

# Hebrews 12:14-17 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

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## The Epistle to the Hebrews

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Superior Person  
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Superior Life  
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BETTER THAN  
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BETTER  
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BETTER  
LIFE

|                              |                          |                            |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| MAJESTY<br>OF<br>CHRIST      | MINISTRY<br>OF<br>CHRIST | MINISTERS<br>FOR<br>CHRIST |
| DOCTRINE                     |                          | DUTY                       |
| DATE WRITTEN:<br>ca. 64-68AD |                          |                            |

See [ESV Study Bible "Introduction to Hebrews"](#)  
(See also [MacArthur's Introduction to Hebrews](#))

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Hebrews 12:14 **Pursue peace** with **all men**, and the **sanctification** (holiness) **without which no one** will **see** the **Lord**. (NASB: [Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Eirenen diokete \(2PPAM\)](#) [meta panton, kai ton agiasmon, ou choris oudeis opsetai \(3SFMI\)](#) [ton kurion.](#)

**Amplified:** Strive to live in peace with everybody and pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** Try to live in peace with everyone, and seek to live a clean and holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Weymouth:** Persistently strive for peace with all men, and for that growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord.

**Wuest:** Be eagerly seeking after peace with all, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord,

**Young's Literal:** peace pursue with all, and the separation, apart from which no one shall see the Lord,

**PURSUE PEACE WITH ALL MEN AND THE SANCTIFICATION:** [Eirenen diokete \(2PPAM\)](#) [meta panton kai ton hagiasmon:](#)

- Ge 13:7, 8, 9; Ps 34:14; 38:20; 120:6; 133:1; Pr 15:1; 16:7; 17:14; Isa 11:6, 7, 8, 9; Mt 5:9; Mk 9:50; Ro 12:18; 14:19; 1 Co 1:10; Gal 5:22,23; Eph 4:1-8; 1 Th 5:15; 1 Ti 6:11; 2 Ti 2:22; Jas 3:17,18; 1 Pe 3:11
- **Sanctification** - He 12:10; Ps 94:15; Isa 51:1; Lk 1:75; Ro 6:22; 2 Cor 6:17; 7:1; Php 3:12; 1 Th 3:13; 4:7; 1 Pe 1:15,16; 3:13; 2 Pe 3:11,18; 3 Jn 1:11
- Ps 34:14, Mt 5:8-note Pr 15:1-note, 16:7, 17:14, Ep 4:3, Ro 14:19, Ro 12:18 Mt 5:9
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

**Pursuing Holiness** elsewhere in the New Testament (among many references)...

Therefore (term of conclusion), having these promises (see 2Co 6:16, 17, 18, cp "precious and magnificent promises" 2Pe 1:4-note), beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting **holiness** (hagiosune) in the fear of God (a reverential awe should motivate us = cp Pr 1:7, 9:10, Ps 111:10-note, Job 28:28, Eccl 12:13, 14, 1Jn 3:2, 3, 1Pe 1:17-note). (2Corinthians 7:1-note)

For this is the will of God, your **sanctification**; that is, that you abstain (literally hold oneself away from - cp 1Pe 2:11-note) from sexual immorality (porneia)...For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in **sanctification** (hagiasmos) (1Th 4:3-note, 1Th 4:7-note)

As obedient (hupakoe) children, do not be conformed (suschematizo = stop molding your behavior in accord

with a pattern or set of standards) to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,<sup>15</sup> but like the **Holy One** who called you, be **holy** yourselves also in all your behavior;<sup>16</sup> because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE **HOLY**, FOR I AM **HOLY**." (1Pe 1:14-note, 1Pe 1:15, 16-note)

**Pursue** (1377) (**dioko** from **dio** = pursue, prosecute, persecute, also pursue in good sense) means to follow or press hard after, pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain, go after with the desire of obtaining.

The **present imperative** is a command to continually press hard after, moving energetically toward the goals of something, in this case toward the goal of peace with all men. Continually pursue this goal, like the hounds chasing in pursuit of the fox. This is not a passive role that one just lets happen; it is an active concept that one must strive for. Our responsibility to **work out** (pursue) (Php 2:12-note) doing so in dependence on God's provision of what He has worked in [God's Spirit indwelling and energizing both the desire and the power] Php 2:13-note).

This command to **pursue** peace and holiness suggests several thoughts: (1) This not an optional "activity" but a necessity (before I was saved I chased after sin, now sin continually "chases" after me, thus the command); (2) To pursue demands diligence and directed effort (cp 1Ti 4:7, 8, 9-note) (3) This pursuit is not to be a spasmodic endeavor but is to be our lifelong task (**present tense**). Clearly the pursuit of holiness requires enablement and provision from the One Who is Himself holy. At the same time holiness is a process, something we as believers will never completely attain in this life. In fact as most of us of some age in Christ have experienced, as we begin to conform to the will of God in one area of our life, He reveals to us our need in another area. And thus we come to understand that we will always be pursuing holiness in this life, the attainment of the goal of holiness reserved for the next life in glory! Hallelujah.

**Dioko** - 45 times in the NT -

Matt. 5:10, 11, 12, 44; 10:23; 23:34; Lk. 11:49; 17:23; 21:12; Jn. 5:16; 15:20; Acts 7:52; 9:4f; 22:4, 7f; 26:11, 14f; Rom. 9:30f; 12:13f; 14:19; 1 Co. 4:12; 14:1; 15:9; 2 Co. 4:9; Gal. 1:13, 23; 4:29; 5:11; 6:12; Phil. 3:6, 12, 14; 1Th 5:15; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:12; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 3:11; Rev. 12:13

Those who are at peace with God are responsible to pursue peace in their relationships with others as an important aspect of growth in sanctification (cp Col. 3:15-note; 1Pe 3:11-note). The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit makes this possible (Ro 8:6-note; Ro 15:13-note), for "the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace" (Gal 5:22-note).

**Spurgeon - Peace** is to be studied, but not such a peace as would lead us to violate holiness by conforming to the ways of unregenerate and impure men. We are only so far to yield for peace's sake as never to yield a principle. We are to be peaceful so far as never to be at peace with sin: peaceful with men, but contending earnestly against evil principles. Often the Alpine hunter, when pursuing the antelope, will leap from crag to crag, will wear out the live-long day, will spend the night upon the mountain's cold brow. He then descends to the valleys and up again to the hills as though he could never tire, and could never rest until he has found his prey. So perseveringly, with strong resolve to imitate your Lord and Master, follow peace with all.

**Peace** (1515) (**eirene** [word study] from verb **eiro** = to join or bind together that which has been separated) literally pictures the binding or joining together again of that which had been separated or divided and thus setting at one again, a meaning conveyed by the common expression of one "having it all together". It follows that peace is the opposite of division or dissension. Peace as a state of concord and harmony is the opposite of war. Peace was used as a greeting or farewell corresponding to the Hebrew word *shalom* - "peace to you". **Eirene** can convey the sense of an inner rest, well being and harmony. The ultimate peace is the state of reconciliation with God, effected by placing one's faith in the gospel. In eschatology, peace is prophesied to be an essential characteristic of the Messianic kingdom (Acts 10:36).

**Related Resource:** See study of **Hebrew word Shalom**

**Eirene** - 92 times in the NT -

Matt. 10:13, 34; Mk. 5:34; Lk. 1:79; 2:14, 29; 7:50; 8:48; 10:5f; 11:21; 12:51; 14:32; 19:38, 42; 24:36; Jn. 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26; Acts 7:26; 9:31; 10:36; 12:20; 15:33; 16:36; 24:2; Rom. 1:7; 2:10; 3:17; 5:1; 8:6; 10:15; 14:17, 19; 15:13, 33; 16:20; 1 Co. 1:3; 7:15; 14:33; 16:11; 2 Co. 1:2; 13:11; Gal. 1:3; 5:22; 6:16; Eph. 1:2; 2:14f, 17; 4:3; 6:15, 23; Phil. 1:2; 4:7, 9; Col. 1:2; 3:15; 1Th 1:1; 5:3, 23; 2Th. 1:2; 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:22; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:3; Heb. 7:2; 11:31; 12:14; 13:20; Jas. 2:16; 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:2; 3:11; 5:14; 2 Pet. 1:2; 3:14; 2 Jn. 1:3; 3 Jn. 1:14; Jude 1:2; Rev. 1:4; 6:4

**Peace** is a condition of freedom from disturbance, whether outwardly, as of a nation from war or enemies or inwardly, as in the current context, within the soul. **Peace** implies health, well-being, and prosperity.

Make it the habit of your life to seek hard after peace with men and holiness before God, the holiness He desires and which He

alone can work in us as we work out our salvation in fear and trembling.

Those who pursue peace seek to forgive and to forget and to be kind and to be thoughtful and be able to help others and be able to pray for their enemies!

The exhortation is most likely address the attitude those Jews who had come into the New Covenant were to manifest toward the unsaved Jews who were in danger of renouncing their professed faith in Messiah and of returning to the temple sacrifices.

**Marcus Dods** - The circumstances of the Hebrews were fitted to excite a quarrelsome spirit, and a feeling of alienation towards those weak members who left the straight path. They must not suffer them to be alienated but must restore them to the unity of the faith, and in endeavoring to reclaim them must use the methods of peace, not of anger or disputation. ([Hebrews 12 Commentary - Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Without sanctification** - Or without holiness. Spurgeon writes that...

You will not gain holiness by standing still. Nobody ever grew holy without consenting, desiring, and agonizing to be holy (Php 2:12-note). Sin will grow without sowing, but holiness needs cultivation. Follow it; it will not run after you. You must pursue it with determination, with eagerness, with perseverance, as a hunter pursues his prey. (**Ed**: Before we were saved we chased after sin. After salvation sin chases after us!)

If you occasionally get drunk, or if you now and then let fall an oath, or if in your business you would make twice two into five or three, according as your profit happens to run, do not talk about being a Christian. Christ has nothing to do with you, at least no more to do with you than he had to do with Judas Iscariot (cp Titus 1:16-note, 2Co 13:5, Mt 7:21-note, Mt 7:22, 23-note). You are very much in the same position. If without holiness, then much more without morality can no man expect to see the face of God with acceptance.

God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will He let man in with sin in His right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it. It is enough for Him to bear with your hypocrisies on earth. Shall He have them flung in His own face in heaven?

Christ will be master of the heart, and sin must be mortified (Ro 8:13-note, Col 3:5-note). If your life is unholy, your heart is unchanged; you are an unsaved person (Gal 5:19, 20, 21-note, Ep 5:5, 6-note). If the Savior has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a **hatred of sin** and a **love of holiness** (Ps 119:104, 128-note), the grace which does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves His people, not **in** their sins but **from** them. Without holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). "Let every one that names the name of Christ **depart** (aorist imperative = a command, not a suggestion) from iniquity" (2Ti 2:19-note). If not saved from sin, how can we hope to be counted among His people? Lord, save me even now from all evil, and enable me to honor my Savior. (Daily Help)

**Andrew Murray** - **Follow after sanctification**, lit. "holy-making." We know this word. Holiness is the highest glory of God, and so holy-making is the being taken up into His fellowship, and being made partakers of His holiness. It is receiving into our nature and character the spirit of that heavenliness and holiness in which He dwells. Follow holy-making, without which no man shall see the Lord. Holy-making is the spiritual preparation, the inner capacity for meeting the Lord, and being at home with Him. The passages in the Epistle, in which we have already had the word, will be our best instruction as to the way in which we are to follow after holiness. ([Andrew Murray. The Holiest of All - see page 497](#))

**R A Torrey** - Here we are taught that we have our own part in sanctification, and that if we are to be sanctified in the fullest sense, sanctification is something that we must pursue, or seek earnestly, if we are to obtain it. While sanctification is God's work, we have our part in it, viz., to make it the object of our earnest desire and eager pursuit. (Torrey, R. A. 1918. The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith. New York George H.: Doran company)

**Pursue...sanctification** - pursue...holiness. It seems that **peace** and **holiness** go together. In Heb 12:11 he mentions "the peaceful fruit of righteousness (right living before God and man - which is certainly related to holiness)." This truth is important to know and to believe, so our belief might translate into appropriate behavior. In other words to quote Jerry Bridges (in The Pursuit of Holiness)...

Because **we do not believe** (**Ed**: Saying "I believe" is not the same as saying "I believe and therefore I will behave"! ) that humility is the path to God's exaltation (1Peter 5:6-note), we jockey for a place of position and power in our relations with others. Because **we do not believe** that God takes note of and will in His time avenge all wrongs done to us (Romans 12:19-note), we study in our own minds how we can "get back" at someone we feel has wronged us. Because **we are not convinced** of the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13-note) (**See Related Discussion: The Deceitfulness of Sin**), we play with it, thinking we will thereby find satisfaction. And because **we do not have a firm conviction** that "without holiness no one will see the Lord"

(Hebrews 12:14), we do not seriously pursue holiness as a priority in our lives. **Faith** and **holiness** are inextricably linked. **Obedying** the commands of God usually involves **believing** the promises of God (**Ed**: See related resources: **Obedience of faith - What does it mean?**; **Relationship of faith and obedience in the study of covenant**). One definition of faith might be "Obedying the revealed will of God and trusting Him for the results." "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6-note). If we would pursue holiness we must have faith to obey the will of God revealed in the Scripture and faith to believe that the promises of God will then be ours. ([The Pursuit of Holiness](#)) (Bolding added)

**Spurgeon** - The holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace; and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something that is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace; this is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness ... sown in peace among those who make peace" (Jas 3:18). We are to follow holiness—this must be practical holiness, the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God did not call us to impurity, but in holiness" (1Th 4:7-note). The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow—I mean, if we look at it imputatively. We have it at once. It is given to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed; it is bestowed on the soul in the instant it lays hold of Christ Jesus. This is another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as everyone can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness that is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God and obedience to the Lord's command.

Some who have aimed at holiness have made the great mistake of supposing it needful to be morose, contentious, faultfinding, and censorious with everybody else. Their holiness has consisted of negatives, protests, and oppositions for opposition's sake. Their religion mainly lies in contraries and singularities; to them the text offers this wise counsel: follow holiness, but also follow peace. Courtesy is not inconsistent with faithfulness. It is not needful to be savage in order to be sanctified. A bitter spirit is a poor companion for a renewed heart. Let your determination for principle be sweetened by tenderness toward your fellow men.

Now, if our text said that, without perfection of holiness, no man could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out. No one who knows His own heart ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will. It does not say, "perfection of holiness," but "holiness." This holiness is a thing of growth. It may be in the soul as the grain of mustard seed, and yet not developed. It may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realized—a groaning, a panting, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow until the mustard seed shall become a tree.

**Sanctification** ([1377](#)) (**hagiasmos** [word study] from **hagiazō** = sanctify from **hagios** = holy, set apart, consecrated) literally means **sanctification** and includes the ideas of consecration, purification, dedication and holiness. The dominant idea of sanctification is separation from the secular and sinful and setting apart for a sacred purpose. Holiness is the state of being set apart from sin and the world to deity (God) or the process of becoming more dedicated to God. Sanctification is "the process by which believers are set apart by God as a special people to grow spiritually in personal holiness and to develop Christ-like character."

See offsite resource - Puritan writer [Thomas Watson on "Sanctification"](#)

**Wuest** puts it this way "The word **'sanctify'** in the Greek means "to set apart," and the word "sanctification" refers to the setting apart process."

**Hagiasmos** is used twice in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ezekiel 45:4, Amos 2:11) and 10 times in the NT (these are discussed below)...

**Romans 6:19** I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification...**Romans 6:22** But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

**1Corinthians 1:30** But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and **sanctification**, and redemption,

**1Thessalonians 4:3-note** For this is the will of God, your **sanctification**; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in **sanctification** and honor...7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in **sanctification**.

**2Thessalonians 2:13** But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through **sanctification** by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

**1Timothy 2:15** But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and **sanctity** with self-restraint.

**Hebrews 12:14** Pursue peace with all men, and the **sanctification** without which no one will see the Lord.

**1Peter 1:2**-note according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the **sanctifying** work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.

**Hagiasmos** was used in the Greek pagan religions to describe buildings, altars or offerings set apart for religious purposes. The object set apart was thus declared sacred, holy, devoted to religious purposes. It applied also to the worshippers. They were set apart persons, thus religious devotees of the temple.

As explained below, **hagiasmos** can refer either to a **state** of being set apart from sin and the world unto God (equating with our initial salvation) or secondly can refer to the **process** by which a saint becomes progressively more set apart to God. Thus **sanctification** in one use takes place at a moment in time (salvation) but in the other use **sanctification** is a continuous process until we are glorified. Peter uses hagiasmos primarily with the former meaning. The Holy Spirit is crucial both aspects of sanctification.

**Wuest** adds that "This pre-salvation work of the Spirit is spoken of in Scripture as the sanctification of the Spirit. It is the setting-apart work of the Spirit in that He sets the unsaved person apart from his unbelief to the act of faith, from his standing in the first Adam which brought him sin and death, to a new standing in the Last Adam which brings him righteousness and life. This we call positional sanctification."

The **Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology** has a note that helps illustrate the meaning of hagiasmos writing that "The generic meaning of **sanctification** is the state of proper functioning." To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer. A pen is "sanctified" when used to write. Eyeglasses are "sanctified" when used to improve sight. In the theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends. A human being is sanctified, therefore, when he or she lives according to God's design and purpose." ([Elwell, W. A., & Elwell, W. A. The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology . Baker Book House](#))

The **College Press NIV Commentary** states that "The concept of **sanctification** can be understood by comparing the sanctification of people to the sanctification of the temple or its utensils. A sanctified building, lampstand, or pot is designated to be used only in service to God. A sanctified person has also been set apart for service. The Holy Spirit both marks us for God's service and empowers us to render that service. (1 & 2 Peter : The College Press NIV Commentary. Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing).

Writing to the **Thessalonian** believers (whose faith had been shaken by false teachers cf 2Th 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**Paul** reminds them of the source and security of their salvation, explaining that they are "brethren beloved (**perfect tense** = their permanent state) by the Lord, because God has chosen you (election -- **middle voice** = for Himself) from the beginning for salvation through **sanctification** (hagiasmos) **by the Spirit** (God's part) and faith (man's part, realizing that even faith is a gift) in the truth" (2Th 2:13).

The Spirit uses the Word of Truth (the Gospel - 2Co 6:7, Col 1:5-note, 2Ti 2:15-note, Jas 1:18-note) to convict men of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come (Jn 16:8), to point them to safety in the "Ark" of Christ and to set them apart from the world.

Using the verbal root of **hagiasmos** (hagiazō), **Paul** declared to the Ephesian elders "And now I commend (paratithēmi = para - beside + tithēmi - place = a banking term = to deposit as a trust and/or for protection, commit for safe keeping, cp use in 2Ti 2:2-note entrusting gospel to faithful stewards) you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance ("imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away reserved in heaven" - 1Pe 1:4-note) among all those who are **sanctified** (hagiazō [word study] - perfect tense pictures their having been set apart occurring at a definite point of time in the past -- the moment they were born again by faith -- with the present result that they are still set apart, that blessed condition continuing throughout this life and the one to come!)." (Acts 20:32)

**What is "the" holiness which the writer refers to?**

**Kenneth Wuest** feels that "The exhortation is thus addressed to the saved among the recipients of this letter, and in relation to their attitude towards the unsaved Jews who were in danger of renouncing their professed faith in Messiah and of returning to the temple sacrifices. The **holiness** spoken of here is defined in the context and by the historical background of the letter. [Hebrews - Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

**Expositor's Greek Testament** (Marcus Dods) - The **holiness** which this epistle has explained is a drawing near to God with a cleansed conscience (He 10:14-note, He 10:22-note), a true acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as bring the worshipper into fellowship with God. ([Hebrews 12 Commentary - Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**Henry Morris** offers this explanation stating that "**Holiness** is the same as **sanctification**. As far as our position and standing before God are concerned, we, as believers, have peace with God and are **sanctified in Christ Jesus** (Ro 5:1-note; 1Co 1:2). Without these (which means without salvation), we could never hope to see the Lord. We still need to follow diligently after peace and holiness in a practical sense, by His enabling grace, if we would see Him in faith. ([Hebrews 12 Notes from Defender's Study](#))



## [Bible - links on right](#))

Ryrie feels that the writer means that "**Without sanctification** in life we cannot see the Lord; i.e., worship Him acceptably. ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

Stedman explains it this way...

But of even more importance is the **pursuit of holiness**, for without it no one will see the Lord. Whether this seeing of the Lord refers to the beatific vision of God (Bruce 1964:364, cp Mt 5:8-note), or to seeing Jesus at his Second Coming (Westcott 1889:406; **Ed**: I think this cannot be an option for "every eye will see Him", both saved and unsaved, Re 1:7-note), it clearly precludes any who are not pursuing **holiness** from having a close and vital relationship with God. The need to **make every effort** suggests continuance and is perhaps better translated "**pursue**." As we have noted before, it is a mistake to take **holiness** as referring only to righteous behavior apart from seeing it also as a gift of God Who imparts righteousness to the one who believes in Jesus.

If we pursue righteous behavior only as a means to "seeing" the Lord, we will eventually find ourselves with the Pharisees (cp Mt 15:14, 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 25, cp Is 56:10, 6:10). They were blindly ignorant of terrible failure but claimed a relationship that did not really exist. But if we truly practice a continual reckoning of ourselves as already righteous within by a gracious act of God on the basis of the death and resurrection of Jesus (cp Php 3:9-note, Ro 6:11-note), we will find ourselves strongly motivated to live righteously (cp Titus 2:11-note, Titus 2:12-note) and inwardly distressed at any failure to do so (cp Ps 32:3-note, Ps 32:4-note, Ps 32:5-note). This inward distress will bring us again and again to the throne of grace (He 4:16-note) for forgiveness (1Jn 1:9) and recovery (cp Pr 28:13, cp Mt 3:8). We will progressively be **transformed into his (Christ's) likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit** (2Cor 3:18). That is what is meant by the exhortation to "pursue holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (KJV). ([Hebrews 12:14-17 Dangers to Watch For](#))

John MacArthur observes that "This verse is **not easy to interpret**, and has been a problem for many sincere Christians. At first glance, it seems to be teaching salvation by works—if we successfully pursue peace and sanctification, we will be saved and will see the Lord. The truth is, however, that a person who is not saved cannot pursue either peace or sanctification, at least not successfully. Only the Christian has the ability, through the Holy Spirit, to live in peace and in holiness. "'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked'" (Isa 57:21) and any righteousness men try to produce apart from God is as "a filthy garment" (Isa 64:6). I believe the writer is speaking of practical peace and righteousness. Positionally, in Christ, Christians already are at peace (Ro 5:1-note) and already are righteous (2Cor 5:21), but practically we have a great deal to do (Php 2:12-note). Because we are at peace with God, we should be peacemakers. Because we are counted righteous, we should live righteously. Our **practice** should match our **position**. Otherwise the unbeliever will stand back and ask, "Why don't you **practice** what you **preach**? If you don't live like Christ says to live, why should I accept Him as my Lord and Savior?" (cf. 1John 2:6). **Pursuing peace** primarily relates to loving men, and **pursuing righteousness** primarily to loving God. If we love men, we will be at peace with them, and if we love God we will live righteously. ([MacArthur, John: Hebrews. Moody Press](#)) (Bolding added)

J I Packer adds that...

**Holiness** is not a price we pay for final salvation, but is, rather, the road by which we reach it, and **sanctification** is the **process** whereby God leads us along that road (**Ed**: He leads but we must choose to follow!). The New Testament shows us that in the school of sanctification many modes of pain have their place—physical and mental discomfort and pressure, personal disappointment, restriction, hurt, and distress. God uses these things to activate the supernatural power that is at work in believers (2Co 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 11), to replace self-reliance with total trust in the Lord who gives strength (2Co 1:8, 9, 10f.; 2Co 12:9, 10-note), and to carry on his holy work of changing us from what we naturally are into Jesus' moral likeness "with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus he prepares us for that which he has prepared for us, verifying Paul's statement that "God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth ... that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 2:13, 14, 15; cf. Eph. 5:25, 26, 27; Titus 2:11, 12, 13, 14; 3:4, 5, 6, 7).

When children are allowed to do what they like and are constantly shielded from situations in which their feelings might get hurt, we describe them as spoiled. When we say that, we are saying that overindulgent parenthood not only makes them unattractive today but also fails to prepare them for the moral demands of adult life tomorrow—two evils for the price of one. But God, who always has his eye on tomorrow as he deals with us today, never spoils his children. The lifelong training course in holy living in which he enrolls us

challenges and tests us to the utmost again and again. Christ like habits of action and reaction—in other words, the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23)—are ingrained most deeply as we learn to maintain them through experiences of pain and unpleasantness. Which in retrospect appear as God's, chisel for sculpting our Souls.

There is more to sanctification than this but not less. "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons," writes the author of Hebrews. "For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons" (Heb.12:7, 8f). Bastard offspring notoriously go uncared-for, but, says the writer, it will not be so for you who believe. Your heavenly Father loves you enough to school you in holy living. Appreciate what he is doing, then, and be ready for the rough stuff that his program for you involves...

In reality, the witness of Scripture is: "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). There is no heaven without holiness of life...

When we realize that real holiness is a real necessity, it is a tremendous encouragement to know also that by the power of the Spirit a holy life is possible even for spiritual weaklings such as we are, and so of course we should want and seek it. (Packer, J. God's Plans for You)

**Jerry Bridges** writes that "the writer of Hebrews is telling us to take seriously the necessity of personal, practical holiness. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives at our salvation, He comes to make us holy in practice. If there is not, then, at least a yearning in our hearts to live a holy life pleasing to God, we need to seriously question whether our faith in Christ is genuine (cp 2Cor 13:5). It is true that this desire for holiness may be only a spark at the beginning. But that spark should grow till it becomes a flame—a desire to live a life wholly pleasing to God. True salvation brings with it a desire to be made holy. When God saves us through Christ, He not only saves us from the penalty of sin, but also from its dominion. Bishop Ryle said, "I doubt, indeed, whether we have any warrant for saying that a man can possibly be converted without being consecrated to God. More consecrated he doubtless can be, and will be as his grace increases; but if he was not consecrated to God in the very day that he was converted and born again, I do not know what conversion means." (See **Bishop Ryle's** classic treatise on [Holiness](#) - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written) (Bridges, J.. The Pursuit of Holiness. Colorado Springs: Navpress)

**Holiness** is that which only comes from God as a free gift of His matchless grace. In this epistle it is pragmatically explained as a drawing near to God with a cleansed conscience (Heb 10:14, 22), a true acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as bringing the worshiper into fellowship with God. Holiness in Hebrews means not throwing away your confidence, not shrinking back to destruction, not falling away, not drifting, not hardening your heart, not living in continual disobedience. On the positive side, holiness in Hebrews is being holy as He is holy by holding fast, by enduring, by pressing on to maturity, by diligently seeking Him, by believing that He is, by believing that He is a Rewarder of those who seek Him.

**J C Philpot** - To possess this holiness is a necessary and indispensable meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; but this meetness must be wrought in us by the power of God's grace, for I am sure that in ourselves of it we have none. But see its necessity. What happiness could there be in the courts of bliss unless we had a nature to enjoy it? Unless we were made capable of seeing Christ as He is, and enjoying His presence for evermore, heaven would be no heaven to us. Nothing unclean or unholy can enter there. Sanctification therefore must be wrought in us by the power of God, to make us meet for the heavenly inheritance, and He therefore communicates of His Spirit and grace to give us heavenly affections, holy desires, gracious thoughts, tender feelings; and above all that love whereby He is loved as the altogether lovely. By the sanctifying operations of His Spirit, He separates us from everything evil, plants His fear deep in the heart, that it may be a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death; and works in us a conformity to His suffering image here that we may be conformed to His glorified image hereafter. Thus there is a perfect and an imperfect sanctification—perfect by imputation, imperfect in its present operations. But the one is the pledge of the other; so that as surely as Christ now represents His people in heaven as their holy Head, so will He eventually bring them to be for ever with Him in those abodes of perfect holiness and perfect happiness which are prepared for them as mansions of eternal light and love.

## Resources Related to Holiness and Sanctification

- Holiness Quotes
- The Lord Who Sanctifies
- The Lord Who Sanctifies 2
- Holiness by J. C. Ryle
- Exposition of 1Peter 1:15-16 "Be Holy as He is Holy"



- The Attributes of God - His Holiness
- The Holiness of God - by A W Pink
- [John Piper's Strategies for fighting lust](#)
- [Thomas Brooks The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Why Would Anyone Want To Be Holy?](#)
- [Holiness: Root of His Grace - Sammy Tippit: Pt 1 Pt 2 Pt 3](#)
- [Thomas Watson: Sanctification - Real, Counterfeit, Necessity, Signs, Inducements, How Attained?](#)
- Cultivating Holiness by Joel R. Beeke
- Holiness by Striving or Resting? Jerry Bridges (see also [Mp3's related to pursuit of holiness](#))

#### WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD: *choris oudeis opsetai* (3SFM!) *ton kurion*:

- Ge 32:30; Job 19:26; 33:26; Mt 5:8; 1Co 13:12; 2Co 7:1; Ep 5:5; Gal 3:21; 1Jn 3:2,3; Re 21:24, 25, 26, 27; 22:3,4,11, 12, 13, 14, 15
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

#### Without...

- Without shedding of blood, no remission Heb. 9:22
- Without faith no pleasing God Heb. 11:6
- Without holiness, no heaven Heb. 12:14
- Without chastisement, no sonship Heb. 12:8

**Without** (5565) (*choris* from *chora* = land from *choros* = field or place usually where cattle range or *chasma* = thru idea of empty expanse) as a preposition it means apart from, separate from (at a space, separately) and thus is a marker of dissociation, indicating a distinct separation from something.

**No one** (3762) (*oudeis* from *ou* = not + *dé* = but + *heis* = one) means literally "but absolutely not one" and thus no one, nothing, none at all. It emphasizes not even one!

**Spurgeon** - In the Greek there are no less than three negatives in this passage, as though it said, "No never, no man shall see the Lord." Surely He who would not spare Satan, the bright archangel, will not admit polluted man to heaven. He who put His Son to death to bring His own elect to heaven by purifying them from sin, will not bring any of us there if we remain unholy and do not submit ourselves to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the object of election: "God chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Eph 1:4-note) This is the very end of our calling.

**See** (3708) (*horao*) means to discern clearly (physical or mental). it is not merely act of seeing, but also actual perception of object.

**How do we see Him today?** By faith (Heb 11:1-note, Heb 11:27-note) As far as our position and standing before God are concerned, we, as believers, have peace with God and are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (Ro 5:1-note; 1Co 1:2). Without these (which means without salvation), we could never hope to see the Lord. We still need to follow diligently after peace and holiness in a practical sense, by His enabling grace, if we would see Him in faith.

Compare Jesus' own words in Mt 5:8 (note) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

There is another way some interpret this verse. Practical holiness is a proof of new life within and thus if a person is not growing more holy, it raises the possibility that he may never have been made positionally holy by grace through faith. When the Spirit of Holiness invades and indwells a person, He imparts a new desire to be pleasing to God (Ezekiel 36:27, Php 2:13-note) and this new heart is manifest by that person living more and more a life separated unto God His Father. It is a matter of cause and effect. If Christ has been received, the rivers of living water will flow.

**How do we apply the truth in this exhortation?** The way to finish well in life's marathon is to pursue peace and holiness making every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. We must learn the runner's lean, continually stretching ourselves forward to

## **J C Ryle from his article on Holiness...**

### **“Without holiness no one will see the Lord.”--Hebrews 12:14**

Our text for today opens up a subject of deep importance. That subject is practical holiness. It suggests a question that demands the attention of all professing Christians-Are we holy? Will we see the Lord?

That question can never be out of season. The wise man tells us, there is “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to be silent and a time to speak,” (Eccl 3:4, 7) but there is no time, no, not a day, in which a man ought not to be holy. Are we?

That question concerns all ranks and situations of men and women. Some are rich and some are poor-some educated and some uneducated-some masters, and some servants; but there is no rank or state in life in which a man or woman ought not to be holy. Are we?

I ask to be heard today about this question. How does our account stand between our souls and God? In this hurrying, bustling world, let us stand still for a few minutes and consider the matter of holiness. I know I could have chosen a subject more popular and pleasant. I am sure I could have found one easier to handle. But I feel deeply I could not have chosen one more seasonable and more profitable to our souls. It is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God saying, “Without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

I will endeavor, by God’s help, to examine what true holiness is, and the reason why it is so needful. In conclusion, I will try to point out the only way in which holiness can be attained in a plain and practical manner.

#### **I. First, then, let me try to show what true practical holiness is-what sort of persons are those whom God calls holy.**

A man may go to great lengths, and yet never reach true holiness. It is not knowledge-Balaam had that: nor great profession-Judas Iscariot had that: nor doing lots of things-Herod did that: nor zeal for certain matters in religion-Jehu had that: nor morality and outward respectability of conduct-the rich young ruler had that: nor taking pleasure in hearing preachers-the Jews in Ezekiel’s time had that: nor keeping company with godly people-Joab and Gehazi and Demas had that. Yet none of these was holy! These things alone are not holiness. A man or woman may have any one of them, and yet never see the Lord.

#### **What then is true practical holiness?**

It is a hard question to answer. I don’t mean that there is any lack of Scripture on the subject. But I fear lest I should give a defective view of holiness, and not say all that ought to be said; or lest I should say things about it that ought not to be said, and therefore cause harm. Let me, however, try to draw a picture of holiness, that we may see it clearly before the eyes of our minds. Only let it never be forgotten, when I have said everything, that my explanation will be nothing but a poor imperfect outline at the best.

#### **a) Holiness is the habit of agreeing with the mind with God, in accordance as we find His mind described in Scripture.**

It is the habit of agreeing with God’s judgment-hating what He hates-loving what He loves-and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. The person who most completely agrees with God is the one who is the most holy person.

#### **b) A holy person will endeavor to turn away from every known sin, and to keep every known commandment.**

They will have a decided bent of mind toward God, a hearty desire to do His will-a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing the world, and a love for all His ways. They will feel what Paul felt when he said, “In my inner being I delight in God’s law” (Ro 7:22-note), and what David felt when he said, “I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path” (Psalm 119:128-note).

#### **c) A holy person will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ.**

They will not only live the life of faith in Him, and draw from Him all their daily peace and strength, but they will also strive to have the mind that was in Him, and to be “conformed to His likeness” (Ro 8:29-note). It will be their aim to bear with and forgive others, just as Christ forgave us-to be unselfish, just as Christ did not please Himself-to walk in love, just as Christ loved us-to be meek and humble, even as Christ made Himself nothing and humbled Himself. They will remember that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth-that He did not come to do His own will-that it was His food and drink to do His Father’s will-that He would continually deny Himself in order to minister to others-that He was meek and patient in spite of undeserved insults-that He thought more of

godly poor men than of kings-that He was full of love and compassion to sinners-that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin-that He did not seek the praise of men, when He might have had it-that He went about doing good-that He was separate from worldly people-that He prayed continually-that He would not even let His nearest relatives stand in His way when God's work was to be done. These things a holy person will try to remember. By them they will endeavor to shape their course in life. They will lay to heart the saying of John, "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (1Jn 2:6); and the saying of Peter, that "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1Peter 2:21-note). Happy is the person who has learned to make Christ his "everything," both for salvation and example! A great deal of time would be saved, and a great deal of sin prevented, if men and women would often ask themselves the question, "What would Christ have said and done, if He were in my place?"

**d) A holy person will pursue meekness, endurance, gentleness, patience, kindness, and control of their tongue.**

They will put up with a lot, tolerate a great deal, overlook a lot, and be slow to talk of demanding their rights. We see a clear example of this in the behavior of David when Shimei cursed him-and of Moses when Aaron and Miriam spoke against him (2Sa 16:10; Nu 12:3).

**e) A holy person will pursue self-control and self-denial.**

They will labor to subdue the desires of their body-to crucify their flesh with all of its affections and lusts-to curb their passions-to restrain their worldly inclinations, lest at any time they break loose. Oh, what a word of warning is that of the Lord Jesus to the Apostles, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life" (Luke 21:34); and that of the Apostle Paul, "I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1Corinthians 9:27).

**f) A holy person will pursue love and brotherly kindness.**

They will endeavor to observe the golden rule of doing to others as they would have others do to them, and speaking as they would want others to speak to them. They will be full of affection towards their brothers and sisters in Christ-towards their bodies, their property, their characters, their feelings, and their souls. "He who loves his fellowman," says Paul, "has fulfilled the law" (Ro 13:8-note). They will detest all lying, slandering, backbiting, cheating, dishonesty, and unfairness, even in the smallest things. They will strive to adorn their religion in all of their outward demeanor, and to make it lovely and beautiful in the eyes of everyone around them. Sadly, what condemning words are found in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and the Sermon on the Mount, when laid alongside the conduct of many professing Christians!

**g) A holy person will pursue a spirit of mercy and benevolence towards others.**

They will not stand idle all day long. They will not be content with simply not harming others-they will try to do good to others. They will strive to be useful in their day and generation, and to lessen the spiritual needs and misery of those around them, as far as they can. Dorcas was such a person "always doing good and helping the poor," which she did,-not merely planning to do it or just talking about it, but she actually did it. Paul was another such person, stating: "I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well," he says, "If I love you more, will you love me less" (Acts 9:36; 2Corinthians 12:15).

**h) A holy person will pursue purity of heart.**

They will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid everything that might draw them into it. They know their own heart is like tinder, and will diligently keep clear of the sparks of temptation. Who will dare to talk of strength when David can fall? There are many hints to be gleaned from the ceremonial law. Under it the man who only touched a bone, or a dead body, or a grave, or a diseased person, at once became unclean in the sight of God. And these things were pictures and figures. Few Christians are ever too watchful and too particular about this point.

**i) A holy person will pursue the fear of God.**

I do not mean the fear of a slave, who only works because they are afraid of punishment, and would be idle if they did not dread discovery. Rather, I mean the fear of a child, who wishes to live and move, as if they were always in their father's sight, because he loves them. What a noble example Nehemiah gives us of this! When he became Governor at Jerusalem he might have invoke taxation on the Jews, requiring money from them for his support. The former Governors had done so. There was no one to blame him if he did. But he says, "But out of reverence for God I did not act like that" (Nehemiah 5:15).

**j) A holy man will pursue humility.**

They will desire, in humility, to consider others better than themselves. They will see more evil in their own heart than in any other in the world. They will understand something of Abraham's feeling, when he says, "I am nothing but dust and ashes;"-and Jacob's,

when he says, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant;"-and Job's, when he says, "I am unworthy;"-and Paul's, when he says, "I am the worst of sinners." Bradford, that holy and faithful martyr of Christ, would sometimes sign his letters with these words, "A most miserable sinner, John Bradford." Good old Mr. Grimshaw's last words, when he lay on his deathbed, were these, "Here goes an unprofitable servant."

#### **k) A holy man will pursue faithfulness in all the duties and relationships in life.**

They will try, not merely to fulfill their duties and responsibilities, as well as others who have no care or concern for their souls, but even better, because they have higher motives, they will try to be of more help than the others. Those words of Paul should never be forgotten, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord,"-"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (Colossians 3:23-note; Romans 12:11-note). Holy persons should aim at doing everything well, and should be ashamed of allowing themselves to do anything poorly if they can help it. Like Daniel, they should seek to give no "basis for charges against themselves, "unless it has something to do with the law of their God" (Daniel 6:5). They should strive to be good husbands and good wives, good neighbors, good friends, good citizens, good in private and good in public, good in the place of business and good in their homes. Indeed, holiness is worth little, if it does not bear this kind of fruit. The Lord Jesus puts a searching question to His people, when He says, "What are you doing more than others?" Mt 5:47-note).

#### **l) Last, but not least, a holy person will pursue spiritual mindedness.**

They will endeavor to set their affections entirely on things above, and to hold very loosely the things of earth. They will not neglect the daily business of their life; but the first place in their mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. They will aim to live like those whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim traveling to their home. To commune with God in prayer, in the Bible, and in the assembly of His people-these things will be the holy person's principal enjoyments. They will value every thing and place and company, in the same proportion as it draws them nearer to God. They will enter into something of David's feeling, when he says, "My soul clings to you." "You are my portion, O LORD" (Psalm 63:8-note; Ps 119:57-note).

Such is the outline of holiness. Such is the character that is pursued by those who are called "holy." Such are the main features of a holy man and a holy woman. (Read the complete article on Hebrews 12:14: Holiness)

**Steven Cole** writes that...

We must pursue peace and purity to finish the Christian race: Stay on course (Heb 12:14)! The course entails the two great commandments. Pursuing "peace with all men" is the second commandment, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:39). To pursue "the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" is the first commandment, to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt. 22:37). Jesus links these two themes (in reverse order) in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt. 5:8, 9-note). The link between pursuing peace and sanctification shows that we must not pursue peace at any cost. As Paul puts it (Ro 12:18-note), "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." His words imply the reality of living in this fallen world, that sometimes it is not possible to be at peace with everyone. Sometimes the other person clings to bitterness and hatred, and you can't do anything more than you've done to be reconciled. At other times, to make peace would require compromising obedience to God, either morally or doctrinally. You can't sacrifice personal holiness or commitment to God's truth for the sake of peace. But, whenever you can do so without compromise, the race set before us includes pursuing both peace with others and purity before God....

#### **B. Pursue the purity without which no one will see the Lord.**

The NASB uses "sanctification," but that doesn't alliterate with peace as purity does! Some versions use "holiness." The idea is, moral purity, both inwardly and outwardly. It points to a heart that is growing in conformity with God's standards of purity or holiness. As Jesus pointed out in the Sermon on the Mount, moral purity must begin on the heart level. Adultery, in God's sight, is not just the physical act, but also the lust of the heart (Mt. 5:27, 28, 29, 30-note). Jesus indicated that if a man will not judge his lust on the thought level, his whole body will be thrown into hell! That is what our text means when it says, "without which no one will see the Lord." It means, if you're not growing in sanctification (purity), you will not go to heaven!

We need to clarify that with two things.

First, it does not mean that we earn heaven by our righteous behavior. The Bible is abundantly clear that heaven is God's free gift to all that trust in Christ as Savior and Lord (Ro 6:23-note).

Second, it does not mean that anyone can be perfectly holy or sanctified in this life. Some Christians teach that believers can achieve a state of sinless perfection or total sanctification in this life. But the Bible is clear that we must strive against indwelling sin as long as we live (Heb. 12:4-note; Gal. 5:16,17-note; Ro 8:12,13-note).

So, what does our text mean? It means that those whose hearts have been regenerated by God's grace will pursue a course of purity or holiness (1Co 6:9, 10, 11; Eph. 5:3-11-note; Col. 3:5, 6, 7,8-note; 1Jn 3:7, 8, 9, 10). They may sin often, but they do not remain in sin. They hate it, they confess it and turn from it, and they fight against it with the spiritual weapons that God provides (Ep 6:10-20-note). They build into their lives safeguards to avoid sin. They renew their minds through Scripture, hiding God's word in their hearts, so that they might not sin against Him (Ps. 119:11-note). It is a lifelong pursuit, but without it, no one will see the Lord. They won't go to heaven! Heaven will be a place of absolute holiness. God is holy, surrounded by His holy angels, who cover their faces and proclaim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3). The saints in heaven are all perfectly holy, never to sin again. If you're not pursuing a course of holiness now, you'd be awfully uncomfortable in such a holy place, not to mention the fact that you'd ruin it! So everyone who has been rescued from sin and judgment by the cross wants to please the Lord who died for him by pursuing purity. ([Read Pastor Cole's full Sermon](#))

**Hebrews 12:15** [See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled \(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

**Greek:** [episkopountes \(PAPMPN\) me tis usteron \(PAPMPN\) apo tes charitos tou theou. me tis rhiza pikrias ano phuoussa \(PAPFSN\) enochle \(3SPAS\) kai di' autes mianthosin \(3PAPS\) polloi](#)

BGT πισκοπο ντες μ τις στερ ν π τς χ ριτος το θεο , μ τις ζα πικρ ας νω φ ουσα νοχλ κα δι α τς μιανθ σιν πολλο ,

**Amplified:** Exercise foresight and be on the watch to look [after one another], to see that no one falls back from and fails to secure God's grace (His unmerited favor and spiritual blessing), in order that no root of resentment (rancor, bitterness, or hatred) shoots forth and causes trouble and bitter torment, and the many become contaminated and defiled by it— ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

CSB Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and by it, defiling many.

ESV See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

NET See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no one be like a bitter root springing up and causing trouble, and through him many become defiled.

NIV See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

**NKJ** looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

**KJV** Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

**NLT:** Look after each other so that none of you will miss out on the special favor of God. Watch out that no bitter root of unbelief rises up among you, for whenever it springs up, many are corrupted by its poison. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**NLT** (revised) Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

**Young's Literal:** looking diligently over lest any one be failing of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up may give trouble, and through this many may be defiled;

**SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE COMES SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD: episkopountes (PAPMPN) me tis husteron (PAPMPN) apo tes charitos tou theou:**

- **See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God** He 2:1,2; 3:12; 4:1,11; 6:11; 10:23-35; Deut 4:9; Pr 4:23; 1 Cor 9:24, 25, 26, 27; 1 Cor 10:12; 2 Cor 6:1; 13:5; 2 Pe 1:10; 3:11,14; 2 Jn 1:8; Jude 1:20,21
- **No one comes short** - Luke 22:32; 1 Cor 13:8; Galatians 5:4
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

**Related Passage:**

Deuteronomy 29:18+ Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit (wormwood; Lxx = pikria)

**Comment:** Moses reminded the people of the gross idolatry they witnessed while enslaved in Egypt and then while traveling through the wilderness (cp Dt 29:16, 17). If they witnessed it with hearts devoted to the Lord, they couldn't help but be repulsed by what they saw, and they surely wouldn't want to participate in it. Nobody in Israel—no individual, family, or tribe—was to get involved in idolatry; for any idolater could become a "bitter root" that could defile the whole nation. Hebrews 12:15 applies this same warning to local assemblies of believers, for "one sinner destroys much good" (Ec 9:18). Even if the offenders kept their sins hidden and were confident that they could escape judgment, the Lord would know and would judge. There could be no forgiveness; they would be plagued and killed and their names would be blotted out from under heaven (Dt 9:14; Ex 32:32, 33). They would suffer from all the plagues named in Deuteronomy 28. (Wiersbe)

**Wormwood** (Dt 29:18; Pr 5:4; Jer 9:15; 23:15; La 3:15, 19; Am 5:7; 6:12) was a plant known for its bitter pulp and often associated with poison. Therefore Israel was warned to be extremely vigilant against the sin of idolatry when they entered the land of Canaan and faced the temptations of the lewd, debauched, sexually charged practices associated with pagan idol worship.

**Calvin:** As soon, therefore, as any one should endeavor to excite his brethren to worship false gods, God commands him to be plucked up, lest the poison should burst forth, and the bitter root should produce its natural fruits in the corruption of others.

**Hard Sayings:** Just as one apostate in Israel could influence many neighbors to serve gods other than Yahweh, so one apostate among these Christians could lead others to forsake their faith.

**Pulpit Commentary:** The herb is thus described by Umbreit: "It is a plant toward two feet high, belonging to the genus *Artemisia* (species *Artemisia absinthium*), which produces a very firm stalk with many branches, grayish leaves, and small, almost round, pendent blossoms. It has a bitter and saline taste, and seems to have been regarded in the East as also a poison, of which the frequent combination with rosh gives an intimation."

**See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled** - I like the old King James translation "**Looking diligently.**" Oh, what a needed word for the body of Christ. In Ephesians 4:3+ Paul exhorts us to be "**diligent to preserve** (not "make" or "create" but preserve = idea of guard) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Exhortations like Hebrews 12:15 are vital to obey that we might guard the unity, lest the unity of our local Body of Christ be disturbed and even destroyed if allowed to "fester!"

**THOUGHT** on "**See to it**" - Note the verb "**see to it**" -- From the English translation I thought "**see to it**" was a command but to my surprise it was present tense which describes the ideal bent of our mind (our mindset - Ro 8:6+) which is ever toward the transforming power of the **grace of God**. The purpose is that no root of bitterness might spring up. Oh how we all need to daily depend on the Holy Spirit to enable us to continually fight off the tendency toward the unholy behavior of becoming bitter or resentful at some wrong or injury done to us by another (saint or not). **See to it** in the present tense is clearly something we can do only by continually



being filled with the Holy Spirit. So I think as you look at many of the exhortations/instructions in Scripture, especially when they are in the present tense calling for a lifestyle (habitual practice), you can begin to see our desperate need for the continual filling by the Spirit. And this is why I say I think we are more often filled with Him than we might think -- someone says something wrong, injurious, hurtful and yet "somehow" we don't respond, react or begin to nurse a grudge! How is that possible? That's the point - it is **IM-possible**, but praise God it is **HIM-possible** - the Spirit has just demonstrated that He is in us, filling us, controlling us, empowering us to wear the "new garment" if Jesus Christ! All praise, glory and honor be unto our King. Amen? Amen!

**See to it (1983)** (**episkopeo [word study]**) from **epi** = upon or intensifying the already existing idea in verb + **skopeo** = regard, give attention to, look at, contemplate) means literally to look upon, and thus to observe, to examine the state of affairs of something, to look after or to oversee. In the NT, episkopeo is used only in Hebrews 12:15 and 1 Peter 5:2-note, the latter used to describe the work of shepherding the flock. It expresses careful regard of those in position of responsibility.

**Vincent** writes that "**Looking diligently** (episkopountes) gives diligently as the force of epi, but epi signifies direction rather than intensity. The idea is exercising oversight.

**Wuest** paraphrases this verse better conveying the meaning of **episkopeo** = "**exercising oversight** (episkopeo) [over yourselves] lest anyone be falling away from the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up be troubling you, and through this the many be defiled (Hebrews 12:15)

**Episkopeo** describes one who is literally a "watchman" "upon" (prefix "*epi*-" = upon) the sheep. This verb is in the **present tense** which pictures these men as constantly, diligently, actively and responsibly overseeing the care of the sheep in their flock, something that is only possible as we learn to give up "trying so hard to live the Christian life" and learn to trust the enabling power of the Spirit (see Php 2:12-note and Php 2:13-note). They are constantly examining them for "*spiritual parasites*" and are ever on the lookout for the ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15-note). Oversight is not the only duty of shepherding, but it is the one Peter mentions here in the situation of suffering.

**Episkopeo** is made up of two words in Greek just like it is in English - "over" and "sight". Elder-shepherds exercise oversight. They are "overseers". They look out over the flock. God holds them accountable for seeing the big picture and acting for the good of the whole flock.

**Spurgeon** - The word is "episkopountes," a word that signifies overseeing, being true bishops, looking diligently as a man on the watchtower watches for the coming foe. See the sentry pace the rampart. He looks in one direction and he sees the brushwood stirred; he half thinks it is the foe, and suspects an ambush there. He looks to the front, across the sea—does he not discern a sail in the distance? The attack may be from the seaboard. He looks to the right, across the plain, and if even a little dust should move he watches lest the foe should be on foot. So in the church of God each one should be on his watchtower for himself and for others, watching diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.

**ESV Study Bible** - See to it that. As they pursue peace and holiness (v. 14), Christians should watch out for each other (cf. 3:13; 10:24-25) in order that no one falls short of the gift of eternal salvation

**McGee** - Looking diligently (He 12:15KJV) has in it the thought of direction. And what is that direction? "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith . . ." (Heb. 12:2).

**Vine** writes that "exercising" is the right rendering; the word does not imply the entrance upon such responsibility, but the fulfilment of it. It is not a matter of assuming a position, but of the discharge of the duties.

**Matthew Poole** says episkopeo "notes a very strict and severe inspecting themselves; its primitive, skopein, signifieth such a looking to a thing, as those who, in shooting, aim at the mark; and the preposition adds intention to the action, signifying a most earnest care in Christians over themselves, in them over others, and in ministers over them all.

**See to it** is in the plural, making it everyone's responsibility to make sure no one misses the grace of God. Continually considering, taking heed of the critical importance of the grace of God, remembering that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. The word expresses the careful regard of those who occupy a position of responsibility (as a physician, or a superintendent) The same word is used in 1Pe 5:2 (see note) where the elders are exhorted to take the oversight of the local church. The noun is used in [Acts 20:28] where Paul calls the elders, overseers. The idea here is that these Jews should exercise oversight over their lives to the end that they do not fail of the grace of God.

Hebrews addressed an audience wanting to face two directions ("Mr. Facing-Both-Ways") at once--the security of what they could see which was the Ritual and Legalism of Judaism (exemplified by Mt. Sinai He 12:18-note) versus what they could not see yet already possessed by faith (Mt Zion - He 12:22-note) which equates with the freedom as a slave of Christ. The inspired writer urged

them to face full forward toward Christ and forget legalism. The gravest sin they could commit would be to try to earn salvation through the law and miss the way of grace.

The idea of episkopeo in this verse is

**All of you**, act like bishops in seeing that no one succumbs to gracelessness.

In other words the writer is urging what you might call some sanctified “meddling” in each other’s lives. We must consciously involve ourselves in the Body of Christ, assuming responsibility for seeing others go on in grace, and also humbly receiving their loving care for us. We all need grace to finish the race!

The next two verses (He 12:16, 17-notes) seem to present four distinct sins to avoid. But there is a strong suggestion in the context that this is another warning against the single sin of apostasy and that these four sins are all related to it.

First of all, apostasy is a failure to obtain the grace of God. Note that the verb comes short is **present tense** suggesting that this is this person's lifestyle. In other words such a person continually comes short of or lacks the grace of God. Such a one is continually left behind in the race and so fails to reach the goal. He is continually falling short of the end, that is of becoming a full partaker of the grace of God. And no one can continually, habitually come short of God's amazing grace and pretend to say they are a true believer. The person looks like a Christian, talks like a Christian, professes to be a Christian, but he has never been born again. He has come so near the Savior but has never received Him and thus is so near and yet so far.

**Thomas Manton** - There must be a constant watch kept not only over our own hearts but also over the congregations to which we belong. Members must take care of one another; this is the communion between saints. (An Exposition on the Epistle of James)

**Baker NT Commentary** - the writer reasserts the corporate responsibility of the believers. "See to it that no one misses the grace of God" (compare He 3:12; 4:1, 11). As members of the body of Christ we are responsible for each other. We have the task of overseeing one another in spiritual matters, so that we may grow and flourish in the grace of God and not come short of it. That is, no one should be allowed to straggle, for if this happens he becomes Satan's prey and will miss God's grace (2Co 6:1; Gal. 5:4). Mutual supervision within the entire body stimulates the spiritual health of the individual members. Avoid, therefore, the indifference to one another manifested by Cain, who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). Instead we should ask each other about our spiritual well-being, although perhaps not in the quaint wording of the Methodist preacher who inquired, "How is it with thy soul, brother?" But certainly as members of Christ's body we must put similar questions to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

**Comes short of** (5302) (**hustereo** from **hústeros** = last, latter, terminal, hindmost) has the basic meaning of come to late (in time) or to come after (in terms of space) and thus it means to fail in something, come short of, miss, not to reach. **Hustereo** has the basic meaning of being last or inferior. It means to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end, to lack. It means to come late or too tardily.

**Vincent** writes that the idea is “fall back from,” implying a previous attainment. The present participle marks something in progress: “lest any one be falling back.”

Note the word "**of**" is the preposition **apo** (575) which is a marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association, separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal. It pictures any separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed.

**Hustereo** means to be excluded here (He 12:15-note) or in He 4:1-note as coming too late through one's own fault miss and so to fail to reach the intended objective or goal.

The early Greek commentator Theophylact interprets **hustereo** in terms of a journey of a band of travelers who every now and again check up, "Has anyone fallen out? Has anyone been left behind while the others have pressed on?" We too are on a "journey", the final destination being the City of the Living God, the Heavenly, New Jerusalem, Mt Zion. Don't fall behind & be left behind or you'll miss the grace of God & be left at the fearful Mt. Sinai where the Law has condemned you because of your sin.

In several of the NT passages **hustereo** means to be in short supply, to fail, to give out or to lack. Hustereo can mean to experience deficiency in something advantageous or desirable and thus to be lacking, go without or come short of (as in Mt 19:20).

**Wiersbe** - What sins will rob us of the enabling of God's grace? These verses tell us: lack of spiritual diligence, bitterness against others (see Deut. 29:18), sexual immorality, and living for the world and the flesh. (**Commenting** on He 13:24) Of course, the writer of the Hebrew epistle was sending his personal greetings to the leaders of the church; but this is a good example for all of us to follow. Every Christian should be on speaking terms with his pastor. Never allow any "root of bitterness" to grow up in your heart (Heb. 12:15) because it will only poison you and hurt the whole church.

**Richards** sees the falling short in the context of the divine discipline just discussed in Heb 12:5-11 - If we fail to sense the love and

the purposefulness that underlie God's discipline we are likely to become bitter and so "miss the grace of God." If we see our trials and difficulties in the perspective provided by God's grace we will accept discipline. (Bible Reader's Companion)

**Hustereo** is used 14 times in the Lxx

Num. 9:7, 13; Neh. 9:21; Job 36:17; Ps. 23:1; 39:4; Eccl. 6:2; 9:8; 10:3; Cant. 7:2; Dan. 4:33; 5:27; Hab. 2:3

**Hustereo** - 16x in 16v -

Matt. 19:20; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 15:14; 22:35; Jn. 2:3; Rom. 3:23; 1Co. 1:7; 8:8; 12:24; 2 Co. 11:5, 9; 12:11; Phil. 4:12; Heb. 4:1; 11:37; 12:15

**Hustereo** is used in the famous "Hall of Faith" chapter, Hebrews 11 - They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, **being destitute** (hustereo), afflicted, ill-treated (Heb 11:37-note)

The meaning of **hustereo** is further illustrated in the following verses...

(At the wedding in Cana site of Jesus' first recorded miracle) And when the wine **gave out**, (hustereo) the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." (John 2:3)

Now when he (the prodigal son) had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began **to be in need** (hustereo). (Luke 15:14)

The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still **lacking** (hustereo)?" (Mt 19:20)

If our perseverance should "fall short" like the wine at the wedding feast in Cana, the party could be ruined (John 2:3). If our faith runs out like the prodigal son's money, we may find ourselves very impoverished (Lu 15:14). It is easy for this deficiency to come on us unnoticed, like the rich young ruler's lack of freedom from his wealth (Mt 19:20).

With reverential fear all are to examine their own spiritual condition (cf. 1Cor 10:12; 2Cor 13:5) and to actively press for commitment on the part of others (cf. Jude 1:23).

**Hustereo** means to essentially to be found to come short as in Romans 3 where Paul writes that ...

all have sinned and **fall short** (hustereo) of the glory of God (Ro 3:23-note)

When you **come short** of something, you can miss it an inch or a mile, but you still miss it! So those in **Romans 3:23** have missed it a "mile". There are others who have missed it by only an "inch". For example, take the man that Mark wrote about...

And looking at him (a man who ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him), Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "**One thing you lack** (hustereo): go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! (Mark 10:21, 22, 23)

In this declaration by Jesus the verb **lack** is the same word **hustereo** (come short) used here in Hebrews 4. Jesus was telling the man (and all who have ears to hear) that "you are coming short in just one thing".

Isn't it amazing how some can come so close! They are in a good Bible believing church, they know stories and verses in the Bible, they know the message of good news, they are "good" people, etc, etc...but they lack one thing...they've never confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life the importance of which Paul explains...

But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you **confess** with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he **confesses**, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "**WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED** (means to be caused to be much ashamed, humiliated or disgraced!)." (See **notes** Ro 10:8; 10:9; 10:11)

When you come so close yet are still short, you might even presume that you have entered into the rest (like a "vaccination" or being inoculated with the inactive virus to prevent you from getting the real viral disease), and so this is why it is so important to continue to encourage one another daily while there is still time. Coming to Bible study means nothing if Christ is not in your heart. You can know a lot in your head but the real issue is to make certain of your calling and election. Many will say to Jesus in that day "Lord, Lord" but He will say "I never knew you." (Mt 7:21-note; Mt 7:22, 23-note)

Here are all the uses of **hustereo** (words in bold below represent translation of hustereo) in the NT...

**Matthew 19:20** The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still **lacking**?"

**Mark 10:21** And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing **you lack**: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

**Luke 15:14** "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began **to be in need**.

**Luke 22:35** And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, **you did not lack** anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing."

**John 2:3** And when the wine **gave out**, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God,

**1 Corinthians 1:7** so that you are not **lacking** in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**1 Corinthians 8:8** But food will not commend us to God; we are neither **the worse** if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.

**1 Corinthians 12:24** whereas our seemly members have no **need of** it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,

**2 Corinthians 11:5** For I consider myself not in the least **inferior** to the most eminent apostles.

**2 Corinthians 11:9** and when I was present with you and **was in need**, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia, they fully supplied my need (related word husterema), and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

**2 Corinthians 12:11** I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect **was I inferior** to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

**Philippians 4:12** I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and **suffering need**.

**Hebrews 4:1** Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem **to have come short** of it.

**Hebrews 11:37** They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, **being destitute**, afflicted, ill-treated

**Hebrews 12:15** See to it that no one **comes short of** the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

**Wuest** writes that "The translation is "lest any one be falling back." This exactly describes the situation of this unsaved Jew who has allowed himself to be led along by the Holy Spirit in His pre-salvation work of convicting the sinner of sin, and of bringing him to the place of repentance (He 6:4, 5, 6-see **notes** He 6:4; 6:5; 6:6). These Jews were thus the recipients of the grace of God up to this point. The writer is concerned that they might fall back from this grace to the temple sacrifices again, and thus be irrevocably lost (Ch. 6). It should be clear that the writer is not here speaking of the Jew who had already put his faith in Messiah as High Priest. That person could not fall back to the sacrifices (He 6:9-note). He has been the recipient of the work of the Spirit by whom he was regenerated, baptized into Jesus Christ as his Head and into the Body of Christ, and permanently indwelt, and sealed with the Spirit by God the Father until the glorification of his body."

**Guzik** explains it this way...

We must get right with God's grace. So look diligently to keep both yourself and others from a return to legalism in either outward form or inward attitude that falls short of God's grace, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble.

i. "A bitter root is a root that bears bitter fruit . . . So it is possible for the seed of bitterness to be sown in a community and, though nothing is immediately apparent, in due time the inevitable fruit appears." (Morris)

ii. Many are corrupted because of bitterness towards someone they feel has wronged them, and they hold on to the bitterness with amazing stubbornness! What they must do is remember the grace of God extended to

them, and start extending that grace towards others - loving the undeserving.

iii. A legalistic attitude will always produce a bitterness that defiles many; its emphasis on what we should do for God before what He has done for us in Jesus puts us (and those around us) in a terrible performance trap.

([Hebrews 12](#))

'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

**Richard Hughes** - The readers are admonished, therefore, to see to it, to show practical concern, that no one fail to obtain the grace of God, or, rather, that none of their fellow contestants fall behind in the race and turn away from the prize that is before them. As we have repeatedly seen, the danger by which they are threatened is that of apostasy: in He 3:12 they have been warned to take care lest in any of them an evil, unbelieving heart should cause them to desert the living God; in 4:1 they have been advised to fear lest any of them be judged to have failed to reach God's rest; in He 6:4-6 they have been told of the impossibility of restoration for any who wilfully abandon the blessings of the gospel; and in He 10:26-31 they have been cautioned again regarding the irremissibility of the sin of deliberately profaning the blood of the covenant. Similarly here it is once more the peril of apostasy, of dropping out of the race, of "rejecting him who warns from heaven" (He 12:25-29), against which they are being warned. Our author, then, is not speaking of some relatively serious deficiency in the Christian life, but of the absolutely disastrous eventuality of cutting oneself off from the grace of God. Where there are symptoms that such a situation may be developing, earnest attentiveness and searching self-scrutiny on the part both of the community and of the individuals of which it is composed are an urgent necessity. (A Commentary On The Epistle To The Hebrews)

**Spurgeon** - Under the means of grace, there are many who do "**fall short of the grace of God**." They get something that they think is like grace, but it is not the true grace of God, and they ultimately fall from it, and perish. What we need is to have unfailing grace, and power so to hold on that, at the last, we may inherit the crown of life. But we must look diligently for this, for the best of us has shrewd cause to suspect himself. And in church fellowship we ought to be very watchful lest the church as a whole should fail through lack of the true grace of God, and especially lest any root of bitterness springing up among us should trouble us, and thereby many be defiled. We must remember that though we are saved by grace, yet grace does not stupefy us, but rather quickens us into action. Though salvation depends upon the merits of Christ, yet those who receive those merits receive with them a faith that produces holiness.

**Grace** ([5485](#)) (**charis**) is a word with a number of meanings in the NT, the specific nuance being dependent on the context.

(1) a quality that adds delight or pleasure or a winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction = graciousness, attractiveness, charm, winsomeness (Lk 4:22, Col 4:6-note)

(2) a beneficent disposition toward someone, and specifically in the NT defines God's attitude toward human beings = kindness, grace, favor, helpfulness, gracious care/help, goodwill (Jn 1:16, Ep 2:8)

(3) practical application of goodwill = (a sign of) favor, gracious deed/gift, benefaction (Ac 24:27, 25:9, 2Co 8:4, Eph 4:29-note)

(4) exceptional effects produced by God's favor = ability, power to transform, enabling power Ro 12:6-note, 1Co 15:10)

(5) response to generosity or beneficence = verbal thank offering, thanks, gratitude (1Co 15:57)

**New American Commentary** - God's grace is always available 'to help us in our time of need' (He 4:16). Those who fail to depend on it and respond to it will not enter his heavenly kingdom (cf. He 3:12, 13, 14).

**Poole** - Lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any person among them should fail of grace offered in the gospel to it, and never have it, Titus 2:11-12; or apostatize from the profession of it, by seduction or persecution, Heb 4:1; 10:38; 2Co 6:1: compare Ga 1:6; 3:3.

The **grace of God** is undeserved, unsought, and unbought (except that it is made available by the precious blood of the Lamb of God). The infinitely high price of redemption was paid for by "**the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor (His incarnation), that you through His poverty might become rich (spiritual riches that Jesus gives to all who place their trust in Him)." (2Cor 8:9)

**Grace** is God's supernatural provision for our every need when we need it. God in His grace gives us what we do not deserve, and in His mercy He does not give us what we do deserve.

So the riches of our salvation (calling, election, justification, sanctification) were all made possible by the "impoverishment" of Christ Who became a man, suffered and died a cruel death on the cross so that grace could be manifested in our life. When we realize

what it cost God to express **grace**, it helps us realize the wickedness of our sin and the undeserving state of mankind. What an amazing divine paradox -- grace was immeasurably costly for God to express and yet is unconditionally free to all men. **Grace** is God's favor freely offered but expensively expressed!

**Grace** is not some static concept but is a dynamic force, which totally transforms the believer's life beginning with salvation (Acts 15:11; 18:27; Ro 3:24-note; Ep 1:7-note; Ep 2:5-note, Ep 2:8-note; 2Ti 1:9-note; Titus 2:11-note; Titus 3:7-note), continuing in our sanctification (2Pe 3:18-note, Titus 2:12-note - where grace "instructs" us in our daily walk of godliness) and then all through eternity in our glorification (1Pe 1:13-note, Ep 2:7-note). Grace enables the believer suffer/endure without grumbling or complaining, and enables our weakness or suffering to be used for God's glory. When a Christian turns away from living by God's grace, he or she must depend on their own power and this invariably leads to failure and disappointment.

**Grace** is distinct to Christianity for no other world religion has such a supernatural enablement, nor could they because grace is from God and every other world religion is anti-god at its core! The great news of the Gospel is that every believer has "received...grace upon grace" through our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 1:16), because "grace and truth were realized through" Him (Jn 1:17) and He is "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). And so from the very beginning of the birth of the Church in Acts we see that "abundant grace was upon them all" (the new believers composing the church) (Acts 4:33). In the epistles Paul wrote of the "grace in which we stand" (Ro 5:2-note). James adds that humility gives every believer access to grace that is greater than sin's power (James 4:6; cp Ro 5:20-note). Peter described the "manifold [multi-colored - like Joseph's multicolored "dream coat"] grace of God" (1Pe 4:10-note) which is sufficient for "multicolored" trials (1Pe 1:6-note). In short, God always provides the sufficient grace for every trial (no exceptions!) Thus it is little wonder that Paul characterized this amazing grace as the "surpassing grace of God in [believers]" (2Co 9:14), and was confident that "God is able (present tense = He continuously has the ability) to make **all** (pas = all without exception) grace abound to you (referring to believers), that **always** (pantote from pas = all + tote = then) having **all** (pas) sufficiency in **everything** (pas), you may have an abundance for **every** (pas) good deed" (2Co 9:8 - note the "all" sufficient character of grace all the time to all believers! Praise God.).

The "**grace of God**" is described as...

- **Glorious** (Ep 1:6-note)
- **Abundant** (Acts 4:33)
- **Rich** (Ep 1:7-note)
- **Manifold** (many-sided, multi-colored, variegated) (1Pe 4:10-note)
- **Sufficient** (sufficing, enough, adequate - there is never a shortage) (2Co 12:9-note; 2Co 12:10-note)

**THAT NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, AND BY IT MANY BE DEFILED:me tis rhiza pikrias ano phuoua (PAPFSN) enochle (3SPAS) kai di autes mianthosin (3PAPS) polloi:**

- He 3:12; Dt 29:18; 32:32; Is 5:4,7; Je 2:21; Mt 7:16, 17, 18
- **Trouble** - Josh 6:18; 7:25,26; 22:17-20; Ep 5:3; Col 3:5
- Ex 32:21; 1Ki 14:16; Ac 20:30,31; 1Co 5:6; 15:33; Gal 2:13; 2Ti 2:16,17; 2Pe 2:1,2,18
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

#### See related topic - Forgiveness and Unforgiveness

- List of links related to forgiveness/unforgiveness
- Multiple illustrations and quotes related to forgiveness/unforgiveness
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Ephesians 4:32
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Colossians 3:13
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Matthew 6:12 and Matthew 6:14-15

For all you horticulturists out there, does not this passage present a powerful picture of the acrid fruit reaped when we plant the seeds of bitterness in our heart?!



**Hunt** (Biblical Counseling Keys) has these insights on **bitterness**...

- Resentment toward God and those who have not fulfilled your expectations will grow bitter roots that destroy acceptance of yourself and others.
- If you don't forgive, you will develop a root of bitterness and a bitter root will grow bitter fruit.... You will become bitter.
- Unresolved anger produces bitterness. And the Bible links bitterness with being in bondage to sin. (Acts 8:23)
- Give the situation to God. Jesus understands how much you have been wronged. When He was being persecuted, Jesus knew that the heavenly Father would judge justly... in His way, in His time. And you can know the same. Your trial will make you either bitter or better.
- Following conflict, what keeps your heart from a negative focus? Jesus said, "Love your enemies."...If you are saying, "but they really aren't enemies," realize that if someone evokes resentment, bitterness, or hatred, that person is an enemy to your spirit. Because praying for your enemy is commanded by Christ, believers should obey this directive and not regard this as optional. And because praying for your enemy protects your heart from bitterness, you should want to obey this directive in heart and in deed. One approach is to pray "the fruit of the Spirit" for your offender. And because you are willing to "bless" your enemy, the Bible says that you will inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9)

**R Moffatt Gantry** wrote the following that relates to the root of bitterness - Self (**flesh**) is the tumor of the soul, and it grows by what it feeds on. You cannot cure it by a few good resolutions. It requires the most drastic treatment, and Christ prescribes crucifixion as the only way of destroying this root of every kind of bitterness. (**Ed**: Note that **flesh** is still **flesh** even after we have been crucified with Christ, but now the battle can be waged victoriously as we surrender to the indwelling Spirit of grace).

**Spurgeon** - Sin is a bitter thing and a defiling thing; and unless we look diligently, it will grow in our hearts like the weeds grow in our gardens after a heavy rain. It will spring up before we are aware of it. The first person who is likely to fail in this church is myself. Each one ought to feel that; the beginning of the watch should therefore be at home. Depend upon it, if there is anyone likely to fall into sin it is you. Though I say "you," I mean myself as well. Each man is himself most in danger. In the center of my lawn, horseradish will sprout up. After the smallest shower of rain, it rises above the grass and proclaims its vitality. There was a garden there once, and this root maintains its old position. When the gardener cuts it down, it resolves to rise again. Now, if the gardener cannot get it quite out of the ground, it is his business constantly to cut it down. Even when associated in church fellowship, each one brings his own particular poisonous root, and there are sure to be bad roots in the ground. We are to watch diligently lest any of these bitter poisonous roots spring up, for if they do they will trouble us.

**Root** ([4491](#)) (**rhiza**) is literally the underground part of a plant and figuratively as used here that which constitutes a basic source or reason for an event and thus the source, cause or reason.

**Root** - 17x in 16v -

Mt 3:10; 13:6, 21; Mk 4:6, 17; 11:20; Lk 3:9; 8:13; Ro 11:16, 17, 18; 15:12; 1Ti 6:10; He 12:15; Re 5:5; 22:16.

We need to be very careful to not nurse a grudge for it can grow into **a root of bitterness**.

See the OT example of a root of bitterness (Ge 37:8, 11) which led to the fruit of bitterness, attempted murder! (Ge 37:18)

**Jamieson** - root of bitterness -- not merely a "bitter root," which might possibly bring forth sweet fruits; this, a root whose essence is "bitterness," never could...The only safety is in rooting out such a root of bitterness... So long as it is hidden under the earth it cannot be remedied, but when it "springs up," it must be dealt with boldly. Still remember the caution (Mt 13:26, 27, 28, 29, 30) as to rooting out persons.

**Baker NT Commentary** - The roots of many weed plants spread rapidly and produce plants in all the places where the roots grow. These roots develop undetected; the resultant rapid multiplication of plants is quite unsettling. Roots and plants spell trouble for crop-producing plants that are then deprived of necessary nutrients and as a result yield a reduced harvest. With this picture borrowed from the world of agriculture, the author of Hebrews looks at the church and compares a person who has missed the grace of God (and has fallen away) with a bitter root. Such a person causes trouble among God's people by disturbing the peace. With his bitter words, he deprives the believers of holiness.

**Adam Clarke** - A root of bitterness signifies a poisonous plant. The Hebrews call every species of poison a bitter, and with considerable propriety, as most plants are poisonous in proportion to the quantum of the bitter principle they possess. The root of bitterness is here used metaphorically for a bad man, or a man holding unsound doctrines, and endeavoring to spread them in the Church.

**John MacArthur** - The root of bitterness refers to a person who is superficially identified with God's people, and who falls back into

paganism. But he is no ordinary apostate. He is arrogant and defiant concerning the things of God. He thumbs his nose at the Lord. God's response to such boastful unbelief is harsh and final.

**Bitterness** (4088)(**pikría** from **pikrós** from **pik-** = to cut, prick) originally meant pointed or sharp, e.g., of arrows then more generally of what is "sharp" or "penetrating" to the senses, a bitter, pungent taste or smell and then what is "painful" to the feelings.

**Pikria** - 4x in 4v - Acts 8:23; Ro 3:14; Ep 4:31; He 12:15. All uses translated as *bitterness*.

**Pikria** - 19x in the Lxx - Ex 15:23; Deut 29:17; 32:32; Ps 9:28; 13:3; Job 3:20; 7:11; 9:18; 10:1; 21:25; Amos 6:12; Isa 28:21, 28; 37:29; Jer 2:21; 15:17; Lam 3:15, 19; Ezek 28:24

**Pikria** was used literally to describe plants that produced inedible or poisonous fruit. Greeks described the figurative use of *pikria* as long-standing resentment, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled. So many of us have a way of nursing our wrath to keep it warm, of brooding over the insults and the injuries which we have received.

In the NT **pikria** is used in a metaphorical sense to describe animosity, resentfulness, harshness or an openly-expressed emotional hostility against an enemy. *Pikria* defines a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man. Somebody does something we do not like, so we harbor ill will against him. Bitterness leads to wrath, which is the explosion on the outside of the feelings on the inside.

**Bitterness**—extreme enmity; sour temper

#### A. Kinds of:

The heart Pr 14:10

Death 1Sam. 15:32

#### B. Causes of:

Childlessness 1Sa 1:5, 10

A foolish son Pr 17:25

Sickness Is 38:17

#### C. Avoidance of:

Toward others Ep 4:31

As a source of defilement He 12:15

**ISBE** has this note on **bitterness**...

1. the physical sense of taste;
2. a figurative meaning in the objective sense of cruel, biting words; intense misery resulting from forsaking God, from a life of sin and impurity; the misery of servitude; the misfortunes of bereavement;
3. more subjectively, bitter and bitterness describe emotions of sympathy; the sorrow of childlessness and of penitence, of disappointment; the feeling of misery and wretchedness, giving rise to the expression "bitter tears";
4. the ethical sense, characterizing untruth and immorality as the bitter thing in opposition to the sweetness of truth and the gospel;
5. Numbers 5:18 the Revised Version (British and American) speaks of "the water of bitterness that causeth the curse." Here it is employed as a technical term.

**Vincent** says this is "a bad man in the church"!

In the first use of **pikria** in the OT Moses records...

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were **bitter** (*pikria*); therefore it was named Marah. (Ex 15:23)

**Bitterness** reflects a smoldering resentment, a brooding grudge-filled attitude, an unwillingness to forgive or a harsh feeling. Bitterness is the opposite of sweetness and kindness (cf. husbands toward wives in Col 3:19-note). It harbors resentment and keeps score of wrongs (cf 1Cor 13:5-note)

**Pikría** or **bitterness** is the spirit of irritability that keeps a person in perpetual animosity, making him sour and venomous. Bitterness applies to the bitterness of spirit to which men give vent by bitter words.

**Barclay** adds that "the Greeks defined (**pikría**) as long-standing resentment, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled. So many of us have a way of nursing our wrath to keep it warm, of brooding over the insults and the injuries which we have received. Every Christian might well pray that God would teach him how to forget."

**Eadie** says that **pikria** is "A figurative term denoting that fretted and irritable state of mind that keeps a man in perpetual animosity, that inclines him to harsh and uncharitable opinions of men and things, that makes him sour, crabby and repulsive in his general demeanor, that brings a scowl over his face & infuses venom into the words of his tongue.

**Newell - Bitterness** is ever ready! What fearful folly for a race speaking thus to imagine that by "being baptized, " and "joining the church" they are ready to "go to heaven, " and be in the holy company on high, with the meek and lowly Son of God and the holy angels, -and all this without a thought of being forgiven, washed, born again! ([Romans 3: Devotional and Exposition](#))

**Wiersbe** has this practical comment on **bitterness** to which even believers can fall prey (although here in Hebrews, the reference appears to refer to an unsaved individual): An unforgiving spirit is the **devil's playground** (cp Ep 4:29, 2Cor 2:11) and before long it becomes the Christian's battleground. If somebody hurts us, either deliberately or unintentionally, and we do not forgive him, then we begin to develop bitterness within, which hardens the heart. We should be tenderhearted and kind, but instead we are hardhearted and bitter. Actually, we are not hurting the person who hurt us; we are only hurting ourselves. Bitterness in the heart makes us treat others the way Satan treats them, when we should treat others the way God has treated us. In His gracious kindness, God has forgiven us, and we should forgive others. We do not forgive for our sake (though we do get a blessing from it) or even for their sake, but for Jesus' sake. Learning how to forgive and forget is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

**Springing up** ([5453](#)) (**phuo**) literally means to spring up in regard to a seed germinating and breaking through the surface of the ground. To generate, grow up, sprout. To beget. The use is figurative of course in this verse.

In 1 Ti 3:6 **phuo** is the root of the word **neophutos** which means literally one newly sprung up and thus describes a "new convert," one who has been newly begotten so to speak.

Paul uses the combined word **sumphutos** (literally plant together where "phuo" is the root verb) in Romans 6:5-[note](#) to describe believers as literally "planted together with" Christ. Ro 6:5 presents a beautiful picture of the believer for it speaks of a living, vital union of two individuals growing up together. The word could be used of the Siamese twins whose bodies were connected at one point, and whose blood stream flowed through two physical bodies as it does normally through one. Here the word speaks of that vital union of the believing sinner and the Lord Jesus. By union with Him, we undergo a death like His and spiritual resurrection. Thus we have the ability to live with resurrected life in union with Christ. See [note](#) on Romans 6:5 for more detailed discussion of these wonderful truths.

**Phuo** - 3x in 3v - Luke 8:6, 8; Heb 12:15. **NAS** = grew(2), springing(1). The two uses by Jesus in Luke 8 have both a literal and a figurative sense, the picture of seed that "grew up" picturing a person who seemed to be like a plant that grew up but which proved not to be viable (not to be a believer). The second metaphorical description is that of a genuine believer.

Luke 8:6 "And other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

Luke 8:8 "And other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

**Phuo** - 8x in the Septuagint - Ex 10:5 (Moses in his warning to Pharaoh to let God's people go), Dt 29:18, Pr 26:9, Song 5:13, Isa 37:31, Ezek 37:8, Da 4:10

In Dt 29:17-18 **phuo** is used figuratively to describe the seductive, deceptive, destruction effect of pagan idolatry (and their horrid abominations that accompanied their idolatry).

"Moreover, you have seen **their abominations and their idols** of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them); 18 lest there shall be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there shall be among you a root bearing (Lxx = **Phuo**) poisonous fruit and wormwood (Lxx = "springing up [**phuo**] with gall and bitterness.")

Prov 26:9 Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard (Lxx = "thorns grow [**phuo**] in the hand of a drunkard"), So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Isaiah 37:31 uses **phuo** figuratively in a good sense to describe the [remnant](#) (believing) of Israel --- Isaiah 37: "And the surviving [remnant](#) of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. 32 "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a [remnant](#), and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this."

**John MacArthur** explains Isaiah's prophecy which has both a near and far aspect regarding its fulfillment - zeal of the LORD of hosts. The same confirmation of God's promise in 9:7 assured the future establishment of the messianic kingdom. Deliverance from Sennacherib in Hezekiah's day was a down payment on the literal, final restoration of Israel.

In Ezekiel 37:8 [note phuo](#) speaks of the resurrection and salvation of Israel, an event which will be fulfilled at Messiah's second coming. "And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them (Lxx = "flesh grew upon [phuo] them"), and flesh grew, and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

**Springing up** is in the **present tense** which pictures the springing up in progress. The root is gradually (and continually over time) revealing its pernicious character.

There are none so bitter against the truth as those who have departed from it. - James Philip

**Causes trouble** (1776) ([enochleo](#) from **en** = in + **ochléo** = disturb, harass with crowds, tumults, to mob) is a very picturesque verb which literally means "to crowd in" or "crowd upon" and figuratively means to excite disturbance, to trouble, to annoy. The idea is to interfere or bother to the point of causing discomfort. (BDAG) This is exactly what bitterness will do! Liddell-Scott adds that one sense is to be a nuisance. Enochleo refers to something inside that bothers and upsets you so much that you are constantly pestered by thoughts about it.

In the Septuagint uses in Ge 48:1, 1Sa 19:14, 1 Sa 30:13 and Mal 1:13 enochleo conveys the idea of to be sick or ill, a sense which is not seen in the NT uses.

In the NT enochleo is used only twice, to describe the negative effects of bitterness and of demonic spirits. One wonders if there might be some correlation!

Rick Renner adds this note on Hebrews 12:15 - The word enochleo pictures a person who is continually troubled, harassed, and annoyed by thoughts of how someone else wronged him. The offended person is now so troubled that he is almost emotionally immobilized. Instead of moving on in life, he gets stuck in the muck of that experience, where he wallows day after day in the memories of what happened to him. If that person doesn't quickly get a grip on himself, he will eventually fulfill the next part of the verse, which says, "... lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled." (Sparkling Gems from the Greek)

The only other NT use is by Luke who describes an episode from the life of Jesus

"And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who **were troubled** with unclean spirits were being cured. (Luke 6:17, 18)

**Vincent** has an interesting note on **enochleo** writing that it is "From **ochlos**, a crowd or mob, with the idea of want of arrangement and discipline, and therefore of confusion and tumult. Hence it is applied to the noise and tumult of a crowd, and so passes into the sense of the trouble and annoyance caused by these, and of trouble generally, like the Latin *turbæ*. Thus Herodotus says of Croesus, when on the funeral-pile he uttered the name of Solon, and the interpreters begged him to explain what he meant, "and as they pressed for an answer and grew **troublesome**" — I., 86. Frequent in medical language. Thus Hippocrates, "**troubled** with a spasm or tetanus."

Enochleo is used 5x in the Septuagint - Gen 48:1 (to describe Joseph's father Jacob as "sick" ~ troubled), 1 Sa 19:14

**J Vernon McGee** - **Bitterness** today is like quinine in a barrel of water. It doesn't take much to make the water bitter. I remember when I was a boy my mother would always tell me when I cut up a chicken, "Be careful and don't break the gall bladder. You'll ruin the whole chicken if you do." She was right. You could spoil the entire fowl if you broke the gall bladder. God wants to get rid of that gall bladder of bitterness in His church. For instance, Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Just a few complainers and critics in the church can absolutely stifle any spiritual movement. Oh, how many lives have been wrecked by bitterness!

**Ray Stedman** summarizes missing the grace of God noting that "The writer has already warned of this in He 3:12(note): "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." Such unbelief is a bitter root which will create strife and defile many. The root is unbelief which refuses to reckon on God's provision of righteousness because it feels

confident it can produce an acceptable righteousness on its own. Strife and defilement are the bitter fruit which this root inevitably produces. It will reveal itself in two forms: sexual immorality or godlessness, like that of Esau. The first is defilement of the body; the second is defilement of the soul. Our author only touches on the first at this point but will bring it up again at He 13:4 (note). Yet this brief reference must not be missed for it equates sexual immorality in its effects with a godless spirit. ([Hebrews 12:14-17 Dangers to Watch For](#))

**Be defiled** (3392) (**miaino** [word study]) means to contaminate, corrupt, taint, defile, tinge, pollute, make "dirty", make "unclean". Originally the verb **miaino** meant to stain, as with color, and then came to mean defile as by staining (with color). The verb defile actually conveys the idea of giving something color by painting or staining it. Homer for example has this phrase "Tinges the white ivory with purple." In classical Greek, **miaino** is the standing word for profaning something. Thus Plato wrote "And if a homicide... without purification pollutes the agora, or the games, or the temples," etc. Figuratively in the NT **miaino** means to defile and stain and speaks especially of cultic and ceremonial impurity which causes something to be unacceptable.

**Miaino** - 5x in 4v - Jn 18:28; Titus 1:15; Heb 12:15; Jude 1:8. **NAS** = defile(1), defiled(4).

**Miaino** - 113x in the Lxx -

Ge 34:5, 13, 27; 49:4; Ex 20:25; Lev 5:3; 11:24, 43f; 13:3, 8, 11, 14f, 20, 22, 25, 27, 30, 44, 59; 15:31f; 18:24f, 27f, 30; 20:3; 21:1, 3f, 11; 22:5, 8; Nu 5:3, 13f, 19f, 27ff; 6:7, 9, 12; 19:13, 20; 35:34; Deut 21:23; 24:4; 2 Kgs 23:8, 10, 13, 16; 2Chr 29:19; 36:14; Ps 78:1; 105:39; Job 31:11; Hos 5:3; 6:10; 9:4; Hag 2:13f; Is 43:28; 47:6; Jer 2:7, 23, 33; 3:1f; 7:30; Ezek 4:14; 5:11; 7:22, 24; 9:7; 14:11; 18:6, 11, 15; 20:7, 18, 26, 30f, 43; 22:3f, 11; 23:7, 13, 17, 30, 38; 24:13; 36:17; 37:23; 44:25; Da 7:26; 11:31f

As an aside this verb **miaino** is used some 30 times in the **Septuagint (LXX)** (which had about 104 uses!) and thus would likely have been a very familiar term to the Jewish readers (many of whom used the Septuagint as their primary OT Scripture).

The writer is quoting from **Moses** who referred to a **root of bitterness** in **Deuteronomy**...

lest there shall be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there shall be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. (**NIV** = "make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.") (Dt 29:18)

**Comment:** Wormwood is a bitter plant. An idolatrous individual or group could infect the entire nation with the poison of idolatry. This figure of speech thus projects an image of the tragic and hopeless fruit of idolatry. Worshiping anyone or anything other than the one God separates us from God's forgiveness and blessing. We can become so set in our determination to worship a false god that we are no longer sensitive to the call of the one true God. God does not overrule the freedom of the individual. God will not forgive one who will not repent and turn to Him. We can become so determined in our sinful alienation from God that we place ourselves beyond the reach of God's forgiveness and infect others with the same poison.

We must be alert. Every fellowship of any size has a few "bitter roots" who follow false gods and subtly poison those around them. If we are to run well, the price is vigilance—especially in the good times.

**Matthew Poole** - And thereby many be defiled; lest by but one such poisonous root, a whole church of Christians may be infected and poisoned, their sin being as apt to spread and diffuse itself, as leaven, 1Co 5:6, to taint the whole lump, Ga 5:9: and how early, even in the apostles' time, for want of obeying this caution, were the primitive churches corrupted, both in doctrine and morals, by loose, filthy heretics among them!

Apostasy is a root of bitterness. The person turns sour against the Lord and repudiates the Christian faith. His defection is contagious. Others are defiled by his complaints, doubts, and denials.

In sum, this **root of bitterness** refers to the first century Jew who is considering leaving the teaching of grace and return to the Law and ritual of Judaism and thus induce others to commit the same offense.

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**The Blight of Bitterness** - Adrian Rogers - Hebrews 12:14-15 - Now, there is a terrible problem that can blow the joy of the candle of life out in your life and leave your soul in darkness. There is a problem that can hold back revival in this church. There is a problem—ladies and gentlemen—that can cause brokenness, divorce, and arguments in your home. There is a problem that can keep you from understanding the Bible. There is a problem that can keep you from being a vital, vibrant, and victorious soul-winner. And, that problem is the problem of bitterness. And, the title of our message this morning is the **Blight of Bitterness**.

I'm going to explain to you in just a moment what bitterness is but I think most of us already know what bitterness is because we

have been around bitter people. Or maybe we are a bitter person. Often a bitter person is hostile, caustic, critical, overloaded with resentment, faultfinding, and a person who is angry. Those are often frequently bitter people.

But, sometimes the bitterness doesn't show itself that way. Sometimes the bitterness shows itself by being a crybaby type of person—morose, sad, full of self-pity, and melancholy. Many times these people, when you pull the veil back, are really just bitter people. Or sometimes it shows itself in a person who is cool, aloof, disinterested, and not a participant, but inside they are a seething volcano of bitterness. Now, it is a terrible, horrible, hurtful, and hellish problem, the blight of bitterness. And, the Bible warns us about it.

Now, I want you to understand also that Hebrews is written to Christians. The Scripture here is written to Christians. And, so we need to make certain that we don't think that we're immune to this problem of bitterness. There are many sour saints. There are many caustic Christians. There are many bitter brothers. So pay attention as we think about the blight of bitterness.

The first thing I want you to see as we look at our text this morning is what I'm going to call the root of bitterness. Now, look at it in verse 15: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

### **What is the root of bitterness and how does this root find lodging in our heart and lives?**

Well a bitter person is a person generally who has been hurt. Something has happened to them. Life has not worked out as they thought that it should work out. Someone has hurt them. Maybe that one they perceive to be God Himself. They are bitter at God. Or they are bitter at society. Or they are bitter at specific individuals. They may be bitter at husbands or at wives. You know, the Bible says in the book of Colossians, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:19). Sometimes the better half becomes the bitter half. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:19).

### **Why this bitterness?**

Well these people have been hurt. And, that hurt turns to anger and hostility. Now, the hurt may have been intentional. They may have been intentionally hurt. Or the hurt may have been unintentional. Someone hurt them and was not even aware of the fact that they hurt them or the hurt may have been imagined. Nobody did anything to them really. But, they feel that they have been hurt. They feel that they have been misused. They feel that they have been abused.

Now, we've all been hurt. There is not a one of us here that has not suffered some kind of hurt. And, when we are hurt our natural inclination is to react with anger—is it not?—to react with resentment. We have a desire to get even. We have a desire to hurt the one that has hurt us. But, if we are Christians we recognize that desire to be wrong. We recognize that to be of the old nature. And, we confess it, we deal with it, we get over it, and somehow it doesn't become a root of bitterness.

But, a bitter person is different. When a bitter person is hurt he doesn't deal with his bitterness. But, he takes it into his heart. He begins to dwell on it. He begins to mull it over and over again. And, then in order to justify this feeling that he has in his heart he looks for other problems to justify this feeling of bitterness. If somebody hurts him he begins to watch that person to see if he can find other faults in that individual. And, then he becomes a very negative person. And, he looks for all of the faults and the flaws that he can find in that other person. And, when he looks for them, he will certainly find them. Because we all have flaws and we all have faults.

As a matter of fact, you always find what you look for. If you came to this service this morning looking for a problem you can find it. If you came to Bellevue Baptist Church looking for something to criticize, hey folks, look long enough and you will find it. But, if you came looking for a blessing you'll find a blessing this morning too. You see you're to find what you look for.

And, the bitter person—this person who has been hurt—begins to look for these things. And, sure enough, they find them. And, the more they see the more that confirms them in their bitterness and the more bitter they become. I'll tell you something else about a bitter person—a caustic Christian, a sour saint—they have a way of bringing out bitterness in other people. You know they are very clever many of them. A bitter person because he becomes a student of this sort of thing, he knows where your emotional hot button is. And, he knows how to push that button and to get out of you the response that he wants. A bitter person really wants to get under your skin to see if he can get you to react with hostility to him. And, when he can or when she can, that only confirms the bitterness that they already have. It only pushes that down deeper into their sub-consciousness and gives them a right to justify that bitterness.

**Now, let me say this. Few people will admit that they are bitter. This is an underground sin.** The Bible calls it "... root of bitterness..." (Hebrews 12:15). And, the root is that which is unseen. It is underground. Few people will admit it. They will deny it, they will disguise it, or they will disregard it. But, you will find very few people who say, "Well I'm just a bitter person." Every now and then you'll find one—but not many—because it takes a great amount of candor and honesty to admit that one is a bitter person.

Anna Russell wrote these words. I enjoy them. She said,



"I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed.  
to find out why I killed my cat and blackened my wife's eye.  
He put me on a downy couch to see what he could find  
and this is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind.  
When I was one my mommy hid my dolly in the trunk.  
And, so it follows naturally that I'm always drunk.  
When I was two I saw my father kiss the maid one day  
and that's why I suffer now from kleptomania.  
When I was three I suffered ambivalence from my brothers  
and so it follows naturally that I poisoned all my lovers.  
I'm so glad I have learned the lesson it has taught  
that everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault."

And, this is the way the bitter person feels. **He feels absolutely justified in his bitterness.** And, so he is a negative person. He is looking for faults to reconfirm this feeling of hostility and pity that he feels in his own heart and his own life. And, so the root of bitterness grows in the soil of a hurt that has not been properly dealt with.

### **The fruit of bitterness**

Secondly, I want you to notice not only the root of bitterness, but I want you to notice the fruit of bitterness. Look again in Heb 12:15. The Bible says we're to be: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness"—now watch it—"springing up"—because every root has fruit, springing up—"trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

**Now, you're going to find out that first of all when you are bitter it is going to hurt you first.** It's going to hurt you. It's going to trouble you. But, not only is it going to trouble you. Your bitterness will have a contagion about it. Many are going to be defiled. And, so first of all there is personal trouble and then there is social trouble that comes from bitterness.

Look first of all at this physical trouble. The Bible says, "that this root of bitterness will trouble you" (Hebrews 12:15). I want to recommend to you if you want a book to read. It is called [None of these diseases \(borrow\)](#) by S.I. McMillen. And, Dr. McMillen—a medical doctor—in that particular book lists over fifty diseases that are emotionally caused. There are people just sick, but they have physical disability because of some sort of mental, psychological, and spiritual stress.

"The man who makes me angry will kill me."

In that book he told the story of some physiologist whose name is Dr. John Hunter who knew enough about himself. Dr. Hunter said this "I am at the mercy of any scoundrel who can make me mad." He said, "The man who makes me angry will kill me." He knew something about his heart condition. And he said, "The man who makes me angry will kill me."

Later on, at a medical meeting there was a man who stood up and said something about Dr. Hunter that was unfair and it indeed made him mad. Dr. Hunter stood up and with vindictive words on his lips castigated that man and fell dead. He prophesied his own death. He knew that the blood vessels when they would begin to constrict with the anger that he would have would kill him. He committed suicide, as it were by allowing himself to get angry. Now, it may not affect you that way particularly and I'm not saying that every sick person is bitter. But, I'm saying that every bitter person will eventually—if he doesn't deal with that bitterness—be sicker than he ought to be.

**Pay attention. There are the physical consequences and there is that physical trouble.** The Bible says it will "trouble you" (Hebrews 12:15) but not only that physical trouble, that emotional physiological trouble. Dr. McMillen said this, and I want to quote from him. He said,

"When you let somebody get you angry, when you get bitter toward somebody, you become their slave. You become the slave of the person to whom you are angry."

And, I want to quote an extended passage from him. He said, and I quote,

"The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work any more because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body and I become fatigued after only a few hours' work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. I may drive a new, luxurious car along a lake fringed with the autumn beauty of maple, oak and birch. But as far as my experience of pleasure is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain. The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I cannot escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad, and strawberry shortcake

smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it." ([None of these diseases - borrow](#))

King Solomon must have had a similar experience, for he wrote,

"Better a dish of vegetables with love, than the best beef served with hatred" (Proverbs 15:17)

He goes on to say,

"The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom, but, more cruel than any slave driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my innerspring mattress becomes a rack of torture. The lowliest of the serfs can sleep, but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the vials of my wrath." ([None of these diseases - borrow](#))

Now, to the degree that you hold resentment toward anyone, to that same degree you are that one's slave. There will be physical trouble. Mark it down. There will be emotional trouble. Mark it down. There will be spiritual trouble. Mark it down.

You can't have hellishness in your heart  
and holiness in your heart at the same time.

The verse before our verse—verse 14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Now, you can't have hellishness in your heart and holiness in your heart at the same time. You just can't do it. And, so he mentions peace with men and holiness in the same sentence. And, then tells us not to be bitter.

So pay attention, dear friend. There is going to be that personal trouble. But, not only is there going to be that personal trouble, there is going to be that social defilement. Notice on, he goes on to say, not only is it going to trouble you, but he says, "... many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15).

**Bitterness sets off a chain reaction.** I want you to put your bookmarks there in Hebrews 12 and I want you to turn to Ephesians 4. Here is a very significant passage of Scripture. Ephesians 4 and I want you to begin reading with me in verse 26, "Be ye angry, and sin not..." (Ephesians 4:26+). And, I want to say that it is not always a sin to be angry. Jesus was moved with anger at the moneychangers. Jesus was moved with anger sometimes at the hardheartedness of the Pharisees. But, his was a righteous anger. His was an anger that was properly directed and properly channeled and properly used. His was an anger that was not of bitterness. He never got angry at what someone did to Him personally.

"Be ye angry, and sin not—well, when does anger become sin? Well, listen—"let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26+). That is, when it becomes bitterness. What does it mean, "let not the sun go down upon your wrath?" (Ephesians 4:26+) It means, upon your anger, when you begin to live with that anger. When you nurse that anger, feed that anger, cherish that anger, and you go to bed with it and you get up with it. And, you go to bed with it and you get up with it. The sun goes down upon your wrath. Then what do you do? You give place to the devil.

Look in Ephesians 4:27, "Neither give place to the devil". When you get angry and you sin and you refuse to deal with that sin becomes bitterness. And, that bitterness in your life becomes that devil's campground—the devil's beachhead—the stronghold that we were talking about a few Sunday mornings ago when we talked about your thought life. Was it last Sunday? The thought life. The stronghold that gets there in your mind. That's what it is. It is the devil's place. It is that foul nest in which Satan takes up lodging to war on the rest of your life and to trouble you.

But, now I want you to notice not only how this begins to trouble you, but how it begins to spread. Look down to verse 31. Now pay attention. This is a very significant passage of Scripture and I want you to look at it. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31+). Now, here I want you to notice how this bitterness spreads. How it troubles others when you allow it to have a foothold in you and begin to trouble you.

Now look at it. First of all, bitterness. He mentions bitterness in verse 31. You're wounded; you're hurt, and you're angry. You're angry at God, angry at your neighbors, angry at your wife, angry at your husband, or angry at your parents. You're angry. And, you don't deal with it. You go to bed with it. You allow the sun to go down upon your wrath. It becomes bitterness and that bitterness turns to wrath.

Look at it. He mentions wrath next. The Greek word that is translated wrath has the idea of "hotness," internal heat. Now, what happens is when you get bitter you take it in and you do sort of a slow burn. You just smolder on the inside. It's like taking a trash basket full of oily rags and dropping a match in there and just putting it in the closet. And, shutting the door and those rags begin to burn. That's what wrath is. It's that slow burn. Do you ever feel it? You have if you're normal.

First of all, there's that bitterness. That bitterness turns to wrath. Now, watch it, the wrath turns to anger. That's the next thing he mentions. Now, anger is that which is outward. Anger is explosive. It comes to the surface. Those smoldering rags now have burst

into flame and you do on a temper tantrum. Somebody jostles you. You just explode. You say, "My goodness what got into me." I tell you, there were rags smoldering in the closet for a long time you just opened the door and fed it with oxygen. That's all you did. And, it burst into flames. There is that outward hostility. And, it is far out of proportion to the thing that seemed to cause it. There is anger.

And then what—clamor. That's when the old tongue gets loose. And, the word clamor means, "it now becomes vocal." You enter into a verbal contest. You get into a war of words. And, there is that harshness and that rancor and that clamoring. You let the argument heat up and then it moves into the next step. Boy this is a terrible one. Then it says evil speaking.

No longer is it clamor. No longer is it just an argument. But, now it becomes name-calling. You want to vilify the other person. You can things that you know are not true about the other person. And, you say things that you wish you'd never said, "I hate you," "I wish we'd never gotten married," "I'm sorry I ever met you," "I wish you were dead," or "You're a liar." Oh, our tongues.

We gave the devil a place. We got bitter. That bitterness turned to wrath. That wrath turned to anger. And, that anger turned to clamor. And, that clamor turned to evil speaking. And, then that evil speaking turns to the worse part of all, malice. Which means, "I want to do you harm," "I want to hurt you," "I want to injure you." And, we're filled with malice. That's what the writer of Hebrews is talking about when he says, "You watch that root of bitterness. It'll spring up. It'll trouble you" (Hebrews 12:15) physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But, not only will it trouble you "many will be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15). Oh, it's a cancerous thing in a home in a church, in a society, and in a business. And, many are defiled by this root of bitterness.

### **The pursuit of bitterness**

Now, the third and final thing I want to mention this morning. I want you to see not only what I call the root of bitterness and not only the fruit of bitterness, but I want you to see the pursuit of bitterness. Go back if you will to Hebrews 12 and you'll see why I said the pursuit of bitterness. Look in verse 15. The Bible says we are to be "looking diligently"—just underscore that looking diligently—"lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you..." (Hebrews 12:15).

You see a root is underground. You have to seek it out. You have to pursue it. You have to search for it. Because I know as I'm standing here preaching you're sitting there saying, "I wonder if any of those old bitter people are hearing what he is saying." Yeah? Now, could it be that the Holy Spirit of God wants to do radical surgery on you this morning. And, get down deep, deep, deep. And, reveal to you something about yourself that perhaps you've never known, never been willing to admit. And, with some of you it may go all the way back to your childhood. A root of bitterness.

You need to pursue it for three reasons. Number one, you need to pursue it to recognize it. When you recognize it, when you make a proper diagnosis you've done a big thing. See, so many people never recognize it. I mean they don't admit it. They are bitter, but it would be the last thing. They would never say, "I am a bitter person."

They may hide their bitterness behind a mask. A preacher and a deacon went golfing one day. And, the deacon said to the preacher, "Preacher you're the most even handed person I've ever seen. You always smile. When I hit my ball in the water hazard, in the golf, in the sand, in the rough, or when I make a bad shot, hook it, slice it, boy it just shows all over me. But, you do the same thing but you just keep on smiling." The preacher says, "Yeah I know it." But, he says, "Everywhere I spit the grass dies."

Recognize it. Sometimes you can hide it with a facade. I'll tell you one of the worse things that can possibly happen in the realm of bitterness is for you to become a member of Bellevue Baptist Church in good standing, doing church work, and yet have bitterness in your heart. Because you know what happens? When you live outwardly a good life, but you have bitterness down beneath the surface, that outward life is just your way of pruning the limbs while you strengthen the root. And, the more you prune the limbs the more you strengthen the root. And, the more of these outward things you do that seem so good and the things that you give up, but if you don't deal radically with that root cause, it's going to trouble you and many are going to be defiled. You need to pursue it in order to recognize it. Then you need to pursue it in order to remove it, to root it out. And, there is only one thing that will root it out and that is to forgive the person who has wounded you.

Are you certain pastor? Let's get it from The Word of God. I want you to see what God's Word says in Ephesians 4:31, 32. Now, we dealt with verse 31+ but I want you to listen to verse 32 now, listen: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you"—that is, remove it—"with all malice"—alright, how are you going to do it? Listen, here is how you do it—"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted"—listen now—"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31-32+). Are you listening?

The only way that you can remove it is to forgive—fully and freely—that person who has hurt you. You say that is not fair. They deserve my wrath. No they don't. First of all, you don't know enough to punish them. "... Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). But, I'm going to tell you something else friend, it's going to hurt you more than it's going to hurt them. But, I'm going to tell you something else. I'm going to tell you something else friend. The model for this is God forgiving you.

Is there anybody here who deserved to be forgiven when God forgave you? Anybody? Of course not. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32+).

The grace of God causes us to do this. That's the reason the writer of Hebrews said, "Beware lest any of you fail of the grace of God and a root of bitterness spring up" (Hebrews 12:15). You think of God's grace. You think of what Jesus Christ has done to you and the grace of God to you. And, then on the basis of that grace, "...be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32+). And, when you do God the Holy Spirit will root that bitterness out.

You say, "That's going to be hard." Calvary was hard. And, the person who deals with bitterness is going to have to taste of Calvary. But, it's worth it. The Bible said of Jesus, "...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..." (Hebrews 12:2+). He suffered for the joy of forgiving us. And, we can suffer for the joy of forgiving others.

Mark Twain said that, "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it." That's what it is. You say, "Well, when I forgive them is that going to deal with these memories?" No, the memory will be there. But, it will be different.

Somebody put it this way "The hornet of remembering may fly again, but the sting of bitterness has been removed" Oh you will remember it psychologically. But, the sting is gone because you've put it beneath Calvary's blood. And, you've been "kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ' sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32+).

You are to pursue it to recognize it and you are to pursue it to remove it, but you are not finished yet. You are to pursue it to replace it. Now, it is not without significance that Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness..." (Hebrews 12:14). That is, it is not just enough to get the bitterness out. We want to be right with our brother and sister. We want to be reconciled. Amen? That's what it is. Oh, we want that love of God in our hearts.

Edwin Marcum was a great poet. And, he lived a life 'till he reached the age where he thought he could retire. And, he had a lot of money laid up to retire. But, when he found himself in his sixties and got ready to retire he found out that his banker friend had defrauded him and had appropriated his money. And, the money that he thought he had, he did not have. His money was gone. And, there he was a man ready for retirement and he was penniless. And, he got bitter. How could a friend do something like this to me? And, he got bitter on life. And, he became censorious and cantankerous and full of spite and revenge. He said, "Now I've got to go back to work." And, he tried to go back to work but he couldn't work. He would sit down at the desk to write his poetry and the words would not come and his heart was locked up. The candle of joy had been blown out in his life and all he could think about was the man who had harmed him and the man who had wronged him and how terrible it was. And, he became more and more bitter. Marcum said, "I was sitting at my desk doodling, just kind of drawing circles on a piece of paper and thinking about this man." He said, "God the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, 'Marcum, if you don't deal with this thing it is going to ruin you. You cannot afford the price that you are paying. You must forgive him,'" And, Marcum said, "Oh my God, I will and I do freely forgive." And, that root was pulled out. The joy started to flow again. And, then he wrote these words,

"He drew a circle that shut me out:  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in."

There may be somebody, dear friend, who has shut you out but I want you to take God's love and bring him. Just bring them in. For God for Christ's sake has done for you. My friend, you listen to me now. Beware lest there be a root of bitterness springing up that troubles you and defiles many. Let's bow in prayer

#### **Related Resource:**

- [The Root of Bitterness - Adrian Rogers](#) - 41 minute video

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### **AN OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION OF BITTERNESS**

#### **DIGGING OUT THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS** - Alan Carr (excerpted)

Now, I am not much of a gardener, but I do know this: some plants, especially some weeds, will never die unless you dig out their roots and utterly destroy them. You can cut them off at the surface time after time, but they just keep coming back. However, when the root is exposed and removed from the soil, the plant is gone. It takes work to dig out roots, but it is worth the effort, since it protects the other plants in the garden. Resentful...has the idea of brooding anger over that which has happened in your life. This anger produces a bad spirit within a person. It is a spirit of hostility and coldness toward God or others. Where does bitterness

come from? Bitterness can come about as the result of what others do to us or say about us. Sometimes, bitterness can result from the events of life themselves, as we blame God or others for our troubles. Bitterness will affect every relationship within your life, but it will affect your relationship with the Lord most of all. The Bible talks about this “root of bitterness” that is a possibility in our lives. Notice: Heb. 12:15 and Deut. 29:18. These verses refer to that “root of bitterness”. It is called a root because it begins hidden within the soil of your heart. From there, its roots will entwine themselves around your heart and mind, until they choke the life out of you emotionally and spiritually. If allowed to grow unchecked, this “root of bitterness” will spring up into a plant that will cast a shadow over everything you are and do. A “root of bitterness” in your life will literally come to dominate your very existence. In our text, we are presented with a man who was in the strangle hold of a massive “root of bitterness”. Ahithophel met a tragic end because he allowed a root of bitterness to flourish in his life.

## **I. THE TESTIMONY OF AHITHOPHEL'S LIFE**

**A. He Had The Testimony Of A Saved Man** – Many things in this man's life give the indication that he was a saved man.

- 1. He Sacrificed To God** – 2Sa 15:12 – The very first time Ahithophel appears in the Bible, he appears engaged in the act of worship. This indicates that he was a keeper of the Law and a worshiper of the Lord.
- 2. He Spoke For God** – 2Sa 16:23 – Ahithophel had the reputation as a man who gave good, godly counsel. In fact, this verse says that hearing a word from Ahithophel was just like getting the word directly from the mouth of God.

**B. He Had The Testimony Of A Serving Man** – Reading about this man's life teaches us that he did not just believe in God, but he also served God by serving others.

- 1. He Was A Counselor To God's Man** – 2Sa 15:12 – Great leaders have always surrounded themselves with good counselors and David was no exception. Ahithophel was one of the men David trusted for advice and direction as he governed the nation of Israel.
- 2. He Was A Companion Of God's Man** – Ps 41:9 – In this Psalm, which looks back on the treachery of Ahithophel's life, David refers to him as “my familiar friend”. The word “familiar” comes from the same root that is often translated “peace”. These men were at peace on with another. They were as close as men could be. The word “friend” comes from a word that can be translated “great champion or husband”. (Which, by the way, is how my wife sees me!) I think that in using these two words, David is saying, “Ahithophel and I were closer than brothers. Our hearts were wedded together as one and we walked together in peace.” He was a friend to the man of God!

In spite of the fact that Ahithophel gave every outward indication that all was well between himself and the Lord and between himself and David, there was something working in his heart that would destroy everything. Even during these times of his life, Ahithophel was being eaten alive, from the inside out, by an event that had happened years earlier.) I pointed out all those positive things from the life of Ahithophel to say this to you: You cannot always tell from the outward signs what is happening in a person's heart! You may be thinking: “Preacher, no one here has a root of bitterness in this heart. After all, we are at church on a Sunday evening. We have a smile on our faces; we are joyous; we are worshipping together; everything is alright.” I think Ahithophel is about to teach us that what you see on the outside does not always show you the true condition of the heart! Have you ever heard of the word “hypocrite”? It was how Jesus referred to the scribes and Pharisees, Matt. 23:13-15; 23, 25, 27. It is an interesting word! It was originally used to refer to “an actor, or one who plays a part.” In the famous Greek tragedies, one actor would often play many parts. This actor would have a different mask for each part he was to play. As he transitioned from part to part, he would simply switch one mask for another. Hence, hypocrisy came to refer to someone who “plays different parts by hiding behind different masks.” Someone who wears their church face on Sunday and lives like the world on Monday is a hypocrite. By the same token, someone who loves you to your face, but secretly despises you in their hearts is also a hypocrite. They are merely playing a part and hiding behind a mask. What is the bottom line? What you see is not always what you get! People tend to try and hide a lot of themselves from others. But, we all need to remember, God sees it all, even that which you think you have hidden, Heb. 4:13.)

## **II. THE TRAGEDY OF AHITHOPHEL'S LIFE**

The bitterness that was hidden within the heart of Ahithophel finally came out. Notice how it manifested itself in his life.

**A. A Tragic Conspiracy** – When David's son Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel saw his chance to enact his revenge upon King David. Ahithophel joined the rebellion and stood against God's anointed, 2 Sam. 15:31; Ps. 41:9.

**B. A Tragic Counsel** – Out of his hatred for David, Ahithophel gave Absalom two words of counsel. The first recommendation he made was designed to disgrace King David, 2 Sam. 16:20-23. By having Absalom go into his father's concubines, he publicly disgraced David and created a rift between father and son that could never be healed. The second recommendation was designed

to Destroy King David, 2 Sam. 17:1-4. Had this second piece of advice been followed, it is possible that David would have been defeated.

**C. A Tragic Conclusion** – Thankfully, David had a true friend in Absalom's court, a man by the name of Hushai. Hushai had originally planned to go with David when he fled from Absalom, but at David's request, he stayed behind in the city to try and overthrow the counsel of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 15:32-37. Hushai comes to Absalom and professes his loyalty, 2 Sam. 16:16-19. After he has gained Absalom's confidence, Hushai contradicts the wise counsel of Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 17:1-22, which resulted in Absalom accepting Hushai's counsel and David being warned of what is about to take place and thus David is spared. Of course, the key verse is 2 Sam. 17:14. God was behind all this intrigue, because David, not Absalom, was the king of Israel!

When Ahithophel sees that his counsel has been rejected and that his plans to defeat and destroy David have failed, he returns to his house, puts everything in order and commits suicide! What a tragic end to what had been a good life!

Ahithophel did all these evil things because there was a root of bitterness in his life. He hated David and had merely pretended to be his friend all those years. As that root of bitterness grew in his life, Ahithophel lost sight of his former friendship with David. He lost sight of his walk with the Lord. Everything of value in his life had been choked out and he was left with nothing but bitterness and hatred. The root of bitterness had utterly consumed this man.)

As tragic as these events may be, I would like to point out that there are many in our Baptist church who are also afflicted with a root of bitterness. Because of some events in your past; because of what someone said to you or about you; because you didn't get your way at some point, your feelings are hurt and nothing means as much to you as getting your pound of flesh. You are angry at someone else and you want revenge. You are hurt and you want them to hurt. You are offended and so you give them the cold shoulder, or purposely go out of your way to avoid having to speak to them. You think you are hurting them, but in reality, you are hurting no one but yourself! How? Friend, your bitterness will kill no one but you! When you and I allow bitterness over the hurts, slights and events of life to control us, we are committing slow, spiritual suicide. We are allowing our very spiritual life to be strangled right out of us! When we allow our hurts to linger, they will grow into a root of bitterness that will stifle anything spiritual within our lives. It is a tremendous tragedy when saved; spiritual people allow their lives to be consumed by hate, anger and bitterness! The best thing you can do is build a bridge and get over it before it kills you!

### III. THE TEACHING OF AHITHOPHEL'S LIFE

As we look at Ahithophel's life, I think you would agree with me that his life is a tragedy. His life is a lesson in foolishness. This man truly lives up to his name. Ahithophel means "Brother of Folly; or Brother of Ruin". Knowing what happened to him, I think we would all confess that we do not want the same thing to happen to us. So, what lessons can we take away from this study tonight? There are a couple.)

**A. The Reasons That Produced His Fall** – I have talked a lot about Ahithophel's bitterness, but I have not yet told you what he was bitter over. I think we need to know. There are three passages that reveal the reasons behind this man's bitterness and hatred toward David. They are: 2 Sam. 11:1-27; 2 Sam. 23:34. Looking at these two passages together you can see that Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahithophel. David had treated his grand-daughter like she was a plaything and had arranged the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite.

Considering what David did to Bathsheba, it is no wonder that Ahithophel was angry! And, he allowed his anger to burn for some 9 years, all the while feigning friendship toward David, biding his time until he could exact revenge. This bitterness ate Ahithophel alive until he was brought to the point of intrigue and murder, 2 Sam. 17:1-4. Then, when he saw that his plans had failed and the man he hated would return to the throne, Ahithophel took his own life, rather than face David.

**Can you see the danger in allowing a root of bitterness to flourish in your life?** Yet, in all of this, Ahithophel forgot two important truths.

1. God is sovereign and He is able to deal with the sins of His children, 2Sa 17:14; Rev. 3:19.
2. David had already paid dearly for his indiscretion with Bathsheba, 2Sa 12, and he would continue to pay for the murder of Uriah for the rest of his life, 2 Kings 12:9-10. God's children never get away with sin!

**B. The Remedies That Prevent Our Failure** – With all this in mind, what can we do to avoid being consumed by a root of bitterness? Thankfully the Bible holds the answer to this question.

1. Acknowledge you own sin in allowing a root of bitterness to flourish. When you harbor resentment in your heart and fail to extend forgiveness to those who hurt you, then you are just as guilty as they are in the eyes of the Lord. Your first step is to admit your own wrong before the Lord, 1 John 1:9.
2. People must be forgiven! This is not an option; it is a necessity, Matt. 18:15-17; Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 17:1-



5; Eph. 4:32. It is better to confront those who have offended you and get things settled than it is to allow bitterness to consume from the inside out! Remember, God knows how to take care of His Own children, Heb. 12:6-12; Rev. 3:19; Rom. 12:17-21.

3. Past events must be forgotten! What happened yesterday can never be changed. But, you do hold the key to tomorrow. You should never allow the hurts of yesterday to control your life today. It is a shame when we drag around the baggage of what someone said, what someone did or how we were hurt. It does nothing but strangle the spiritual life right out of you! You say, "I can't forget it!" Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.", Matt. 11:28. He also says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.", 2 Cor. 12:9. Where we fail, He prevails! He will give you the grace to forgive and He will give you the grace to forget, if you will bring it to Him, 1 Pet. 5:7! If you will bring it to Him, He can really make the past the past!

4. Hatred and anger must be forsaken! Eph. 4:26-27, give serious warning concerning anger within our lives. It allows our adversary, the devil, a foothold, or a beachhead from which he can attack every area of our lives! You must bring your bitterness to the Lord!

**Conclusion** - Friend, are you afflicted with a root of bitterness? If so, then let me challenge you to bring it before the Lord and let Him dig it out of your life tonight. If you will honestly confess your hurt to the Lord, seek to forgive the offending party, and then God will give the grace needed to make that a reality in your life. You don't need to let that root of bitterness live another minute! **Of course, some are bitter against others** and maybe even against God and they know it, but they have no intentions of forgiving or forgetting, choosing rather to seethe in their anger and to feel sorry for themselves. If that describes you friend, then you are in danger tonight. You need to lead the charge to this altar, seeking the Lord for your own forgiveness and restoration, so you can begin the healing process. **Others need to get up and go to another Brother or Sister** and say, "I'm sorry for what I said or what I did. Please forgive me!" That would be a blessing! **Still others are harboring a hurt and nursing a wounded spirit** and the person you are hurt at doesn't even know they have done anything to you. The best thing you can do is to get before the Lord and deal with that matter in your own life. If you can't get over, then do what the Bible says and go to that Brother or that Sister and talk it over in a spirit of humility and love. I have done what the Lord asked me to do tonight. I have delivered the mail. Now, it is up to you to read it and to do what the Lord is speaking to your heart. My friends, let's be honest with our own hearts and with one another tonight. Until we deal with our roots of bitterness, the power of God and the ability of the Spirit of God to convict hearts, save sinners and move in power will be hindered.

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[\*\*Hebrews 12:15 What is a "Root of Bitterness"?\*\*](#) April 1, 1997 | by John Piper

"Bitterness" is usually associated with anger and grudges. But is this what it means in Hebrews 12:15? "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness, springing up, causes trouble, and by it many be defiled"? I don't think so.

Let's ask a few questions. First of all, does "root of bitterness" mean that the root is bitterness (like block of wood)? Or does it mean that the root grows up into a plant and bears the bitter fruit? Second, does "bitterness" in Hebrews 12:15 mean "festering anger," or does it mean "poisonous and foul"? Third, where did this image of a "root of bitterness" come from?

Let's start with the last question. Answer: it came from Deuteronomy 29:18. "Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit." This background also helps us answer the first two questions: the root is not itself bitterness but rather bears the fruit of bitterness. And the bitterness it bears is something poisonous. This bitter fruit may be festering anger, or it may be something else. The point seems to be that it is deadly.

The key question is, What is this root that causes deadly, bitter fruit to sprout in the church? The next verse in Deuteronomy 29 gives the surprising answer, but it fits perfectly with the book of Hebrews. Verse 18 ends: "...lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit." Then verse 19 begins by defining this root: "...one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This would lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike."

What then is the root that brings forth the bitter fruit? It is a person who has a wrong view of eternal security. He feels secure when he is not secure. He says, "I shall be safe [=secure], though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart." He misunderstands the covenant God makes. He thinks that because he is part of the covenant people, he is secure from God's judgment.

This kind of presumption is what the book of Hebrews deals with repeatedly—professing Christians who think they are secure because of some past spiritual experience or some present association with Christian people. The aim of Hebrews is to cure Christians of presumption, and to cultivate earnest perseverance in faith and holiness. At least four times it warns that we must not neglect our great salvation but be vigilant to fight the fight of faith every day lest we become hardened and fall away and prove that

we had no share in Christ (2:3; 3:12-14; 6:4-7; 10:23-29).

This is also the very point of the context of the term “root of bitterness” in Hebrews 12:15. “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness, springing up, causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (12:14-15). This is a warning not to treat holiness lightly or to presume upon more grace.

Therefore a “root of bitterness” is a person or a doctrine in the church which encourages people to act presumptuously and treats salvation as an automatic thing that does not require a life of vigilance in the fight of faith and the pursuit of holiness. Such a person or a doctrine defiles many and can lead to the experience of Esau who played fast and loose with his inheritance and could not repent in the end, and find life.

Soberly,  
Pastor John

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### **"Bound By Bitterness"**

Heb 12:15—Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you], and thereby many be defiled;

The passage warns of us of a very grievous sin that gets a free pass, this sin will ruin a person. The root of bitterness often goes unnoticed, it rarely gets any attention, it is rarely discussed, but it is like a deadly virus that is silently killing its victims. As we discuss this mighty sin, some may ask is this is so, why is this sin so great? The sin of bitterness is hidden beneath the surface, it is covered up, it cannot be seen in a literal sense. The problem with bitterness is that it has to have a reason; the bitter person has to have something to be bitter at. Often the object of this bitterness has no idea that the bitter person has so much venom toward them. The bitter pill is difficult to digest; it literally destroys the body that is trying to digest its poison.

The strange thing about bitterness is that when it is planted in a life, after it has been watered, when the bitter heart has become fertile ground, other roots spring up. The good thing about a root is that it can be removed while it is in the beginning stages of growth, a small sapling can be pulled up with ease, but as it takes hold the longer it's roots take hold, the greater difficulty we have in plucking it up. The other roots that grow along with bitterness are easy to identify, hatred, anger, malice, backbiting, division, jealousy, envy, unhappiness, the list could go on I suppose. I wonder if you have let this bitter root into your life, has it entrenched itself within your heart? If it is there how well are you hiding it, are you doing good at disguising it?

The real problem with bitterness is how it swells up at times in our life; it literally can affect our health. It will take a person to the grave; it can bring forth the deepest form of depression. As you look over your life, is the bitterness worth the pain, are you not tired of carrying this heavy burden around? I wonder if you would not be better off to bury this thing and leave it in the grave, move on, get over it. I have found that some people are bitter with God, their spouse, their child, their job, a promotion, a promise, a pain, and sometimes the church, what is your object of bitterness?

1. Bitterness Must Be Fertilized & Attended
2. Bitterness Must Be Faced & Admitted
3. Bitterness Must Be Forsaken & Abandoned

As we wrestle with this green eyed monster of bitterness a decision must be made, will you let it flourish or will you cut it off, pluck it up by the roots? Ask God to give you the courage to face the truth and the will power to do what is needful, get rid of the evil root of bitterness (Cantrell's Jewels for the Journey)

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### **Hebrews 12:12-24 Road Builders**

The cover of a recent Our Daily Bread pictures a leaf-strewn road through the mountains of Vermont. Those who use the road can enjoy a smooth and beautiful ride over difficult terrain. To make this possible, others had to work hard to chart the route, clear the trees, and level the rough spots.

In a way, all Christians are road builders. We are paving the way of faith for the next generation. The faithfulness of our lives may determine how difficult their journey will be. Will they have to repair the damage we have done to the road? Will they be able to build new roads for others to find the way to God?

To be good road builders, we must heed the advice found in God's Word. The author of Hebrews instructed us to live in peace and be holy (Heb 12:14), to make sure no one misses the grace of God, and **not to permit a root of bitterness to grow and cause trouble** (Heb 12:15).

Those of us who have come to Jesus owe gratitude to those who have made "straight paths" for our walk of faith (Heb 12:13). In turn, we must remember those who will follow us and make straight paths for them. Let's practice our faith in a way that makes it easy for others to come to Jesus and to follow Him. What kind of road builder are you?— Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful;  
May the fire of our devotion light their way;  
May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe,  
And the lives we live inspire them to obey. —Mohr  
© 1987 Jonathan Mark Music and Birdwing Music

A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

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## **Ephesians 4:30-32 The Root of Bitterness - David Holwick**

### **I. Introduction.**

#### **A. Bitterness is a common fact of life.**

- 1) Exodus 1:14; 12:8 - bitter herbs reflect harsh conditions in Egypt (and haste in leaving).
- 2) Weeping bitterly occurs frequently in OT.

#### **B. Bitterness is a sign of a worldly attitude. Romans 3:13-14**

"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.  
The poison of vipers is on their lips.  
Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

#### **C. Many Christians are afflicted with bitterness.**

- 1) It can destroy your spiritual joy.
- 2) It can destroy your witness with non-believers.

### **II. Causes of bitterness.**

#### **A. Bitterness toward people.**

- 1) They have done some wrong toward you.
  - a) Grandpa Frye and 40 year grudge against his daughter.
- 2) They have something you don't.

"But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.  
Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil." James 3:14-15

#### **B. Bitterness toward God.**

- 1) Naomi felt embittered due to death of husband and son. Ruth 1:20

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.  
I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty.  
Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." Ruth 1:20-21

- 2) Job - "bitterness of soul" a common expression.

#### **C. Bitterness comes from harboring unforgiveness and envy in heart.**

### **III. Effects of bitterness.**

#### **A. Steers you away from God. Hebrews 12:15**

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

- 1) Grows insidiously, quietly, like a root.
- 2) Turns heart away from God's grace and love.

B. Breaks down relationships.

- 1) Hebrews 12:15 - trouble is caused for many.
- 2) Deut 29:18 - all of God's people can be infected.  
"Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations;  
Make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison." Deut. 29:18

C. Turns focus to worldliness. Makes you a captive of sin.

- 1) You become a captive of sin, like Simon of Samaria.  
Peter describes him as not saved. Acts 8:22-23  
"Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.  
For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

IV. Victory over bitterness.

A. Don't let bitterness start to begin with.

- 1) David and experience at Ziklag. 1 Sam 30:6  
  
"David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters.  
But David found strength in the LORD his God." 1 Sam 30:6  
a) David was equivalent to a terrorist. While on a raid, his city was destroyed and the families of his men taken. His men were bitter.  
  
b) David did not get bitter, but found strength in God.

B. If bitterness does start, admit it and do something.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.  
Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.  
Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:30-32

- 1) Deal with grudges directly.
- 2) Get rid of bitterness by have a forgiving heart.

C. Turn thoughts toward love.

- 1) Real-life story from Los Angeles Times:

A father and mother from Dearborn, Michigan, whose 20-year-old daughter had been brutally murdered, traveled to the prison where their daughter's convicted killer was being held.  
"We love this special person from the bottom of our hearts," the mother said.  
"We harbor no hatred, no revenge."

Is this woman simply crazy?

"We had the normal human reaction of grief and anguish,"

she declared:  
"Didn't I have the right to be filled with red-hot hate?  
But where would it have gotten me?  
It wouldn't have gotten me my daughter back....  
God led us on this journey.  
You don't have to commit a horrible crime to be lost.  
You just have to ignore Jesus Christ."

V. Our response.

A. Bitter experiences are bound to come.

B. How will we respond to them?

C. "Better" rather than "bitter." (Billy Graham session)

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**Helen Grace Lesheid writing on on bitterness** - It grows. It distorts reality. It keeps us chained to the past. Like bad air, it pollutes not just the bitter person, but those who come in contact with the person (He 12:15). (Breaking Free from Bitterness - Discipleship Journal, Vol 14, No. 6, Nov/Dec 1994)

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### 1 Samuel 12:20 Have You Turned?

In May of 1998, the failure of a control processor on board the Galaxy IV communications satellite caused it to rotate out of position and turn away from the earth. In an instant, 40 million pagers became useless pieces of plastic. Hundreds of retail stores and scores of radio and TV stations were also affected--all because one satellite turned the wrong way.

How many people would be affected if you or I turned away from God? Few of us realize the extent of our influence, but our obedience to God is vital because of our role in the church (1 Cor. 12:12-17) and the world (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

God charged His Old Testament people to be faithful to His covenant "so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, . . . and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood" (Dt. 29:18). A New Testament writer recalled this when he said we should be careful "lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness** springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Heb. 12:15).

Are you out of position today? Turn back to God. Stay in contact with Him. You never know how many lives will be influenced by your decision. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### THINKING IT OVER

What might cause me to turn away from God?

Is there any "root of bitterness" in my life?

Is there anything I need to confess to God right now?

True repentance turns from the wrong and returns to the right

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Self-pity weeps on the devil's shoulder, turning to Satan for comfort. His invitation is: "Come unto me all you that are grieved, peeved, misused, and disgruntled, and I will spread on the sympathy. You will find me a never-failing source of the meanest attitudes and the most selfish sort of misery. At my altar you may feel free to fail and fall, and there to sigh and fret. There I will feed your soul on fears, and indulge your ego with envy and jealousy, **bitterness** and spite. There I will excuse you from every cross, duty, and hardship, and permit you to yield unto temptation." (From Green, M. P. Illustrations for Biblical Preaching)

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Romans 12:14-21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. —Romans 12:21

One summer I was at a gathering of old high school acquaintances when someone behind me tapped me on my shoulder. As my eyes drifted over the woman's name tag, my mind drifted back in time. I remembered a tightly folded note that had been shoved through the slot on my locker. It had contained cruel words of rejection that had shamed me and crushed my spirit. I remember thinking, Somebody needs to teach you a lesson on how to treat people! Although I felt as if I were reliving my adolescent pain, I mustered up my best fake smile; and insincere words began coming out of my mouth.

We began to converse. A sad story of a difficult upbringing and of an unhappy marriage began to pour out of her. As it did, the words

“root of bitterness” from Hebrews 12:15 popped into my head. That’s what I’m feeling, I thought. After all these years, I still had a deep root of bitterness hidden within me, twisting around and strangling my heart. Then these words came to my mind: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

We talked. We even shared some tears. Neither of us mentioned the long-ago incident. God taught someone a lesson that afternoon—a lesson of forgiveness and of letting go of bitterness. He taught it to me.

Dear Lord, please help me not to harbor resentment and bitterness in my heart. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, enable me to let go of my bitterness and forgive those who have hurt me.

**Revenge imprisons us; forgiveness sets us free.**

By Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**The Cure for Bitterness is a Heavenly Vision** - The story of the blind songwriter [Fanny Crosby](#) ([Click for additional bio and links to many of her hymns](#)) who wrote more than 8,000 songs is a powerful example of a heart that refused to let the seeds of bitterness and unforgiveness germinate. When Fanny was only 6 weeks old a minor eye inflammation developed and as some tell the story, the doctor who treated her was a quack and the potion he prescribed resulted in her becoming totally and permanently blind! Talk about having a reason to be bitter! And yet this Spirit filled woman harbored no bitterness against the physician and was quoted as having said of him

If I could meet him now, I would say thank you, over and over again for making me blind.

Indeed Fanny Crosby considered her blindness to be a gift from God to help her write the 8000 hymns that flowed so freely from her pen. Warren Wiersbe in commenting on Fanny’s life wrote that...

It was said of another blind hymn writer, [George Matheson](#), that God made him blind so he could see clearly in other ways and become a guide to men. This same tribute could be applied to Fanny Crosby, who triumphed over her handicap and used it to the glory of God. (Editorial comment: Here are words from his most popular hymn)

**[O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go](#)**

I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O light that followest all my way,  
I yield my flickering torch to thee;  
My heart restores its borrowed ray,  
That in thy sunshine’s blaze its day  
May brighter, fairer be.

And so when God allowed life to give Fanny Crosby “lemons”, instead of choosing bitterness, she turned the lemons into some of the sweetest hymns ever penned! In short, Fanny filled with the Spirit and the grace of God, turned tragedy into triumph, becoming better instead of bitter! May her tribe increase!

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English essayist and critic Charles Lamb (1775–1834) once commented about a person he did not want to meet:

“Don’t introduce me to that man. I want to go on hating him, and I can’t hate someone I know.” Our Daily Bread

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**Myth:** “You must forget in order to forgive.”

**Truth:** Forgiving is not forgetting. The key is how it is remembered.... Forgiving is remembering without bitterness, hatred or resentment (June Hunt - Biblical Counseling Keys - BORROW her related book [How to forgive-- when you don't feel like it](#) Or borrow her book [Counseling Through Your Bible Handbook](#) - deals with 50 common problems from anger to worry)

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**Bitterness** always inflicts a deeper wound on the person who harbors it than the person against whom it is directed. A man who had car trouble on a lonely road asked a farmer to tow him to the nearest garage. On the way his wife was protesting to her husband the fee the farmer charged. “It is scandalous,” she said, “to charge us ten dollars for towing this car only three miles.” To which her



husband replied, "Never mind, dear. I'm having my revenge—I've got my brakes on." Many a person has thought himself to be getting revenge, but all the time the major damage was being done to him. (Speaker's Quote Book)

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Robert Louis Stevenson, in his Picturesque Notes of Edinburgh, tells the story of two unmarried sisters who shared a single room. As people are apt to do who live in close quarters, the sisters had a falling out, which Stevenson says was "on some point of controversial divinity." In other words, they disagreed over some aspect of theology. **The controversy was so bitter that they never spoke again (ever!).** There were no words, either kind or spiteful — just silence. Nevertheless, possibly because of a lack of means, or because of the innate Scottish fear of scandal, they continued to keep house together in the single room. A chalk-line was drawn across the floor to separate their two domains. For years they coexisted in hateful silence. Each woman's meals, baths, and family visitors were exposed to the other's unfriendly silence. At night each went to bed listening to the heavy breathing of her enemy. Thus, the two sisters (ostensibly daughters of the Church!) continued the rest of their miserable lives. They probably were not true Christians, because Christians are not to resist reconciliation and forgiveness. ([Hughes, R. K.: Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ. Crossway Books](#))

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**The Burden of Bitterness - Luis Palau** writes...

A friend of mine went through a massive emotional breakdown. After his recovery, we went for a walk. "Luis," he told me, "don't ever allow anyone to make you bitter."

He told me about his breakdown which proved very embarrassing.

"My problems began when I got so worked up about the contractor who didn't build my basement and driveway right. I hated what he'd done to my home. And since he lived next door, I saw him almost daily. Each time I saw him, my anger and bitterness grew even more intense until I finally cracked."

No wonder God's Word is so emphatic: "Get rid of all bitterness" (Ephesians 4:31). Why? Because if a "bitter root grows up" within you, it will "cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:15). ([Luis Palau: How to Renew Your Spiritual Passion. Discovery House, October, 1994](#))(Or borrow it [here](#))

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**Purge Out The Poison** - My friend and I were standing in the parking lot of a restaurant where we had just finished lunch. While we were discussing the damage a bitter spirit can cause, he took out his New Testament and solemnly read Hebrews 12:15 to me: "Looking carefully . . . lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."

In the six long decades since our conversation, the sad truth of that warning has been repeatedly verified by my experiences in pastoral ministry. Bitterness is a poison, and if not purged out by prayer, confession, and forgiveness, it does great emotional damage and destroys relationships. A little grudge that festers can become a devastating malignancy of soul. That's why the advice in Hebrews must be diligently heeded.

Have you been holding fast to the memory of some insult, some event, some criticism? As Paul put it in Ephesians 4:26note, "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." Take the proper steps to resolve the problem right away.

Holding a grudge poisons our spiritual lives. With the Holy Spirit's help, let's uproot any bitterness right now. It's amazing how joyful our lives will be when we allow God to purge out the poison of bitterness. --V C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

#### **Thinking It Through**

What are we to do when someone sins  
against us? (Lk. 17:3, 4). According to Jesus,  
how many times are we to forgive? (Mt. 18:21, 22).

**To get rid of weeds of anger,  
dig out the bitter roots.**

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**Sunk by Own Attack ([USS Tang in Wikipedia](#))** - During World War II the U.S. submarine Tang surfaced under the cover of darkness to fire upon a large Japanese convoy off the coast of China. Since previous raids had left the American vessel with only eight torpedoes, the accuracy of every shot was absolutely essential. The first seven missiles were right on target; but when the eighth was launched, it suddenly deviated and headed right back at their own ship. The emergency alarm to submerge rang out, but it was too late. Within a matter of seconds the U.S. sub received a direct hit and sank almost instantly. Instead of doing battle with the enemy, Christians often use God's Word like a torpedo to attack one another. With precisely aimed missiles of criticism,

contempt, or callousness, we can cripple the body of Christ, of which we are all members. You cannot sink someone else's end of the boat and still keep your own afloat. (Ed: "Amen" or "Oh my"!)

In much the same way we can destroy ourselves by our enmity and hostility directed toward others. The effects of holding a grudge are very serious. In fact, modern medicine has shown that emotions such as bitterness and anger can cause problems such as headaches, backaches, ulcers, high blood pressure, even contributing to the increased incidence of heart attacks, etc. When we do not love our enemies (Mt 5:44-note where "**love**" = present imperative - keep on loving them in effect "70 x 7"! ) but strike back at them, we are usurping God's prerogative to mete out justice (Ro 12:17-note, Ro 12:18, 19, 20, 21-note). When we seek to take our own revenge, beloved, we in effect are aiming the torpedo at our own heart and are sure to incur severe damage ourselves. For the sake of God's Holy Name and the forgiveness wrought in our behalf by the Cross of Christ, may the Spirit give each of us the necessary desire and power in the "knick of time" so that we think before we act in haste and hatred. Amen (Quoted in part by [Lenya Heitzig and Penny Rose - Pathway to Living Faith James](#))

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His father and I were good friends. The man whom I shall call John died suddenly, leaving a devastating shock. Years later, John, Jr., moved to the city where we were located. Hearing I was serving a church in the community, he looked us up, and eventually affiliated with our congregation. I was delighted to think he wanted to be part of our fellowship. Like his father, I assumed he, too, was a commendable churchman. I soon learned, however, that he was bitter over his father's death, was blaming God, and trying to punish Him for taking his father in the prime of life. When Victory Sunday arrived—the day we underwrite the program needs of the church—young John wrote a big "0" on his pledge card. This bright, attractive, articulate man with a splendid business connection had permitted bitterness to consume his potential, distort his personality, and sour his soul. The antidote to bitterness is acceptance and forgiveness. What if God had retaliated for the crucifixion of His son? The cross would be just another death marker; there would be no church, no salvation! (1000 Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching)

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Vindictiveness - It is said that when Otto Von Bismarck surrendered to resentment, he ate too much, drank too much, talked too much, and spent his nights rehearsing conflicts real and imaginary. He carried the bile of bitterness and the inner seethings of resentment. When he had no immediate cause for hate, he would dredge up a skeleton from the past and chew on it for awhile. One morning Bismarck proudly announced, "I have spent the whole night hating." So, the weight of resentment eventually broke his health. He grew a beard to hide the twitching muscles of his face. Jaundice, gastric ulcers, gallstones, and shingles wracked his body. After ascending to enviable prominence and power, he spent his sullen retirement in shameful vindictiveness. When a publisher offered him a large sum of money for his life's story, he began to write with a reckless disregard for truth, heaping hate on men and women long dead. Hatred was Bismarck's passion. He died at the age of eighty-three, an embittered, cynical, desperately lonely old man, miserable and self-consumed. (1000 Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching)

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### **A Bitter Root Produces Sour Fruit! Hebrews 12:15**

When a person becomes offended and doesn't deal with that offense correctly, that bitterness often churns so long in a person's soul that it turns into a root of bitterness. This is exactly what Hebrews 12:15 is talking about when it says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

The word "root" is the Greek word *ridzo*. It refers to a root, such as the root of a tree. These are roots that have gone down deep and are now deeply embedded. Therefore, the word *ridzo* often denotes something that is established or firmly fixed.

By using the word *ridzo* ("root"), God is telling you that if you don't repent of bitterness and remove it from your life, it becomes deeply embedded in your soul. Once it becomes this deeply rooted in your soul, your negative opinion of the offender will become firmly fixed. As time passes, your thoughts of judgment against him will become more developed, rationalized, and established. That root of bitterness will become so firmly fixed inside you that your angry, judgmental thoughts about the person will actually begin to make sense to you.

When a "root of bitterness" gets this deeply embedded in your mind and emotions, it's no longer just a "root" you're dealing with; now you have a mental stronghold. That stronghold of bitterness will take a lofty position in your mind and emotions. From that position, it will then present a myriad of logical reasons to explain why you shouldn't have anything else to do with that person and why you should keep your distance from him.

The word "bitterness" comes from the Greek word *pikria*. It refers to an inward attitude that is so bitter, it produces a scowl on one's face. In other words, you become so inwardly infected with bitterness that you are outwardly affected in your appearance and disposition.

This "bitterness" is acid to one's soul, and eventually it begins to surface. When it does, the fruit it produces is unkind, sour, sharp, sarcastic, scornful, cynical, mocking contemptuous, and wounding. Bitterness has nothing good to say about the other person. In

fact, it looks for negative things to say about that person in order to affect others' opinions about him as well.

If you find yourself constantly saying negative things about someone who has offended you or upset you in the past, it may be that a root of bitterness is trying to grow inside your heart. If this describes you, it is essential that you grab hold of that root of bitterness through the act of repentance and rip those destructive roots clear out of your soul! If you don't, the roots of bitterness will go down deep into the soil of your soul, and eventually you'll be filled with the bitter fruit that bitterness produces.

If God's Spirit has been trying to deal with you about a negative attitude you have toward someone else, pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Go get alone with God. Ask Him to put His divine hand into your soul and to extract that ugly growth that is trying to grow inside of you. God wants to liberate you, but it must begin with your invitation!

#### MY PRAYER FOR TODAY

Lord, I don't want any bitterness to sprout inside me, so I am asking You to turn on the spotlight of the Holy Spirit and reveal any unforgiveness or resentment that might be lurking inside my heart. I know that the fruit of bitterness is very sour, and I don't want that fruit to be a part of my life. So, Holy Spirit, I ask You to please show me every root of bitterness, and then help me rip it clear out of my soul! I pray this in Jesus' name!

#### MY CONFESSION FOR TODAY

I confess that I refuse to allow a root of bitterness to grow deep into the soil of my heart. The instant I recognize that a seed of bitterness is trying to sprout in me, I will grab hold of that root, and through the act of repentance, rip those destructive roots out of my soul. I choose to walk in forgiveness and to stay free!

I declare this by faith in Jesus' name!

#### QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER

1. Is there anyone against whom you have a root of bitterness right now? If so, who is that person? Is there a reason you've allowed bitterness to fester inside your soul? Don't you see that it would be more healthy for you to forgive your offender and to walk free of those detrimental attitudes?

2. Is there anyone whom you have wronged and who now has a root of bitterness because of you? If yes, who is that person? What is stopping you from going to that person to ask him or her for forgiveness?

3. Which person comes to your mind as an example of someone who has been controlled by bitterness? When you think of that person and the bitterness that has dominated his or her life, doesn't it make you want to be sure that bitterness never controls you?

If you find yourself constantly saying negative things about someone who has offended you or upset you in the past, could it be possible that a root of bitterness is trying to grow inside your heart? (Rick Renner - Borrow [Sparkling gems from the Greek : 365 Greek word studies for every day of the year to sharpen your understanding of God's word](#))

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**Good Dads** - Columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. grew up with a father he describes as physically present but emotionally absent. In his first book on parenting, Pitts openly chronicles his struggle to come to terms with his alcoholic father and the climate of fear he had created in their home. Pitts challenges all men to resolve the resentment toward their absent or abusive fathers instead of passing it on to the next generation.

There's a passage in Hebrews 12 that applies to all Christians, but it has special relevance to dads. It reads:

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled (He 12:14, 15)

Think of what could happen in our families if we emptied our hearts of bitterness and made peaceful relationships our goal! If we have been blessed with a wise and loving father, we should be grateful and follow his example. But if our father has failed us, we must rely on God's grace, resolve our anger toward him, and strive to be the kind of dad we never had. It won't be easy, but with our heavenly Father as a perfect example, we can learn to be good dads. —David C. McCasland ([Ibid](#))

A faithful father leads by love  
With tender firmness from above,  
For he himself has learned from God  
The lessons of His chastening rod. --DJD

**A good father reflects  
the love of the heavenly Father.**

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William Cowper, the great hymn writer, after his attempt at suicide had been frustrated, returned home and wrote:

**God Moves in a Mysterious Way**

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform.  
He plants His footsteps on the sea  
And rides upon the storm.

"Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessing on your head.

"Judge not the hand by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace,  
Behind a frowning Providence,  
He hides a smiling face.  
"His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour.

**The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.**

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."

Hebrews 12:16 that there be **no \* immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.** (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [me tis pornos e bebelos os Esau, os anti broseos mias apedeto \(3SAMI\) ta prototokia eautou.](#)

**Amplified:** That no one may become guilty of sexual vice, or become a profane (godless and sacrilegious) person as Esau did, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau. He traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Young's Literal:** lest any one be a fornicator, or a profane person, as Esau, who in exchange for one morsel of food did sell his birthright,

**THAT [THERE BE] NO IMMORAL OR GODLESS PERSON LIKE ESAU WHO SOLD HIS OWN BIRTHRIGHT FOR A SINGLE MEAL: me tis pornos e bebelos os Esau os anti (Idea of exchange) broseos mias apedeto (3SAMI) ta prototokia heautou:**

- He 13:4; Mark 7:21; Acts 15:20,29; 1 Cor 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,9, 10, 11; 6:15, 16, 17, 18, 19 20; 10:8; 2 Co 12:21; Gal 5:19, 20, 21; Ep 5:3,5; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; Re 2:20, 21, 22, 23; 21:8; 22:15
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

**BEWARE OF THE SPIRIT**

## OF ESAU IN YOUR MIDST

**Spurgeon** - Does it not seem strange that after speaking to us about being God's sons and favored with His love, yet even then, in that clear blaze of light, there comes in this caution against fornication and profanity. How near a foul spot may be to lily-like whiteness! How Judas may sit side by side with favored and true-hearted apostles, and may be near the Master, too. "The one who thinks that he stands must watch out lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). And if at any time the pottage should seem very sweet and we should be very hungry, if the world's gain should be almost necessary to our livelihood, and we are tempted to do an unrighteous thing to get it, let us take care. Esau could not undo the terrible act of selling his birthright; neither could we if we were permitted to do so. God grant we may be spared from such a dreadful crime!

**Immoral** (4205) ( **pornos [word study]** from **pernao** = sell <> **perao** = pass thru, carry over particularly as merchants do and thence to sell) is a fornicator or sexually immoral person. It is one who commits sexual immorality.

**Pornos** - 10x in 10v - 1Co 5:9, 10, 11; 6:9; Ep 5:5-note; 1Ti 1:10; Heb. 12:16; He 13:4-note; Rev. 21:8-note; Re 22:15-note **NAS** = fornicators(2), immoral(2), immoral men(1), immoral people(2), immoral person(1), immoral persons(2).

Here the writer asserts in clearest terms that Esau was sexually immoral, calling him **apornos**, from which we get the word **pornography**. Interestingly, the Old Testament does not say he was a fornicator unless it is implied in his marrying the two Canaanite daughters of Heth, who subsequently made life miserable for his parents (cf. Ge 26:34, 35). Rabbinical tradition, however, both Palestinian and Hellenistic, paints Esau as a man completely subject to his libido.

**Godless** (952) (**bebelos [word study]** from **baio** = to go + **belos** = threshold, particularly of a temple) refers properly to one who either was or ought to have been debarred from going over the threshold or entrance of the temple. The picture is that which is trodden under foot and which thus describes that which is the antithesis of that which is holy or set apart. **Bebelos** thus describes that which is accessible to everyone and therefore devoid of real significance. **Bebelos** can thus describe that which is worldly as opposed to having an interest in transcendent (existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe) matters.

**Bebelos** - 5 times in the NT - 1Ti 1:9; 4:7; 6:20; 2Ti 2:16; Heb. 12:16. **NAS** = godless person(1), profane(1), worldly(3).

The meaning of this adjective is nicely conveyed by our English word **profane** which describes that which disregards what is to be kept sacred or holy. The English word "**profane**" is derived from the Latin *profanus* which means "*outside the temple, not sacred*" and in turn is derived from *pro-* 'before' + *fanum* = 'temple'.

**Profane** describes a mindset which takes little notice of anything beyond the material.

**Bebelos** suggests that which is void of all connection with, or relation to, God. There is nothing sacred about these fables. By using **bebelos** Paul is not saying that the **fables** were blasphemous per se but that they did not possess the character of truth and sound doctrine.

**Vincent** - The verb **bebeloo** means "to profane, pollute", (Matt. 12:5; Acts 24:6, and often in LXX). Derived from **belos** = threshold (compare to **baio** = to go). Hence the primary sense is that which may be trodden. Compare to Latin *profanus* meaning before the temple or on the ground outside. What is permitted to be trodden by people at large is unhallowed, profane. Esau is called **bebelos** in Heb. 12:16, as one who did not regard his birthright as sacred, but as something to be sold in order to supply a common need. ([Vincent's Word Studies](#))

A godless person is one who has no regard for God, whose focus is only on physical pleasures. Like Esau such a one would not consider the birthright in the Abrahamic Covenant of any value and thus he despise it

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau **despised** (Lxx = **phaulizo** a verb not found in the NT but means to hold cheap, worthless, of no account, good-for-nothing) his birthright. (**Genesis 25:34**).

**Calvin** says of such that the **godless** are "those in whom the love of the world so holds sway and prevails, that they forget heaven as men who are carried away by ambition, addicted to money and riches, given over to gluttony, and entangled with other kinds of pleasures, and give the spiritual kingdom of Christ either no place or the last place in their concerns.

Westcott sums up this word by saying that it describes the man whose mind recognizes nothing higher than earth, for whom there is nothing sacred, who has no reverence for the unseen. An unhallowed life is a life without any awareness of or interest in God. In its thoughts, aims, pleasures, it is completely earthbound. We have to have a care lest we drift into a frame of mind and heart which has no horizon beyond this world, for that way inevitably lie the failure of chastity and the loss of honour.

**Birthright** (4415) (**prototokia** from **prototokos**; corresponding Hebrew word = bekowrah [see 01062](#)) is the rights of the firstborn (the **prototokos**). The birthright among the ancient patriarchal Hebrews conferred upon the eldest son the right of religious

leadership (acting as the so-called priest of the family) and promised a double portion of the father's estate (Dt 21:17) which indicated his authority over the his younger siblings. Thus the firstborn was not only a type of Christ as the Firstborn and High Priest of God, but also a type of Christians as the firstborn who are written in heaven and are partakers of the eternal inheritance (cf. He 12:23-note). Slighting the birthright was both slighting the high honor of officiating in God's name, and despising that eternal inheritance which was typified by the double portion.

**Esau** sold his birthright to **Jacob** as indicated in this narrative by Moses...

- But Jacob said, "First sell me your **birthright**."
- And Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the **birthright** to me?"
- And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his **birthright** to Jacob. (Ge 23:31, 32, 33)

**Spurgeon** - He was thus guilty of *spiritual fornication*, preferring his *meat* to his *Maker*, thinking more of one morsel of meat than of his birthright. Those who seek the pleasures of the flesh rather than the pleasures of a higher world are here put side by side with Esau. Now Esau sold the right to his future heritage for a present mess of pottage. Many there are who do something very like that: sell their souls for a little Sunday trading, or for a little carnal company, a little of that fool's mirth which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. They are willing to damn themselves to all eternity because they cannot bear the jeers and sneers of a ribald world. Let us not be like them or like Esau!

Spurgeon is NOT implying one sinful act by a believer (in contrast to Esau's one act of selling his birthright for a single meal) would result in damnation! A believer has already believed in and accepted and received His "birthright" by believing in Christ Jesus, in Whom (independent of anything "meritorious" we do) we "obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for" us (1 Peter 1:4) Believers have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph 1:3) That is our position and our possession because we are safely, eternally in covenant with Christ. While acts of sin on earth certainly impact our earthly fellowship, they do not keep us from our eternal fellowship with God.

**Stedman** sums up **Esau** (and those who would emulate his behavior) concluding that "He thought so little of the promises of God to Abraham and Isaac, to which he was the primary heir as the firstborn, that he sold those rights to his brother Jacob for a bowl of stew! So unimportant was this transaction in his eyes that later he assumed he could still receive the blessing which accompanied the right of firstborn. Though his brother Jacob had tricked their blind father into conferring the blessing upon himself, Esau still tried to change his father's words and gain the blessing he had sold. His father could not and would not change his mind, so **Esau lost both the birth right and the blessing**. That is the secular mentality. It has little time for worship or service, but it is intent upon material gain and earthly advantage. **Professing Christians who claim to be born again but who live no differently than non-Christians are repeating the godlessness of Esau**. Like him they too will find a surprising rejection in the last day. Jesus has them in mind when he says, "Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers! (**Ed**: More literally Jesus said those "*You who practice lawlessness*" - *practice* is in the [present tense](#). The point is that these *professors* proved they were not *possessors* of the Holy Spirit of Jesus because they CONTINUALLY [present tense](#)] manifest unholy behavior and lived unholy lives!)" (Mt 7:23-note). ([Hebrews 12:14-17 Dangers to Watch For](#))

Apostasy is illustrated by Esau. He had no real appreciation and no desire for the birthright and therefore he willingly bartered it for the momentary gratification of his appetite. As recorded earlier we saw that "**Esau despised his birthright**." He was the prototype of an ungodly man who had no affinity for the things of God (in essence trodding the Holy things of God under foot). He illustrates the one who has had the light of the truth but who falls away (He 6:6-note) , who sins willfully (He 10:26-note) and there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

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**ARE WE SELLING OUT?** Have we "sold out" the way Esau did? (Heb. 12:16). **Has the lure of wealth, power, prestige, position, security, style, or the approval and praise of others led us to barter away God's riches for a single meal?** Esau sought to change his father's mind and gain the inheritance he had forfeited by his duplicity, but he could not set right the damage he had done. He had to live with his decision. Neither can we turn back the clock and undo the wrong we have done to ourselves and to others. Although the past is irrevocable, there can be a new day before us, filled with new chances, new opportunities, and new expectations. God will not redo the past, but when we repent He can and will forgive us and set us on a new path. The Lord can give us opportunities to show how we have truly repented of the decisions of the past and how much we long to serve Him in the decisions to come. He will never mention the deeds by which we've shamed others and ourselves; they are forgiven and forgotten forever. God will give us a place to begin again—to love, to serve, to touch others profoundly and eternally for His sake. This demonstrates the greatness of our heavenly Father's forgiving love to us.

Dear Lord, be merciful to me;  
My sin has grieved Your heart;



And grant to me Your strength anew  
To make a fresh, new start. —D. De Haan

God's forgiveness is the door to a new beginning.

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## **Genesis 25:29-34 The Birthright - Devotional comments from W H Griffith-Thomas**

THE revelation of the Divine will concerning the two brothers (Ge 25:23) was evidently no secret. It is clear that both Esau and Jacob knew of it. This fact is in some respects the key to the true interpretation of this incident.

### **I. The Bargain of the Brothers**

The contrast in appearance which marked the two boys was continued in their characters as men. Their daily pursuits were expressive of their natures and temperaments. Esau comes in one day from hunting, tired and hungry. The savor of the pottage is enticing, and the hungry and weary man cries out to his brother to feed him with that red stuff of which he does not even know the name. Now is Jacob's opportunity, for which he has probably been waiting. He had doubtless already taken his brother's measure and knew how to deal with him, and so he proposes a bargain: "Sell me this day thy birthright." The birthright seems to have included temporal and spiritual blessings; it carried with it a double portion of the paternal inheritance (Dt 21:17; 1Chr 5:2) ; it gave the holder precedence as head of the family or tribe; above all, it constituted the possessor priest and spiritual head of his people. All this Jacob evidently knew, and in the light of what God had said to his mother he already appreciated the value of the birthright.

It is not at all improbable that long before this moment Esau had learned to set little store by the family privileges which belonged to him as the firstborn son. To him the position and opportunity meant little or nothing; and now he impulsively cries out that as the birthright is of no profit to him, since he is at the point of death, he is willing to sell it for a meal of red lentils. It seems clear from the narrative that there was no likelihood whatever of his dying for want of food. The words are expressive of his utter disregard of and indifference to the position and privileges associated with the birthright.

Jacob, knowing his brother's weakness and bearing in mind the issues involved in the transaction, calls upon Esau to take a solemn oath. This Esau is quite ready to do, and so the transaction is closed. He sold his birthright and in return received the meal that he so eagerly desired. "Thus Esau despised his birthright." In these few words we have the illuminating touch which explains the whole position. This was no sudden impulse on the part of Esau, just as it was no sudden brilliant idea on the part of Jacob. On the one hand, there was the attitude of despising the birthright and on the other the attitude of full appreciation. These things do not spring up suddenly and at once; they are plants of longer growth. It is this fact that compels us to go beneath the surface and try to discover the explanation of both sides of the transaction.

### **II. The Characters of the Brothers**

On the surface of the story Esau is a good specimen of the man of the world—frank, warmhearted, and every inch a man. There is a superficial attractiveness about him, and we easily dub him a fine fellow. In reality, however, he was at once sensuous and sensual. The one word "profane" (Heb 12:16-note) in its literal meaning sums up his character. It comes from *pro-fanum*, "outside the temple," and refers to that plot of ground just in front of the fane which was common to everyone, as being outside the sacred enclosure. Gradually the word came to mean that which was purely earthly and common, as opposed to that which was sacred, consecrated, and dedicated to God. Esau's life was entirely earth-bound. God was not in all his thoughts. He was intent only on present gratification, and set no value on the Divine gifts. To him future blessings were intangible and unreal, and as he thought he was going to die he did not see any reason why he should grasp at blessings which could never be personally enjoyed. Everything about the present was real to him, while everything about the future was unreal, vague, and misty; and so, whatever we may say about Jacob's part in the transaction, Esau cannot be exculpated. So far from being an injured man he really supplanted himself. To him this world was everything and God nothing.

"He is the kind of man of whom we are in the habit of charitably saying that he is nobody's enemy but his own. But, in truth, he is God's enemy, because he wastes the splendid manhood which God has given him. Passionate, impatient, impulsive, incapable of looking before him, refusing to estimate the worth of anything which does not immediately appeal to his senses, preferring the animal to the spiritual, he is rightly called a "profane person."

"Alas!" while the body is so broad and brawny, must the soul lie blinded, dwarfed, stupefied, almost annihilated?" (Carlyle) ."

Jacob's character, on the other hand, was unattractive and even repulsive on the surface. He was cool and calculating, could hold his appetites and desires in check, and wait—if necessary for years—for the accomplishment of his purpose. He evidently knew his brother well, and had been watching his opportunity. When the psychological moment came he took advantage of it at once. All this tends to repel us from the man as unworthy and contemptible, and no one for a moment can doubt that his crafty and subtle method was in every way objectionable and deplorable. And yet underneath the surface there was not a little in him of an entirely opposite



character. He had a keen and true appreciation of that which Esau despised. He realized the spiritual nature of the birthright; and though we utterly object to the method by which he attempted to obtain it we must never forget that his object was good, and that he desired to obtain that which he knew God intended for him. Thus Jacob was appreciative of the spiritual meaning of the birthright, and was at any rate to some extent truly sensitive to the Divine word. He wanted spiritual blessings, even though he went the wrong way to obtain them. He also shines out in contrast with his brother in his constancy. Esau was one of the most inconstant of men, everything by turns and nothing long, a shallow nature full of impulse and ungoverned feelings; today despising his birthright, tomorrow wanting it back; today absolutely indifferent, tomorrow sorrowing over his loss. Jacob on the other hand was tenacious and persistent, and possessed a reserve of strength which, even though it was often directed into wrong channels, was in itself one of the most valuable features of human life.

Thus while superficially we are attracted to Esau and repelled by Jacob, as we penetrate towards the depth of their characters we see the true natures of the brothers and their differences of attitude to and outlook on life and things spiritual.

## **1) Lessons from Esau**

### **(a) The real proof of life is personal character.**

It was the act in Esau's case that revealed the true state of affairs and showed what he was. We see in him "that inexorable law of human souls, that we are preparing ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil that gradually determines character" (George Eliot). No one becomes base all at once, and we may be perfectly sure that Esau's character had already deteriorated before he made this choice. Character is continually growing, and when the crisis comes we act, not solely according to what we wish at the moment, but according to what we really are, for our wishes are the expressions of our actual character. Esau possessed no spiritual insight, no appreciation whatever of the blessings of the great Abrahamic covenant. He cared only for this life and for present enjoyment. The result was that when the test came the true man was revealed. According as he had lived previously, so his character showed itself.

The tissues of the life to be  
We weave with colors all our own;  
And in the field of Destiny  
We reap as we have sown.

### **(b) The supreme test of character is found in little things**

It seemed but a small matter, a feeling of hunger and a desire for food, and yet it was the means of testing and revealing Esau's real character. It is a sad and solemn picture, a strong man who cannot wait a moment for food and cries out to be fed. How often in history have insignificant events been turning points of human lives! We are tested more by trifles than by great crises. Many men can shine in emergencies who are not able to stand the test of faithfulness in little things.

### **(c) The imperative necessity in life is to subdue the flesh to the spirit**

Esau failed to see, because he had lost the power to see, that the mind and soul need food as well as the body. And if life is "harmony with environment," then nothing purely physical can nourish the soul. It is only too easy to crush and kill our higher aspirations by undue attention to the demands of our lower nature. This is true not only of the purely earth-bound like Esau, but also of great and noble natures like Darwin's, who by absorption in intellectual pursuits become atrophied in taste and feeling. No part of our complex nature must remain unnourished, but we must see to it that physical and even intellectual enjoyments do not dwarf and eventually kill the spiritual side of our being. When the animal and spiritual collide, it will involve sacrifice if the spiritual is to be considered. The little girl's explanation of St. Paul "keeping under his body" was not far wrong: "by keeping his soul on top."

### **(d) The one thing needful is to put God first in our life**

So far as we can see, God had no place in the life of Esau. With all his bodily vigor and general attractiveness there was one part of his nature entirely uncultivated. He was God-less. He lived for the present, not for the future; for things physical, not spiritual; for time, not eternity. In this he is like many men today. They have everything that this world can give—wealth, money, natural powers, position—everything but God. And yet, with all their advantages, they must necessarily fail. "In the beginning God." And when God is first, then all else finds its place—purpose, power, and perpetual peace and progress.

## **2. Lessons from Jacob**

### **(a) The necessity of right principle**

Jacob's purpose in desiring the birthright was undoubtedly genuine and exemplary, but the way in which he went to work to obtain the birthright was in every way deplorable and wrong. He was one of the earliest, but unfortunately has not been by any means the

last, of those who have considered that the end justifies the means. This is one of the deadliest foes of true living. The end does not justify the means; and right ends must always be accomplished by right means, or else left unaccomplished.

### **(b) The value of waiting for God**

If only Jacob had been willing to wait God's time and way, what a difference it would have made to him! The birthright would have been his in any case, but he was unwilling to allow God to give it to him. How like we are to Jacob in this respect! We take God at His word, and yet we will not wait God's time; and the result is we bring untold sorrow and trouble upon ourselves and others. It is essential that we keep in view the two requirements of the true life, faith and patience (He 6:12-note). It is not enough to believe what God has said; we must "wait patiently for Him." (Ps 37:7-note)

### **(c) The certainty of righteous retribution**

We must never forget that God permitted Jacob no possession of the birthright until he had first of all acknowledged Esau as his lord (Ge 32:4,5ff), and had renounced all claim to it as the result of this evil bargain. He did not enter upon the birthright until it came quite naturally into his possession after Esau had abandoned it (Ge 36:6). How different his life would have been if only he had believed that God was able to carry out His purposes unaided—at least, unaided by cleverness and deceit!(d) The conclusion of the whole matter is that the only guarantee of true living is God in the heart and life as absolutely and permanently supreme. When God dwells in the heart as Saviour, in the conscience as Master, in the life as Lord, then—and only then—do we become assured of the possession of God's spiritual birthright and of its enjoyment in God's own way.

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**Our Daily Bread - What's Worth Keeping?** - A story is told of a man who loved old books. He met an acquaintance who had just thrown away a Bible that had been stored in the attic of his ancestral home for generations. "I couldn't read it," the friend explained. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it." "Not Gutenberg!" the book lover exclaimed in horror. "That Bible was one of the first books ever printed. A copy just sold for over two million dollars!"

His friend was unimpressed. "Mine wouldn't have brought a dollar. Some fellow named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in German."

This fictitious story shows how a person can treat as worthless that which is valuable. That's what Esau did. Although he was a nice enough fellow, Esau was a "profane" man because he sold his spiritual birthright "for one morsel of food" (Hebrews 12:16). Only when it was too late to undo his wretched bargain did he realize that he had sacrificed the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

We had better be careful of the "bargains" we make in life. Our culture places a high price on what is worthless and throws away as worthless what is of eternal value.

Ask the Lord to help you discern what's worth keeping and what is best discarded.—Haddon W. Robinson [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The little choices we must make  
Will chart the course of life we take;  
We either choose the path of light  
Or wander off in darkest night. —D. De Haan

**Why pay the high price for this world's bargains  
when eternal life is free?**

**Hebrews 12:17** For you know that [even afterwards](#), when he [desired](#) to [inherit](#) the [blessing](#), he was [rejected](#), for he [found no place](#) for [repentance](#), [though](#) he [sought](#) for it with [tears](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [iste](#) (2PRAI) [gar oti kai metepeita thelon](#) (PAPMSN) [kleronomesai](#) (AAN) [ten eulogian apedokimasthe](#). (3SAP) [metanoias gar topon ouch euren](#). (3SAA) [kaiper meta dakruon ekzetesas](#) (AAPMSN) [auten](#).

**Amplified:** For you understand that later on, when he wanted [to regain title to] his inheritance of the blessing, he was rejected (disqualified and set aside), for he could find no opportunity to repair by repentance [what he had done, no chance to recall the choice he had made], although he sought for it carefully with [bitter] tears. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** And afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance,

even though he wept bitter tears. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Young's Literal:** for ye know that also afterwards, wishing to inherit the blessing, he was disapproved of, for a place of reformation he found not, though with tears having sought it.

**FOR YOU KNOW THAT EVEN AFTERWARDS WHEN HE DESIRED TO INHERIT THE BLESSING: iste (2PRAI) gar hoti kai metepeita thelon (PAPMSN) kleronomesai (AAN) ten eulogian:**

- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

**For (gar)** - Here is another use of this helpful **term of explanation** which we do well to learn to pause and ponder.

**Even afterwards** - This refers to Moses record in Genesis 27...

Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me."

32 And Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your first-born, Esau."

33 Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed."

34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

35 And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and has taken away your blessing." (Genesis 27:31-35)

**Inherit (2816)**(**kleronomeo** from **kleros** = First a pebble, piece of wood used in casting lots as in Acts 1:26 then the allotted portion or inheritance, and so a lot, heritage, inheritance + **nemomai** = to possess; see **Kleronomos**) means to receive a lot or share of an inheritance, inherit a portion of property or receive a possession as gift from someone who has died.

**Esau** was remorseful at the loss of the older son's double portion, but it was too late. His father could not reverse the blessing.

**Esau** had no regard for spiritual values, no need for God in his life. As noted earlier Esau typifies that man the writer of Hebrews describes as **willingly** renouncing the truth about Christ in order to escape reproach, suffering, or martyrdom. The writer has just told them that there is a great hall of faithful saints who have finished the race and so too can they finish strong if they run in faith. The conflict of sufferings they were experiencing was a manifestation of God's loving discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11) so that they should not lose heart but run with endurance, eyes of their heart fixed on Jesus, at the same time strengthening the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble. And then the writer presents for their consideration a stark contrast with those in Hebrews 11 -- the immoral and godless Esau who had been graciously given spiritual light but tragically (and eternally) fell away from the light (He 6:4-6 -see **notes** He 6:4; 6:5; 6:6), sinning willfully against God (He 10:26-note). Such a man cannot be renewed to repentance and there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins! This is a hard saying but it is God's clear word. It is tantamount to the unforgivable sin. If one rejects God's great grace, there is no plan B by which he or she can enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Such a man or woman may exhibit great emotion, even with loud weeping and wailing, but their emotions reflect only a worldly sorrow which leads only to remorse and ultimately to eternal death in contrast to genuine godly sorrow which leads to repentance and ultimately to true and eternal life. Paul alluded to this contrast between godless remorse (like godless Esau) and godly sorrow writing...

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. (2 Cor 7:10-11)

Esau may have desired the blessing but the writer has clearly taught that without faith it is impossible to please God (He 11:6-note) and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek **Him**, not those who diligently seek the **blessing**! I am convicted - How often I seek the blessing rather than the Blessor! The fallen flesh always seeks the reward, not the Rewarder!

**Wikipedia** defines remorse - **Remorse** is an emotional expression of personal regret felt by a person after they have committed an

act which they deem to be shameful, hurtful, or violent. Remorse is closely allied to guilt and self-directed resentment. When a person regrets an earlier action or failure to act, it may be because of remorse or in response to various other consequences, including being punished for the act or omission. ([See artist's depiction of remorse and the "voices" shouting at him!](#))

**Blessing** (2129) (eulogia from **eú** = good, well + **lógos** = word; English = eulogy = a commendatory formal statement) is literally a good word, good speaking, fine speech or praise. Eulogia is the act of speaking favorably (cp Rev 5:12, 13, 7:12).

**Eulogia** - 16 times in the NT - Ro. 15:29; 16:18; 1 Co. 10:16; 2 Co. 9:5f; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:3; Heb. 6:7; 12:17; Jas. 3:10; 1 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 5:12f; 7:12

**Spurgeon** - He (Esau) could not get his father to change his mind concerning Jacob; on the contrary, he (Isaac) said, "I blessed him. Moreover, and he will be blessed" (Gen 27:33). His many tears did not avail; they were not *repenting tears*, but only *selfish ones*. He did not repent that he had bartered his birthright for a mess of pottage; he regretted that he had lost the blessing, and that was all!

Esau is like the boy who was sorry he got caught, not sorry that he had sinned! The former is remorse, the latter repentance.

**HE WAS REJECTED FOR HE FOUND NO PLACE FOR REPENTANCE THOUGH HE SOUGHT FOR IT WITH TEARS:**  
**apedokimasthe (3SAPI) metanoias gar topon ouch heuren (3SAAI) kaiper meta dakruon ekzetesas (AAPMSN) auten:**

- He 6:8; Proverbs 1:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; Jer 6:30; Mt 7:23; 25:11,12; Luke 13:24, 25, 26, 27
- He 6:4,5, 6; 10:26, 27, 28, 29
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Holiness](#) - by J C Ryle - This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written
- [Thomas Brooks on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
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## THE HIGH COST OF LACK OF GENUINE REPENTANCE

**Was rejected** (593) (apedokimazo [word study] from **apó** =off, away from, a marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association + **dokimazo** = approve after examination - proving a thing worthy or genuine. Put to the test for the purpose of approving - Ro 1:28-note) means to judge someone or something as not being worthy or genuine and thus someone or something to be rejected. In classic Greek there is a secular use describing coins rejected as counterfeit or after scrutiny or trial to reject a candidate because of lack of qualification. Reject after testing or scrutinizing. Declare useless. Throw out as the result of a test! (think of the tragic absurdity this meaning conveys in light of the NT uses that speak of rejection of the Precious Messiah!). The word means to be rejected completely!

**Apodokimazo** in context speaks of a deliberate choice and one which is final and thus it speaks of no second chance for Esau (aorist tense = past completed action) .

**NIDNTT** has this note on the root and the related words (especially in classic Greek) - The root dek-, dechomai, accept, gives two verbal derivatives dokeo and dokao. The former means (intrans.) to appear, have the appearance, (trans.) to think, believe, consider right; the latter means expect. Derivatives of the former are: (a) dokimos, trustworthy, reliable, tested, recognized, used as a technical term for genuine, current coinage, but also applied to persons enjoying general esteem; (b) adokimos, untested, not respected; (c) indirectly also dokimion, test, probation; (d) from dokimos are also derived dokimazo, test, pronounce good, establish by trial, recognize, and apodokimazo, disapprove of, reject, blame; dokimasis and dokimasia, investigation, testing (preparatory to installing in an office); dokime, approved character, trial. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Most of the NT uses (see below) reflect reflection of the Messiah by His own people, the Jews (cp Jn 1:11, 12, 13)

In fact **Larry Richards** writes that "**Apodokimazo** indicates putting something or someone to the test and rejecting that object or person as unfit or not genuine. This word is used in nearly every instance of the Jewish people's examination of Jesus and their rejection of him as the Messiah, the Son of God.

**Apodokimazo** - 9 times in the NT - Matt. 21:42; Mk. 8:31; 12:10; Lk. 9:22; 17:25; 20:17; Heb. 12:17; 1Pet. 2:4, 7

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders **rejected**, This became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes ' '? (Quoting Ps 118:22, 23-[note](#), Isa 28:16 - When Christ, the Stone, presented Himself to the builders—the leaders of Israel, they had no place for Him in their building plans. They declared Him as useless and threw Him aside!) (**Related Resource: Christ, the Rock, the Stone** - Click here for Scripture chain & chart - this would make a great Sunday School series)

Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and **be rejected** by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

**Comment: Wuest** writes that "The religious leaders of Israel put Jesus to the test for the purpose of approving Him as Messiah, for they were looking for their Messiah. But He did not meet their specifications. He was not the kind of a Messiah the Jews wanted. They wanted a military leader who would liberate them from the yoke of Rome, not a Saviour who would free them from their bondage to sin. The article ("the") appears (in the original Greek) before each word, **elders, chief priests, and scribes**, saddling each, Expositors says, with his separate responsibility. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos](#))

Mark 12:10 "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders **rejected**, This became the chief corner stone;

**Comment: Wuest** writes that "The leaders of Israel investigated His claims, found them to be true, substantiated by the miracles He performed (John 3:2), yet with all this evidence, rejected Him as Messiah because He did not meet their specifications. They were looking for a Messiah who would deliver Israel from the despotism of Rome, not from the dominion of sin. But this Messiah will some day become the King of kings and Lord of lords over the earth as the Head of the **Millennial** empire, the Headstone of the Corner.

Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and **be rejected** by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

Luke 17:25 "But first He must suffer many things and **be rejected** by this generation.

Luke 20:17 But He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written, 'The stone which the builders **rejected**, This became the chief corner stone'?

Hebrews 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he **was rejected**, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

1 Peter 2:4-note And coming to Him as to a living stone, **rejected** by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,

1 Peter 2:7-note This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders **rejected**, This became the very corner stone,"

**Apodokimazo** is used 6 times in the Septuagint (LXX)...

Psalms 118:22-[note](#) The stone which the builders **rejected** Has become the chief corner stone.

Jeremiah 6:30 They call them **rejected** silver, Because the LORD has rejected them.

Jeremiah 7:29 'Cut off your hair and cast it away, And take up a lamentation on the bare heights; For the LORD has **rejected** and forsaken The generation of His wrath.'

Jeremiah 8:9 "The wise men are put to shame, They are dismayed and caught; Behold, they have **rejected** the word of the LORD, And what kind of wisdom do they have? (What an oxymoron - "wise men" rejecting the only source of true wisdom! Deception is an amazing thing!)

Jeremiah 14:19 Hast Thou completely **rejected** Judah? Or hast Thou loathed Zion? Why hast Thou stricken us so that we are beyond healing? We waited for peace, but nothing good came; And for a time of healing, but behold, terror!

Jeremiah 31:37 Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also **cast off** all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

**Spurgeon** - Esau never repented of his sin, but only of the consequences of it. He never sought pardon of God, but only sought to inherit the blessing. And there will be many who have lived for this world, and loved it, who, when they wake up in another world, will begin to seek the blessing, but they will be rejected. This may happen even in this world. If they only seek to die the death of the righteous, and do not seek the pardon of their sin, they shall hear the Lord say to them, "Because I called out, and you refused me, I

stretched out my hand, yet there is none who heeds. You have ignored all my counsel, and my reproof you are not willing to accept. I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic comes upon you" (Pr 1:24–27). **Esau wanted to have this world, and the next too. He wanted to have the pottage and the birthright; he wanted to be a fine gentleman among the Hittites and yet have the blessing. He wanted to have his wife of a fine noble Philistine family, and be thought a famous fellow among them, and yet at the same time have the blessing that belonged to the separate people of God.** With tears he sought to get that blessing, but he could not have it. (Ed: This reminds us of Jesus' words in Mt 6:24-**note** and of Joshua's words - Joshua 24:15. See also Ru 1:15,16-**note** 1Ki 18:21 Ezek 20:39 John 6:67 ) Spurgeon adds that the situation with Esau was "like John Bunyan's parable of Passion and Patience in Pilgrim's Progress. Passion would have his best things first; Patience would have his best things last. Passion had all his best things, and laughed at Patience as Patience sat there. But after a while, Passion had used up all his best things and then he had nothing left. But Patience had his best things last, and, as Bunyan says, "There is nothing after the last, so the good things of Patience lasted forever and ever." So it is with the good things of Jacob, when he chose the good part and sought after it. Even with all his sin, it lasted, and his name is in the covenant, and he rejoices at this day before the throne of God.

**Sought** ([1567](#)) (**ekzeteo** from **ek** = out or to intensify the meaning + **zeteo** = to seek) means to seek out, to look for, to search diligently for anything lost. This verb implies that the seeker exerts considerable effort and care in learning something.

**Ekzeteo** - 7 times in the NT - Lk. 11:50, 51; Acts 15:17; Rom. 3:11; Heb. 11:6; 12:17; 1 Pet. 1:10

The "Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament" (Rienecker) notes that the preposition **ek** in this compound "always seems to denote that the seeker finds, or at least exhausts his powers of seeking."

The point is that Esau showed a worldly sorrow (for getting caught, for not being able to enjoy the benefit of the blessing, but he totally lacked any desire for the "Blessor", for God Himself). There was no "godly sorrow" such as Paul writes about explaining that it is...

the **sorrow** that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the **sorrow** of the world produces death. 11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.(2Cor 7:10, 11)

There was no "repentance without regret" and thus the result for Esau was death. What an irony. He so despised his birthright that he sold it for a cup of soup claiming that if he didn't get it he would die (Ge 25:32). He was prophetic! He did die but not like he thought.

God's message to all who are in the race is clear: To give free rein to our sexual ("immoral and godless") and physical appetites will ruin our race and if that is the habitual practice of one's life, it indicates that person was never truly regenerate and did not possess the indwelling Holy Spirit Who directs one's heart toward Holy desires and away from godlessness. As Paul warned the saints in Ephesus "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (See **notes** Ephesians 5:5; 5:6)

So beloved, stop being deceived. Those who run the race like Esau will receive Esau's just recompense. As the writer warned in Hebrews 2 - For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, (see **notes** Hebrews 2:2; 2:3).

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## **F B Meyer - Our Daily Walk - LOST OPPORTUNITIES-**

**"O Jerusalem .... how often would I have gathered thy children together .... and ye would not!"-- Mat 23:37.**

THE GREEKS represented Opportunity as bald, with no lock of hair by which she could be laid hold of as she turned away and fled. Every one has opportunity, but there is often no symptom of its approach, no sign of its departure; when once it is missed, it rarely comes again! It is said that Queen Victoria once gave a comparatively unknown painter the opportunity of a private sitting. She came at the exact time that was arranged, but he was five minutes late, and he lost his opportunity!

Esau bartered his birthright! What cared he for the spiritual prerogative of the first-born to act as the priest of the clan, and to stand in the possible lineal descent of the Messiah. He craved what would satisfy and please his senses. But when he had sold his birthright, he was held to the transaction. "He found no place of repentance" does not mean that he wished to and could not, but that the die was cast, the decision was deemed final. It is within the range of every one to do an act, to make a choice, to barter away the spiritual for the material so absolutely, that the decision is held irrevocable. Let us take care lest we be betrayed by passion into an act which may affect our entire destiny.

The outstretched wing of God's love would have sheltered Jerusalem from its impending fate, but she refused Him in His servants and His Son, and her day of opportunity passed!

Even so, salvation waits for us all, and there is hope and opportunity for us to repent as long as the day of grace is not closed, but let us not forget, as McChesney said, that Christ gives last knocks. The present is your time of hope, of a fresh beginning, of a new opportunity. Open the door of your life to Christ and make Him King. He offers you your chance, rise to it; do your very best, find your niche of service in His Kingdom, and set yourself to follow Him with all your heart, and mind, and strength.

**PRAYER-** O Lord, let us not serve Thee with the spirit of bondage as slaves, but with the cheerfulness and gladness of children, delighting ourselves in Thee and rejoicing in Thy work. AMEN.