

Helps in Dealing with Remaining Sin

by Albert N. Martin

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What I wish to do tonight is to speak to you on the very practical subject of helps to dealing with remaining sin. And for Scriptural background to the thoughts that I will share with you tonight, I would ask you to follow as I read from Romans the 6th chapter. And I shall read the entire chapter. The Apostle having expounded the great truth that sinners are accepted before God as righteous solely on the basis of the work of another, the work of Christ, and they come into vital appropriation by faith and faith alone--now human logic goes to work on that grand doctrine and says, "All right, if I'm saved by the work of another and I'm saved by faith that confesses I have nothing to bring to God, but I simply lay hold of that which is provided, then let us continue in sin that grace may abound." And so the Apostle addresses himself to that objection and says,

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things

is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

As I address myself to the very practical subject of helps to dealing with remaining sin, I wish to do so with three broad fundamental Biblical and theological propositions forming the base upon which these practical exhortations will be given. The order of Scripture is always, you are and therefore be. This is what you have, and in the light of it, therefore do. Doctrine is always the basis of exhortation unto practice, and all exhortations to practice are rooted in the realities of Christian doctrine. The doctrine is unto practice; the practice is rooted in the doctrine. And so very briefly I wish to state three Biblical propositions, each of which is taught in this 6th chapter of Romans and throughout the entirety of the Word of God, which will be the platform upon which the exhortations will be set forth.

The first proposition is this: all men by nature are under the dominion of sin. When the Apostle writes to the Roman Christians, he generalizes their pre-converted state and says it was true of each one of them, that they were the bondslaves of sin. And this concept occurs in the strong language of verse 17: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." You were as it were the property of another. Sin is personified into a living master, and all of these Roman Christians are called as to their pre-converted state the very bondslaves of this master called sin. Again in verse 18, the same concept is used and again in verse 22. Our Lord Himself said in John 8:34, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." And so the relationship of all men by nature to sin is one of servitude. We are under sin's dominion, and this servitude is a very practical servitude. The Apostle says in verse 13 that you were presenting your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. He repeats it in verse 19: "Ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity." In other words, the doctrine of bondage to sin is not some kind of a detached theoretical description. It is an accurate statement of the case as it is. Sin, as it were, speaking through depraved lust and unregulated passion, says, "Give me your eyes to lust; give me your ears to receive false witness; give me your feet to walk in forbidden paths; give me your hands to touch forbidden objects; give me your affections to covet inordinate objects." And we presented ears, eyes, hands, tongue, feet, and all of our faculties without and within as the very instruments of servitude to sin. The servitude, then, was practical; the servitude was pervasive. When you were the slaves of sin, he said you were like free men in regard to righteousness. You did not recognize the claims of righteousness. As a free man does not recognize the claims of a slave owner--he's a free man. The Apostle says you regarded yourselves as free men in regard to righteousness. So this servitude is not only practical but pervasive. And it is perpetual, for he says you were continually the slaves of sin. This was your constant state--eating, drinking, sleeping, and waking. Every aspect of your life was but an expression of this servitude. And that's the condition of everyone in this building this night who is not savingly united to Jesus Christ. What do you need to do to become a slave of sin? You need do nothing but to be born a son or daughter of Adam; that's all. "We were by nature," the Apostle says, "children of wrath, even as others."

The second proposition is here in Romans 6 and elsewhere in Scripture: all men by nature are under sin's dominion, but some men by grace are no longer under its dominion. The Apostle says in verse 17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the

servants of sin...." That condition no longer exists. "Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. And being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Some men are no longer slaves of sin. They are in the words of this text the slaves of righteousness. And of course, verse 22 repeats the same sentiment: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God." You are no longer the slaves of sin. You are the servants of the living God. And verse 14 is the most explicit statement of this principle that some men by grace are delivered from sin's bondage: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The moment a man or woman, boy or girl comes into the orbit of the effectual operations of grace, they are out of the orbit of sin's dominion. And no one exists in the same orbit at the same time. All men by nature are within the sphere where sin is lord. But when grace becomes operative, grace unto free justification, that same grace delivers men from that sphere of bondage to sin and brings them into the state of freedom from that bondage. And so the second proposition is clearly taught here; it is taught in Romans 8:5-9; it is taught explicitly in Galatians 5:19-24 and in 1 John 3:1-10. These are the most powerful statements in the New Testament demonstrating this second proposition, this second assertion: some men by grace are delivered from sin's dominion.

But now there is a third proposition: All saved men, though delivered from the dominion of sin, have the remains of sin and corruption with which they must reckon to the end of their days. Now don't ever start any view of the conflicts and struggles and responsibilities of the Christian life with proposition 3. Start with 1; go on to 2, and then and only then will you have the right perspective of the third proposition. And it's interesting that the chapters which most forcefully declare the believer's emancipation from bondage to sin, most explicitly assert the reality of the present aggravation of remaining sin. Emancipation and aggravation are put together in the closest of context. Here is Roman 6: You were, but you now are. You once were, but this is your present experience. But in the midst of that, he says in verse 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Though I have been delivered from sin's dominion, I have not been delivered from the actings of lust in my members. And I have a responsibility that there will be no usurping of sin in my life. He goes on in verse 13 in a way of exhortation, as you were voluntary and cooperative in presenting your members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, now there must be the same conscious, voluntary cooperative yielding of your members instruments of righteousness unto God. Though the people envisioned in Romans 6 are delivered from sin's dominion, there is still remaining corruption. Furthermore, Romans 6 is followed very closely by Romans 7. And what is the cry of the last part of Romans 7:14 and following in spite of the fact that a well-known minister in recent days has taken a position on this disputed chapter that contradicts the historic understanding of it? May I just suggest, the Apostle Paul was not careless in the use of tenses. And whatever Romans 7:14 and following teaches, it's interesting that everything he says with reference to this problem is in the present tense. The previous 13 verses deal with what we would call in English the past tense. They are a description of something that happened historically in the life of the Apostle. But verse 14 and onward deal with a present reality, and that reality focuses on the words of verses 20-23:

"Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against

the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Here is the man who is fully cognitive of the great truth of Romans 6, that some men by grace are delivered from the dominion of sin. And he speaks of the great emancipation in chapter 6. But here in chapter 7, he speaks of the agitation of remaining sin. You have essentially the same thing in the other great chapters of emancipation. Galatians 5:19-24. You have the statement about the realm of the flesh in verses 19-21; verses 22 and 23 the realm of the spirit. And then Paul says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." There's been a basic emancipation from the realm of flesh into the realm of spirit. But verse 17 in that same chapter says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Take again 1 John--great book dealing with the emancipation. Chapter 3: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin...." He that is born of God does not make a practice of sin. But that's the same John who says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Likewise in Romans 8, another great chapter of emancipation. Having stated in verse 9 that we are no longer in the flesh as a dominant sphere of spiritual experience, "but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in [us]." He goes on to say in verse 13 that we must by the Spirit continue to mortify the deeds of the flesh. Though we're delivered from the flesh as the realm and domain in which we live and move and have our being, there is still the problem of remaining flesh, remaining corruption: sin in our members with which we must reckon to the end of our days.

Now in the light of those three fundamental principles, I should like to exhort you as time permits in the way of some practical directives assisting us in this great conflict with remaining sin. Now some may question the very thing that I am doing and say, "Is it right to give rules, principles, guidelines? Should we not simply just pray everyday, 'Lord fill me with the Spirit; lead me not into temptation, and deliver me from evil.' Is not that enough?" No, my friend. The whole concept of warfare is patent in the Word of God, that we must learn spiritual logistics in this warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And all the principles that I will set before you are ones that just whistle through the pages of the New Testament and are wonderfully illustrated in many portions of the Old as well. And there's no significance to the order, except the first and last focus upon Christ. And any consideration of this matter must have the focus there. So the only significance is in what forms the beginning and the end. And there is no real significance in what lies in the sandwich in between.

First of all then, if by the grace of God when we leave this place to go back into the mundane, the hum drum, the place of duty and responsibility, how are we to make progress in dealing with the problem of remaining sin? Well, first and foremost, we must keep our hearts well supplied with Gospel motives. Now what do I mean by those words? Well, when I use the term "keep the heart well supplied," I'm speaking in terms of such statements as we find in Proverbs 4:23: "Keep [or guard] thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. And if we may liken the heart to a garden, a garden that grows weeds if it is not nurtured and cultivated and cared for, but a garden which under proper care can produce luscious, nourishing food, we then must keep the heart well-furnished, well

weeded, well cultivated so that holy fruits may spring forth, not innately from our hearts but from that virtue which is in Christ and which becomes our portion because we are united unto Him. We must then keep the heart well-furnished with what? Well, with what I'm calling Gospel motives. And I'm using the term "Gospel motives" in contrast to legal motives. Legal motives and principles would be such things as the fear of hell, the fear of the consequences of our sins, perhaps even the fear of the chastening rod of God. But as Owen has so clearly demonstrated in volume 6 of the complete works of Owen dealing with this subject, these legal motives are conquered in sinners day after day. And though they may for a time be a barrier to some sins, in many people they are nothing but a paper barrier. And in the heart of the child of God, there must be found flourishing, not legal motives but Gospel or evangelical motives. And what do I mean by evangelical motives? Those motives that flow from the genius of the Gospel, those motives that flow from a present sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, those motives which flow from a trustful reliance upon and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ in all the beauty of His person and the perfection of His work.

Let me give you an example of Gospel motives working in the heart of a man to keep him from sin and to spur him on to duty, one in the New Testament and one in the Old. The Apostle Paul, of course, is a great example in the New Testament. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:14: "For the love of Christ constraineth us." The Apostle describes some motivating power in his life as the love of Christ, that is, a believing intelligent apprehension of Christ's love to him. Now imagine that you were privileged to follow the Apostle Paul to one full day of his arduous labors. Suppose you could be with him in the motel where he stayed between preaching engagements, and you were awakened in the morning by the muffled tones of his intercession as he arose early to seek the face of His God. And then you followed him as he spent some of the morning hours in the local market place button-holing people and seeking to accost them in the name of Christ and lay before them the Gospel in all of its majesty, in all of its tender entreaty, and in all of the overtones of divine urgency. And then you watched him go back to his motel, and he prayerfully compose letters that he asked you to take down to the post office, letters to go to a church here and a church there and a church in another place. And then you beheld him as perhaps he skipped the supper hour to spend time gathering around him some of the leaders in the local assembly and exhorting them to go on in the faith, and warning and charging them as a father with his own individual children. And then you saw him go to some public meeting hall, and there he preached as a man who had spent the day resting or relaxing. He preached with such energy that some even thought he was demented and that he was beside himself. And after seeing him through such a day and following him back to the motel as he flopped his weary bones upon his bed, you say,

"Paul, I've watched you all this day; I've heard the urgent, fervent pleading in your prayers; I've beheld your tender, loving, consuming zeal for the conversion of sinners; I've seen you pour your heart through your pain as you've taken the concern of the churches upon you; I've beheld you preach with energy and power and in demonstration of the might of God. Paul, what is it that drives you with that which borders almost upon madness? What is it that drives you from your bed to pray; drives you from the place of a recluse into the peculiar dangers of the marketplace and the public ministry and back to the secret place to yearn over the churches? Paul, what is it that drives you? What is it that impulses you?"

And the Apostle would answer,

"The love of Christ constrains me. In my eye continually is this awesome, this blessed, this glorious reality that the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me, and because of what He is and what He has done, all of my debts to divine law have been paid; all of my forfeited privileges of communion with God have been restored. And it's the believing sight of this love of this Savior to me that constrains me, constrains me to keep under my body, constrains me to say no even to the innocent that would impede my progress in grace and in usefulness."

Here's a man moved by Gospel motives. In the Old Testament you have the example of Joseph. The young man by strange providence deposited in Potiphar's house, and in that situation a woman cast her eyes upon him and taunts him day after day seeking to seduce him until one day in her frustration when the scene is set for his fall, she lays hold upon him physically and says, "Lie with me." And his response is, "No, I dare not. What will happen to my reputation? What will happen to my present station?" No, no, none of these things are foremost in his mind. Whatever place they may have played, the Scripture is careful to record that the answer of Joseph was, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This God who graciously preserved him when his brothers sought his ruin, this God who had delivered him, this God who had brought him into this place of position and usefulness in Potiphar's house, this God before whose eye He knew all of his life was constantly lived--here was a man furnished with Gospel motives.

Now let me say by way of application, if you are to keep your heart well-furnished with Gospel motives--and you must, or you will make very little progress in dealing with remaining sin--there are three exhortations, one positive and one negative that I would lay before you. The positive is this: If you are serious about dealing with remaining sin, then you must seriously employ all the means of grace, public and private, in order to keep your heart well-supplied with Gospel motives. If I'm serious about keeping the garden in my backyard free of weeds, specific steps must be taken. If I'm determined that the plant leaves will be lush and green, then specific steps must be taken. And so we've organized the children into a band of mini farmers who have their weeding chores in the morning. And if we go a few days without rain, one of them has the watering chore, and I have the fertilizing chore. And specific calculated steps are taken to keep that garden well-furnished with all that is necessary to have a good crop of vegetables. No one ever has a heart well-furnished with Gospel motives by sitting back and just hoping it will be so. For God has ordained specific means in order to keep the heart well-furnished with Gospel motives. Some of those means are public; some are private. Those public means, of course, are the preaching of the Word. For in all true expectation of the Word, Jesus Christ in one way or another is set before us, the glory of His salvation, our need of that salvation, and its many dimensions. When the law is preached, it is preached that we may discover its perfection fulfilled in Christ and our imperfections that we may be driven to Christ. And so the whole end of all true law preaching is to produce Gospel motives in the heart. The true end of opening up doctrine is that we may see Jesus Christ as the Lodestone of all truth. And the end of opening up duty is to show us how we demonstrate our gratitude to the Son of God. And the opening up of the promises is to ravish our hearts with the realization that, how many so ever are the promises of God, in Him is the "yea" and through Him is the "amen" to the glory of God. And I say to my dear preacher friends, are you preaching the Word as you ought? Is Christ Himself coming through if I may say that without irreverence? Is the Lord Jesus the great throbbing heartbeat of your preaching? I do not mean do you sentimentally parrot the name of Jesus 50 times in a sermon. I don't mean that at all.

But if He is the great theme of the Scriptures, you cannot be rightfully expounding the Scriptures and not have Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the great comprehensive theme of your preaching. Perhaps the little progress that some of your people are making in the area of dealing with remaining sin is reflective of a ministry that does not have enough of Christ in it. And it's the question I must continually ask myself as a preacher. Can it be that the crippled walk of my people is a reflection of their own spiritual starvation? Their hearts are not being irrigated with that Water of Life that flows, not from Mount Sinai, but from under the Throne of God and a little Lamb. The irrigation of the heart must come from that source and the blessed privilege of coming to His table where there we have set before us in visible tangible emblems the heart of the Gospel: "My body broken, My blood poured fourth." You see the whole goal of that table is not that you might come and while you sit take a rake and just go through the muck and corruption of your own heart. Perhaps few texts have been more misunderstood than the text in 2 Corinthians 11: "Let a man examine himself." We think of it: "So let a man examine himself and so let him stew in unworthiness." That's not what it says. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." For that which I discern when I examine myself is a more clear view of my own corruption and need, and therefore all the more my desperate need of Him who loved me unto death and poured out His blood on my behalf. And there are fresh actings of faith upon Him; the pouring forth of devotion to Him. And that's the end of the private means of grace. To tell a young convert, "Now that you're a Christian, read the Bible"--that's poor advice. The proper advice is, "Seek the Lord in His Word." Don't be content to tick off your Mcheyne's calendar and say, "I've read my chapter for the day. I've been a good boy. Now I must really stand." That's a legal perspective. For if you read the Word, seeking Him in the Word, there will be the realization that without Him you can do nothing. And you spread your helplessness before Him as He is demonstrated in His glory. The commands are not isolated precepts; they're the Words of your heavenly Shepherd. What a difference when you read the Bible that way. "My sheep hear My voice." And the commands, whether they be in the area of home (husbands love your wives; wives be subject to your husbands; children obey your parents), employer-employee relationships, and all of the other definitive instructions on ethical conduct, let's never look at them as isolated Christian regulations hanging out there in some kind of an independent relationship from the Son of God. No, no, they are the voice of the Shepherd, the One who loved us; the One who gave Himself for us. And so if the heart is to be kept well-furnished with Gospel motives, we must be diligent in the use of the means of grace, not only public but private, seeking the Lord in His Word; seeking the face of our Lord as we pray.

The second exhortation--this is a negative one: if you would make progress in dealing with remaining sin, there must be the heart well-furnished with Gospel motives. That means you have to use the means calculated to keep it well-furnished. Beware of anything, no matter how innocent it may appear, if it bleeds away the vigor and reality of Gospel principles in your heart. Whatever shrivels your love to Christ and the believing apprehension of His love to you, flee it like death itself. Some of you young men are starry-eyed. Miss right has come across your path. Some of you young women, everything is going flutter flutter and flip flop. Mr. right has come across your path. You've been praying very earnestly that God would bless this relationship, and you've just about convinced yourself that it's of God. I challenge you to ask this question: "Is this relationship increasing the vigor of Gospel principles in my heart or is it bleeding my heart of Gospel principles?" Don't you tell me that God gives you a

gift that, in turn, steals your affections to Him. Either it is not His gift, or you're abusing the gift. Either there must be a severance of the relationship or a drastic alteration of what's involved in that relationship. Do you apply this to the use of the television, the literature you read, the exercise of Christian liberty? I urge all of you if you were not here last year, to obtain the tapes of Pastor Chantry's two messages on Christian liberty and self-denial. With a resurgence of understanding of reformed truth (and one element of reformed tradition is the doctrine Christian liberty), there is a subtle move abroad to turn that blessed and holy truth into a license for sin and spiritual carelessness. And when a man says, "I'm rejoicing in my freedom in Christ" and indulges in practices that bleed away his love to Christ, something's wrong. For the appreciation of my liberty in Christ rightly understood and rightly implemented in practice will deepen my devotion to Him and my believing apprehension of His love to me. Beware of anything which bleeds away the vigor and reality of Gospel principles.

And my third exhortation--another negative: beware of falling back under legal principles. You see, the human heart by nature is either an antinomian heart or a legalistic heart. It either says, "If I'm saved by the doings of another, it doesn't matter what I do." Or it says, "Since what I do is important, what I do must be foundational to my standing with God." And left to itself, the human heart will drive a man down a path of antinomian lechery or into cold, lifeless legalism and pharisaism. The New Testament early needed the book of James and 1 John to counteract antinomianism. And it needed desperately the book of Galatians and Romans to counteract legalism. You will not make progress in Gospel holiness in dealing with the remaining sin if you allow yourself to come back under legal principles. Now, how does it work? It works like this: "If I've been a good boy or a good girl and I haven't fallen before my besetting sins for two or three days, then I don't need to come in the words of the hymn saying, 'Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.'" When I've just fallen in some area of particular weakness; when I've been tripped up in some area of remaining sin, then I have nothing, no pedestal upon which to stand as I appear before my God. I come groveling in the acknowledgement I've sinned. I have nothing to commend myself to God. I must look wholly out of myself to Christ if I'm to find any access. My friend, if a few days of relative victory over some specific lust or corruption makes you assume any other posture than that which you had the moment after you sinned as far as your approach to God, you've fallen back under legal principles, and it won't be long before you'll fall again. For the way we are led into sin is by being led away from Gospel motives. And when it is in some sense we've attained, the Scripture says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." That's the first and perhaps the most essential exhortation. The others I will move through much more rapidly.

In the second place, if you and I would make progress with remaining sin--and it will be with us through all our days--we must keep our consciences sensitive to the guilt and danger of our sins in general and our peculiar areas of weakness in particular. The battle against remaining sin is difficult enough when we regard our enemies as enemies. But if you begin to look at your enemies either as friends or neutral observers, the battle is lost. My friend, every remaining lust in you and in me, if it could have its way, would slay us. And the moment you begin to look at any area of remaining sin as innocent or neutral, you're in danger--terribly, frightfully in danger. And how are we to keep the conscience sensitive both to the guilt and the danger of our sins in general and our peculiar areas of weakness in particular? We must bring our sins again and again to the light of God's law and its full purity, not bringing our sins to the law to come back under its condemning power, but to the law in its purity

as a revealing power. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." And the Apostle says in 1 Timothy, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient...." And then he describes the functions of the law. But he goes on showing how the law unveils outward gross sin. And he closes with this phrase: "...and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." In other words, the law is God's instrument to reveal sin wherever sin exists. From the gross sins of the flesh to the refined sins that are a contradiction of the holiness demanded by the Gospel. If you want a profitable Lord's Day exercise in the afternoons, you take the larger catechism in the section on the Ten Commandments, and you take one this week praying, "O God, I bring my whole life to the search light of your holy Law; that You would reveal in me anything that is a contradiction of the holiness demanded by the Gospel." And then read those questions: What duties are commanded? What sins are forbidden? And then you look up the Scripture references and allow the Word of God, exposing the heart to that burning light of the law, and you see something of the enormity, the extent of your remaining sin. But O, you must not only bring those sins to the light of God's Law again and again; you must bring those sins to the light of the Gospel in all of its glory. See your sins in the light of the self-emptying of Christ. Say to that particular sin that seems to have almost a magnetic power in your life; it seems to cling and adhere to you with an unusual force. Say to that particular sin,

"Is it this sin that caused my Lord to leave the ineffable glory of the Father's presence to come to the confines of a virgin's womb? Is it this sin that caused Him to breathe as His first air upon Earth the acrid smell of a cow barn? The holy nostrils of the Son of God seared with its first breath by the stench of a barn. Is it this sin that when my flesh yields to it, or I yield to it, brings such delight to me in a moment? Is it this sin that caused Him who was the object of the adoring wonder of the angelic host to become the object of the rude stare of dumb beasts in a manger? Is it this sin that demanded that mysterious humiliation?"

Bring those sins to the cross of Christ. Hear the voice of the Son of God: "My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Name your sin; bring it to the darkness of Calvary. Bring your sin to the blazing light of that awful darkness, for there is no light like the darkness of Golgotha to show sin in its true color. O dear child of God, keep your conscience sensitive to the guilt and danger of your sins by bringing them again and again to the light of the law in all of its purity and to the Gospel in all of its glory.

Thirdly, if we would make progress in dealing with remaining sin, we must not only keep the heart furnished with Gospel motives; keep the conscience sensitive to the guilt and danger of sin, but we must avoid all the known occasions of sin except where duty demands otherwise. Our Lord said in Matthew 26:31, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It is not prayer detached from watching that will see us overcoming temptation; it is not watching divorced from prayer. We are to watch and to pray. And watchfulness demands the engaging of all our faculties in the most intense observation of where the enemy lies; how I am susceptible to his subtleties and avoiding those occasions at all cost unless duty demands otherwise. John Owen said, "He who dares to dally with occasions of sin will also dare to sin. He that will venture upon temptations to wickedness will also venture upon wickedness itself." And I'm amazed again and again in pastoral counseling how this simple principal is either not understood or willfully ignored by so many of God's people. Here's the person who bemoans the

problem of irritability, and yet this person knows that most of the succumbing to irritability comes on the heels of a lack of normal sleep. And it was not duty that caused you to cheat on an hour or two of your sleep. It was an inordinate involvement in innocent social relationships. And the devil isn't concerned what keeps you from getting your necessary rest just so long as your sin rises to the fore and the name and testimony of Christ is jeopardized because of you. Maybe some of you need to stop groaning and moaning before God about the problem of irritability and start disciplining your time schedule to get adequate rest. Some of you mourn the fact that Sunday mornings your minds are so distracted; your minds are so dull. And you have to go home and ask God to forgive you for the kind of lame worship that you brought to Him. And all the while the problem is you've not disciplined your Saturday night's use of the television. What about you young people and older people as well, single and married people? Are you serious in praying, "O Lord, keep me pure in a lecherous age?" Are you serious in praying, "O Lord, keep me from the sins that are slaying the thousands on the left hand and on the right?" Then you better avoid all the known occasions of those sins. The Scripture says in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "Flee fornication." He doesn't say, "Pray about it." He says, "Flee it." That means you don't put yourself in physical surroundings that make fornication possible; that make adulterous relationships possible. You don't begin the innocent bantering with someone of the opposite sex who is joined to another. You avoid the occasions. And when you find that in the presence of certain men and women there begins to be, as it were, the untying of that holy veil cast over your heart and your thoughts, avoid that person. Flee fornication. Dear young women, if you're concerned that you will never be an unnecessary provocation to impurity in a man, you'll recognize that your clothing is not an amoral issue. And though we would shrink in horror from a legalism that would legislate with inches skirt lengths and other styles, the Scriptures do say, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness)...." "You can't tell me what to wear!" My friend, if that's your attitude, nothing would convince you till you go down before God as a man or woman saying, "O Lord, my dress is not a matter of indifference. It's a matter of a Gospel obedience. Lord, make me sensitive to what is modest in terms of my station and calling in life and my position and relationship before and with other men and women." Avoid the known occasions of sin.

And then fourthly, if we're to make progress in dealing with remaining sin, we must learn to strike at the first risings of sin. The first proposals of sin are often very modest. And we reason: "I can go thus far in compliance with its proposals but no farther." But remember, whatever the first proposals of sin may be, its ultimate end is always the same. Look at James 1:14 and 15: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." It's a picture of conception and birth and then another generation. What happens? A man is tempted: drawn by his own lust and enticed. Then when he consents to lust, there is conception. Lust conceives and then gives birth to sin, and the child which sin bears is death. And the two generations are inherent in the first modest proposal. No matter how modest those first proposals may be, the ultimate intention is death. Like the lecherous man whose hobby is seducing women, his first encounter always begins with modest banter. But he has one end in view, the stripping of that woman's virtue upon the altar of his own lust. Do you believe that every sin that comes to you saying, "Indulge me this little bit; give me a little quarter here and a little bit there"--do you really

understand its true intention? Christian, do you believe that every stirring of envy, if it had its way, would lead to murder and destruction? Every doubt of any phrase of Scripture as to its authority, if it had its way, would lead to ultimate denial of every word of Scripture? Do you believe that every breathing of pride at its first stirrings, if it had his way, would run and tear the crown from off God's head and put it on your own? Do you believe that every unclean thought, if it had its way, would lead actually to wallow in the filth of lechery and immorality? Christian, if you believe that, you'll start striking at the first risings of sin. And I had occasion just this day to know that this is not abstract theory. People walking over these grounds have come and bared their hearts and had to shake their heads as if to say, "How could this be? How could I or this one ever be involved in such areas of sin and declension from God?" The first proposals were modest, almost blushing modest. O dear Christian, strike at the first rising of sin.

And then I close with the focus with which we began. If we are to make progress in dealing with remaining sin, we must look continually to Christ for the killing of our sin. Mortification is to be done in the strength and power of the Spirit according to Romans 8:13: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." And the work of the Spirit is always in conjunction with and inseparately joined to the objective work of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is given in the context of the preaching of the Gospel. Paul says to the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" And as the first communications of the Spirit are given in conjunction with the Gospel, the objective realities of Christ and the glory of His person and work, so all subsequent communications of the Spirit are given in the context, not of Spirit-centeredness but of Christ-centeredness. "He shall testify of me. He shall take the things of Myself and reveal them." And so if we would by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, it is a call to look continually to Christ for the killing of our sin.

Hebrews 12 is the great passage:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race 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. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

Do you see the exhortation? There is a race before us; the impediment of running the race well is sin. And there must not only be the laying aside but the looking. Not only putting aside the weights but the considering of Him. And if we are to make progress, we must look to Him of whom the Scripture says, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sin." All the saving from all the sin in all the aspects of that salvation are attributed to Him. He shall save His people from their sin, not only in providing the atonement, the appeasement of divine wrath and anger that there might be a just basis of declaring those who believe in Jesus to be forgiven and accepted, but He shall save them from their sins in the remaining aspects of that salvation: progressive sanctification and ultimate glorification. And therefore, we're to look unto Him. It's in the virtue of His death and resurrection and our union with Him that we walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). And so if we're to make progress, dear

fellow believers, we must look unto Christ, the mighty Victor, the One who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. We're to look to Him as One in whom the virtue and the power resides by which we may overcome. But we must also look unto Him as the great example in the great struggle with sin. That's the emphasis of verses 3 and 4: "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." He did. He resisted unto blood to bear an aspect of sin that you and I as believers will never have to bear. He swallowed up the full measure of God's wrath against the sins of His people. Whatever agonies sin brings to us, whatever inward disturbance and agitation, whatever throws of conviction, humiliation, and repentance, we shall never know one dram of what sin brought to our Lord: the fiery anger of the righteous Judge of the universe. We may know His fatherly frown; we may know as the subsequent context indicates, His loving, fatherly rod upon our back to chastise us. But the glistening rod of judgment was broken on the head of the Son of God never to be mended--broken and cast away upon Him. Do you get weary of the conflict, Christian? Aren't there times when you say, "Lord, if I could just have one day when I serve you with an unsinning heart." Are you wearing in the conflict? What about some of those pockets of resistance, some areas of sinful patterns and attitudes? It's as though they were swept away by the rising of the Son of righteousness in your heart when you're were first drawn into union with Him. Things that held you in vice-like grips for years--the chains were broken and they've never been a real problem. But O, there's some other area. You wonder if you've made an inch of progress. Do you have those areas: inward corruptions, stirrings of remaining sin, uncleanness that plagues you and sometimes torments you and sometimes causes you to wonder, "Am I ever, ever going to see relief? Am I even a child of God?" Do you grow weary? Are you ready to quit? Look unto Jesus! Look unto Jesus! You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. And why did He give Himself to the pouring out of His blood? Not just to turn away the wrath of God. He loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify it, purify it, and present it a holy church. He died to make us holy. He died to make us good that we might go at last to heaven saved by His precious blood. Dear child of God, when you grow weary and quit and, as it were, just throw up your hands in despair, you're denying the very intent of the death of Christ. O, look unto Him in whom the virtue resides and who pours forth by the Spirit in our hearts ever-increasing measures of that virtue, look unto Him as the great example.

And then finally, look unto Him as the One who will complete that work in the day we shall be like Him and see Him as He is. What strengthened our Lord in the prospects of Golgotha? What caused our Lord to move resolutely to that awful place? The Scripture says, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross...." Dear child of God, fix your gaze upon Him who at His appearing is going to do something to you and to me that will be nothing less than making us into His own moral likeness--every last stain of sin gone and gone forever! And more than that, every virtue that we saw in just seed form while here below will then begin to come to its full and perfect fruition as we are ushered into His presence. O, may the Lord help us as we live to the end of our days, that this problem of remaining sin, that in the conflict, we may know something of the grace and overcoming power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But you say, "Pastor Martin, What do I do when I fall?" My friend, your fall is within the orbit of the Gospel. Don't jump out into the orbit of the law. And when you fall, as a Christian, rather than let that keep you from Christ, go quickly, go immediately to Him. And as your sins are confessed and there's a fresh application of

the blood of Christ, you go forth fragrant with that fresh knowledge that Jesus Christ is indeed the Savior of sinners. And filled anew with Gospel motives, you're nerved again for the conflict. Amen!

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