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## NOTICE

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Yours truly,

J. H. HUGHES.

## Besetting Sins.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

LET us lay aside every sin which easily entrap us, and so wraps us round as to trip our feet, and cause us to stumble.

That is a very fair rendering of the first verse in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. In our common Version it reads, "The sin that doth so easily beset us." A besetting sin is the one that chimes in with a person's strong inclinations. Does he love mirthfulness? Then he must be careful lest he run into excessive levity, and play the harlequin. He will be tempted to make jests of sacred things, and to crack jokes on serious occasions. A minister ought not to be a monk; but neither should he be a social comedian.

Does a man love ease? Then he always interprets those providences in his own favor which allow him to shirk hard work, and swing in his hammock. Does he love flattery and *edat*? Then he is tempted to covet applause, and to imagine that he is serving God when he is only burning incense on the altar of self-worship. The ardor of love may easily kindle into unholy passion, and become "hot coals of fire" in the bosom. The most dangerous enemy is the one which wears a fair face and has a smooth tongue. Look out for *selfishness*! It is the "old Adam" lurking behind every hedge. It will always keep pace with you if you give it the upper hand. Make no league with it; for Christ will never abide in the same heart with that subtle and greedy tyrant. A Christian is never safe, never strong, and never true to his Master unless he is constantly "collaring" every sinful and selfish lust, and forcing it into unconditional surrender.

The test question which Jesus Christ proposes to every one at the very start is this, Will you lay aside the sins that easily beset you, and follow me? The sin may be very dear; it may have encased itself in your heart; no matter, *but it away!* While the love of any sin remains, the heart cannot love the spotless Saviour. There is no room for both; Christ will not accept one corner, and leave Satan the "chief seats" in the soul. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with *all the heart*."

If a true Christian life is a race, then no one can win it if handicapped with besetting sins. Here is one cause for shallow conversions, and stunted religion; they began with a compromise with favorite sins. The old encumbering weight was not laid aside; the entangling and entrapping garment of sin was not stripped off. If this article falls under the eye of any one who is awakened and anxious to begin a real Christian life, I would say to him, or her—pray for a deep conviction of sin, and with the Spirit's help, for a thorough uprooting of evil principles, inclinations, and habits. Unless you "*abhor*" that which is evil," you will not "cleave to that which is good." A true follower of Christ must not only do a great deal of sincere loving, but

also a great deal of honest hating. Dr. Johnson used to say that he liked a good hater. Until you hate sin as your real enemy, and as Christ's enemy that you look it out, there will be no room for Jesus to come in and dwell in your heart. The weeds must come out before the good seed can take root in the soil of your soul. It makes no odds what the sin or sins may be that so fatally beset you. A man may be crushed by an avalanche or he may be poisoned by an atom of strychnine; each one *takes life*; and the sin that comes from Jesus, takes your soul's life for this world, and the next!

The command to "lay aside *every* weight" means that you are not to take up with a cheap and easy religion. Some preachers and teachers, in their desire to commend the freeness of the gospel offer, the simplicity of the faith-process, hold out the delusive idea that "it is the easiest thing in the world to be a Christian." These rose-water teachers make no allowance for the weakness of human nature, or the power of the adversary, or the surrounding multitude of temptations. Such false preaching is pretty sure to either hoax its recipient into self-deception, or to make him a crude, half-converted professor to the last. Of such shallow experiences grand old Samuel Rutherford said, "Many people only play with Christianity, and take Christ for almost nothing. If ye never had a pained soul for sin, ye have not yet lighted upon Christ. But if ye would quit all the world for Him, that proveth that *the work is sound*." Jesus Himself put repentance before faith, for He knew that no man could cleave to his sins and lay hold on a divine Saviour with the same hand. The only effectual repentance is to lay aside the sins that entrap you; the only effectual faith is to begin, with the Spirit's help, to keep Christ's commandments. "Looking unto Jesus," says the apostle who wrote this direction how to win the race. That is the secret of success, after all. Looking unto Jesus! The one sure way, and the only way to get sin out of our hearts; the only effectual way to do that is to admit Christ Jesus there. Looking unto Jesus! A victorious life is no child's play. We won't get to heaven on a featherbed. The grip on Jesus loosens the grip of sin, and every mile on the race-course brings us nearer to the crown.

## What is It to Be a Christian?

BY REV. SPENSER B. MEESER.

"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."—*Gal. 2:20. (Revised Version.)*

There can be but little doubt that Paul was the preëminent Christian. To answer, then, the question, "What is it to be a Christian?" with Paul's words, is a legitimate and perhaps the surest way of obtaining a correct reply. Let us analyze his answer, that we may be sure that we come at his meaning.

"And that life I now live in the flesh (that is his Christian life, his new life), I live in faith." Faith is the element in which he lives, as the air and light are the elements in which we live our material life. Faith is his atmosphere and his environment; what he breathes, what he walks in, what he calculates on, what he depends on, what he acts by, plans by, hopes by, what he gets his inspiration and motives from, what he is surrounded by: the very world he lives in. He lives in a faith-world.

The fact is, that man can't do business fifteen minutes without faith, faith in his employees' integrity, in the honesty of the banker, in the stability of the government, and the reliability of the railroad. In reality, our ordinary life is such that one can't live at all without faith. Our element is a mixture of faith and knowledge. But Paul's "faith" is more than this. His life he lives "in faith;" what faith? "The faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The element in which

Paul's life is lived then, is not faith in men, or railroads, or governments, or banks; but in the Son of God. That is, he depends on, he hopes by, he plans by, he acts by, calculates on, walks in that particular faith which is in the Son of God. And just as one's faith in banks, railroads, men, and governments, affects his business action, his social action, his business ventures, his social pleasures, so Paul's faith in the Son of God influences all his hopes, plans, and actions. Being a faith in one supreme Person with one supreme principle of action, it attaches Paul to that Person and that course of action.

Though I have endeavored to make this perfectly clear, I want it to be clear to every one of us; for it is a painful fact that even many Christian people do not have a clear understanding of what it is to be a Christian.

There are many ideas about this matter that are erroneous. One says, that to accept the sacraments of and belong to it, is to be a Christian. But the church is simply a form, or expression, of the Christian life, and not the substance. Another says, that to have a clear idea of certain truths and to accept them, the creeds of the church, that is to be a Christian. Faith, in such a man's conception, is to have a vivid perception of truth. But, as Dr. Gladden remarks, "the devils also believe in this sense, and tremble. The devils are dogmatists." Still another says, to be a Christian is to have certain emotions of peace and joy. He says: "I feel that God has received me." Well, perhaps He has, but these emotions are the result of being a Christian. They are not the thing itself, as feeling strong and well is not good health, but the symptom of it. And one more says, to be a Christian is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. To be kind to your neighbor, to be honest and do right as far as you know, that is to be a Christian. But here again, these are the obligations of the Christian life, not its essence.

There is one essential, central thing, without which one is not a Christian, although he have everything else.

To define the Christian, one must find this essential thing. A congressman makes political speeches; but one may do that, better even than the member of congress and still not be a congressman. The congressman writes letters on government stationery and sends them through the mails without postage stamps; but one may do that and compel his correspondent at the other end to pay the stamp, and yet not be a congressman. The essential thing in being a congressman is being chosen at the polls by a vote of certain people to represent them in the government.

The Christian believes what Jesus said; he believes what the Bible says about Him; he believes most of the things the church holds about Jesus; he accepts the things the church does in Christ's name; he obeys the forms Christ prescribed, and does many of the things Christ commands; but one may do all these and not be a Christian. That is, if language means anything, to be a Christian, a man must begin with Christ Himself—with Christ personally, with the man God, the God-man, the Saviour, the very Christ Himself.

Here, then, is the essential thing. To be a Christian, is to have a definite, personal, conscious relation to Jesus Christ; a relation attaching him to Christ. It is an attitude to a Person, a personal union with Jesus Christ; a deliberate, conscious adhesion to Christ; an attachment of a man who knows his own weakness, his own sin, his own fallibility; an attachment of such a person to a Redeemer whom he knows is supreme, sinless, infallible. It is something which begins in a personal experience which daily binds us more firmly to Him. It is an experience of confidence in Him, faith; and an attachment to Him, love. To be a Christian is to be personally related to a Person, Christ. Until that comes, if the Bible means anything and language means anything, a man is not a Christian. He may come to it through creeds, or sacraments or the stirring of the emotions; he may reach