

## **STRIVING AGAINST SIN**

**June 14, 2015**

**Hebrews 12:1-29**

**“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”**

**Hebrews 12:4**

The Hebrew people were chosen by God to receive special favor. The ultimate manifestation of favor was this: by them the Savior of mankind was delivered to humanity. But when the Savior came, many struggled. He was not what their longstanding religious traditions had envisioned, thus His life and ministry were at odds with their conceptions. Consequently, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John. 1:11).

The Epistle to the Hebrews explained ancient Hebrew Scriptures and ceremonies as prophetic pictures of Jesus Christ. Christ and His accomplishments fulfilled them and are thus superior to them. This is the central theme of the epistle. It describes them as shadows (8:5; 10:1), and Christ as the reality of which they were only pictures.

Many of the original recipients of the epistle believed in Christ. Many others refused to believe. Still others vacillated; confused by those who insisted that salvation is earned by practicing traditions rooted in the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews exhorted the readers to trust Christ alone, to “give more earnest heed” to what His apostles proclaimed (2:1), to “hold fast” to Him (3:6) and to “harden not your hearts” (3:8, 15; 4:7) against Him. He admonished them to “take heed . . . lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief” (3:12, 19; 4:11), and to “labor . . . to enter into that rest” (4:11) which Christ supplies.

The writer also prodded them to persevere in the face of opposition, reminding them of earlier days when they “endured a great fight of afflictions” (10:32). He urged them: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward” (10:35), testifying, “we are not of them who draw back unto perdition” (10:39). To illustrate and encourage, he provided a long list of Old Testament men and women who persevered against enormous obstacles in obedience to faith. These, “of whom the world was not worthy . . . having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (11:38, 39). Yet they persevered in faith, and God will reward them along with all others who persevere in faith.

Observing their perseverance, we are to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and . . . run with patience (endurance) the race that is set before us,” (12:1). Ultimately, we look to Christ Himself, who endured the cross (12:2). And as we consider what He endured, we are reminded, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (12:4).

This text sets before us a searching and convicting question: Do you strive against sin? To what level do you strive against sin?

In the long list of Old Testament heroes, the first cited is Abel. His blood was shed in martyrdom because he believed God, and was made righteous by faith (11:4; 12:24; Matt. 23:35). The last one cited is Christ Himself, who “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2). Both went to death “striving against sin.” None of us strive against sin to this extent. But against this standard of measure, let us gage our own battle against sin, both within our lives and in our land.