

What are “Besetting Sins”?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: Heb. 12:1

- A. In the life of every individual, there is a besetting sin that persistently stands between him and God.
 - 1. It differs from person to person. What is a besetting sin to one may not trouble another at all.
 - a. With Moses it was anger
 - b. With David it was desire for women
 - c. With Abraham it was fear for his life
 - 2. It is a temptation and sin that one finds it particularly hard for him to resist and often finds himself easily tangled up in it
- B. The Hebrew writer insists that these sins in particular must be overcome or we will be unable to make progress in our journey to heaven

I. DEFINING BESETTING SINS

- A. “Easily beset” - εὐπερίστατος - easily ensnaring, obstructing, constricting; that which easily surrounds as a garment that winds around and hinders, clinging closely; easily encircles or entangles, like a loose flowing robe” (ICC)
 - 1. Euperistatos - “a competitor thwarting a racer in every direction; figuratively, of sins that tangle and hinder” (Strongs)
 - 2. Runners in the ancient Olympics would lay aside even their inner garments so as not to be impeded.
- B. The Hebrew writer pleads for Christians to lay aside every hindrance to living the Christian life, especially those sins which, like inner garments, cling so close to us. Besetting sins are those which cling close to us and are easily committed by us.
 - 1. Besetting sins may be those indulged before obeying the Gospel; easily falling back into old, familiar patterns
 - 2. Besetting sins may be those we are drawn to due to temperament, such as pride, laziness, skepticism, or stubbornness.
 - 3. Besetting sins may be those we are exposed by our profession.
 - 4. Besetting sins may be those we are particularly vulnerable due to weakness, genetic or self-imposed: smoking, drinking, drug abuse, stealing, bigotry, gossip, attention, pornography

II. BESETTING SINS OF GOD’S PEOPLE

- A. Peter had a weakness for impulsive, inconsistent behavior - Matt. 26:33-75
- B. Moses was beset with impatience - Num. 20:7-12
- C. James and John were beset with anger and harshness toward others
 - 1. Luke 9:51-56
- D. Simon the sorcerer was beset with covetousness - Acts 8:18-21

III. BESETTING SINS CAN BE INTENSIFIED

- A. By returning to former associates in the besetting sins - 1Cor. 15:33

- B. By returning to places that facilitate the besetting sins - 2Peter 2:20
- C. By failing to fill the void left by besetting sins - Luke 11:24-26

IV. BESETTING SINS CAN BE OVERCOME

- A. 1Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:16
- B. The Corinthians overcame their besetting sins - 1Cor. 6:9-11
- C. The Colossians overcame their besetting sins - Col. 3:5-7
- D. Paul overcame his besetting sins - 1Tim. 1:12-13; 1Cor. 9:27

V. HOW TO OVERCOME BESETTING SINS

- A. Make no opportunities for besetting sins - Rom. 13:14; 2Tim. 2:22; Gen. 39:12
- B. Cultivate a mind that is unfavorable for the besetting sin. Keep your mind saturated with spiritual things - Isa. 26:3; Rom. 8:5-6
- C. Overcome the besetting sin through Christ - John 15:5; Phil. 4:13; Heb. 12:2

Conclusion:

- A. Besetting sins are those sins which hinderingly cling so close to us and are so easily committed. All sin separates us from God, and that includes the ones we with which we have the most difficulty resisting
- B. David wrote a confession Psalm after succumbing to his own besetting sin
 - 1. Psalm 51:1-3, 7-12