

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Hebrews 12:1-2.**
Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- B. A sermon by request. The question says, **"What is the sin mentioned in Hebrews 12:1?"**
- C. In tonight's lesson we want to look at this passage of Scripture and attempt to find out what the sin mentioned here is.

I. THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

- A. Hebrews 12:1a.
Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,...
- B. From the overall context of the book of Hebrews it would logically follow that the "great cloud of witnesses" are those just mentioned in chapter 11. What a cloud it is!
- C. Mentioned are:
 - 1. Abel.
 - 2. Enoch.
 - 3. Noah.
 - 4. Abraham.
 - 5. Sarah.
 - 6. Isaac.
 - 7. Jacob.
 - 8. Joseph.
 - 9. Moses.
 - 10. The Hebrews.
 - 11. Rahab.
 - 12. Gideon.
 - 13. Barak.
 - 14. Samson.
 - 15. Jephthah.
 - 16. David.
 - 17. Samuel.
 - 18. The prophets.
 - 19. Women.
 - 20. Others.
- D. The point being that we see such great examples of faith that they are an encouragement to us to also remain faithful. They were faithful to God even though they did not receive what was promised them (see Heb. 11:39-40). We have received many of the blessings they did not, we therefore should remain faithful to God.
And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

II. THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES US.

- A. Hebrews 12:1b.
Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us,** and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
- B. This is the main point of the sermon tonight, since it directly attempts to answer the Bible question.
- C. What is this sin that so easily entangles? Let me suggest four possibilities:
 - 1. **It is the sin(s) in which we freely indulged before becoming a Xian.**
Texts: Eph. 2:1-3; 1Cor. 6:9-11; Col. 3:3-7; Titus 3:3-4.
(1Cor 6:9-11) Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, **10** nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

(Eph 2:1-3) And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Col 3:3-7) For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. **5** Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. **6** For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, **7** and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

(Titus 3:3-4) For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. **4** But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,

2. **It is the sin(s) to which we are particularly exposed by our natural temperament or disposition.**

Texts: Gal. 5:17-21; Rom. 7:14-20; Phil. 2:12-13.

(Rom 7:14-20) For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. **15** For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. **16** But if I do the very thing I do not wish *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that it is good. **17** So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. **18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. **19** For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. **20** But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

(Gal 5:17-21) For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. **19** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(Phil 2:12-13) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **13** for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

3. **It is the sin(s) to which we are exposed to by our profession, by our relations to others, or by our situation in life.**

Texts: Mt. 13:22; Jn. 15:17-19; 17:14; 1Cor. 5:10-11; 2Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 4:1-5; Col. 2:8, 20-22; Jas. 4:4.

(Mt 13:22) "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

(Jn 15:17-19) "This I command you, that you love one another. **18** "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. **19** "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

(Jn 17:14) "I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

(1Cor 5:10-11) I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. **11** But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one.

(2Cor 6:14-18) Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? **15** Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? **16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. **17** "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. **18** "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

(2Cor 7:1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

(Gal 4:1-5) Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, **2** but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. **3** So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. **4** But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, **5** in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

(Col 2:8) See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

(Col 2:20-22) If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, **21** "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" **22** (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with the using)-- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

(Jas 4:4) You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

4. **It is the sin of unbelief.**

Texts: Heb. 2:1; 3:12-13; 3:18-19; 4:1-3; 4:11; 6:11-12; 10:19-22; 10:35-39; 11:1-2.

(Heb 2:1) For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away.

(Heb 3:12-13) Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

(Heb 3:18-19) And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? **19** And *so* we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

(Heb 4:1-3) Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. **2** For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. **3** For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

(Heb 4:11) Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through *following* the same example of disobedience.

(Heb 6:11-12) And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, **12** that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

(Heb 10:19-22) Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, **21** and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

(Heb 10:35-39) Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. **36** For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. **37** FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. **38** BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. **39** But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

(Heb 11:1-2) Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2** For by it the men of old gained approval.

III. **RUNNING WITH ENDURANCE.**

A. Hebrews 12:1c.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, **and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**,...

B. First Corinthians 9:24-27.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. **25** And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26** Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; **27** but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

C. The Xian life is likened to a race and/or walk. We should do so not at a sprint that will cause us to quit very quickly, but to walk/run at a speed that will allow us to finish the race (Lk. 21:19; Jas. 1:2-4; 2Tim. 2:2; Rev. 2:10; 17:14).

(Lk 21:19) "By your endurance you will gain your lives.

(2Tim 2:2) And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

(Jas 1:2-4) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. **4** And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(Rev 2:10) 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

(Rev 17:14) "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him *are the* called and chosen and faithful."

IV. FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS.

A. Hebrews 12:2a.

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

B. Notice in this very context that the sin of 12:1 might be unbelief, due to this reference in 12:2 that Jesus is the perfecter of faith!

C. Texts: Heb. 5:8-9; 7:14-16; 7:22-26; 9:11-15; Rom. 3:23-26.

(Heb 5:8-9) Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. **9** And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

(Heb 7:14-16) For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. **15** And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, **16** who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

(Heb 7:22-26) so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. **23** And the *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, **24** but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. **25** Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. **26** For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

(Heb 9:11-15) But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; **12** and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. **13** For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, **14** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? **15** And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

(Rom 3:23-26) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; **25** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; **26** for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

V. WHO ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME.

A. Hebrews 12:2b.

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

B. Texts: Eph. 2:14-16; Phil. 2:8; Col. 2:13-14; 1Pet. 2:24.

(Eph 2:14-16) For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, **15** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, **16** and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

(Phil 2:8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

(Col 2:13-14) And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **14** having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

(1Pet 2:24) and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

VI. **AND HAS SAT DOWN ON THE THRONE OF GOD.**

A. Hebrews 12:2c.

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, **and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

B. Jesus, on His throne (Lk. 1:32-33; Phil. 2:8-11; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 3:21; 21:3-4).

(Lk 1:32-33) "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; **33** and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

(Phil 2:8-11) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **10** that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, **11** and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Heb 1:3) And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

(Rev 3:21) He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

(Rev 21:3-4) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, **4** and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be *any* death; there shall no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. We have discussed Heb. 12:1-2 and specifically looked at "the sin that so easily entangles."
- B. Whatever the sin happens to be--we must get rid of it!
- C. JC is the answer to sin.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.