

WHY NOT JUST GET RID OF IT?

- By Pastor Greg Hooker

SCRIPTURE TEXT

*“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses [those saints who have gone on before us], **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race [Christian life and endeavor] that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:1, 2).*

INTRODUCTION

One of many TV ‘reality’ shows clogging up the air waves is that of ‘*Hoarders*’ – those interesting, yet controversial accumulators and collectors of anything this side of mars and beyond. If you have had the ‘awesome’ pleasure of watching this National-Geographic-Oscar-winning-show, you know what I’m talking about! There is nothing known, or *not* known to man that cannot be found in some of these rich cultural museums scattered across the good ole US of A. There should be a disclaimer at the beginning of each exciting episode stating, ‘These people are what you call, ‘Professionals’, please don’t try any of this at home!’

While I’m sure no one reading this message is anything remotely like that, we all seem to clutter up our lives with ‘non-essentials’ and things that slow us down, cause worry, take time away from family and friends, and hinder our walk and relationship with the Lord.

Years ago I owned and operated a Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning business until I learned that moving furniture the weight of a small elephant by oneself everyday wasn’t ‘my cup of tea’! During those long-hard-days of sweating it out and wondering just what I had gotten myself into; I can proudly say, ‘I was introduced to some of these strange and bazaar creatures amply called ‘hoarders’. Believe me, they are a unique and intriguing breed.

I remember well a house in the area of Chattanooga, Tennessee, that I will never forget. After saying my usual polite howdy doo’s to the elderly lady answering the door, I proceeded to walk (or should I say, squirm) into what once looked like a living room; but if I had not known better, I would have taken oath that I was in a newspaper warehouse with issues ready to be delivered from practically every day during the past centennial! I mean there were piles of newspaper stacked all the way to the ceiling, wall to wall, and with an itty bitty path to precariously navigate through. I’m certain that in the event of a fire, half of Chattanooga would have been incinerated! If it were possible to somehow dig, claw, and excavate to the bottom of those stacks of newsprint, I would dare guess Abraham Lincoln would have been on the front page of some of those long forgotten, yellow tainted and onion-brittle-ancient tabloids!

Why on earth that poor soul felt the need to collect, store and safeguard untold issues of newspapers is only know to the God and a select few of the hosts of Heaven! Following a brief moment of ‘shell shock’,

my next obvious question was ‘How in the world does she expect me to clean her carpet?’ There was no way in a month of Sunday’s that I could move those mounds of Chattanooga history archived in within the confines of this ‘hoarders’ home.

Now I’m aware there is a little bit of ‘hoarder’ in each of us, but this goes beyond extremism – even to the extent of ‘What on earth were you thinking?!’ Little doubt this dear lady was a little ‘off her rocker’ to amass such a collection of worthless newsprint, to such an extent her daily life was encumbered and radically effected. She had allowed her obsession to ‘weigh’ her down, impede a normal way of life, and cause her to become a recluse in her own home.

In our text quoted above, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to “...lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us ...” In the original language, “the” isn’t present in the manuscripts; therefore, Paul is saying – not just *one* sin – but sin in general. Every one of us, just like the hoarder, has certain ‘weights’ and ‘sin’ we tend to carry around. They accumulate in our lives, take up important space reserved for important matters, and distract us from the real significant issues of life. Notice point number one:

I. UNNECESSARY BAGAGE – “... lay aside every weight ...”

Paul uses a Greek word in this passage that isn’t found anywhere else in the New Testament; the word is ‘ogkon’, which is translated “weight”. It’s an interesting word, meaning something that is ‘crooked’, or ‘hooked’ as to suspend the entire weight of something upon a person. No doubt Paul is alluding to the Olympic Games commonly held during the time of this writing, in which the runner would shed himself of every tread of clothing possible, even to the point of going bare naked, so as not to be hindered in anyway during the race. Most, if not all of the runners clothing was eliminated in order to gain an edge upon his opponent.

Using this commonly known analogy, Paul exhorts the believers to shed any extra weight that would hinder them from their very best performance in the “Christian race set before them.” For each racer the weight is different; it may be the weight of pride, vanity, worldliness, unholy thoughts and actions, pursuit of something outside the will of God, the unwise use of one’s time, procrastination, or the blatant ignoring of the Lord’s will in a person’s life.

While these “weights” may, or may not be sin in and of themselves; they are unquestionably things we elect to carry around slowing us down as we run the race God has set before us. No runner would ever think of carrying a backpack full of bricks in a race he was hoping to win! Neither should a Christian carry anything that would hold them back from finishing well.

Barnes Notes puts it this way: ‘Some persons would make much more progress if they would throw away many of their personal ornaments; some, if they would disencumber themselves of the heavy weight of gold which they are endeavoring to carry with them. So some very light objects, in themselves considered, become material encumbrances. Even a feather or a ring - such may be the fondness for these toys - may become such a weight that they will never make much progress toward the prize.’

You see friends, it doesn't have to be a sin per say, but something of a *hindrance*; something that is not needed, something that is carried around just for the sake of having. Anything causing us to slow down in our race toward the prize of Jesus Christ ought to be cast aside.

When Audrey and I began our journey on Springer Mountain in Georgia, section hiking the 2175 miles of the celebrated Appalachian Trail, we had everything but the kitchen sink in our backpacks as we started a grueling ascent up the eight mile 'Approach Trail' to reach the beginning of the actual trailhead itself. After about one hundred yards I turned, chocking down a bit of pride, and told Audrey there was no way we could hike this trail with all the needless 'essentials' we had eagerly packed before leaving home.

So making a quick survey to ensure no one was watching our rookie performance, we rambled back down to the car, unloaded our packs and discarded about half of the so called 'essentials' and resumed our expedition with a little more passion, enthusiasm and a lot less weight. We had rid ourselves of most of the items we simply didn't need for the hike – yes, they were luxuries, but not indispensable. They only served to slow, encumber, if not completely halt our plans and ability to hike the Appalachian Trail.

Paul exhorts us in like manner, to "lay aside" these needless weights, the unnecessary baggage that have no real value, other than to slow our Christian race and impede our ability to finish well. Now notice our second point:

II. UNNECESSARY BELONGINGS – "...and the sin which doth so easily beset us ..."

While we are exhorted not to carry around 'unnecessary baggage', Paul goes a step farther and pressures the Christian runner not to carry 'unnecessary belongings' – "... and the sin which doth so easily beset us ..."

Once again, Paul uses a Greek word only used in this passage of Scripture; it is the word 'euperistaton'. Tyndale renders it "the sin that hangeth on us." Bloomfield translates it as 'the sin which especially winds around us, and hinders our course'. What Paul is conveying to us is; as a runner in the Olympics would never run in a garment that 'hangs on' or wines /wraps around them, so the Christian runner running for the prize of God would never wind or wraps a garment of sin around their body, a sin for which would side-line them from the race. They are sins for which we are particularly liable to commit and practice – appropriately called "besetting sins". Notice the following examples:

- 1) **Sins that would chiefly be brought on by our natural personality, or disposition.** Each of us is made up in different ways when it comes to our temperaments. One person may be susceptible to laziness, materialism, greed, apathy, or a sensual nature; while these sins may not affect another. Their weaknesses may lie elsewhere in pride, drunkenness, swift to wrath, or anger. Each individual possesses their own vices and sins to deal with.
- 2) **Sins that we freely indulged ourselves in before becoming a Christian.** Often the new believer in Christ develops the false assumption that once born into the family of God; all their unholy desires miraculously evaporate and never trouble them again. While this occasionally happens

with some people to a certain extent, for the most part these sinful and unholy urges lie smoldering and will eventually return with a fiery vengeance. Remember, we are forgiven of our sins and our souls have been washed in the blood of Jesus, but we remain encased in the old flesh with its fleshly desires. Consequently, we struggle day after day with the urges of the old Adamic nature pulling, tugging, and soliciting our attention away from the new life in Christ.

- 3) **Sins that we are exposed to through our daily acquaintances with family, friends, and co-workers.** Although we may be forgiven and endeavoring to be more 'Christ-like', we face a world that largely rejects and ridicules our walk with the Lord. They lie in wait to snare and entrap us to partake in their evil deeds; to join in their unholy ranks, and dissolve back into their ungodly ways. Another word common among our contemporary culture is 'peer pressure' – the incessant temptation and desire to 'fit in with the crowd'.
- 4) **Sins that we are exposed to through some special weakness in our character.** Most, if not every Christian, has a weak spot in his/her personality. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. That weak link is one that we must guard and strengthen daily. Our Christian character will be greatly determined by how we safeguard that 'weak link' in our lives. The failure of that one link could cause a total collapse of a Christian's character and the way in which the world views them. One broken link could destroy your testimony, break down your family life, and bring reproach upon the Savior – just one link!

CONCLUSION

In the Christian life there is no room for 'hoarding'. Anything that would cause us to take our eyes off of the ultimate prize set before us needs to be dealt with in a swift and concise manner. The unnecessary 'baggage' and 'belongings' serve only to hinder our relationship with Christ, take our attention away from what's really important, and cause us to lose sight of the "prize set before us". Remember, there is no prize for the quitter or sluggard – 'The winner never quits, and the quitter never wins'!

PRAYER

Dear Father, please help us to lay aside any and all things that would hinder and slow us down in the race you have set before us. Help us to remain focused on the prize set before us and pursue it with all the strength and stamina we have; in Jesus name, Pastor Greg.