

The Pastor's Pen

“The only weapon to fight sin with is the spear which pierced the side of Jesus. To give an illustration—you want to overcome an angry temper; how do you go to work? It is very possible you have never tried the right way of going to Jesus with it. How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was, and I trusted him to save me. I must kill my angry temper in the same way. It is the only way in which I can ever kill it. I must go to the cross with it, and say to Jesus, ‘Lord, I trust You to deliver me from it.’ This is the only way to give it a death-blow. Are you covetous? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil so long as you please, but if it be your besetting sin, you will never be delivered from it in any way but by the blood of Jesus. Take it to Christ. Tell him, ‘Lord, I have trusted You, and Your name is Jesus (translated ‘The LORD saves’) – for You do save Your people from their sins. Well Lord, this is one of my sins – save me from it!’” ~ Charles H. Spurgeon

The term “besetting sins” was used by the old theologians to describe those sin patterns true believers never can quite seem to get completely past in this life. And, the reality is that every single one of us who is a true believer has one or more besetting sins. We may not all have the same exact besetting sin(s), but nonetheless we do indeed all have besetting sins. There has never been (and there never will be this side of Glory) a true believer in Jesus Christ who does not feel the utter frustration and deflation of the battle that is always raging within us. In fact, this is the very frustration that the apostle Paul expresses in Romans 7:15, when he says, *“I do not understand my own actions! For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate!”*

What does this tell us? For one, if we *don't* struggle with besetting sin(s), we have never been born again and the reason there *is no struggle* is because we are a *willing* and *deluded slave* to sin. By contrast, believers are *formerslaves* who seek to walk in a manner that glorifies Jesus. Be that as it may be, our besetting sins grab at us to trip us up, and at times our besetting sin(s) seem to come up from deep within us to attempt to derail us. As a result, we more often than not feel our Christian life is two steps forward and three steps back. Ok (we ask), but – *why*? Why does the Lord not just deliver us at once from these recurrent sin patterns we all struggle with? What good purpose can the Lord Jesus – Who *died* to redeem us – possibly have for allowing us to struggle and so often (if we are honest) fail in our struggling? I certainly do not pretend to know the answer in full. However, if we are honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that there is at least one “holy” purpose that our besetting sins do serve in our Christian lives. You are probably wondering if you just read what I wrote right...did I say that wicked thoughts, words, and actions serve at least one holy purpose? Actually, I *did* say that because Scripture is absolutely filled with paradox, if we just have eyes to recognize it.

What was the single most brutal and evil event that has ever occurred in all of human history? Was it not the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth? Second question. What was the single most compassionate and holy event that has ever occurred in all of human history? Was it not the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth? So then, was the cross wicked, or was it righteous? The answer is...yes. That is called Biblical paradox.

So, how does paradox work with regard to the besetting sins in our lives? What holy purpose could they possibly serve? Well, if our struggles do nothing to spur us onto glory other than to remind us of our constant need of the power of the Gospel and our complete and utter hopelessness apart from Jesus – then they do indeed serve a truly holy purpose. See, by nature we are wickedly independent and we absolutely love to deceive ourselves into believing that we’ve got our lives pretty well under control. Far too often we speak of the Gospel and God’s Grace in the past tense – as though we have somehow gotten past our desperate right now need of it. Our besetting sins remind us that we are utterly and completely hopeless without Jesus – not only in the past – but right now. Try as we may, we will never defeat the power of the flesh by the power of the flesh. As Spurgeon points out in the quote above, we must run to Jesus saying, ‘Lord, I have trusted You, and Your name is Jesus (Yeshua means ‘The LORD Saves’), for You do save Your people from their sins! Well Lord, this is one of my sins; save me from it!’ Could it be that the Lord chooses not to deliver us from the ongoing struggle against our besetting sins because He will not allow us to find hope – in any other place? He loves us far too much – and He is far too committed to us – to ever let us forget how much we need Him every single day.

I pray that your week goes well and that the Holy Spirit fills each of our hearts to overflowing.

Your brother in Christ,

Heath