

# There's a Hole in My Sidewalk

- I'd like to talk about the place you go where you get stuck and feel like you can't get out
- More specifically, I'd like to talk about how to avoid going to that place
- We all have challenges that we face
- Some of us face certain types of challenges and some of us face others
- One of the interesting things in life is the reality that each of us face different challenges
- What might be an issue for you may have never have been a concern for me
- What I struggle with might be something that you don't even give a second thought to
- Of course, the opposite is also true...
- Many of us face the same challenges
- Sometimes these are things that you have to face every day, and the continual weariness of the effort can become debilitating
- Sometimes they are things that only come up infrequently, but the intensity and impact of them is so severe they can really set you back
- We all academically understand and accept the fact that our Lord died for our sins, and in our heads we understand that we will be forgiven if we ask for it
- We come here on Sunday morning and take these Memorial emblems in remembrance of that promise
- But, the academic acceptance of a biblical concept, and the actual effectual change it should have on your heart are two different things
- I continually wrestle with the concept of my forgiveness
- I understand it
- I believe it

- But, at the same time I wonder if I really do understand it...
- ***If I really do believe it...***
- I find myself falling into the same hole over and over again, and I start to wonder if I am taking advantage of God's forgiveness
- On the one hand I fully believe that God does not expect me to be perfect
- But on the other hand, I fully believe that He does expect me to try
- On the one hand I fully believe that God will even forgive me for the sins that I forget to ask forgiveness for
- On the other hand, I fully believe that God wants me to be repentant of every thing I do that is wrong
- And then I go to bed and get up the next day and wrestle with it all over again...
- What can be the most debilitating in the struggle against sin is the constant challenge of a repeating sin
- Addiction seems like such a hard word to use...
- We tend to think of it in terms of a "Habit" instead...
- But, it something that has grabbed hold of us, and we can't see to shake it
- Our minds tend to leap to the large, ugly sins that so many of us struggle with:
  - Alcoholism, Pornography, Sexual addictions...
- But a persistent constant sin is a problem regardless of the intensity level:
  - Continual Gossiping, Belittling your Spouse, Swearing
- They are all similar in that they can grab hold of your life and change you into a different person
- What I would like to direct our attention to this morning is the simple fact that you will **NOT** be able to shake yourself loose of that sin unless you turn to God for help
- No amount of resolve, will-power or resolutions will release you from it's grip
- It took a while for me to realize this...
- The thing is that God actually planned it this way

- God has planned it so that we get stuck in our sins and then, and only then, can we begin to actually **FEEL** the need for his forgiveness

- Consider this verse in Romans 11:

- Romans 11:32 KJS

32) For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

- That word in the King James for UNBELIEF is more often translated DISOBEDIENCE

- Listen to the same verse in a newer version

- Romans 11:32 NLT

32) For God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone.

- God wants us to come to understand that we need to rely upon Him for our salvation

- He reinforces this by trying to teach us to turn to him for deliverance from our sins

- This process of walking away from the holes that we fall in is expressed perfectly in the poem that I want to share with you

**There's a hole in my sidewalk**

*by Portia Nelson*

**Chapter 1**

**I walk down the street  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk  
I fall in  
I'm lost. . . I'm helpless  
It isn't my fault  
It takes me forever to find a way out**

- The first time you fall to a new sin it can be confusing almost to the point of dizzying...

- You truly do feel lost and helpless

- You feel out of control

- You find yourself blaming others and not able to accept the responsibility for what you've done
- It shakes your faith to realize that you are so far removed from God that you have allowed yourself to fall to this level of wickedness
- You can become shaken by this realization, and it can weaken your resolve to get back on your horse and try again
- You find yourself in a slump, and it takes you a long time to come back to a good place
- We are often quick to pray in situations like this...
- But not necessarily quick to recover
- Like bumping into a stranger and quickly spurring out "I'm sorry", you haven't really taken the time to process what you have done, and don't really know why you have done it, or if you truly are sorry
- And then comes chapter 2...

## **Chapter 2**

**I walk down the same street  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk  
I pretend I don't see it  
I fall in again  
I can't believe I'm in the same place  
But it isn't my fault  
It still takes a long time to get out**

- Now that singular experience that you thought could never happen, has happened again
- Because you didn't truly plumb the depths of your thoughts and emotions on the cause of your first fall, you had convinced yourself that the hole really wasn't there
- You had said, "I'm sorry" to God, but you didn't really understand what was behind your actions, and haven't truly repented of what caused the sin
- You continue to think that this is a simple mistake
- You haven't owned up to your actions or accepted responsibility for what you've done

- This is often the longest chapter in your journey down this street...
- You continue in this state of not acknowledging you have a problem, simply asking God to forgive you when you fall, but not really addressing the fact that you have a problem
- Without addressing the problem head-on, you haven't acknowledged the greatest asset you have available
- You haven't brought God into the solution of the problem

**Chapter 3**  
**I walk down the same street**  
**There's a deep hole in the sidewalk**  
**I see it there**  
**I still fall in... it's a habit**  
**My eyes are open**  
**I know where I am**  
**It is my fault**  
**I get out immediately**

- Now you are in a bad way...
- Now you have developed a habit
- Go ahead... Call it an addiction
- It's something that you know is bad for you, but you've been doing it so often that it seems like it is a part of you
- What once were vices are now merely habits
- Because you haven't swept this sin clean out of your life, it has moved in, made itself comfortable, and now it feels like it's home
- On the positive side though, you are now starting to acknowledge it now
- It's brazen behavior has made clear to you that you have to do something about this
- Your eyes are open
- You accept responsibility for your problem

- You start to ask God to enter into your life and bring resolution to this problem
- It's no longer just about asking for forgiveness for this sin that you accidentally did... Now you want help in finding a way to stop doing it

#### **Chapter 4**

**I walk down the same street  
There's a deep hole in the sidewalk  
I walk around it**

- Your solution: Avoidance
- You think that by simply repressing this desire you can solve your problem
- This is better, but not best
- This will work for a while, but God has something better in mind
- Don't get stuck on this chapter
- Keep praying, keep reading, keep up the communication with God, and keep looking for a better solution

#### **Chapter 5**

**I walk down another street**

- With God, it's simple
- It says easy, but it does hard
- You will only achieve this kind of victory if you allow God to help you
- Philippians tells us...
- Philippians 2:13 NLT
  - 13) For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.
- God works within your heart to give you the desire to obey Him...
- It's a partnership that you create between God and yourself
- To successfully navigate these difficult roads you have to accept God's help in your life, but you have to do something positive to help yourself

- Just because you can't beat this on your own doesn't mean that you don't have to do something to work toward that goal
- But, just because you have to do something doesn't mean that you should think that you can beat it on your own and that you don't need God
- Left to your own devices, you will continually struggle with falling in those same holes and fighting your way back out
- But, God will not put you on that new road without you struggling some on your own first
- This is the conflict of a life of service to God
- This is the struggle that defines what this existence on Earth is...
- Paul told the Romans,
- Romans 8:7-9 CEV
  - 7) Our desires fight against God, because they do not and cannot obey God's laws.
  - 8) If we follow our desires, we cannot please God.
  - 9) But, you are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you.
- It is Human Nature to pretend that the Hole in the Sidewalk doesn't exist, and to fall to the same sin over and over again
- But, if you allow God to work within your heart to give you the desire to obey Him, then you are no longer ruled by your desires
- You have to lower yourself in prayer, acknowledging that you are falling into the same hole over and over again...
- And ask God to come into your life and provide you the help that you need
- I love how David put it in Psalm 51:
- Psalm 51:9-12 NIV
  - 9) Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
  - 10) Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
  - 11) Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12) Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

- ***Create in me a pure heart!***

- It's oddly beautiful that God cares about us so much that the only way we can succeed in our struggles is to ask him to create a new spirit in us!
- Are you so beaten down that you don't even have the energy to ask for that?

- ***Grant me a willing spirit!***

- God is even willing to give us the spirit that we need to want to succeed!
- This requires us to connect with God in a most dependent way
- It a very close relationship
- This is the kind of connection that God wants from us
- Jesus died to make this connection for us

- Ephesians 3:16-19 NIV

- 16) I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
- 17) So that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,
- 18) may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,
- 19) and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- God wants you to walk down a different street
- But, He doesn't expect you to do it alone

- ***Walk with God!***