

Hebrews 12:14-17 Commentary

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CONSIDER JESUS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST
 Click chart to enlarge
 Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
 Swindoll's Chart, Interesting Pictorial Chart of Hebrews, Another Chart

The Epistle to the Hebrews				
INSTRUCTION Hebrews 1-10:18			EXHORTATION Hebrews 10:19-13:25	
Superior Person of Christ Hebrews 1:1-4:13	Superior Priest in Christ Hebrews 4:14-10:18			Superior Life In Christ Hebrews 10:19-13:25
BETTER THAN PERSON Hebrews 1:1-4:13	BETTER PRIESTHOOD Heb 4:14-7:28	BETTER COVENANT Heb 8:1-13	BETTER SACRIFICE Heb 9:1-10:18	BETTER LIFE
MAJESTY OF CHRIST	MINISTRY OF CHRIST			MINISTERS FOR CHRIST

DOCTRINE	DUTY
DATE WRITTEN: ca. 64-68AD	

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

Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#)

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](#) (3SFM) [ton kurion.](#)

BGT Ερηνὴν διόκετε μετὰ πάντων καὶ τὴν γίασην, ἧ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ᾄεται τὸν κύριον,

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](#))

NKJ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

NET Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness, for without it no one will see the Lord.

CSB Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness-- without it no one will see the Lord.

ESV Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

NIV Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

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, ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

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

- **Pursue peace with all men** - Ge 13:7-9; Ps 34:14; Ps 38:20; 120:6; 133:1; Pr 15:1; 16:7; 17:14; Isa 11:6-9; Mt 5:9; Mk 9:50; Ro 12:18; 14:19; 1Co 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 Ps 34:14, Mt 5:8+ Pr 15:1+, 16:7, 17:14, Ep 4:3, Ro 14:19, Ro 12:18
- **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; 3Jn 1:11
- [Hebrews 12:12-14 Perseverance, Peace, and Purity](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Romans 12:18+ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace (present tense) with all men.

Matthew 5:8+ "Blessed are the pure ([katharos](#)) in heart, for they shall see ([horao](#) - same verb as Heb 12:14) God.

Revelation 22:4+ they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

1 John 3:2-3+ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Psalms 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I

awake.

Job 19:26-27 "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!

2 Timothy 2:19+ Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "**Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.**" (= PURSUES HOLINESS)

THE CHRISTIAN'S PURSUIT FOR PEACE AND HOLINESS

Having spoken of God's loving discipline (Heb 12:5-10+) that produces "**the peaceful fruit of righteousness**" (Heb 12:11+) and given commands for the believers to "**strengthen** the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and **make straight** paths for your feet," (Heb 12:12-13+), the writer now turns to what this **righteousness** looks like in daily life. Hebrews 12:14 is a call to pursue, to chase after with deliberate effort, two inseparable virtues: peace with all people and holiness before God. Holiness and peace are two sides of one coin. You cannot have one without the other.

Pursue ([dioko](#) - chase after, press hard toward) **peace** ([eirene](#)) **with all men** - **Pursue** is a [present imperative](#), a command to pursue peace and holiness which 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+) (3) This pursuit is not to be a spasmodic endeavor but is to be our lifelong task (present tense). And finally, (4) the persistent pursuit of peace (and holiness) requires enablement and provision from the One Who is Himself holy (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). **Pursue** invokes the imagery of a hunter tracking prey or a runner straining forward in effort toward the finish line (cf "run with endurance" - Heb 12:1+). The Christian must chase it down, for peace rarely falls into our laps. **Peace** ([eirene](#)) in the present context is the product of holiness (Heb 12:10+) and is maintained only by Spirit enabled pursuit.

Notice the phrase **with all men** indicating that the command to **pursue peace** extends even to those who oppose us (cf. Ro 12:18+). Keep pursuing even as though they keep resisting. The same energy we once used to argue must now be used to reconcile. The believer must actively chase reconciliation — not wait for peace to happen. Such a pursuit requires humility when wronged, grace when provoked, and patience when resisted. We cannot control how others treat us, but (filled with the Spirit) we can control how we will respond. And think about how this would strike his readers, many of whom were being "pursued" by persecutors! The persecuted readers (and we) are called to become the pursuers, because God's grace has transformed their (our) desire from wanting to return hostility into a desire for seeking harmony. In short, this is a call to imitate Christ Who Himself suffered for us, leaving us "an example...to follow in His steps." (1Pe 2:21+)

One could paraphrase it "Keep on earnestly chasing after harmonious relationships with everyone, as far as it depends on you, without compromising the holiness that marks God's children." In summary, the writer is calling his readers to be peacemakers, not just peace-likers but active "peace-chasers."

One caveat is that the command to **pursue peace** does not mean peace at any price. It is peace without compromise of truth or holiness. The believer's goal is reconciliation, not at the expense of righteousness, but as the fruit of righteousness (cf "*peaceful fruit of righteousness*" Heb 12:11+). In other words, holiness is the inward reality of a heart transformed by God's grace and peace is the outward fruit of His grace. It follows, that to compromise truth for the sake of tranquility will forfeit both! 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! (See related thoughts on forgiveness)

As **John Phillips** says "To be peaceable does not mean we must surrender conviction, but it does mean that we will be courteous, considerate, and willing to comply with legitimate social customs and will refuse to quarrel." (Borrow [Exploring Hebrews](#)).

*We are only so far to yield for peace's sake
as never to yield a principle.*

Spurgeon adds that "**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." (Sermon [The Winnowing Fan](#))

THOUGHT - This command to pursue peace and holiness is imminently practical and begs several questions

of all of us: What are you pursuing most passionately today—comfort or conformity to Christ? Has your zeal been redirected by grace, or diminished by complacency? Would others describe your spiritual life as drifting or pressing on? What “races” are distracting you from the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14)? Are you pursuing peace (Rom 14:19), righteousness (1 Tim 6:11), and love (1 Cor 14:1) with the same energy you once spent on self? Do I pursue Christ with the same passion I did when I was first saved, or have the embers of my love for Him begun to grow cold? Is so read the Master's advice in Revelation 2:4-5+! What absorbs my time, thoughts, and talk? Whatever I pursue most reveals what I value most (Mt 6:21+, Mt 6:33+). The question is not “Am I running?”—everyone is. The question is “What/Who am I pursuing?”

And the sanctification ([hagiasmos](#)) (NET, CSB, ESV, NRSV = "holiness") - The first question that might arise is whether our writer is referring to initial sanctification (when one is born again) or to ongoing, practical sanctification that characterizes an individual who has been born again. Based on the fact that **pursue** is in the present tense which calls for continuous action, this would strongly support that the writer is speaking of ongoing, daily growth in Christlikeness (aka progressive sanctification). The point is if one's Christian life has no evidence of ongoing sanctification, then there is a real question that person has ever truly been born again. If one is not born again as indicated by progressive sanctification, then that individual cannot expect to see the Lord either **NOW** (in the sense of knowing Him intimately, experiencing daily fellowship, walking by faith not sight, as Moses who "endured as **seeing** Him Who is unseen" - Heb 11:27+) or in the **FUTURE** in eternal Heavenly fellowship. Oh, such a person will indeed see the Lord, but it will be a most "unwelcome" sight, for it will be at the Great White Throne, where they are judged and sentenced to the eternal Lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15+, cf Mt 7:21-23+).

Heb 12:14 links the believer's horizontal conduct (peace with others) with their vertical devotion (holiness before God). Together they form the visible evidence of transforming grace at work within one's heart, firm proof that one truly belongs to the family of God (and that they will "see God" intimately and personally as discussed above). The command to **pursue** reminds us that daily sanctification is both God's work in us and our continual pursuit of holiness (the verb **pursue** is in the active voice calling for the reader to make a personal choice of their will) in cooperation with His Spirit. (See [Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)).

A person who is not saved cannot pursue either peace or sanctification, at least not successfully

John MacArthur observes that the phrase **the sanctification** "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 the 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+) and already are righteous (2Cor 5:21+), but practically we have a great deal to do (**ED**: “work out” in Php 2:12+ while God supplies the power to do it in Php 2:13NLT+ - THIS IS NOT "LET GO, LET GOD," BUT "LET GOD, LET'S GO!"). Because we are at peace with God (Ro 5:1+), we should be peacemakers (Mt 5:9+). Because we are counted righteous, we should live righteously. Our practice (**ED**: daily, ongoing, progressive sanctification) should match our position. (**ED**: [justified](#) - a one time event). 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. 1Jn 2:6+). (See [Hebrews Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

Without basic holiness, a person cannot be truly saved or know Christ.
--Grant Osborne

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+; 1Pe 3:11+). The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit makes this possible (Ro 8:6+; Ro 15:13+), for “the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace” (Gal 5:22+).

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.

F F Bruce - “The sanctification apart from which no one will see the Lord” is, as the words themselves make plain, no optional extra in the Christian life but something which belongs to its essence. It is the pure in heart, and none but they, who shall see God (Matt. 5:8). Here, as in v. 10, practical holiness of life is meant, the converse of those things against which a warning is uttered in the verses which follow. ([The Epistle to the Hebrews](#))

Without (choris) which no one (absolutely no one = [oudeis](#)) **will see (horao) the Lord (kurios)** - See the Lord as discussed above describes more than the simple act of seeing, but includes the idea of intimacy and fellowship with the Lord Jesus, something that only genuine believers can experience (now in part on earth, one day soon in full in heaven). Note the word **no one** (absolutely no one = [oudeis](#)) are a strong negative and signify that when there is no holiness, there is absolutely no vision and experience of the Lord Jesus. The unholy cannot stand before His presence (cf. Ps 24:3-4; Hab 1:13). The eyes which look upon God are eyes that have been washed and made pure by grace.

Note the two "**without**" in Hebrews 12 and both give clear warnings to those who claim to be Christian and yet continually choose to live unholy lives like the ungodly world! Heb 12:8 = "**without** discipline...you are illegitimate children and not sons" and Heb 12:14 "**without** which no one will see the Lord."

How do we see Him today? By faith (Heb 11:1+, Heb 11:27+) 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+; 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.

THOUGHT - This verse carries profound practical application for every believer. While every believer will see the Lord someday, there are certainly varying degrees of "spiritual vision" during our earthly walk. As we choose to walk in the Spirit and pursue holiness, our sight of Jesus grows ever clearer. But sin will always blur our vision of the Lord (1Jn 1:6-7+, cf 2Pe 1:9+). Practicing holiness sharpens that vision and brings His presence into focus. Dearly beloved of the Lord, how's your *spiritual vision*? Perhaps it's time to visit the "Divine Ophthalmologist" and have those *spiritual cataracts* removed (I had literal cataract removal a year ago and was amazed at the clarity and sharpness of colors I had been missing for the previous 5-10 years)! Beloved, beware of the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13+), for it is like a fog that will slowly, silently roll into your soul and dim your vision of Christ, dulling your love for Him and causing you to "stumble" in the spiritual darkness. But praise God, repentance lifts the fog, allows us to once again see His face clearly. Jesus Himself gave us the remedy for failing "spiritual vision" - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Mt 5:8+)

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 peace and extending our entire beings toward holiness! (Php 3:12+, Php 3:13+, Php 3:14+, Heb 12:1+, Heb 12:2+)

Homer Kent - The Biblical doctrine of sanctification teaches that all believers have obtained God's holiness judicially (i.e., past sanctification). However, Scripture is also clear that there is a present sanctification which is to be demonstrated, as well as a future sanctification to be consummated. It is obviously the present aspect which is emphasized here, for this sanctification is something to be pursued. The believer's present life is to become progressively more Christ-like, and should increasingly conform to the perfect standing which is already possessed in Christ. (Borrow [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#))

Simon Kistemaker - The second command is: pursue holiness. Peace and holiness are two sides of the same coin. Holiness is not the state of perfection already attained. Rather, the word in the original Greek refers to the sanctifying process that occurs in the life of the believer. To put it differently, the believer reflects God's virtues. In so doing, he becomes more and more like Christ who through the Holy Spirit continues to work in the believer's heart. As the writer of Hebrews says, Jesus is the one who makes the believer holy (2:11). (Borrow [Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews](#))

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

Spurgeon - In the Greek there are no less than three negatives (ED: I could find only 2) 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+) This is the very end of our calling.

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. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

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+). 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+, 2Co 13:5, Mt 7:21+, Mt 7:22, 23+). 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+, Col 3:5+). If your life is unholy, your heart is unchanged; you are an unsaved person (Gal 5:19, 20, 21+, Ep 5:5, 6+). If the Savior has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a **hatred of sin** and a **love of holiness** (Ps 119:104, 128+), 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+). 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 on pursue sanctification - 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 (pursue sanctification), 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 (see especially Heb 10:19-25, Heb 4:16). ([The Holiest of All - 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. (The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith) (See [Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)).

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 (1Pe 5:6+), 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 (Ro 12:19+), 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+) (See Related Discussion: The Deceitfulness of Sin), we play with it, thinking we will thereby find satisfaction (cf Heb 11:25+). 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. Obeying 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 "Obeying the revealed will of God and trusting Him for the results." "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6+). 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. (BORROW [The Pursuit of Holiness page 146](#))

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-+). 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 contrarities 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. (Spurgeon's sermon [The Winnowing Fan](#))

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+), 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+, Job 28:28, Eccl 12:13, 14+, 1Jn 3:2, 3+, 1Pe 1:17+). (2Co 7:1+)

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

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,¹⁵ but like the **Holy One** who called you, **be** () **holy** yourselves also in all your behavior;¹⁶ because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE **HOLY**, FOR I AM **HOLY**." (1Pe 1:14+, 1Pe 1:15, 16+)

Here are a few more thoughts on what others think "the" holiness 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 Commentary](#))

Thomas Schreiner - Holiness should not be understood in terms of sinlessness but describes those who continue to seek and pursue the Lord. (See [Commentary on Hebrews - Volume 36 - Page 391](#))

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+, He 10:22+), 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+; 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](#))

Ray Stedman explains pursue holiness writing that...

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+), 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+), 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, Is 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+, Ro 6:11+), we will find ourselves strongly motivated to live righteously (cp Titus 2:11+, Titus 2:12+) and inwardly distressed at any failure to do so (cp Ps 32:3+, Ps 32:4+, Ps 32:5+). This inward distress will bring us again and again to the throne of grace (He 4:16+) 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](#))

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 4:7-11+), to replace self-reliance with total trust in the Lord who gives strength (2Co 1:8-10f.+; 2Co 12:9, 10+), 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+; Titus 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. (BORROW [God’s Plans for You PAGE 56](#))

Scripture speaks of both a holiness which we have in Christ before God and a holiness which we are to strive after. These two aspects of holiness complement one another, for our salvation is a salvation to holiness

-- Jerry Bridges

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 [Holiness](#)) (BORROW [The Pursuit of Holiness page 32](#))

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.

Pursue ([1377](#)) (**dioko** from **dio** = pursue, prosecute, persecute, also pursue in good sense) means to follow or press hard after, pursue with earnestness, intensity and diligence in order to obtain, go after with the desire of obtaining, to run swiftly after. The idea is strenuous endeavor — not a casual desire but a determined pursuit. The word contains the idea of pressing forward with determination, whether in malice or in love. In Php 3:12,14+ the metaphor of **dioko** is athletic, depicting a runner straining forward. Paul's pursuit is that of one whose whole being is bent toward the finish line. **Dioko** can be used in a negative sense of to persecute (Mt 5:10, Gal 1:13) describing a hostile pursuit (Acts 22:4) or in a positive sense, to pursue after (Ro 14:19+, Php 3:12+) describing eager pursuit of that which is good. The Christian life is not passive but pressing.

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+; 1Pe 3:11+). The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit makes this possible (Ro 8:6+; Ro 15:13+), for "the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace" (Gal 5:22+).

Peace ([1515](#)) (**eirene** 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). Peace is not mere absence of conflict but the presence of right relationship, first with God, then with men (cf. Ro 5:1+).

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.

Sanctification (holiness)(1377) (**hagiasmos** from **hagiozo** = 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. It is both positional (the once-for-all act in Christ) and progressive (the ongoing work of the Spirit). The latter meaning is known as progressive sanctification which is the process by which believers are set apart by God as a special people for God who are called to grow spiritually in personal holiness and Christ-like character. Positional sanctification (justification) is inseparably linked to practical sanctification (progressive sanctification). You cannot practice the latter without the former (justification) and the former without the latter (progressive sanctification) lacks the proof that the former (justification) was genuine! To be sure one is justified by faith alone in Christ alone, but this justification never remains alone, but brings forth spiritual fruit (in this context evidence of growth in holiness).

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.

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

1 Thessalonians 4:3+ 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**.

2 Thessalonians 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.

1 Timothy 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.

1 Peter 1:2+ 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 - 2Th 2:13+) 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 (justification) but in the other use **sanctification** is a continuous process until we are glorified. 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." ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

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." ([The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

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 of 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+, 2Ti 2:15+, Jas 1:18+) 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** (hagiazo), **Paul** declared to the Ephesian elders "And now I commend (paratithemi = para - beside + tithemi - place = a banking term = to deposit as a trust and/or for protection, commit for safe keeping, cp use in 2Ti 2:2 + 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+) among all those who are **sanctified** (hagiazo - 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)

Resources Related to Holiness and Sanctification

- Holiness Quotes
- [Is being holy even possible, since only God is holy?](#)
- The Lord Who Sanctifies
- The Lord Who Sanctifies 2
- [Thomas Watson on "Sanctification"](#)
- Exposition of 1 Peter 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 on Hebrews 12:14 - The Crown and Glory of Christianity or, Holiness the Only Way to Happiness](#)
- [Why Would Anyone Want To Be Holy? Discover what God expects from us](#)
- [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](#))

J C Ryle's Classic on Holiness is worthy your time to read...chapters listed below. This volume is considered the best book on the Christian life that has EVER been written!

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Sin](#)
3. [Sanctification](#)
4. [Holiness](#)
5. [The Fight!](#)
6. [The Cost!](#)
7. [Growth in Grace](#)
8. [Assurance](#)

9. [Moses—An Example](#)
 10. [Lot—A Beacon](#)
 11. [A Woman to Be Remembered](#)
 12. [Christ's Greatest Trophy](#)
 13. [The Ruler of the Waves](#)
 14. [The Church Which Christ Builds](#)
 15. [Visible Churches Warned](#)
 16. [Do You Love Me?](#)
 17. [Without Christ](#)
 18. [Thirst Relieved](#)
 19. [Unsearchable Riches!](#)
 20. [Needs of the Times](#)
 21. [Christ is All](#)
-

HEB 12:14 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.

Spurgeon - [The Winnowing Fan](#)

'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 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 12:14–15

There are in the text two things to be followed. The fourteenth verse tells us what they are. 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord'. We are to follow peace and holiness; the two are consistent with each other and may be followed together. 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 sake as never to yield a principle; we are to be so far peaceful as never to be at peace with sin, peaceful with men, but contending earnestly against evil principles. 'Follow peace', but let the following of it be guarded by the other precept, 'holiness'. With equal ardour we are to follow holiness. 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 lies mainly in contrariness 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 towards your fellow men. Be resolute for the right, be also gentle, pitiful and courteous. Consider the meekness as well as the boldness of Jesus. Follow peace, but not at the expense of holiness. Follow holiness, but do not needlessly endanger peace.

Spurgeon - You will not gain holiness by standing still. Nobody ever grew holy without consenting, desiring, and agonizing to be holy. 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.

"... holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

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?

Strive for ... the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.(HEBREWS 12:14)

The Holy Spirit's work in transforming us more and more into the likeness of Christ is called sanctification. Our involvement and cooperation with Him in His work is what I call the pursuit of holiness. (I call it "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)") That expression is taken from Hebrews 12:14: "Strive for [literally: pursue] ... the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."

This pursuit requires sustained, vigorous effort. It allows for no indolence, no lethargy, no halfhearted commitment, and no laissez-faire attitude toward even the smallest sins. In short, it demands the highest priority in a Christian's life because to be holy is to be like Christ—God's goal for every Christian.

The word **pursue** in this context means to strive to gain or accomplish. In Philippians 3:12–14, this word is translated "press on." In the New Testament it is most commonly translated "persecute," carrying the word's common meaning—to track down in order to harm or destroy.

At the same time, however, the pursuit of holiness must be anchored in the grace of God; otherwise it is doomed to failure. That statement probably strikes many people as strange. A lot of Christians seem to think the grace of God and the vigorous pursuit of holiness are antithetical—in direct and unequivocal opposition.

To some, the pursuit of holiness sounds like legalism and man-made rules. To others, an emphasis on grace seems to open the door to irresponsible behavior based on the notion that God's unconditional love means we're free to sin as we please.

Grace and the personal discipline required to pursue holiness, however, go hand in hand. An understanding of how grace and personal, vigorous effort work together is essential for a lifelong pursuit of holiness.....

By contrast consider race-car drivers. They wouldn't think of using cruise control. They're not interested in blending in with those around them. They want to win the race. So they're totally focused on their driving. They try to push their car to the outer limits of its mechanical ability and endurance, and press themselves to the limits of their skill. They're driving with all their heart, soul, and mind. This is what it means to love and obey God with all our heart, soul, and mind. It means striving for holiness, in the words of Hebrews 12:14. It means making every effort to add to our faith the various facets of Christian character, in the words of 2 Peter 1:5–7.

***If your life is unholy, your heart is unchanged;
you are an unsaved person.***

Spurgeon - Christ will be master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. If your life is unholy, your heart is unchanged; you are an unsaved person. If the Savior has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, 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 nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19+). 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.

Jerry Bridges - NOT AN OPTION [Holiness Day by Day: Transformational Thoughts](#)

Strive ... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (HEBREWS 12:14)

Scripture speaks of both a holiness which we have in Christ before God and a holiness which we are to strive after. These two aspects of holiness complement one another, for our salvation is a salvation to holiness: "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life" (1 Thessalonians 4:7, NIV). To the Corinthians Paul wrote: "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy" (1 Corinthians 1:2, NIV). The word sanctified here means "made holy." We are, through Christ, made holy in our standing before God and called to be holy in our daily lives.

***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.***

In Hebrews 12:14 we're told 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.

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. 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 [Holiness](#))

Seven Indispensable Things

1. Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).
2. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
3. Without works faith is dead (James 2:26).
4. Without sanctification [holiness] no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).
5. Without love I am nothing (1 Cor. 13:2).
6. Without discipline you are not a son of God (Hebrews 12:8).
7. Without Me [Jesus] you can do nothing (John 15:5).

—Pulpit Helps

Follow Peace (Hebrews 12:14)

“Follow peace with all men” (Heb. 12:14). Do not offend a bad man, because he will stick at nothing to be revenged. It is cruel to insult a good man, who deserves nothing but good. A great man may easily crush you. There is none so mean who cannot do mischief. Therefore, follow peace with all men. Of Archbishop Usher it is said that he was of so sweet a temper that he was never known to do an ill service to anyone, or to be revenged of anyone who injured him. It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, that the way to have him as one's friend, was to do him an unkindness. When envy, strife, and war, begin in little angry souls, Mark how the sons of peace come in, And quench the kindling coals.

Chalmers - Follow ... holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. - Holiness, which is the dress of heaven, is ready to fall, like Elijah's mantle, from the hand of Him Who hath said—“Turn unto Me and I will pour out My spirit upon you.” (Pr 1:23)

Holiness Takes Effort

People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.

Daily Light on the Daily Path - The holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

“Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”—But nothing unclean will ever enter it.—There is no flaw in you. “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”—As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.—Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and . . . be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and . . . put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.—He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. Heb. 12:14; John 3:3; Rev. 21:27; Song 4:7; Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:14–17; Eph. 4:22–24; Eph. 1:4

Daily Light on the Daily Path - You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the Lord.’”

The holiness without which no one will see the Lord.—“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”—We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.—“Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.”

“This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy.”—Holiness befits your

house, O Lord, forevermore.

“For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”—Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us . . . with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Ex. 28:36; Heb. 12:14; John 4:24; Isa. 64:6; Lev. 10:3; Ezek. 43:12; Ps. 93:5; John 17:19; Heb. 4:14, 16

Daily Light on the Daily Path - As the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”—Holiness without which no one will see the Lord.—Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.—By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. James 2:26; Matt. 7:21; Heb. 12:14; 2 Pet. 1:5–10; Eph. 2:8–9

Before the Face of God - Three Great Corruptions

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. [Heb. 12:14]

Once again the author of Hebrews exhorts us to persevere. This time we learn of three great corruptions that undermine the walk of the Christian. The first is a belligerent spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life makes a peace-loving person. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9).

Some people have a contentious spirit. They wind up in one conflict after another. Some Christians have this problem as a besetting sin. The author of Hebrews warns that if we don’t mortify a belligerent nature by pursuing peace, we will drift away from the kingdom.

The second great sin is bitterness. Verse 15 says that bitterness will cause us to miss the grace of God. Bitterness comes from unresolved anger, perhaps harbored toward God because he has taken us through rough times. A bitter person causes trouble and defiles others, killing their joy and leading them away from trust in God’s good intentions.

The third great sin is sexual immorality (v. 16). Our minds are tricky, and when we go through hard times we may begin to think we have earned the right to sin. “I’m suffering anyway, so I might as well sin.” Sexual temptation is one of the most profound human temptations. Our negative example here is Esau, who married several Canaanite women instead of seeking out one godly wife. In Esau’s case, sexual immorality seems to have played a part in reinforcing his general godlessness and violence.

The great warning comes in verse 17. One day Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils. He did not care about God, and he did not think that he would have to honor his deal with Jacob. He expected to inherit anyway. But God heard Esau’s word and honored it. Esau lost the birthright. Afterwards he was bitterly grieved, but not truly repentant. So he decided to kill his brother. Esau was rejected.

Coram Deo Hebrews warns us that a contentious spirit, a bitter heart, and sexual immorality often lead people away from the kingdom of God. Those who are God’s elect cannot lose their salvation. But we must live faithfully and cling to him in the midst of trial. Examine your life in terms of these three great sins. Are you even slightly on the slide toward apostasy? If so, run back to him and beg his mercy now, before it is too late.

Is Your Primary Desire In Life To Be Happy Or To Be Holy?

Nothing in the Bible remotely suggests the idea that we should seek “happiness.”

But there is plenty written about seeking holiness: “Pursue holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ... like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior.” (Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15)

While many blithely pursue the life depicted on “Fantasy Island,” a battle is raging between the forces of heaven and hell—between good and evil. It is here that Satan seeks to destroy us while God is preparing us for eternity. It is here that either godly character is being forged, or souls are in the process of destruction. Hardly a place for “happiness.”

“The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth ... waiting eagerly for our adoption ... the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:22, 23)

The pursuit of “happiness” is centered in self and has about it a kind of Disneyesque surrealism. Surrounded as we are by struggling

humanity in the abyss of misery and devastation, chatting about “happiness” seems a tad trite. Consider King Solomon’s poignant observation:

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting ... to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than ... to listen to the song of fools.” (Ecclesiastes 7:2, 5)

Paradoxically, it is only out of a life of holiness and service centered on glorifying God that we experience purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. Note Isaiah 58:10, 11:

“And if you give yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like midday. And the Lord will ... satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”

If “happiness” were achievable in the wealthiest “nation on earth, why then are we plagued by boredom, crime, drugs, the murder of the unborn, teenage pregnancy, and divorce? It is my suspicion that Satan has been less than truthful to us in holding out the carrot of “happiness.” What do you think?

FUGITIVE PRIEST

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. HEBREWS 12:14

1581: In 1581 an intense manhunt was taking place in England. The prey was Edmund Campion, a Catholic priest believed to be conspiring to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I. In fact, all Catholics in England at this time were under suspicion because the pope had decreed that Elizabeth, a Protestant, was not the legitimate ruler—and the decree did indeed lead many English Catholics to conspire against the queen.

Was Campion one of the conspirators? Probably not, but in those days politics and religion were hard to separate. Campion seems to have been a devout man. Raised as a Catholic, he turned Protestant in his youth and was ordained in the Church of England, and his brilliance and devotion to the faith impressed many people, including the queen. Had he stayed Protestant, he probably would have been made a bishop. But he turned Catholic again and, for safety, fled to Europe. But in 1580 the pope sent him and another priest back to England to work—underground—as Catholic missionaries. Naturally the Church of England regarded him as a turncoat. One of the government’s many spies betrayed him, and he was imprisoned in the gloomy Tower of London. He was urged to become a Protestant again—and offered large bribes to do so, with the queen herself pleading with him. Campion would not renounce his faith, so he was tortured on the rack but still refused. On December 1, 1581, after assuring the crowd that he was not a traitor and was as loyal a subject as Elizabeth ever had, he was publicly tortured and executed.

Poor Campion! A good man, zealous for the cause of Christ, he had the bad fortune to live in an age when denominational differences could mean loss of life. Perhaps the many Christians executed by other Christians in this bloodstained century have found a fellowship with each other in a better world.

Prayer: Lord of love, give us wisdom to discern which differences matter and which do not. Amen.

The Silent Killer ‘Bitterness’

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all [men], and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

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;

1. Bitterness Must Be Realized “It’s There”
2. Bitterness Must Be Removed “It’s Time”
3. Bitterness Must Be Resisted “It’s True”

Dear Christian friend has bitterness become embedded in your life, has it turned your singing into silence? What are you going to do about it? Hopefully you will list it in the space below and leave it at the altar and ask God to free you

See also Adrian Rogers' sermon on [Bitterness - Hebrews 12:14-15 - see page 1024](#) - NOTE - This is the first of 4 sermons he preached on BITTERNESS - THE OTHER 3 SERMONS FOLLOW THIS ONE IN THE PDF.

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Root of Bitterness
- II. The Fruit of Bitterness
 - A. Physical Trouble
 - B. Emotional Trouble
 - C. Spiritual Trouble
 - D. Social Trouble
- III. The Pursuit of Bitterness
 - A. Pursue It to Recognize It
 - B. Pursue It to Remove It
 - C. Pursue It to Replace It

Conclusion

The pure in heart

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8, KJV

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. Psalm 17:15, KJV

Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. Psalm 73:1, KJV

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14, KJV

Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see their God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs;
Their soul is Christ's abode.

Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

Lord, we Thy presence seek:
May ours this blessing be;
Give us a pure and lowly heart—
A temple meet for Thee.

John Keble, 1792–1866,
and William John Hall, 1793–1861

You Can't Be Holy in a Hurry

Some years ago we often sang a hymn, ["Take Time to Be Holy."](#) I wish we sang it more in these days. It takes time to be holy; one cannot be holy in a hurry, and much of the time that it takes to be holy must go into secret prayer. Some people express surprise that professing Christians today are so little like their Lord, but when I stop to think how little time the average Christian today puts into secret prayer the thing that astonishes me is, not that we are so little like the Lord, but that we are as much like the Lord as we are. —Reuben Archer Torrey in *The Best of R. A. Torrey. Christianity Today*, Vol. 39, no. 10. See: Proverbs 21:5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14.

Kenneth Osbeck - TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY William D. Longstaff, 1822–1894 [Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions](#)

But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15, 16)

The valuable guidelines given in this hymn for living a holy life are just as pertinent for believers today as they were when William Longstaff wrote them more than a century ago. God still requires a holy lifestyle for His people. We sometimes confuse holiness with piety, which can be merely a hypocritical goodness that masks inner deceit or impurity. A truly holy or Christ-like life reveals the virtues mentioned in 2 Peter 1:5, 6: Goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. We are surrounded today by so much sham and insincerity that we are often unconsciously affected by such influences. To maintain the quality of life that God demands, we must determine to take time to develop a life that is genuinely and consistently holy in every

area.

William Longstaff, though financially independent (son of a wealthy English ship owner), was a humble and devout Christian layman and a close friend and supporter of the Moody-Sankey evangelistic team that stirred England with great revival campaigns during the late 19th century. After hearing a sermon on 1 Peter 1:16—"Be ye holy, for I am holy"—with reference to the book of Leviticus from which it was originally taken, young William began to make the achievement of holiness his life's goal. Although this was his only hymn, these words have since been an invaluable influence for sincere believers everywhere who truly desire to live a genuine Christian life:

Take time to be holy. Speak oft with thy Lord; abide in Him always and feed on His Word. Make friends of God's children. Help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy. The world rushes on; spend much time in secret with Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy. Let Him be thy guide, and run not before Him, whatever betide. In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord, and, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy. Be calm in thy soul—Each thought and each motive beneath His control. Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love, thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

For Today: Leviticus 20:7, 8; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:23, 24; 1 Timothy 1:8; Hebrews 12:14

Holiness

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.—Heb. 12:14.

The true signification of the term "holiness" is "wholeness." In a moral sense, "entire," "complete," "perfect." Holiness in its nature, then, is the conformity of the whole man to the image of God. Without this there is no salvation. It can have no substitute. None being holy by nature, it is a special work of the Spirit, wrought in the heart, and developed in the life actions. The doctrine that men grow up in this state from infancy is false. All men have upon their souls the stamp of sin, and therefore need to put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Holiness is to the Christian what the heart is to the human body—the central principle—the vitality of the soul propelling the "life-blood" of the gospel through the whole man. The soul can no more live without holiness than can the body without the heart. Holiness away, and death reigns. Evidences of present holiness may be both numerous and satisfactory. We mention a consciousness of an indwelling, living Saviour, as among the greatest. We would in this emphasize the term "consciousness," as this, to us, is the highest testimony, and therefore conclusive. A correct conversation shows the state of the heart. This is the stream which exhibits the character of the hidden fountain.

Obedience to the divine commands is essential to convince ourselves and others that we are holy. Patience under trials and afflictions brings out this great blessing to the gaze of men and angels. Love of holy society must be realized by constant experience, or our hope may be a fallacy. Holy souls have an affinity for each other. Love is an attraction for all good.

Reader, are you holy? If not, will you seek to become such?

HOLINESS: BECOMING HOLY [Devotions for the Man in the Mirror: 75 Readings to ... - Page 233](#)

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
Hebrews 12:14

Do you ever think, I have tried to be holy...but I cannot. I have given it my best shot, and I simply cannot do it. It is an impossible task. Others may be able, but I am not. The strain of trying to be holy is too much; it wears me out.

A man said recently, "Gosh, I wish I could be like He seems so committed to the Lord. I find it impossible to live the Christian life; I'm always messing up."

The story of the human race is the story of human weakness and frailty. We strive to be strong, self-sufficient overcomers; we are instead often weak, worn-out, and weary. We leave a trail of broken relationships and unkept promises.

Our virtuous motives give way to the fantasies of the flesh. Our good intentions dissolve in a sea of self-centeredness. Our most noble thoughts occupy the space immediately adjacent to our most perverted ones. Our most admirable ambitions suffocate under the avalanche of the urgent. The juggernaut of the daily press squeezes truth into a once-a-week compartment.

This will never do. We must be holy. The Scriptures state clearly, "without holiness no one will see the Lord." If we cannot be holy,

then how will we ever see the Lord? But how can we ever be holy?

What Is Holiness?

The holiness we are to exhibit is not our own, but the holiness of Christ in us. We are not holy, and we will not become holy humans. Christ in us can manifest His holiness if we will yield our flesh to Him. This is not a human operation; it is a spiritual one. Jesus installs His holiness in us by grace. Not a once-for-all-time transaction, this is a daily, moment-by-moment striving to live more by the Spirit and less by the flesh.

Though becoming more holy is God's work in us, it is not a passive enterprise. Our part is active, to strive and strain toward the high calling we have received. God's part is to forgive our failings based on the merit of Christ's atoning death.

His will is that we become holy. "It is God's will that you should be holy" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This kind of holiness is not the result of our own best effort. Rather, we are to so yield to the Lord Jesus that He can operate as Himself in our lives. His will is that we be holy, but we will be holy only in proportion to how much we yield to the Spirit and not the flesh.

Our problem is that we want to become holy in the same way we want a new car or a raise or a good meal. We want it right now. A friend bought his daughter a new car, but it must sit in the garage until she reaches the legal driving age. Until her sixteenth birthday she only has partial use of the car, when accompanied by an adult. Similarly, holiness is like a gift already purchased for us (by the blood of Christ), but we cannot have full use of it until a certain date in the future (our glorification).

Our Part

Becoming holy is a process which includes God's part and our part. On one hand, our part is to stay out of God's part—to yield, to surrender, to stop seeking God on our own terms. But our part also is to obey. It is to enter His rehabilitation program.

When you put yourself under a doctor's care, he cannot help you if you don't follow his instructions. As the patient surrenders his own good ideas and obeys the doctor's instruction, he becomes well. The same is true in sanctification. If you and I want to be made holy, then we must willingly surrender ourselves to His care, and we must also actively obey His instructions.

We have no more power to make ourselves holy than a dying man has to save himself. We are weak and tired, and we cannot offer much help. However, we can submit to His rehabilitation program—sanctification. The key to our part is faith—to seek Him in obedience. "Anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

If our part is only to have faith, then why do the Scriptures say, "make every effort...to be holy?" It is because the Scriptures speak of faith actively, not passively. Our effort is the obedience which comes from faith, effort which expresses gratitude for the holiness we freely receive from the merit of Christ.

Satan would have us think our effort makes us holy or, more correctly, that the failure of our effort dooms us to be unholy. But our sanctification is a process of sin and surrender, over and over again. Holiness is a process of becoming, not a state of being.

God's Part (SEE "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)")

The forgiveness of Christ makes us holy; He washed away our sin. In reality, God in us—the Holy Spirit—makes us holy. There is no possibility of holiness apart from His grace. He calls us, He justifies us, He sanctifies us (makes us holy), and He will glorify us—all by His grace.

Our part is to surrender in faith; God's part is to implant the sanctifying Holy Spirit in us. "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16). Because of His everlasting love, we know Him, and He is faithful to mold us into the character of His Son Jesus Christ—to make us holy.

This occurs on an eternal horizon, not a temporal one. So as you and I take a few temporal steps and fall, like a toddler learning to walk, our loving Father exhorts us to make the effort to get up and try again—by yielding to the process of His sanctification. When we leave the world that is passing away and enter the kingdom of heaven, we will take full possession of our holiness.

I SURRENDER

Father, I long deeply to be different, to be holy as Christ is holy. I confess I have focused on my own effort and not the enabling of Your Holy Spirit. I surrender myself completely to Your will, "that I should be holy." Now have Your own way with me as I wobble along for these next few steps. Your love compels me to try again. Amen.

Wayne Grudem - Our Role in Sanctification [Systematic Theology](#)

The role that we play in sanctification is both a passive one in which we depend on God to sanctify us and an active one in which we strive to obey God and take steps that will increase our sanctification. We can now consider both of these aspects of our role in

sanctification.

First, what may be called the “passive” role that we play in sanctification is seen in texts that encourage us to trust God or to pray and ask that he sanctify us. Paul tells his readers, “Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life” (Rom. 6:13; cf. v. 19), and he tells the Roman Christians, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1). Paul realizes that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit’s work to grow in sanctification, because he says, “If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13).

Unfortunately, this “passive” role in sanctification, this idea of yielding to God and trusting him to work in us “to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), is sometimes so strongly emphasized that it is the only thing people are told about the path of sanctification. Sometimes the popular phrase “let go and let God” is given as a summary of how to live the Christian life. But this is a tragic distortion of the doctrine of sanctification, for it only speaks of one half of the part we must play and, by itself, will lead Christians to become lazy and to neglect the active role that Scripture commands them to play in their sanctification.

That active role which we are to play is indicated by Romans 8:13, where Paul says, “If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Here Paul acknowledges that it is “by the Spirit” that we are able to do this. But he also says we must do it! It is not the Holy Spirit who is commanded to put to death the deeds of the flesh, but Christians! Similarly, Paul tells the Philippians, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12–13). Paul encourages them to obey even more than they did when he was present. He says that obedience is the way in which they “work out [their] own salvation,” meaning that they will “work out” the further realization of the benefits of salvation in their Christian life.¹³ The Philippians are to work at this growth in sanctification and to do it solemnly and with reverence (“with fear and trembling”), for they are doing it in the presence of God himself. But there is more: the reason why they are to work and to expect that their work will yield positive results is that “God is at work in you”—the prior and foundational work of God in sanctification means that their own work is empowered by God; therefore it will be worthwhile and will bear positive results.

There are many aspects to this active role that we are to play in sanctification. We are to “Strive ... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14); we are to “abstain from sexual immorality” and so obey the will of God, which is our “sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). John says that those who hope to be like Christ when he appears will actively work at purification in this life: “Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Paul tells the Corinthians to “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18) and not to have partnership with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). He then says, “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). This kind of striving for obedience to God and for holiness may involve great effort on our part, for Peter tells his readers to “make every effort” to grow in character traits that accord with godliness (2 Peter 1:5). Many specific passages of the New Testament encourage detailed attention to various aspects of holiness and godliness in life (see Rom. 12:1–13:14; Eph. 4:17–6:20; Phil. 4:4–9; Col. 3:5–4:6; 1 Peter 2:11–5:11, et al.). We are continually to build up patterns and habits of holiness, for one measure of maturity is that mature Christians “have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:14).

The New Testament does not suggest any short-cuts by which we can grow in sanctification; it simply encourages us repeatedly to give ourselves to the old-fashioned, time-honored means of Bible reading and meditation (Ps. 1:2; Matt. 4:4; John 17:17), prayer (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6), worship (Eph. 5:18–20), witnessing (Matt. 28:19–20), Christian fellowship (Heb. 10:24–25), and self-discipline or self-control (Gal. 5:23; Titus 1:8).

It is important that we continue to grow both in our passive trust in God to sanctify us and in our active striving for holiness and greater obedience in our lives. If we neglect active striving to obey God, we become passive, lazy Christians. If we neglect the passive role of trusting God and yielding to him, we become proud and overly confident in ourselves. In either case, our sanctification will be greatly deficient. We must maintain faith and diligence to obey at the same time. The old hymn wisely says, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”¹⁴

One more point must be added to this discussion of our role in sanctification: sanctification is usually a corporate process in the New Testament. It is something that happens in community. We are admonished, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24–25). Together Christians are “being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5); together they are “a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9); together they are to “encourage one another and build one another up” (1 Thess. 5:11). Paul says that “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Eph. 4:1) is to live in a special way in community—“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2–3). When that happens, the body of Christ functions as a unified whole, with each part “working properly,” so that corporate sanctification occurs as it “makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:16; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–26; Gal. 6:1–2). It is significant that the fruit of the Spirit includes many things that build community (“love, joy,

peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," Gal. 5:22–23), whereas "the works of the flesh" destroy community ("sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these," Gal. 5:19–21). [Systematic Theology](#)

A W Tozer - [My Daily Pursuit: Devotions for Every Day - Page 289](#)

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. HEBREWS 12:14

The Bible teaches quite plainly that God is infinite. This above all other things that may be said about God makes the greatest demand on our intelligence and imagination. It requires us to picture a mode of being that we are not familiar with, unlike anything we have ever known.

We are familiar with matter and space and time and motion and energy. We are familiar with creatures composed of matter living in space, and that have some energy and make motions. I am asking you to receive into your mind ideas of something that is not matter, and does not dwell in space; it overflows. The heaven of heavens cannot contain it; it is not subject to time, and it is not a creature. It is the uncreated One, and it is an energy through all that has energy in the world.

To think about God is almost impossible, because our thoughts must rise above everything else we might think about. Faith is involved here. We look beyond what we can actually see and experience a vision of God that cannot be explained in human language.

Oh, how wonderful it is to meditate on God!

Take time to be holy,
Speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always
And feed on His Word.
Make friends of God's children,
Help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing
His blessing to seek.
WILLIAM D. LONGSTAFF (1822–1894)

Today is a glorious day, O God, as I take the time to meditate upon
Thee and Thy nature. How wonderful it is to nourish my soul on those high thoughts of Thee. In the blessed name of Jesus I pray.
Amen.

Hebrews 12:14 (HCSB) "Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.

A new study by the Barna organization shows that though the Bible talks a lot about holiness, most adults are confused and even daunted by the concept. The study found overall, three out of four adults believe it is possible for someone to become holy regardless of their past. While 50 percent of adults said they know someone they consider to be holy, only one in four, or 21 percent, considers themselves to be holy. Results showed very little difference between people who call themselves born again Christians, and the population in general.

The adults most likely to say they knew someone they considered holy described holiness primarily as possessing a positive attitude toward God and life. Respondents who defined holiness as spiritual condition were less likely to identify anyone they knew as holy. When asked to describe what it meant to be holy, adults gave a wide variety of answers. The most common reply was "I don't know."

Other responses included making faith your top priority in life, living a pure or sinless lifestyle, having a good attitude toward other people, or focusing completely on God. The study revealed the responses of born again and non-born again adults were almost identical.

The survey's director George Barna says, "Realize the results portray a body of Christians who attend church and read the Bible, but do not understand the concept or significance or holiness, do not personally desire to be holy, and therefore do little, if anything to pursue it." Barna says other recent survey results on spiritual maturity, indicate the need to teach the importance of holiness. He adds, "To align their hearts with the notion of being holy, we must move them away from a 'cheap grace' theology and replace people's self-absorption with focus on God and His ways."

—<http://www.barna.org>, The Concept of Holiness Baffles most Americans, February 20, 2006. Submitted by Jim Sandell.

Jay Adams - Pursue peace with everybody, and sanctification ...Hebrews 12:14 - Day by Day Along the Way

So, as we saw earlier, you are a hunter—one who “pursues.” Hunters don’t wander at random; hunters have specific targets in mind. One of those that you must pursue with energy and determination is “peace.” Peace means not entering into unnecessary hostilities. Not all battles can be avoided, of course, but all that it is possible to avoid, without compromise, ought to be shunned. You have no reason to “pick a fight.” Peace also means the cessation of hostilities. Peace with God should lead to peace with men. Pursue peace with those with whom you have quarreled in the past. But, as we saw, peace is also shalom, a state of wellbeing within, if not without. Peace is your target, and therefore, has much to do with your daily pursuits. Like a good hunter, keep it in mind, and when there is an opportunity for attaining it, see to it that you do not neglect it or miss the target. Shoot straight, and hit it!

Wayne Grudem - Pursuing Personal Holiness. If we want to truly draw near to God in worship, it is important to strive for personal holiness. The author of Hebrews reminds believers to strive for “the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14), and Jesus says that it is the “pure in heart” who shall “see God” (Matt. 5:8)—**a promise that is fulfilled partially in this life and completely in the age to come**. Specifically in connection with prayer, John says, “If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God” (1 John 3:21), but this principle certainly applies to worship as well, as we have boldness to come into God’s presence to offer him praise. James indicates a similar concern when, immediately after saying, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you,” he adds, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8).¹² [Systematic Theology](#)

Charles Stanley - [The Steps of Forgiveness Seeking His Face: A Daily Devotional - Page 11](#)

SCRIPTURE READING: Hebrews 12:12–15

KEY VERSE: Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

You’ve heard of the stages of grief that a person experiences when someone close to him dies. Death brings out a host of emotions that must be dealt with honestly as they arise.

The same is true for dealing with an offense when someone hurts you. The pain is very real, and even if you know the incident was unintentional, the ache is still there. See if you can recognize these common stages in the process of coming to forgiveness:

Confusion. At first, you may be bewildered by the offense. You may try to find an explanation and relive the scenario in your mind to try to find answers. When the offender is someone close to you, the assault may be all the more troubling.

Denial. Another term for this is detouring, and it involves telling yourself that the offense did not even occur. You explain it away and try to convince yourself that you should not have felt hurt.

Discovery. Through the truth of God’s Word, you come to realize what you’re doing. Jesus urges you to forgive immediately and put the past behind you.

Forgiveness. You come before the Lord, confessing your sin of resentment and at the same time releasing the other person from all obligation to you. You are now free to love as Christ intends.

Lord, help me to identify where I am and move me through the steps of forgiveness.

Rick Renner - [Follow After Peace Sparkling Gems from the Greek Vol. 2: 365 New Gems](#)

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ...—Hebrews 12:14

Do you have a difficult relationship in your life that has been poisoned by offense, bitterness, or misunderstanding? It doesn’t matter who it is—your spouse, a sibling, a friend, an employee, or a member of your church—you will find vital keys to help you navigate the situation in Hebrews 12:14. The verse starts out by saying, “Follow peace with all men...”

That word “follow” is the Greek word *dioko*. This word was an old hunting term that meant to follow the tracks of the animal or to follow the scent of the animal. Just imagine a hunter decked out in all his hunting gear, and he’s following the tracks of his prey. He’s following the scent of the beast, and he’s looking for every little branch that the animal may have broken. The hunter is hunting, following, and searching for that animal—and he is not going to stop until finally he gets his prey.

This word *dioko* is also translated as “persecute” in the New Testament. In other words, when someone was persecuted, it wasn’t something done haphazardly or accidentally; persecution was very intentional and deliberate. The persecutor followed his intended victims. He searched for them. He hunted them. He tracked them down. He was out to get them.

Now the Holy Spirit uses this same word in Hebrews 12:14 and says, “Follow after peace with all men....” That means sometimes peace doesn’t just come to us. In fact, most of the time, peace does not come to us. We have to do something to find peace with people. We have to follow after peace.

No matter how difficult a particular relationship in your life is, God is telling you in this verse what your responsibility is as a believer. You have to put on your hunting gear and make a firm decision to do something about that relationship according to His love that has been shed abroad in your heart (see Romans 5:5). Remind yourself: “I can’t be responsible for what that person does, but I am responsible for what I do—and God has required me to do everything I can do to obtain peace in this relationship.” Of course, sometimes when you do everything you can do, the other person doesn’t respond. You can’t answer for the other person, but you are going to answer for yourself.

So if you’re struggling to have peace with someone in your life, take this verse to heart. It’s time to put on your hunting gear and begin to look for anything you can do. Follow the tracks. Follow the scent. Look for every little broken branch. Look for anything you might possibly do that might lead to peace. Follow the tracks of peace.

Why is it so important that we follow after peace? The Bible goes on to tell us the reason in Hebrews 12:14: “Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man will see the Lord.” That word “see” tells us that lack of peace serves as a blocker that stops us from being admitted into the immediate presence of God. Think how many times you’ve been in a service where God’s anointing is present and people are being blessed, but you can’t enter into it because you are so inwardly upset about someone or something. You see, these attitudes are blockers, and that is why the writer of Hebrews says without peace—or in the presence of strife—you will not be able to be admitted into the life-changing presence of God. Strife is a blocker. It will stop you from entering into the anointing. It will stop you from entering into blessing of any kind.

The Bible tells us to “follow after peace and holiness.” The word “holiness” is the word *hagias*. It means to be separate or to be different. In this particular case, the writer of Hebrews is telling us that we don’t have the privilege of acting or thinking like the world. God calls us to a higher standard. The Holy Spirit lives in us, giving us the power we need to walk in forgiveness on a much higher level than the world. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to walk in freedom rather than the bondage the world walks in. We are called to follow after peace—to hunt it, seek it, pursue it—with all men. And we’re called to walk in holiness, to behave differently than lost people behave and to walk in forgiveness, free from offense. If we fail to pursue that kind of spiritual walk and remain in strife and bitterness, we’ll never really be able to experience the tangible presence of God.

Take a moment to look at your life. Think about those times when you’ve harbored bitterness and offense and allowed your heart to grow hard toward a person. It was very difficult for you to experience the sweet presence of the Lord during those times, wasn’t it? That’s what this verse is talking about.

God has called us to a higher level, and like it or not, this verse tells us what we have to do when we’re dealing with difficult people in our lives who have hurt or offended us. If we’re serious about being disciples of Jesus, we must determine to forgive every person and every offense. We have to respond differently than the world would respond. Then as much as is possible with us, we must actively follow after obtaining peace with every person.

And let me tell you, friend—the only way you’re going to be able to do this is by spending time with Jesus. Ask Him what path you’re to follow to obtain peace. No one understands this better than Jesus. He had enemies all around Him, yet He walked in peace with all men. Talk to Jesus, and He’ll get you on the right track that leads to freedom from strife and offense and to an abiding sense of His presence every day of your life.

FOLLOWING HOLINESS - David Wilkerson

God’s Word tells us in no uncertain terms: “Pursue ... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Here is the truth, plain and simple. Without the holiness that is imparted by Christ alone—a precious gift we honor by leading a life devoted to obeying His every word—none of us will see the Lord. This refers not just to heaven, but to our present life. Without holiness, we will not see God’s presence in our daily walk, our family, our relationships, our witness or our ministry.

No matter how many Christian conferences we attend, how many preaching tapes we listen to, how many Bible studies we are involved in, if we harbor a cancerous sin—if the Lord has a controversy with us over our iniquity—then none of our efforts will produce godly fruit.

Of course, this issue goes beyond all lusts of the flesh to corruption of the spirit. Paul describes the same destructive sin when he says, “Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Corinthians 10:10).

Dearly beloved, will you allow the Holy Spirit to deal with any hidden sin you are harboring? Will you trust in the escape that God has provided for you? I urge you to cultivate a holy fear and trust in these last days. It will keep you pure, no matter how loudly wickedness rages around you. It will also enable you to walk in God's holiness, which holds the promise of His enduring presence.

It is all a matter of faith. Christ has promised to keep you from falling, and to give you sin-resisting power—if you simply believe what He has said. You cannot break free from the death-grip of besetting sin by willpower, by promises, or by any human effort alone. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6)

Holiness

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.—Hebrews 12:14

Before his historic Aldersgate "heartwarming" experience, Wesley, like most of us, sought to please God by his own good works—but without success. In his journal entry for May 24, 1738, he writes:

Being removed to the university for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and private, and read with the Scriptures several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all the while so much as a notion of inward holiness....

Wesley discovered that praying avidly and reading the Bible were not the roads to holiness. Rather, as he later discovered they are the results of holiness. The writer of Hebrews tells us that without holiness we will not see the Lord. In other places, the Scriptures repeat the divine command, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).

What then is the secret to living a holy life?

Clearly, it takes an ongoing experience with the Holy Spirit to enable us to live holy lives. We are holy because we are filled with His holiness. The result is that we live holy lives daily. Inward holiness, as a result of the Holy Spirit living within us, is evidenced by outward holiness as we live our daily lives.

But for many of us, it's too easy to go through our day without a conscious reliance on the Holy Spirit to guide us—to live through us—to enable holiness to be seen in us. But when we cultivate the daily habit of acknowledging His presence, we are blessed.

Be holy today. Be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

But we must love God before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness.—from "The Witness of the Spirit"

PRAYER AND GOD'S WORK E. M. BOUNDS

By their fruits ye shall know them. MATTHEW 7:20

WE CANNOT WONDER THAT SO little is accomplished in the great work in the world which God has in hand. The fact is that it is surprising so much has been done with such feeble, defective agents. "Holiness to the Lord" needs again to be written on the banners of the church. Once more it needs to be sounded out in the ears of modern Christians:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Let it be stated and reiterated that this is the divine standard of religion. Nothing short of this will satisfy the divine requirement. O the danger of deception at this point! How near one can come to being right and yet be wrong! Some men can come very near to pronouncing the test word, "Shibboleth," but they miss it. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord," says Jesus Christ, but He further states that then He will say unto them, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23).

Men can do many good things and yet not be holy in heart and righteous in conduct. They can do many good things and lack the spiritual quality of heart called holiness. How great the need of hearing the words of Paul guarding us against self deception in the great work of personal salvation:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

O may I still from sin depart;
A wise and understanding heart,
Jesus, to me to be given;
And let me through Thy Spirit know
To glorify my God below,
And find my way to heaven.

Christlikeness

In his powerful book *The Holiness of God*, R.C. Sproul observed that unbelievers often feel uneasy in the presence of an obedient Christian. The holiness of God reflected in a believer's life makes the non-Christian uncomfortable. Sproul then told the following true incident to illustrate his point.

A well-known professional golfer was playing in a tournament with President Gerald Ford, fellow pro Jack Nicklaus, and Billy Graham. After the round was over, one of the other pros on the tour asked, "Hey, what was it like playing with the President and Billy Graham?" The pro said with disgust, "I don't need Billy Graham stuffing religion down my throat!" With that he headed for the practice tee. His friend followed, and after the golfer had pounded out his fury on a bucket of golf balls, he asked, "Was Billy a little rough on you out there?" The pro sighed and said with embarrassment, "No, he didn't even mention religion."

Sproul commented, "Astonishingly, Billy Graham had said nothing about God, Jesus, or religion, yet the pro stomped away after the game accusing Billy of trying to ram religion down his throat." What had happened? Simply this: The evangelist had so reflected Christlikeness that his presence made the pro feel uncomfortable.

I wonder, do unbelievers sense our godly influence? If we are identified with Christ and walk in holiness, they will—before we even mention religion.

See: Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 3:11

A W Tozer - A Disturbing Verse [Tozer on the Holy Spirit: A 365-Day Devotional - Page 24](#)

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. —Hebrews 12:14

The word holy is used to describe the character of angels, the nature of heaven and the character of God. It is written that angels are holy and those angels who gaze down upon the scenes of mankind are called the watchers and holy ones.

It is said that heaven is a holy place where no unclean thing can enter in.

God Himself is described by the adjective holy—Holy Ghost, Holy Lord and Holy Lord God Almighty. These words are used of God throughout the Bible, showing that the highest adjective that can be ascribed to God, the highest attribute that can be ascribed to God is that of holiness, and, in a relative sense, even the angels in heaven partake of the holiness of God.

We note in the Bible, too, that the absence of holiness is given as a reason for not seeing God.... This text does have a meaning and it ought to disturb us until we have discovered what it means and how we may meet its conditions.

The divine antidote for the satanic poison of sin is holiness.... Holiness is an attribute of God and a requirement of the people of God.

The Bad Man's Occupation Is Gone

Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18–21; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14

Preaching Themes: Conflict, Peace, Reconciliation, War

To remain quiet is generally the way to baffle an adversary. Indeed, there is no weapon with which he can wound you. If you will not yield so as to give railing for railing, what is to be done with you?

It is much the same as when a certain duke proclaimed war against a peaceful neighbor who was resolved not to fight. The troops came riding to the town, and found the gates open as on ordinary occasions. The children were playing in the streets, and the blacksmith was at his forge, and the shopkeepers at their counters. And so, pulling up their horses, the soldiers inquired, "Where is the enemy?"

"We don't know. We are friends." What was to be done under the circumstances but to ride home?

So it is in life, if you only meet evil with good the bad man's occupation is gone.⁵⁷

Ending the Battle between Neighbors

Matthew 5:9, 23–25, 44; Romans 12:18–21; Hebrews 12:14

Preaching Themes: Conflict, Neighbors, Peace, Reconciliation

William Ladd had a farm in one of the states of America, and his neighbor, Pulsifer, was a great trouble to him, for he kept a breed of gaunt, long-legged sheep, as active as spaniels, that would spring over almost any sort of fence. These sheep were very fond of a fine field of grain belonging to Mr. Ladd, and were in it continually. Complaints were of no use, for Pulsifer evidently cared nothing for his neighbor's losses.

One morning Ladd said to his men, "Set the dogs on those sheep, and if that won't keep them out, shoot them." After he had said that, he thought to himself, "This will not do. I had better try the peace principle." So he sent to his men and countermanded the order, and rode over to see his neighbor about those troublesome sheep. "Good morning," said he, but he received no answer. So he tried again, and got nothing but a sort of grunt. "Neighbor," he said, "I have come to see you about those sheep."

"Yes," Pulsifer replied, "I know. You are a pretty neighbor to tell your men to kill my sheep! You a rich man, too, and going to shoot a poor man's sheep!" Then followed some very strong language.

But Ladd replied, "I was wrong, neighbor, and I am sorry for it. Think no more about it. But, neighbor, we may as well agree. It seems I have got to keep your sheep, and it won't do to let them eat all that grain, so I came over to say that I will take them into my homestead pasture and I will keep them all the season; and if any one is missing you shall have the pick of mine."

Pulsifer looked confounded, and then stammered out, "Now, Squire, are you in earnest?" When he found that Ladd really meant to stand to the offer, Pulsifer stood still a moment and then said, "The sheep won't trouble you anymore. When you talk about shooting I can shoot as well as you; but when you speak in that kind and neighborly way I can be kind too." The sheep never trespassed into Ladd's lot any more.

That is the way to kill a bad spirit. This is overcoming evil with good. If one had begun shooting, and the other had followed suit, they certainly would have been both losers, and both been overcome. But when the offended one made kindness his only return the battle was over.⁵⁸

Oswald Chambers - Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.—Hebrews 12:14

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A **holy** life. Do not substitute the word **happy**; **happiness is a consequence of holiness**.

So many good people are caught up in what we may call "the gospel of temperament." In other words, they subscribe to the belief that they must be happy and bright. But these moods are consequences, and not causes, of the Christian's relationship with God.

Our Lord insists that we keep our eyes fixed on "the strait gate and the narrow way" which, in essence, is pure love and holy living in every area of our lives. Happiness is not to be our primary aim. Our aim is to please the Lord Jesus Christ, to serve Him in the beauty of holiness, in love, and in humility. Is this your aim?

Make every effort...to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. - Hebrews 12:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

William Carey, often considered the father of modern missions, once wrote: ""If, after my removal, anyone should think it is worth his while to write my life, I will give you a criterion by which you may judge of its correctness. If he give me credit for being a plodder, he will describe me justly...I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit.""

William Carey had that spiritual trait the Hebrews needed so badly: perseverance. They needed to learn how to keep running even when their arms ached and their knees felt as if they were going to buckle.

There's nothing wrong with being a plodder. In fact, it's safe to say that there are more plodders among us than there are sprinters. God's work has room for both.

As weak and wavering as the Hebrews were, it might not have occurred to them that they could strengthen others. But that is what the author encouraged them to do, so that the weakest among them would not stumble. Remember that mutual encouragement was one reason they were urged not to give up meeting together as the church (see 10:25).

Those believers were also urged to pursue peace and holiness, another way of describing sanctification or Christian growth. If the lives of the Hebrews were marked by turmoil from outside pressure and persecution instead of peace, they could at least try to ensure that they were not adding to the turmoil by their own actions.

While turmoil may not be something over which we have any control, no one can prevent us from becoming more like Jesus Christ.

This seems to be what the writer had in mind when he warned his readers against missing the grace of God. We have already established that he is not talking about a loss of salvation, but rather the tragedy of a life lived with no effectiveness for God.

There was one additional Old Testament individual that the author had in mind--but Esau was a bad example. Snubbing the holy in favor of his stomach, he suffered incredible spiritual loss. When it comes to a life like Esau's, we need to run the other way.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Has it been a while since you have looked around to see who might be following you in the race called the Christian life?

Yes, we know that you're not supposed to look behind you in a race. But this case is different. Whether you are a spouse, parent,

employer, supervisor, teacher, Saturday morning coach--or just about anything else--it is almost certain that someone is looking to you as an example. Did you run a level path last week for that person to follow? It's worth thinking about today.

David Guzik - Holiness — not as a legalistic list of rules, but in the power of a life separated to God — is essential for anyone who will appear before God

Without holiness no one will see the Lord. - Hebrews 12:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

After Hurricane Katrina, Sam Thompson, a native of the ravaged coast of Mississippi, felt compelled to help. He embarked on an unusual mission: to run 50 marathons in 50 states for 50 consecutive days in an effort to raise money towards hurricane relief.

Sam Thompson understands the nature of a race, a metaphor used by the writer of Hebrews in our reading today. The gospel message, as we hear, understand, and confess it, sets us in motion. It propels us off the starting blocks for a journey of faithfully following Jesus Christ. Our destination is to see the Lord one day (v. 14).

To run well requires spiritual fitness. The Bible calls this holiness. In the first four verses of Hebrews 12, the writer explains what this entails. It requires spiritual determination to keep going when everything inside you and around you screams, "Stop!" It requires wisdom to anticipate potential roadblocks to spiritual growth and to chart a course, making provisions to avoid the entanglements of sin. It requires steadfast focus on Christ.

Holiness is not, however, a contest of self-effort. God determines that we will share in His holiness (vv. 5-11). He arranges the circumstances of our lives, allowing just enough pain so that we grow spiritually but without surrendering to defeat or discouragement. God superintends this process of making us holy.

Another dimension of holiness is relational (vv. 14-17). The writer calls us to peace and forgiveness. He urges us not to give in to bitterness. Holiness is not just a matter of an internal spiritual fervor. To be holy is to pursue right relationships with others.

And finally, holiness is a result of authentic worship. We have much for which to be thankful. The gospel has mediated a settlement for us with God. We are pardoned. We are guaranteed eternal life. It is the resulting joy and thanksgiving that gives us the perseverance with which we are to run this race.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Consider some questions this passage raises. First, are you running well by anticipating and avoiding sin that so easily entangles you? Second, if you are facing a painful circumstance in your life, can you remember that this discipline is a guarantee of the Father's love for you? Third, are you living a life of forgiveness and reconciliation with others? And finally, what are ways you're expressing your reverent worship and awe of God?

Hebrews 12:14 Matthew 5:23-26

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. - Hebrews 12:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

The cousin of French king Louis XV had the habit of ordering his coachman to try to run over any monks he saw walking in the road. This dangerous amusement was permitted to go unchecked, and it eventually led to a deadly consequence. One day the king's cousin passed a man who was repairing a road and shot him—just for the sport of seeing the man fall. When the crime was brought to the king's attention, he pardoned his cousin but with this warning: "Let it be understood: I will similarly pardon anyone who shoots you."

Jesus does more than describe the nature of anger. He diagnoses its root and warns of its ultimate consequences. Anger is what we feel when we believe that we have been wronged by someone. It springs from resentment over an offense and contempt for the individual. It results in an adversarial relationship that has the potential to disrupt fellowship and worship alike.

In His teaching on this subject Jesus offered two important principles for dealing with anger. The first principle is initiative. In this passage the focus is primarily on the one who has offended someone else. We might have expected Jesus to focus primarily on the offended party, since they are the most likely to feel anger towards another. Instead, in these verses it is the offender who initiates the process of reconciliation. Elsewhere Jesus urges the offended party to make the first move (Matt. 18:15). Both share an obligation to work for resolution when there has been a conflict. Ideally, the two would meet en route to one another and settle their differences "on the way."

Jesus' second principle is urgency. How important is it to deal with anger? Reconciliation is so important that it takes priority over everything else. It even takes precedence over worship. God would rather see us resolve our differences than receive our offerings.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you know someone who is angry with you? Is there someone who has offended you? How can you take the initiative in each case to reconcile with that person? Before attempting to reconcile, take some time to think through your strategy. For example, reconciliation may be better attempted face to face rather than over the phone. You may even want to write out what you will say in advance. There is no way to guarantee how the other person will respond, but you can be certain of God's help as you "make every effort."

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+), and what David felt when he said, "I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path" (Psalm 119:128+).

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+). 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+). 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+). 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+; Romans 12:11+). 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+).

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±; Ps 119:57±).

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+). The link between pursuing peace and sanctification shows that we must not pursue peace at any cost. As Paul puts it (Ro 12:18+), "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+). 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+).

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+; Gal. 5:16,17+; Ro 8:12,13+).

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+; Col. 3:5, 6, 7,8+; 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+). 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+). 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 μινθ 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** 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 of the grace of God** - Luke 22:32; 1 Cor 13:8; Galatians 5:4
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

Related Passages:

Hebrews 3:13 (WATCHING OUT FOR EACH OTHER) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrew 10:24-25 (WATCHING OUT FOR EACH OTHER) and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

KEEP ON HIGH ALERT FOR A ROOT OF BITTERNESS!

Having given his readers three commands as to what they were **TO DO** ("Strengthen," "make straight" and "pursue" - Heb 12:12-14), now the writer gives them three warnings about what **TO AVOID**.

See to it ([episkopeo](#)) **that no one comes short of** ([hustereo](#)) **the grace** ([charis](#)) **of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled** - Note 2 warnings here introduced by "that..." (1) come short of grace (2) root of bitterness springs up. **comes short of** ([hustereo](#)) was used in another serious warning in Heb 4:1 "let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest (REMAIN UNSAVED), any one of you may seem to **have come short** of it."

See to it ([episkopeo](#)) I like the old King James translation "**Looking diligently.**" **See to it** is in the plural, indicating that this responsibility does not rest merely on leaders or elders, but on the entire community of believers. The verb [episkopeo](#) (**See to it**) is in the present tense, calling for a continual, vigilant attentiveness—not an occasional glance. Believers are to be constantly on the lookout for brothers and sisters who appear to be lagging behind in the "race," failing to lay hold of the grace that empowers endurance. One writer notes that the primary nuance of *episkopeō* involves inspection for the sake of protection. The writer is not calling for fleshly fault-finding or nit-picking, but Spirit-led, loving oversight—watching over fellow believers in order to offer preventative care and protection. The aim is not to judge but to safeguard, much like a shepherd who scans the flock for those in danger of wandering, weakening, or straying toward harm.

The same verb [episkopeo](#) is used in 1Pe 5:2+ where elders are commanded to "exercise oversight" of the local congregation. The related noun [episkopos](#) occurs in Acts 20:28+, where Paul refers to the Ephesian elders as overseers (*episkopoi*). The idea in Hebrews 12:15 is that these Jewish believers were to exercise careful oversight over one another's lives, ensuring that no one falls short of the grace of God.

Oh, what a needed word for the body of Christ. In Ephesians 4:3-4 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!"

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+) versus what they could not see yet already possessed by faith (Mt Zion - He 12:22+) 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, this charge was not just to the leaders but every individual in the fellowship. The leader might not have access to some of those in danger that other members had contact with.

THOUGHT - This is a good principle for a large church. Individual members need to be watchful—not in a legalistic way, but graciously—for sheep in their midst who are beginning to drift from grace. I've known believers who responded to God's loving discipline by pulling away from the flock. Were they genuine

believers? I can't say. But I do know this: the weight of God's discipline felt to them too painful and too difficult to bear, and so they began to withdraw from God.

In my experience (and I could name several men and women who drew back under God's discipline), there seems to be very little teaching in the church on this powerful truth. As a result, many saints are unprepared for the trials, afflictions, and sufferings that come—and when they do, they interpret them as God being unloving or unfair. In reality, He is showing His love and drawing them closer to Himself through discipline.

I will also admit that I did not clearly understand God's discipline until I completed my second Precept study on Hebrews. The Spirit opened my eyes to the many positives of divine discipline. Previously, I saw it primarily as punitive—God taking me to the woodshed and wearing me out (and I knew I deserved it)! While this genre of correction can be part of His discipline, that view misses His greater purpose: to train us to be more like His Son. See lecture and related notes from Dr Wayne Barber in the article entitled Principles of God's Discipline.

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!

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!

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.

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.

The next two verses (He 12:16, 17+) seem to present several sins (immoral, godless) 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. As discussed 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 goal, 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 (or she) 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 (cf Heb 6:4-6+).

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)

Donald Guthrie on the **grace of God** - The grace of God stands here for all the benefits which God in his grace has provided. Much failure among Christians is due to a lack of appropriation of those benefits. A specific example is here quoted—as when a root of bitterness causes trouble. (Borrow [Hebrews](#))

Simon Kistemaker - 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. (BORROW [Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews PAGE 384](#))

Warren 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. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

COMING SHORT OF GRACE

That no one comes short of ([hustereo](#) - to fail to reach; NIV "misses") **the grace** ([charis](#)) **of God** - **Grace** ([charis](#)) **of God** - is His unmerited favor including his power to live the Christian life. We have seen this same verb **come short** ([hustereo](#)) in Heb 4:1 in another warning "let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have **come short** of it." In that context, failure to enter God's rest refers to one who is an unbeliever. The meaning in the present verse is similar and refers to one who while they may profess to believe in Messiah, are in fact false professors who are not truly born again. **Comes short** is in the present tense which depicts this individual as continually falling short of God's grace. Note that coming short is not about losing salvation. The point is they never obtained salvation by grace through faith. One might say they failed to "utilize" the grace of God that was made available to them. The implication is that this person has heard the truth but they come short of receiving it and in effect turn away from Christ, which is apostasy. Picture a person who come right up to the edge of getting everything that God has for them -- all the power that grace has, all the sufficiency that grace has, all the ability to handle anything that grace has because it's unmerited unearned favor and power.

This passage reminds us that how we value spiritual things reveals the condition of our hearts.

R C H Lenski explains **comes short of the grace of God** - The calamity ever to be guarded against is first of all "that anyone may drop away from the grace of God," literally, "fall behind" and thus be separated "from the saving grace of God."....The picture is that of believers being carried forward to eternal salvation by God's grace, and instead of being carried forward to heaven like the rest this individual is left standing behind and is thus lost. "Grace" is the unmerited favor Dei that comes to the guilty sinner in the gospel to free him from his guilt and sin, to make him a child of God, to keep and to bless him as such. To have (ACCESS TO) that grace and then to drop away from it is calamity indeed. Yet the readers were in danger of doing this very thing by shrinking from persecution and thus being inclined to think less and less of Christ and again falling in love with their former Judaism. (BORROW [The Interpretation of the Epistle of Hebrews page 444](#)).

Simon Kistemaker - The writer reasserts the corporate responsibility of the believers. "See to it that no one misses the grace of God" (compare Heb 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 (2 Cor. 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. (BORROW [Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews PAGE 384](#))

Grant Osborne - When he says in verse 15, "**See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God**," he is returning to Heb 2:1 and Heb 4:1 and the danger of "falling short" or apostasy. This is one of the dominant issues of the book, discussed in depth in Heb 2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-31; and Heb 12:14-29, so this begins the final warning passage. The "grace of God" would encompass all he has done in sending his Son to die on the cross for our sins and the new era of salvation that has resulted. In Heb 4:16, divine grace is intended "so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." The wilderness people fell short and lost their place in God's promised land, perishing in the wilderness. Esau here has joined them and becomes another negative example of what not to do if one wants to inherit eternal life. (See [Hebrews Verse by Verse - Page cxxii](#))

ESV Study Bible - See to it that. As they pursue peace and holiness (Heb 12:14), Christians should watch out for each other (cf. Heb 3:13; 10:24-25) in order that no one falls short of the gift of eternal salvation

Larry Richards insightfully interprets falling short of God's grace in the context of the divine discipline just discussed in Heb 12:5-11 explaining that "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." (BORROW [Bible Reader's Companion PAGE 866](#))

THOUGHT - Are you in danger of becoming bitter at God because of discipline (trials, afflictions, etc) He has either sent or allowed into your life? If so remember that He is 100% sovereign and all DISCIPLINE that comes into our life from the Hand of God is "filtered" through His hands of love for His children, and allowed for their GOOD and His glory! (See [real life illustration below](#)).

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+)

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 10:21-23+)

COMMENT - 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!)." (Ro 10:8-11+)

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+; Mt 7:22, 23+)

Kenneth 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+). 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+). 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." ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

David 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.*

P E 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 unflinching 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. ([Exposition](#))

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).

Matthew 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.

See to it (1983) (**episkopeo** from **epí** = 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. To look carefully, to be on the lookout for, to oversee, to exercise careful attention, to inspect with diligence, to watch over so as to prevent harm. It expresses careful regard of those in position of responsibility (as a physician, or a superintendent) To keep watch over in order to provide protection. In fact one writer says the idea is primarily inspection for the sake of protection. The root word **skopos** meant a mark on which to fix the eyes and by extension a watcher, one who looks attentively.

In the NT, **EPISKOPEO** is used only in Hebrews 12:15 and 1 Peter 5:2+, the latter used to describe the work of shepherding the flock. **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. In the only other use in 1Pe 5:2 episkopeo describes the elders as "watchmen upon" (the prefix "*epi-*" = upon) their sheep. In 1Pe 5:2 episkopeo is in the present tense (as in Heb 12:15) 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+ and Php 2:13+). The verb in 1Pe 5:2 and Heb 12:15 emphasizes personal responsibility to care out this action. They are constantly examining other "sheep" for "spiritual parasites" and are ever on the lookout for the ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15+). Oversight is not the only duty of shepherding, but it is the one Peter mentions here in the situation of suffering.

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) ([Hebrews Commentary](#))

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. In the only other use in 1Pe 5:2 episkopeo describes the elders as "watchmen upon" (the prefix "*epi*" = upon) their sheep. In 1Pe 5:2 episkopeo is in the present tense (as in Heb 12:15) 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+ and Php 2:13+). They are constantly examining other "sheep" for "spiritual parasites" and are ever on the lookout for the ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15+). Oversight is not the only duty of shepherding, but it is the one Peter mentions here in the situation of suffering.

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.

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

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+) or in He 4:1+ 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).

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 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+)

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)

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;

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+)

(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+)

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

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

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)." (2Co 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+; Ep 1:7+; Ep 2:5+, Ep 2:8+; 2Ti 1:9+; Titus 2:11+; Titus 3:7+), continuing in our sanctification (2Pe 3:18+, Titus 2:12+ - where grace "instructs" us in our daily walk of godliness) and then all through eternity in our glorification (1Pe 1:13+, Ep 2:7+). 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+). James adds that humility gives every believer access to grace that is greater than sin's power (James 4:6; cp Ro 5:20+). Peter described the "manifold [multi-colored - like Joseph's multicolored "dream coat"] grace of God" (1Pe 4:10+) which is sufficient for "multicolored" trials (1Pe 1:6+). 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+)
- **Abundant** (Acts 4:33)
- **Rich** (Ep 1:7+)
- **Manifold** (many-sided, multi-colored, variegated) (1Pe 4:10+)
- **Sufficient** (sufficing, enough, adequate - there is never a shortage) (2Co 12:9; 2Co 12:10+)

ILLUSTRATION OF A SAINT IN WHOM A ROOT OF BITTERNESS COULD EASILY HAVE ARISEN BUT DID NOT - I received the following email from Rhonda who has stage IV neuroendocrine tumors in the liver. She wrote:

The last six months have been ugly - physically - but I think we're turning the corner. Cancer stable; osteoporosis and degenerative disc disease under scrutiny for a more comprehensive treatment plan, though the CORE institute folks keep my right-side joints comfortable and mobile by chasing me around with cortisone hypos; and I pray the worst of the three ailments - my GI turmoil - will be much improved when my gall bladder is removed this Tuesday. The nausea, pain, old-fashioned "hurt" - sorry - have worn me out. I fantasize, verily lust, over the idea of food. Yet food hardly appeals because my innards

say "no", and I fear the consequences of eating anything other than white pabulum fodder. To my delight, vanilla ice cream - for which I've had no particular yearning over the years - feels good, tastes good (upper brands), and soothes my stomach. But the all-too-frequent episodes of nausea and pain remain unpredictable. Ondansetron does help; I take 3 daily. And the cancer surgeon prescribed pantoprazole once daily for acid, though I hardly touch anything acidic that I know of. Oh for a blood-red-rare prime rib and a fresh salad! But I'll wait a week or so until I ease back into any real food. Last week I experienced an outright attack so painful I walked at a 45-degree angle until I hurled a vile pile of bile - so bitter my throat burned the rest of the day. **Thank You, Lord Jesus, You continue to bring me through! And the silver lining of the last 6 months? I'm walking in the joy of His presence continually as never before!** (ED: YOU MAY WANT TO READ THAT LAST LINE AGAIN!!!) I keep watching for 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon to come so I can begin my Bible study (Hosea)...Over Thanksgiving I will make a trip East to see [the Ark](#). For me, **this is my last hurrah**. (cf Paul in 2Ti 4:6+) I feel quite certain the Lord will take me home this next year (2026), and **I'm joyful about that prospect.**"

And then Rhonda signed off with these words

"The Lord is soooooo very good to us, isn't He?"

Beloved, are you as convicted as I am? In Acts 14:22+ Paul declared "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." Rhonda will step into an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, for she is viewing her "discipline" with eternal, not temporal, vision. (2Co 4:17,18+)

Would you dare to pray this prayer? Lord, by Your Spirit and Your Word please give us all a heart like this wonderful saint, a heart that willingly receives from Your loving hand whatever you deem is best for our eternal good and your eternal glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

THE INVISIBLE LINE

*There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.*

*The joy is not in the presence of pain but in the knowledge
that God is using our pain to refine us and make us better, not bitter*

Wall-Bangers Anonymous - I'll never forget the time during college when, after I had finished writing a big paper that was due the next day, I heard a loud commotion in the room across the hall. My neighbor was in a state of panic, throwing stuff around his room looking for his paper. Frustrated, he banged his fist against the closet and shouted, "Thanks a lot, God. You make life one big laugh!"

I might have given him an A+ for theology—at least he knew that God was ultimately in charge—but an F for his response to the problem.

For those of us who get mad at God when life takes a wrong turn, we need a good dose of biblical therapy. So, welcome to "Wall-Bangers Anonymous"—a two-step program toward a positive, God-honoring response to pain.

Step One: Think straight about trouble.

It's not only inevitable, it's indiscriminate. Trouble comes in all shapes and sizes. "Various trials" (James 1:2) affect our health, our careers, our relationships. Once we understand the facts, we can begin appreciating their significant value in our lives.

Step Two: Trade resistance and resentment for receptivity and rejoicing.

"Count it all joy" The joy is not in the presence of pain but in the knowledge that God is using our pain to refine us and make us better, not bitter. — Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If we embrace adversity,
Accepting every pain,
Then we will learn what we should know;
Our grief will turn to gain.
—Sper

God chooses what we go through;
we choose how we go through it.

INSIGHT - Every believer discovers this sooner or later: we don't control the storyline of our trials, but we do control the spirit in which we walk through them. Scripture never promises a life free of hardship—but it does promise that every hardship is hand-picked, purposeful, and held within the omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign, loving hands of our Father (Hebrews 12:5–11).

The trial may be chosen for us, but the tone of our response is ours. Will we grumble or trust? Will we resist or submit? Will we focus on the pain or on the God Who works through the pain? (See [illustration](#)) Hebrews reminds us that the Father disciplines us “for our good, so that we may share His holiness” (Heb 12:10). That means every difficulty is not random, but to the contrary is in some way redemptive. The question is never: Why this? The better question is: How will I walk through this? Faith says, “Lord, I did not choose this valley, but by faith I choose to follow You through this valley.” When we choose trust over fear, joyful gratitude over bitter complaining, and glad surrender over willful resistance, the very thing that felt like a burden becomes the birthplace of blessing. God selects the furnace, but we must choose faith while in the furnace. And when we choose the path of faith, His grace is sufficient and His power is perfected in our weakness. (2Co 12:9-10) Beloved, you may not choose what comes next, but you can always choose Christ in what comes next. Let your response turn the trial into a glorious testimony to God's grace and love.

God ordains the season and we choose whether to bloom or become bitter in the season.

We don't get to script our trials, but enabled by His Spirit we do get to shape our response.

Providence determines the path; faith determines the posture.

God appoints the load; we choose whether to trust Him under it.

We cannot always choose our circumstances, but we can always choose our obedience.

We can't choose what storms arrive, but we can always choose to anchor ourselves in Christ.

Sovereignty sets the stage; surrender shapes the story.

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:

- **No root of bitterness:** He 3:12; Dt 29:18; Dt 32:32; Is 5:4,7; Je 2:21; Mt 7:16-18
- **Trouble** - Josh 6:18; 7:25,26; 22:17-20; Ep 5:3; Col 3:5
- **By it many be defiled** - 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
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

Related Passages:

2 Peter 3:17+ (PETER'S SIMILAR WARNING TO BELIEVERS) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **be on your guard** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

1 Corinthians 15:33+ (PAUL'S SIMILAR WARNING TO ENTIRE CHURCH AT CORINTH) **Do not be deceived** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)): “Bad company (present tense - continually) corrupts ([phtheiro](#)) good ([chrestos](#)) morals ([ethos](#)).”

Galatians 5:9+ A little leaven ([zume](#)) leavens the whole lump of *dough*.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8+ (BITTERNESS LIKE LEAVEN) Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven ([zume](#)) leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 **Clean out** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the old leaven ([zume](#)) so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven ([zume](#)), nor with the leaven ([zume](#)) of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Hebrews 3:12-13+ (EARLIER RELATED WARNING WITH PREVENTATIVE) **Take care** ([present imperative](#)

[with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But **encourage** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Jude 1:8 (MORAL CORRUPTION SPREAD BY SENSUAL INDULGENCE) Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, **defile** ([miaino](#)) the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.

Root of Bitterness
Source: [Desiringgod.org](#)

A DANGEROUS, DECEPTIVE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

For all you horticulturists out there, does not this passage present a powerful picture of the acrid fruit reaped when we allow the seed of bitterness in our heart and into the body of Christ?!

That no root ([rhiza](#) - source) **of bitterness** ([pikria](#)) **springing up** ([phuo](#) - sprouts up, grows) **causes trouble** ([enochleo](#) - disturbance), **and by it many be defiled** ([miaino](#)) - This is the second thing the members are to be watching carefully for in their body and this one can be subtle. The [metaphor](#) is of a **root** ([rhiza](#) - source) which is the part of the plant that is not seen because it lies beneath the surface, and yet it is very much alive! In moral sense, the **root** represents the unseen principle of evil from which fruit springs forth. Sin often begins beneath the surface and like a root, it is unseen at first but grows over time. **Bitterness** ([pikria](#)) is not just emotional resentment, but a spirit of rebellion or unbelief that contaminates the community ([see below](#) on Dt. 29:18). A **root of bitterness** is not merely a single act, but a bitter root of character or disposition that bears spiritually poisonous fruit. It is a sin cherished in the heart, perhaps initially concealed from the eye of others, which eventually will bring forth gall and wormwood. Hidden sin is never harmless." **Bitterness** ([pikria](#)) is a settled hostility, an "infection" of the emotions that refuses healing, that poisons the whole inner man and that can potentially spread to the entire congregation. As [discussed below](#) in Deuteronomy this "root" represents a person or principle within Israel who turns from Yahweh and infects others with idolatry or unbelief. Be alert—bitterness rarely starts big. It begins as a hidden seed, and if left alone, it will grow. Once it breaks the surface, it spreads and defiles many.

THOUGHT - Years ago I met with Life Action Ministry, a ministry that sought to come into churches and hopefully stir up revival. They told me that the number one sin they encountered in the churches was unforgiveness, which is closely related to bitterness. As you study this passage, is the Spirit bringing to your mind any unconfessed resentment in your heart? If so Paul's advice is to "Let all bitterness... be put away from you... and be kind to one another" (Eph 4:31–32). Confession and forgiveness are the spiritual tools of removal of this "crabgrass" like sin! And remember bitterness does not affect just you, but can infect your physical family and your church family. If you have this dangerous "root," may God enable you by the Spirit of grace, to pull every one of these ugly, poisonous weeds out of the garden of your heart, doing so for your good and God's glory.

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 we waged victoriously as we surrender to the indwelling Spirit of grace).

Springing up ([phuo](#) - sprouts up, grows - present tense = keeps sprouting unless removed!) pictures a plant that keeps pushing upward, gradually emerging above the surface where it becomes visible. The idea is not a sudden, explosive event but a slow, steady, progressive growth. A seed hidden beneath the soil eventually sprouts, pushes through, and becomes evident to all. The point is that the **root of bitterness** does not announce itself loudly at first. It lies hidden in the heart, often unnoticed, until, over time, it springs up (present tense), continually emerging, ever-growing unless it is decisively dealt with. *Phuō* depicts the law of vital expansion so that what is within inevitably presses without. Thus bitterness concealed does not remain so, never remaining small! The present tense participle stresses that **bitterness** is active, alive, and self-propagating if tolerated and not exterminated. **Bitterness** grows naturally in an unwatched, unweeded heart. This is why the writer gave the charge to **continually** (present tense) **see to it** ([episkopeo](#)), carefully watching like a shepherd watches his flock for danger or disease (cf role of elders [episkopos](#) - in Acts 20:28). In this context, however, the writer is not addressing only the elders; he is exhorting the entire body of believers to function as "shepherds," watching over one another with spiritual care and concern. One thinks of bitterness as like the poisonous plant hemlock which spreads spiritual "poison" among God's people.

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.

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

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.

Grant Osborne - The resulting bitter fruit is the opposite of the "harvest of peace and righteousness" that brings life in Heb 12:11. This alludes to Deuteronomy 29:18 in a context of idolatry, which is seen as a "bitter poison" that destroys, a spiritual contamination that defiles the entire community as a result of sin, producing people who have become calloused with a false sense of security due to their hardened hearts. (See [Hebrews Verse by Verse - Page cxxii](#))

Simon Kistemaker - 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. (BORROW [Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews PAGE 384](#))

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.

Apostasy is a root of bitterness. A person turns sour toward the Lord and rejects the Christian faith. His falling away becomes contagious—others are defiled by his complaints, doubts, and denials. In this context, the 'root of bitterness' refers to the first-century Jew who was considering abandoning the teaching of grace and returning to the Law and rituals of Judaism, potentially leading others into the same error.

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. (See [Hebrews Commentary - Page 407](#))

R Kent Hughes - 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. (See [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#))

TROUBLIND AND DEFILING POWER OF BITTERNESS

Causes trouble ([enochleo](#) - disturbance), **and by it many be** (passive voice, present tense - continually be) **defiled** ([miaino](#) - spiritually contaminated) - **Causes trouble** ([enochleo](#)) is in the present tense depicting the potential persistent "pestilence" or ongoing agitation in the fellowship. It is also in the active voice signifying that bitterness cause "active agitation," troubling marriages, ministries, friendships, and churches until it is confessed and cleansed by the Spirit of grace. This is the inevitable disruption that is wrought by unchecked growth of bitterness. It is interesting that the only other use of [enochleo](#) is in Lk 6:18 describing those "troubled with unclean spirits." Just as demonic oppression disturbed people in Luke 6:18, bitterness spiritually disturbs believers, agitating and spreading, destroying unity and joy in the body! The peace of the church is disrupted, people's minds are unsettled, and many become influenced and drawn into the same sinful ways. As a result, the church loses both its purity and its peace. When someone isn't right with God, they won't stay right with God's people for long. Bitterness stirs up conflict, turning sweet

fellowship among believers into something sour.

The phrase **by it many be defiled** ([miaino](#)) warns that many might continually be contaminated and pictures a slow spreading infection moving through the fellowship. Bitterness in one, if unchecked, can cause defilement in many! The defilement is not ceremonial, but moral and spiritual contamination. Note the potential for bitterness is to defile not just a few but **many**! Think of a drop of dye placed into clear water, spreading until the whole picture is affected. Such can be the defiling effect of bitterness. Or think of a virulent cancer which if not completely cut out by the surgeon can spread widely in the body and eventually cause death.

THOUGHT - Beloved, bitterness is the acid that eats the container. But sadly bitterness doesn't just poison the person who harbors it; it leaks, seeping into conversations, decisions, and relationships in the fellowship. Soon others are "breathing" its "toxic" fumes. o I disturb others with a complaining spirit? This could be a sign that the root is beginning to "cause trouble."

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!

Warren 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. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Ray Stedman summarizes missing the grace of God noting that "The writer has already warned of this in He 3:12: "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+. 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](#))

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 [Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

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. 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 (See poem - [The Invisible Line](#)). 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.

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."

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.

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)

Bitterness (4088) (**pikria** 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.

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)

Pikria 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 (**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. 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 Expository](#))

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.

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.

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)

Springing up (5453) (**phuo**) literally means to spring up in regard to a seed germinating and breaking through the surface of the ground. It was used of plants shooting forth, trees putting out leaves, or crops coming up out of the ground (Lxx of Dt 29:18). *Phuō* denotes the natural process of growth from a hidden root, and a root which once active *shoots upward* and manifests its nature. *Phuō* commonly denotes natural growth processes... In moral contexts, what lies hidden becomes visible and influential. To generate, grow up, sprout. 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[±] 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 [±] 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[±] **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.

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) To be in turmoil, to press upon so as to vex or agitate. 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!

Be defiled (3392) (**miaino**) means to contaminate, corrupt, taint, defile, tinge, pollute, make "dirty", make "unclean". Originally the verb **miaino** meant to dye or stain, as with color, and then came to mean defile, pollute, taint 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. It describes defilement as the result of contact with something unclean.

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)

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

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF BITTERNESS - Bitterness is patient. It does not demand sunlight. It grows in secret. It waits. Then one day it springs up, and suddenly your peace is gone, your joy is drained, and your relationships are strained. Beloved, bitterness never stays buried. It is always sprouting. It must be radically uprooted, not trimmed.

THOUGHT - Is there anyone whose name brings tension to your soul? That may be a "root" beginning to sprout. Do I replay old injuries? This is how the root feeds itself. Have my words recently carried sarcasm, coldness, or distance? These may be early "shoots" of bitterness. Am I praying for the person involved—or avoiding it? Have I sought reconciliation as far as it depends on me (Rom 12:18)? To summarize, what relational weeds am I tolerating that Christ wants uprooted today?

QUESTION [What is a root of bitterness \(Hebrews 12:15\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Hebrews 12:15, in the King James Version, refers to a "root of bitterness" which, if it springs up, will "trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." What exactly is this "root," and how can it defile many? True to the purpose of the book of Hebrews, we can find some explanations in the Old Testament, which are confirmed by other uses in the New Testament.

First, it is helpful to look at a more recent translation of the entire verse. The New International Version reads, "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:15). This passage is directed at the whole church.

In the Hebrew culture, any poisonous plant was called a "bitter" plant. Poison destroys, and the result of ingesting a poisonous plant would be bitter, indeed. The author of the book of Hebrews uses a "bitter root" as a metaphor for that which would bring harm to the church.

There is a verse in the [Pentateuch](#) that closely mirrors the wording in Hebrews. In Deuteronomy 29, Moses reviews the [covenant](#) between God and Israel. In this context, he says, "Make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison" (Deuteronomy 29:18). This particular "bitter poison" is idolatry in defiance of the covenant. Throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated "bitter poison" refers either to the unfaithful (Deuteronomy 29:18; Amos 6:12) or to their punishment (Jeremiah 8:14; 9:15; 23:15).

Moving to the New Testament, we have another reference to the destructive power of bitterness. While rebuking [Simon the Sorcerer](#), Peter tells him to repent of his wickedness, with an added insight: "I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin" (Acts 8:23). Simon's wickedness was his desire to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, essentially treating God as a commodity to enhance his own career as a magician.

So, the "bitter root" in Hebrews refers to a source of evil or wickedness within the church. A root may be small and slow in its growth, but, if it carries poison, it is malignant; it is dangerous. Sin in the church must be diligently rooted out; the result of tolerating wickedness is that "many" will be defiled.

For an example of how God dealt with a "root of bitterness" in the early church, see the story of [Ananias and Sapphira](#) in Acts 5. Obviously, God considers pulling up such "bitter roots" to be critically important to the health of His church.

Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Bitterness imprisons life; love releases it. Bitterness paralyzes life; love empowers it. Bitterness sickens life; love heals it. Bitterness

blinds life; love anoints its eyes.

In the desert I saw a creature, naked, bestial, Who, squatting upon the ground, Held his heart in his hands, And ate of it. I said: "Is it good, friend?" "It is bitter-bitter," he answered; "But I like it Because it is bitter, And because it is my heart."

On Carrying Grudges

Did you hear about the elderly Irishman whose doctor told him he was showing symptoms of memory loss? That night, kneeling beside his bed, he sent a message heavenward, "Dear God, don't take away my grudges."

For some reason, the Irish are known for carrying grudges. No offense is so slight, no insult so inadvertent that it won't be carried around for years awaiting the opportunity for retribution. I think the charge is unjust. Speaking for myself, in whose veins course ample Irish genes, I not only don't carry grudges, I think they can be the costliest of all collectibles.

HATE IS HORRIBLE - Joe Stowell

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. —Hebrews 12:15 NASB

If we learn anything from the memory of the terrorist attack on New York City and our nation's capital, it is that hate is a horrible thing. None of us will soon forget the horror we felt as we watched people jumping out of the windows of the World Trade Center. Or the heart wrenching pictures of loved ones who wandered the streets of New York for days carrying pictures of a dad, sister, mom, or friend whom they hoped might still be alive. The temperatures of the fires in the Trade towers rose to well over 1000 degrees, as the jet fuel melted the steel of the towers. It became a massive crematorium, a holocaust of a different kind. I'll never forget the gripping story of a little girl wiping ashes off a car into a shoe box because, as she said, her cousin had died in the flames and she thought that maybe these were the ashes of her cousin. The human pain and tragedy is immeasurable. If you went to three funerals a day of those who lost their lives, it would take you nearly six years to attend them all.

It seems beyond comprehension that anyone could be capable of such an evil act. Yet there is an explanation. And it isn't that the terrorists wanted to rule our land or possess our natural resources. Simply put, they hated us. So they struck. Hatred is a horrible thing, and we saw it in all of its ghastly potential on that memorable day.

Any of us who harbor hate in our hearts need to take note. This is a wakeup call. Hate is a terrorist emotion. It deludes our minds, and unless it is dealt with, it does irreparable damage to homes, treasured relationships, businesses, and, most important, our own souls. It is an emotional luxury no one can afford. Now is the time to learn the freedom of forgiveness and the overriding benefit of living to love.

If the terror of hate lurks in your life, declare war until grace and love have been victorious.

Henry Blackaby - Bitterness [Experiencing God Day by Day: Daily Devotional - Page 201](#)

See to it 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.—Hebrews 12:15

Bitterness has a tenacious way of taking root deep within the soul and resisting all efforts to weed it out. Bitterness occurs for many reasons. It might come from deep hurts you received as a child, hurts you cannot forget. Time, rather than diminishing the hurt, only seems to sharpen the pain. Bitterness can result from the hurtful words of a friend or coworker. Often the person who hurt you is unaware of the extent of your bitterness. You find yourself rehearsing the offense over and over again, each time driving the root of bitterness deeper within your soul. Bitterness can derive from a sense of being unjustly treated.

Bitterness is easy to justify. You can get so used to a bitter heart that you are even comfortable with it, but it will destroy you. Only God is fully aware of its destructive potential. There is nothing so deeply imbedded in your heart that God's grace cannot reach down and remove it. No area in your life is so painful that God's grace cannot bring total healing. No offense committed against you is so heinous that God's love cannot enable you to forgive.

When you allow bitterness to grow in your life, you reject the grace of God that can free you. If you are honest before God, you will admit the bitterness and allow God to forgive you. Bitterness enslaves you, but God is prepared to remove your bitterness and replace it with His peace and joy.

P G Matthew —Deuteronomy 29:18

In Deuteronomy 29 we read about a "root of poison." The covenant Lord is warning his people about those who join the visible church, God's covenant community, but who, in fact, are insincere professors of faith.

A local covenant community is always a mixture, consisting of the true people of God and those who are false—roots of poison. The term root points to something that is hidden. Both true and false believers come to church. They both smile and appear to be very nice. But the root-of-poison person knows in his heart that his covenant vows are not sincere.

We may not recognize at first who these people are. But God has news for all hidden roots: though the pastor may not find you out, God will. He warns in Numbers 32:23, "You may be sure that your sin will find you out." We all stand naked before God. He sees us and hears us when we think to ourselves, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." Why do false believers invariably leave a true church? They leave to commit immorality. They were hidden roots of poison for a season, pretending to be loyal covenant-keepers. In due time, however, they will be exposed by the Lord of the covenant and evicted.

What about you? What are you doing in the night? Do you think that no one knows? There is One who knows, and he will expose your sins in broad daylight. What you whisper in the chamber will be proclaimed from the housetops. That is the way it is going to be.

True believers are called to be their brother's keepers. We read in 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." Every member of the family of God has a responsibility to all other members to see that they are loving God and one another. And if we see someone sinning, it is our job to confront that person and say in love, "You must stop doing evil; you are disrupting the life of the community. Repent! For you are behaving as a root of poison."

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 (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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.

BITING CANCER

Topics: Arguments; Conflict; Fighting; Gossip; Tongue

References: Psalm 5:9; 57:4; Proverbs 12:18; Jeremiah 9:8; Galatians 5:15; Hebrews 12:15; James 1:26; 3:5–10; 4:1–2, 11

In January 2006, Australian scientists discovered the cause of a mysterious disease that had killed thousands of Tasmanian devils on the island state of Tasmania, off the coast of Australia. The scientists initially believed the deaths were caused by a virus; however, their research ultimately uncovered a rare, fatal cancer. They named it Devil Facial Tumor Disease, or DFTD.

What is strange, according to cytogeneticist Anne-Marie Pearse, is that the abnormalities in the chromosomes of the cancer cells were the same in every tumor. That means the disease began in the mouth of a single sick devil. The ferocious little animal facilitated the spread of DFTD by biting its neighbors when squabbling for food, which, according to Pearse, is a natural behavior of Tasmanian devils. "Devils jaw wrestle and bite each other a lot, usually in the face and around the mouth, and bits of tumor break off one devil and stick in the wounds of another," Pearse said.

Over the course of several years, infected devils continued to inflict deadly wounds with their mouths. Consequently, DFTD spread at an alarming rate, ultimately wiping out over 40 percent of the devil population.

A similar fate threatens the church if its members persist in the devilish behavior of wounding their neighbors with their mouths.
—Sam O’Neal, "Tasmanian Devils Spread Cancer with Their Mouths," PreachingToday.com

Revenge

Sunk by Own Attack

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.

In much the same way we can destroy ourselves by hostility toward others. The effects of holding a grudge are very serious. Modern medicine has shown that emotions like bitterness and anger can cause problems such as headaches, backaches, allergic disorders, ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart attacks, to name just a few. When we do not love our enemies but strike back at them, we are usurping God's prerogative to mete out justice. We read in the Bible, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord!" By seeking revenge, we really inflict great harm on ourselves.

The Work of Sin

One day in Colorado a great stalwart tree fell down. It was four hundred years old. It was a sapling when Columbus landed at San Salvador. It had been struck by lightning fourteen times. It had braved undaunted the storms of four hundred years. It had defied earthquakes and hurricanes. It had laughed in scorn at the winter's blasts and blizzards that would have destroyed it. But in the end the tiny little beetles killed it. They bored under the bark, dug into its heart, ate away its mighty fiber and one day down came the mighty king of the forest.

Let Our Little Hurts Heal

A recent Sports Illustrated article painted a vivid picture: A stress fracture begins when the shocks and strains of playing game after game create microscopic cracks in the outer layers of bone usually in the legs and feet. If the pounding continues and those tiny crevices, which often go undetected, aren't allowed to heal, they can enlarge. When the cracks become large enough to cause pain, they are stress fractures. So it is with our lives. Let us be careful to let our little hurts and disappointments heal so that the tiny cracks do not become debilitating stress fractures.

QUESTION - [What does it mean to fall short of God's grace \(Hebrews 12:15\)?](#)

ANSWER - Hebrews 12:15 says, "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God." What does it mean to "fall short" of God's grace? How can believers guard themselves and others from this danger? The context of Hebrews 12:15 will provide answers these questions.

Hebrews 12 begins with a race metaphor. Believers should run with endurance, fixing their eyes on Jesus (verses 1–2). The next section presents God's discipline as evidence of His love (verses 3–11), and then come practical exhortations (verses 12–17).

In Hebrews 12:12–13, the writer encourages believers to "strengthen their feeble arms and weak knees" and "make level paths for your feet," alluding to Isaiah 35:3–4. Believers should help the weary, adjust for their own weaknesses, and remain steadfast.

Hebrews 12:14–15 provides the immediate context: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." So, we are to pursue peace, holiness, and the grace of God, guarding against bitterness in the heart at all times.

"Falling short" refers to failing to obtain something, missing out on it, or not keeping with it. God is more than willing to give grace. The issue is sin, hardness of heart, and drifting away from His blessings.

Falling short of God's grace is the result of spiritual erosion. When we stop responding to God's grace, we fail to respond to it. The body of Christ should "see to it" that this does not happen. It is the church's responsibility to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24) and "encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25, NLT).

The writer of Hebrews says the danger of falling short of God's grace is that a "bitter root" grows up (Hebrews 12:15). This language is similar to that of an Old Testament warning against idolatry: "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" (Deuteronomy 29:18, ESV). Bitter and poisonous roots turn people away from God and entice others to do the same.

Falling short of God's grace is not a private, personal issue. It spreads, affects others, and defiles Christ's body. The apostle Paul asks, "Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). Spiritual vigilance is crucial because the church's health is at stake.

[Esau](#) is a tragic example of someone who fell short of God's grace: "For a single meal [he] sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (Hebrews 12:16). In a moment of short-sighted hunger, Esau exchanged the permanent for the temporary. He later regretted his decision, but it was too late, although he "sought the blessing with tears" (Hebrews 12:17).

Esau represents someone who values immediate gratification over eternal blessings. Although he had access to God's covenant blessings, he forfeited them through careless, immoral choices. God's grace is a precious gift that should not be neglected.

God's grace saves and sustains (2 Corinthians 12:9); it serves (1 Peter 4:10–11) and sanctifies (2 Timothy 2:21). All believers should see to it that no one falls short of that grace.

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

June 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)

A W Tozer - ROOT OF BITTERNESS [Mornings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 26](#)

Looking diligently...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you. Hebrews 12:15

It is on record that Charles Spurgeon made this comment about a man who was well-known for his bitter and resentful spirit: "May the grass grow green on his grave when he dies, for nothing ever grew around him while he lived!"

The sad and depressing bitter soul will compile a list of slights at which it takes offense and will watch over itself like a mother bear

over her cubs. And the figure is apt, for the resentful heart is always surly and suspicious like a she-bear!

In our Christian fellowship, what can be more depressing than to find a professed Christian defending his or her supposed rights and bitterly resisting any attempt to violate them? Such a Christian has never accepted the way of the cross. The sweet graces of meekness and humility are unknown to that person. Every day he or she grows harder and more acrimonious, trying to defend reputation, right, ministry, against imagined foes.

Is there a cure for this? Yes! The cure is to die to self and rise with Christ into newness of life!

John Piper - [WHAT IS A "ROOT OF BITTERNESS"?](#)

The Price of Presumption Meditation on 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.

Bitterness is usually associated with anger and grudges. But is that what it means in Hebrews 12:15? 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? So "of bitterness" then would mean "giving rise to bitterness," as in the phrase, "news of great joy." 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" (RSV, emphasis added). 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, and 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" (RSV, emphasis added).

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 the full assurance of faith and holiness. At least four times it warns us that we must not neglect our great salvation but rather 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 let the attitude of Deuteronomy 29:19 take root, "I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart" (RSV). It 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. "[Let] there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 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 [the repentance] with tears" (Hebrews 12:16–17). That would be bitter indeed. Don't let a root grow up in the church or in your life that would spread such cavalier treatment of our great inheritance.

J J Knapp - Any Root of Bitterness Heb 12:15

With this word the apostle was thinking of the Old-Testament expression, in which the congregation of Israel was alerted to the

danger that threatened her from the side of the apostates in her midst: "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." He applied it in this passage to those who fall back in grace and he called them a root of bitterness, from which all kinds of evil would sprout, such as cavils and uproars, and he warned us to see to it that such a root would not be found, neither in the congregation of the Lord, nor in our family, because the well-being of the whole group would be affected by it and suffer harm because of it.

A root of bitterness,—behold, a fitting term for the sin whether it consist in a regression of grace, or in another particular transgression. Sin is indeed a matter of bitterness. Initially this seems less appropriate, because before we commit the sin, she seems desirable and sweet and she enarmours the senses. She makes promises of satisfaction, enjoyment and fulfilment,—however, we soon realize that she has a bitter sequence of consequences: bitter regret that tears at our heart, bitter tears that only bring us relief when they are poured out at the feet of Jesus; bitter agony that makes us to cry: "My iniquity is greater than I can bear."; and not the least a bitter punishment, sometimes already in this life, when sin has weakened our health and broken our lives, but particularly in eternity when we, if God's grace does not intervene, shall receive the full reward for our sins in an eternal dying.

A root of bitterness,—behold, indeed a fitting term for sin. Initially she hides like a root covered by the earth. She is not seen immediately in others. Without light from above she cannot be spotted in our own heart. However, a root contains a force of life that soon will reveal itself outwardly. The evil that lays hidden in the depth of the soul, becomes visible for everyone. It does not take long before the bitter fruits begin to form and all that can be picked from its branches are gall and wormwood.

If anyone asks for a remedy, the answer is ready. Picking and gathering the fruits brings only relief for a short while, because as long as the evil has not been taken out by its root, it will sprout again. Sin must not only be removed out of our lives but out of the hidden heart. It will only be well when grace puts the axe at the tough root of the poisonous growth and replaces it with Him who is called the Root of Jesse, and from whom does not sprout death but eternal life.

The Blight of Bitterness - (see also [transcript on page 1024](#)) 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
- See page 1050 in transcript on [Rooting out Bitterness- Adrian Rogers](#)

Daily Light on the Daily Path - "Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom."

Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.—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.—You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. . . . Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.—The tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. . . . No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.—Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt.

Song 2:15; Ps. 19:12; Heb. 12:15; Gal. 5:7; Phil. 1:6, 27; James 3:5–6, 8; Col. 4:6

Love uproots bitterness - Alex Kendrick

See to it 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. Hebrews 12:15

Bitterness plants itself in your heart like a poisonous weed, taking up the same space that could otherwise be home to beauty and color. Hurts that at one time would have been fairly easy to pull up have now spread their root systems into other areas of your life, sprouting up as anger, touchiness, and loss of interest in spiritual things. It pollutes. It festers. This root of unforgiveness causes your marriage to rot from the inside out.

But like every sin, the chief problem is not what bitterness does to you, as dark and destructive as it can be. The main issue is that bitterness is an offense against Almighty God. It reflects a heart of ingratitude toward His grace and blessing. It reveals us as someone who has quit trusting Him to know what we need, even if what we need is a season of hardship that drives us closer to Him. Bitterness robs us of our willingness to walk with Him.

QUESTIONS Is there any bitterness in your heart? If so, what is keeping you from turning it over to God? Are you the rightful judge, or is He? How long will you hold onto your bitterness?

Daily Light on the Daily Path -"No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory."

The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.—Abhor what is evil.—Abstain from every form of evil.—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.

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.—Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.—Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.—"Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."—It was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent,

unstained, separated from sinners.—In him there is no sin.

Ex. 13:7; Prov. 8:13; Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:22; Heb. 12:15; Ps. 66:18; 1 Cor. 5:6–8; 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 7:26; 1 John 3:5

Donald Cantrell - 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;

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? In the space below 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:

Donald Cantrell - The Silent Killer 'Bitterness'

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all [men], and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

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;

1. Bitterness Must Be Realized "It's There"
2. Bitterness Must Be Removed "It's Time"
3. Bitterness Must Be Resisted "It's True"

Dear Christian friend has bitterness become embedded in your life, has it turned your singing into silence? What are you going to do about it? Hopefully you will list it in the space below and leave it at the altar and ask God to free you:

Donald Cantrell - "The Silent Killer—Bitterness"

Heb 12:14—Follow peace with all [men], and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

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 writer of Hebrews tells us to live peaceably with all men, the he also tells us to live in Holiness. If we are to see God we must obey this demand, live in peace and Holiness. Then the writer warns us about the danger of falling, not losing our salvation, but falling by the wayside, ending up in the scrape heap of failure and misery.

As Christians we must avoid the silent killer of bitterness, the writer tells us of the root of this bitterness. The amazing thing about a root is that it is generally hidden, covered up, out of sight. The Christian that has let this root grow in their life is in danger of failure, eliminating the graceful work of God in your life. The tender root begins to grow, now anger, envy, hatred, even jealousy begin to attach to this tender root.

I wonder if we are willing to dig this bitter root up, uncover it for what it is, this root has got such a hold on you that it engulfs your every thought. Bitterness is the silent killer among the Christian world, many of God's dear little children have been wronged or disappointed and let this bitter root take hold in their life, sweetness turned to sourness, as follows:

1. Bitterness Must Be Realized—It's There
2. Bitterness Must Be Removed—It's Time
3. Bitterness Must Be Resisted—It's True

Dear Christian friend has bitterness become embedded in your life, has it turned your singing into silence? What are you going to do about it? Hopefully you will list it in the space below and leave it at the altar and ask God to free you

Nancy DeMoss - Root Issues

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.—Hebrews 12:15

A "ROOT OF BITTERNESS" may seem the least of your concerns today. In fact, given the type of situations you've dealt with in life—the injuries you've received unjustly, through the actions or inactions of others—bitterness can seem like a birthright. Your safety

zone. You may actually feel incapable of any other response.

But be sure of this: bitterness is a fallback position doomed to failure. If left unacknowledged and unaddressed, God's Word says its poison will infect both you and others beyond anything you ever imagined possible. Ask around, and you'll hear the unpleasant proof. Not only is it sin, it is senseless.

But it is not incurable, because God's grace is tailor-made for just such situations. Jesus is a compassionate Savior who was perfected "through suffering" (Heb. 2:10). As a result, not only has He gained our eternal salvation, but He also knows how it feels to be treated harshly, to be taken advantage of, to be misunderstood. And He knows exactly where to apply His healing grace in your hurting, wounded heart.

That root of bitterness will infest every inch of ground in your life if you let it. But God invites you—urges you—to reach out and receive His grace, to come to His throne "with confidence," knowing you will receive His all-sufficient help (4:16).

In so doing, your heart will be set free from the vise of unforgiveness. You'll be released to love and serve both Him and others. No longer will that root of bitterness trouble you and adversely affect those around you. Instead, God's grace will flow through you to others, blessing everything and everyone you touch.

Imagine life without the chronic, low-grade fever of bitterness dulling your senses, consuming your waking and sleeping thoughts. Will you cry out for His grace to remove every vestige of bitterness?

Joni E Tada - The Real Me [Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings - Page 20](#)

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.— HEBREWS 12:15

The other week during a long flight home, I could not get comfortable in the airline seat. My corset was digging into me and no matter what Ken did, my blood pressure continued to spike and my forehead kept sweating (signs that I am in pain). Normally, it would have been enough to drive me to pray. But not this time. I was fed up with my disability (a nice way of saying I was fed up with God's control of the situation). My thoughts were sour, and I was not about to pull my Bible out of my backpack. Instead, I tried to get my mind off my pain by watching the in-flight movie. Halfway through, I thought, This is the stupidest film. Why am I watching it?!

That night after the pain subsided, my first thought was, That wasn't like me. I'm normally not like that. But the whisper of the Holy Spirit replied, "That is you. You are like that." Suffering always tests us, examining and sifting us and asking, "Who are you really?" Normally, we are not faced all the time with how self-focused we are, or how sour or peevish our attitude can be. We think we're doing pretty well. But suffering strips off that veneer and shows us our true colors.

Affliction does not teach you about yourself from a textbook; it teaches you from experience. It will always show you what you love — either the God of all comfort or the comfort that can become your god. Think back on the last time you got "fed up" with your circumstances. What did this reveal about yourself? Talk to God about that today.

Lord Jesus, I may not like affliction in my life, but I am keenly aware that it constantly shows me who I really am. Thank you for covering every sin with your precious blood!

No Bitterness after 35 Years in Prison

Ephesians 4:31–32; Hebrews 12:15

Preaching Themes: Anger, Forgiveness, Injustice, Justice

James Bain went to prison in 1974, when he was 19 years old. Authorities released him just before Christmas in 2009, as a 54-year-old man. James served 35 years of a life sentence given to him when the state of Florida convicted him of kidnapping and raping a 9-year-old boy. He wasn't pardoned or paroled. DNA testing proved him innocent, which means that James spent 35 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. Released on the order of a judge, James "made his first-ever cell phone call to tell his 77-year-old mother he'd been released. 'I'm not angry,' he said. 'Because I've got God.' "

James chose faith in God over bitterness. —Jim L. Wilson and Rodger Russell

Rick Renner - Tell-Tale Signs That Bitterness Is Growing in Your Life Hebrews 12:15 BORROW [Sparkling gems from the Greek page 654](#)

When you find yourself constantly saying something derogatory about someone else, pay attention to what's happening! What you're saying about that person is a tell-tale sign that some bad seed is trying to take root in your heart.

Hebrews 12:15 tells us how to recognize bad seed when it begins to produce destructive fruit in our lives. It says, "... lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you...." The words "springing up" are from the Greek word *phuo*. This word depicts a little plant that is just starting to sprout and grow. It isn't a large plant yet; rather, it's a small seedling that is just breaking through the soil and starting to peek out at the world. However, the very fact that it's peeking through the soil means there is a seed hidden in the soil producing this new life.

This is a very significant picture. It tells us that bitterness doesn't overwhelm us all at once. Instead, it grows a little here and a little there until it finally becomes a huge, ugly growth that defiles our entire lives. Bitterness usually starts peeking up out of the depths of our souls in the form of negative thoughts about another person or a sour, sharp, distrusting, cynical attitude toward someone who has offended us. If the root is not quickly uprooted and removed, that bitterness will eventually become a full-blown tree that produces bitter, wounding, hurtful, and scornful fruit for everyone who eats of it.

Hebrews 12:15 shouts its warning: If you don't stop these attitudes, they will eventually "trouble you." The words "trouble you" are from the Greek word *enochleo*, which means to trouble, to harass, or to annoy. It refers to something inside that bothers and upsets you so much, you are constantly pestered by thoughts about it. In fact, your whole life is stalked by these hassling, troubling thoughts. What you allowed to take root and to fester inside your soul has now become a major nuisance to your peace, keeping you upset and emotionally torn up all the time.

- Do you have a grudge against someone that just gnaws away at you all the time?
- Every time you see that person, do you feel something sharp and ugly inside?
- When you hear about that person being blessed, do you wonder how God could possibly bless him when he did such an ugly thing to you?
- Do negative thoughts like these pester and bother you all the time?

If you relate to the questions I just asked you, then watch out! It may mean that a root of bitterness is growing inside you and that bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness are starting to hound and stalk you wherever you go!

You need to get a grip on yourself and let the Holy Spirit help you permanently rid yourself of these feelings; otherwise, you'll end up troubled, annoyed, and terribly upset. You'll lose your peace, forfeit your joy, and toss aside your victory. Friend, you don't want to take this path! It's too painful, too hurtful, and costs you too much in your walk with God.

So if you find yourself constantly saying something derogatory about someone else, pay attention to what's happening! That is a tell-tale sign that some bad seed is trying to take root in your heart that could potentially grow into a major issue that hassles your whole life. Don't let it happen! Ask the Holy Spirit to help you jerk out those roots from the soil of your heart so you can stay free!

The Holy Spirit is willing, ready, and waiting to help you grab hold of those roots of bitterness and pull them clear out of your life. All He needs is your invitation, so why don't you go ahead and ask Him to assist you right now?

Robert Morgan - Causes of Bitterness -- Borrow [How to beat burnout - page 46](#) by Minirth, Frank B

The book *How To Beat Burnout* suggests that bitterness is "a hidden root of burnout," and isolates five reasons why people tend to grow bitter:

1. Wrong motives or jealousy. In counseling Christians, we frequently see bitterness associated with jealousy. The examples include successful attorneys who envy the abilities of their colleagues, Bible college and seminary students consumed with jealousy toward fellow students ... pastors or missionaries envious of others who have seen more outward evidences of success.
2. Wrong response to irritations; conditional love. In Colossians 3:19 Paul instructs husbands to "love your wives and do not be bitter toward them." The Greek word *pikroi* used here (for the word bitter) demonstrates "resentment or an incensed and angry attitude of mind." Conditional love produces harshness and bitterness both in husbands and wives frequently, that can lead to marital burnout.
3. Wrong response to adversity. In Hebrews 12:15, we discover a warning against "any root of bitterness springing up," instead of enduring hardship as a discipline.
4. Misplaced strife. We have seen churches that have been crippled in their effectiveness for years because of bitter envying and strife on the part of church leaders.
5. An unforgiving spirit. Ephesians 4:31-32 draws a clear connection between bitterness and what is perhaps its most basic underlying cause, a refusal to forgive. "Let all bitterness be put away from you ... Be kind to one another ... forgiving one another.

...
**

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. (Heb. 12:15)

Good, Bad, and Ugly

God gave you anger as an early warning system against evil, danger, or abuse. When an enemy violates boundaries—whether against you, your family, your nation, or the vulnerable—your anger kicks in. It motivates you to take righteous steps to protect yourself and those who need it. Jesus got angry when He protected His spiritual sheep from wolves in sheep's clothing (see John 2:15). When anger motivates righteous action, it has served its God-given purpose.

But when anger is left simmering, it turns toxic. Bitterness, resentment, and an unforgiving spirit are symptoms of simmering anger. God did not design you to store up anger. He graciously commands, "Don't let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph. 4:26).

Bitter Fruit

Bitterness poisons relationships—and not just the relationship with the person you're mad at. Bitterness toward one person harms all your relationships, including your marriage, family, and work relationships. Bitter people make for lousy friends, and Scripture warns against partnering with a chronically angry man (see Prov. 22:24). You need to release the pressure from your simmering cauldron of anger. Decide if the relationship is worth salvaging—sometimes it isn't. If it is, talk through your conflict, enforce appropriate boundaries, forgive, forbear, and move on.

Bottom Line

Unresolved anger puts a bitter taste in your mouth and spoils your relationships. Grow in Christ and develop a forgiving spirit.

DANGER OF BITTERNESS

PSALM 90:8; EPHESIANS 4:31; HEBREWS 12:15

Anger; Bitterness; Confession; Hindrances; Repentance; Shame

Secrets can be destructive, no matter how long they've been buried, as residents of a Ukrainian village found out. The Associated Press reported their story this way:

For 43 years Zinaida Bragantsova had been telling people there was a World War II bomb buried under her bed.

The story began in 1941 when the Germans advanced toward the Ukrainian city of Berdyansk. One night at the very start of the war, she was sitting by the window and sewing on her machine. Suddenly a noise was heard and a whistling close by. She got up and in the following moment was struck by a blast of wind. When she came to, the sewing machine was gone and there was a hole in the floor as well as in the ceiling.

Zinaida couldn't get any officials to check out her story, so she just moved her bed over the hole and lived with it—for the next 40 years. Finally, the woman's problem was uncovered. As phone cable was being laid in the area, demolition experts were called in to probe for buried explosives. "Where's your bomb, grandma?" asked the smiling army lieutenant sent to talk to Mrs. Bragantsova. "No doubt, under your bed?"

"Under my bed," Mrs. Bragantsova answered dryly.

And sure enough, there they found a 500-pound bomb. After evacuating 2,000 people from surrounding buildings, the bomb squad detonated the bomb. According to the report, "The grandmother, freed of her bomb, will soon receive a new apartment."

Many people live like that grandmother, with a bomb under the bed—a terrible secret, a great hurt, a seething anger that lays there for years while everyone goes on about their business. No one is safe until it's removed.

Citation: Lee Eclov, Lake Forest, Illinois; from Associated Press (November 1984)

The Bomb Under the Bed - Peter Kennedy

Topics: BITTERNESS, DANGER

Bible Verses: Ephesians 4:31–32; Hebrews 12:15

In September 1984, the Associated Press reported the following story: "For 43 years Zinaida Bragantsova had been telling people there was a World War II bomb buried under her bed.

The story began in 1941 when the Germans advanced toward the Ukrainian city of Berdyansk. One night at the very start of the war,

she was sitting by the window and sewing on her machine. Suddenly a noise was heard and a whistling close by. She got up and in the following moment was struck by a blast of wind. When she came to, the sewing machine was gone and there was a hole in the floor as well as in the ceiling.

Zinaida couldn't get any officials to check out her story, so she just moved her bed over the hole and lived with it—for the next 40 years. Finally, the woman's problem was uncovered. As phone cable was being laid in the area, demolition experts were called in to probe for buried explosives. "Where's your bomb, grandma?" asked the smiling army lieutenant sent to talk to Mrs. Bragantsova. "No doubt, under your bed?"

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And sure enough, there they found a 500-pound bomb. After evacuating 2,000 people from surrounding buildings, the bomb squad detonated the bomb. According to the report, "The grandmother, freed of her bomb, will soon receive a new apartment."

The article concluded with a lecture on the need for local officials to heed all letters sent to them by citizens so that another such case would not go unattended for 43 years.

Many people live like that grandmother, with a bomb under the bed—a terrible secret, a great hurt, a seething anger that can bring danger or bitterness into our lives.

A W Tozer - Resentment [Tozer on Christian Leadership: A 366-Day Devotional - Page 17](#)

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

In the course of scores of conferences and hundreds of conversations, I have many times heard people say, "I resent that." But I repeat: I have never heard the words used by a victorious man. Resentment simply cannot dwell in a loving heart. Before resentfulness can enter, love must take its flight and bitterness take over. The bitter soul will compile a list of slights at which it takes offense and will watch over itself like a mother bear over her cubs. And the figure is apt, for the resentful heart is always surly and suspicious like a she-bear.

Few sights are more depressing than that of a professed Christian defending his supposed rights and bitterly resisting any attempt to violate them. Such a Christian has never accepted the way of the cross. The sweet graces of meekness and humility are unknown to him. He grows every day harder and more acrimonious as he defends his reputation, his rights, his ministry, against his imagined foes.

The only cure for this sort of thing is to die to self and rise with Christ into newness of life.

A W Tozer - Dealing with the Root [Tozer on the Holy Spirit: A 366-Day Devotional - Page 13](#)

Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. —Hebrews 12:15

Strange as it may seem, harmony within our own hearts depends mostly upon our getting into harmony with God. Morning comes not by our pushing out the darkness but by waiting for the coming of the sun.

Church difficulties are spiritual also and admit of a spiritual answer. Whatever may be wrong in the life of any church may be cleared up by recognizing the quality of the trouble and dealing with it at the root.

Prayer, humility and a generous application of the Spirit of Christ will cure just about any disease in the body of believers. Yet this is usually the last thing we think about when difficulties arise. We often attempt to cure spiritual ills with carnal medicines, and the results are more than disappointing.

What God wants today in His Church and in His work is not so much that the world shall see the power of the Church as the power of her Lord and the presence of Him who goes forth with His weakest servants and becomes their mighty Victor.

Smother the Weeds [My Heart--Christ's Home Through the Year - Page 16](#)

See to it ... that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. HEBREWS 12:15

An invasive vine has taken over our front yard and smothered nearly all our plants. We spend hours trying to kill it, yet it continues to come back. Our latest plan is to spread the area with compost and cover it with large sheets of cardboard. On top of that will go another layer of compost. The offending vine will be blocked from finding its way to the surface, and it will die.

As much as I hope this will work, I know I will feel like a murderer as I lay down that cardboard. I'll think, I'm killing this plant! I'll admire the glossy green leaves and tell myself the vine isn't so bad after all.

It will take determination to smother that offending growth. I must show no mercy—just as I must show no mercy to resentment or

bitter attitudes in myself, even if at the time they appear to be beautiful plants.

Rick Renner - You Are the Bishop Of Your Own Heart! Hebrews 12:15 BORROW [Sparkling gems from the Greek PAGE 636](#)

One of the most powerful verses in the New Testament is Hebrews 12:15. 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." I want you to especially notice the words "looking diligently" in this verse. This phrase comes from the Greek word episkopos, taken from the two words epi and skopos. The word epi means over, and the word skopos means to look. When these two words are compounded into one word as in Hebrews 12:15, the word means to look over or to take supervisory oversight.

The word episkopos is the same Greek word translated "bishop" in First Timothy 3:1. As you know, a bishop has oversight or responsibility for a group of churches. As the chief overseer for those churches, it is the bishop's responsibility to watch, direct, guide, correct, and give oversight to the churches under his care. As long as he serves as bishop, he will be held responsible for the good and the bad that occurs under his ministry.

Hebrews 12:15 uses the word episkopos to alert you and me to the fact that we are the bishops of our own hearts. The use of this word in this verse means it is our responsibility to watch, direct, guide, correct, and give oversight to what goes on inside us.

As the bishop of your own heart, it is your responsibility to guide, direct, and give oversight to what goes on inside your emotions and thinking. You alone are responsible for what you allow to develop inside your head and heart. Like a bishop, you are personally responsible for both the good and the bad that occurs within your thought life.

Why do I make this point? Because we are often tempted to blame our bad attitudes, bitterness, resentments, or feelings of unforgiveness on other people. But the truth is, we are responsible for our own emotions and reactions! If a person does something that has the potential to offend us, God holds us responsible for whether or not that offense takes root in our minds. We can choose to let it sink into our souls and take root, or we can opt to let it bypass us. We are not able to control what others do or say to us, but we are able to control what goes on inside of us.

It is that "inside" part—the part you control—that God will hold you responsible for. Why? Because you are charged with a personal responsibility to oversee what goes on inside your soul. That means you have the last word. You are the one who decides whether or not that wrong settles down into your soul and starts to take root in your emotions.

Anger is an emotion that comes and goes. You choose whether or not irritation turns into anger, anger into wrath, wrath into bitterness, bitterness into resentment, and resentment into unforgiveness. You choose whether these foul attitudes and emotions take up residency in your heart or are booted out the door!

When the devil comes to tempt you with an annoying, hounding thought about the person who offended you, at that moment you have a choice whether or not to let it sink in. You are the only one who can give permission for these attitudes to make their habitation in your mind and emotions. If you're filled with bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness, you permitted the devil to sow that destructive seed in your heart and then you permitted it to grow. Remember, you're the bishop of your own heart!

There is only one reason weeds grow out of control in a garden—because no one took the proper time and care to uproot and remove them. When the garden is choked by weeds, the gardener can't complain, "I just don't know how this happened! How did this occur right under my nose?" It occurred because he was being irresponsible with his garden. If he'd been exercising the proper amount of diligence, he would have known that weeds were about to get the best of him. His lack of diligence is the reason his garden got into this mess!

Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently..." It takes diligence to keep your heart in good shape. The only way you can stay free of the weeds the devil wants to sow in your "garden" is to be attentive, careful, thorough, and meticulous about the condition of your own heart. Don't expect others to take care of your heart for you either. It's your heart!

Also, don't make excuses for the rotten attitudes that fill your thoughts about people who supposedly did you wrong. Even if they really did commit a wrong against you, was it necessary or beneficial to permit the devil to fill you with putrid feelings of bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness? Get over it! What good does it do to let the offense fester inside you until you are inwardly eaten up by its bad memory?

As long as you blame everyone else for the bitterness that rages inside, you'll never walk free. The only way you can get over the offense and walk free of your emotional prison is by accepting responsibility for your own heart.

If someone deliberately sows bad seeds in our "garden" in an effort to hurt or destroy us, God will deal with them. But if we know bad seed has been sown in our hearts and we just ignore it, allowing it to take root and grow unchecked, God will deal with us.

- God will hold others responsible for what they do to us.
- God will hold US responsible for what we allow to go on inside our minds and hearts.
- We cannot answer for the actions of other people.
- We will answer for our inward responses to what others have done to us.

Since the phrase “looking diligently” is from the Greek word episkopos, implying that you are the bishop of your own heart, what are you going to do about the negative and wrong attitudes that are trying to take root in your soul right now? Are you going to let them fester, take root, and begin to produce bad fruit in your life? Or are you going to take the initiative to rip out those attitudes by the roots so your heart can stay free?

Never forget that you are the bishop of your heart. It is your heart, and you are the only one with the authority to decide what does and doesn't go on inside of you. In light of this truth, what are you going to do about the situation you are facing right now? Forgive and let it go, or hang on to that grievance and let it grow? The choice is yours!

Wayne Grudem - Personal Reconciliation. [Systematic Theology](#)

Christians should be encouraged to make right any broken interpersonal relationships. Paul says that men are to lift holy hands “without anger or quarreling” (1 Tim. 2:8), and Jesus reminds us that we are first to “be reconciled” to our brother and then come before God’s altar and offer a gift (Matt. 5:24). In fact, John says that anyone who says, “I love God” but hates his brother “is a liar” (1 John 4:20). Husbands particularly need to make sure they are living “in an understanding way” with their wives and honoring them in order that their prayers “may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). And the entire church is responsible to watch “that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled” (Heb. 12:15)—an indication that sin and broken relationships among a few can spread to many and result in the withholding of God’s blessing from the whole congregation.

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 his heart. After all, we are at church on a Sunday evening. We have a smile on our faces; we are joyous; we are worshiping 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; Psa. 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.

"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)

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.

A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

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)

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)

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

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)

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](#))

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 ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)) 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!

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

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)

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)

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](#))

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](#))

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.**

Anger is the weed; bitterness is the root—
remove the root, and the weed dies."

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+ 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+, Ro 12:18, 19, 20, 21+). 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](#))

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)

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)

Bitterness And The Sovereignty Of God - Newell Hillis

Isn't it true that you and I have every reason to be bitter? Are there any among us who have not been exploited, abused, cheated or ignored?

So how do we deal with our bitterness?

Joseph in the Old Testament serves as an example of someone who had just cause for bitterness and yet was able to draw on God's grace to surmount it:

- As a lad, God gave him a dream that his brothers would serve him. In jealous retaliation, they sold him to a caravan headed for Egypt.
- Ending up as a slave in the house of a military leader, he was falsely accused of rape and imprisoned for an interminable period of time.
- Through a remarkable series of "circumstances" he became the prime minister of Egypt. Years later, his devious brothers find themselves in his presence. With every reason to visit revenge upon them, Joseph forgave them and acknowledged God's sovereign plan in spite of their cruel treatment:

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20)

And so it is to be with us. We must grasp the fact that it is God's sovereign intention to use the uneven circumstances of life to conform us into His image:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." (Romans 8:28, 29a)

If you are struggling with bitterness, let me make a couple of suggestions: Make a list of their causes. Then go down the list item by item asking God to use each of these painful experiences to make you more Christlike. Then ask Him to help you forgive the persons who were responsible. Often, sharing your struggle with another helps in the healing process.

Understand that it is only as we draw upon God's grace that we can turn our bitterness into praise. The alternative is bondage to a morose, angry and self-centered life that only serves to poison everyone around us and thwart our ability to influence others for Christ:

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." (Hebrews 12:15)

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](#))

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.**

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](#).

BGT μ τις π ρνος β βηλος ς σα , ς ντ βρ σεως μι ς π δετο τ πρωτοτ κια αυτο .

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](#))

KJV Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

NKJ lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

NET And see to it that no one becomes an immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

CSB And make sure that there isn't any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for one meal.

ESV that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

NIV See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.

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,

- **No immoral** - He 13:4; Mk 7:21; Acts 15:20,29; 1Cor 5:1-11; 6:15-20; 10:8; 2 Co 12:21; Gal 5:19, 20, 21; Ep 5:3,5; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:1-7; Re 2:20-23; 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

Related Passages:

Genesis 25:34 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 meaning to hold cheap, worthless, of no account, good-for-nothing) his birthright.

1 John 2:15-17+ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

James 4:4+ You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

BEWARE OF THE SPIRIT OF ESAU IN YOUR MIDST

that there be no immoral (pornos) or godless (bebelos) person like Esau, who sold (apodidomi) his own birthright for a single meal - This is the third "that" in Heb 12:15-16 and introduces the third warning - that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau. (first **that** - come short of grace, second **that** - root of bitterness) While the word **immoral (pornos)** refers primarily to sexual sin, it also refers to gratifying sensual appetite, and selling one's soul for a present moment of gratification (a bowl of stew!) Esau preferred the pleasure of the moment to the blessings of eternity with God. Esau was a man who in effect bartered eternity for a moment, willingly indulging the passing pleasure of sin (Heb 11:25). He exchanged God's best for a moment of pleasure!

Here the writer asserts that Esau was sexually immoral, calling him **apornos**, from which we get the word **pornography**. However, 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). While the Old Testament does not record Esau committing sexual sin, the term may be used figuratively here to describe someone who is unfaithful to God (living for the moment, choosing stew over covenant blessing, controlled by appetite rather than principle, traded eternal good for temporary pleasure), much like Israel was called spiritually adulterous (cf. Hosea 1–3). Rabbinical tradition, however, both Palestinian and Hellenistic, paints Esau as a man completely subject to his libido.

*Do not be like Esau, a person who lets desires rule
his decisions instead of letting God rule his heart.*

Grant Osborne on pornos - Esau...married Hittite women in Genesis 26:34 (see Jubilees 25:4–10) and was spiritually unfaithful (pornos, used for both types) to God. (See [Hebrews Verse by Verse - Page cxxii](#))

Godless (bebelos) person like Esau describes a person like Esau—someone unconsecrated, unholy, and unhesitating to trample on what is sacred. **Bebēlos** is not necessarily an atheist but refers to a man who has no appreciation for holy things, treating them as common or trivial. Esau regarded his birthright as a small, insignificant thing. Anything belonging to God was, to him, inferior to his momentary desires. He valued a bowl of stew more than God's covenant—appetite over blessing! A **bebelos** person is worldly-minded, focused on the near, the now, and the material, indifferent to the distant, the eternal, and the divine. He lives as though earth were everything and heaven nothing. Spiritual things meant little to Esau because God meant little to him. Esau is the prototype of the modern secular man, who lives for the moment, is blind to eternity, and careless of the inheritance of God. **Bebelos** in Esau was shown by treating the birthright as worthless, despising God's covenant promises, caring more about food than God's blessing and choosing earthly appetite over heavenly inheritance.

THOUGHT - This sad picture of Esau begs several searching questions of all us: Do I treat spiritual blessings lightly? Am I more driven by appetite than by Scripture? Do short-term comforts outweigh long-term spiritual gain for me? Do I reverence God's Word or treat it as optional? Is my heart "inside the sanctuary," or on the outside looking in?

The writer is addressing Jews who were experiencing social discomfort (pressure from Jews to return to the Temple - some may have begun to drift Heb 2:1) so the writer gives them an illustration of Esau who experienced physical discomfort (hunger) for which he willingly gave up his spiritual blessings. This is a warning for his readers not to do the same as Esau for like him they would lose their spiritual blessings in Christ and would regret their decision eternally (like Esau)!

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! ([Expositional Comments](#))

R Kent Hughes - Esau was completely earthbound. All his thoughts were on what he could touch, taste, and suck. Instant gratification was his rule of thumb. He was void of spiritual values. Godless! Esau was like a living beer commercial—bearded, steroid-macho, with two things on his mind: sexual pleasure and physical pleasure—food, drink, sports and sleep. "Hey, you only go around once. You've got to get it while you can." He was the prototype of modern godlessness—like the forty-five-year old man who had spent all his post-college years devoted to money and when asked, "How is it with your soul?" answered candidly, "My soul? I don't even know whether I have one." Tragic! (See [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#))

Calvin says that the **godless (bebelos)** 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 **godless (bebelos)** 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.

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)

Esau is the "poster child" warning the readers of Hebrews who might be tempted to turn back, drift, or fall short of grace. The writer paints a clear picture of what this looks like in Esau who wasted his spiritual privileges, loved the temporary more than the eternal, refused repentance (Heb 12:17), cared little for God's promises and lived by impulse rather than by faith

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!

Note: 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 and likely our eternal reward, they do not keep us from our eternal fellowship with God.

*Professing Christians who claim to be born again
but who live no differently than non-Christians
are repeating the godlessness of Esau.*

Ray 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+). ([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+) , who sins willfully (He 10:26+) and there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

Immoral ([4205](#)) (**pornos** 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. The literal sense is one who "sells himself" to sexual sin, one who sells himself — a debauchee, one surrendered to his passions. In John uses pornos to refer to those characterized by a sensual, godless lifestyle, a person spiritually "sold out" to sensual gratification, not merely a momentary fall. It can describe a man willing to make a market of his body. Sexual sin is fundamentally self-selling, exchanging purity for sensual gratification — connecting perfectly with Esau selling his birthright.

pornos - 10x in 10v - 1 Co. 5:9; 1 Co. 5:10; 1 Co. 5:11; 1 Co. 6:9 = a pornos will not inherit the kingdom of God; Ep 5:5+ - pornos not even to be named; 1Ti 1:10; Heb. 12:16; He 13:4+; Rev. 21:8+; Re 22:15+ **NAS** = fornicators(2), immoral(2), immoral men(1), immoral people(2), immoral person(1), immoral persons(2).

Godless ([952](#)) (**bebelos** 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. In sum, bebēlos describes a profane, godless, worldly person who treats sacred things as common. We would call a secular person "bebelos."

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 **baino** = 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](#))

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+). 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.

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.

William MacDonald - "Esau...for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." (Heb. 12:16)

It is often possible to barter life's best values for a momentary gratification of physical appetite.

That is what Esau did. He had come in from the field tired and hungry. At that moment Jacob was cooking a pot of red bean soup. When Esau asked for a bowl of the "red stuff," Jacob said, in effect, "Sure, I'll give you some if you'll sell me your birthright in return."

Now the birthright was a valuable privilege which belonged to the oldest son in a family. It was valuable because it gave him the place of eventual headship in the family or tribe and entitled him to a double portion of the inheritance.

But at that moment, Esau considered the birthright worthless. What good is a birthright, he thought, to a man who is as famished as I? His hunger seemed so overpowering that he was willing to give almost anything to satisfy it. In order to pacify a momentary appetite, he was willing to surrender something that was of enduring value. And so he made the awful bargain!

A similar drama is being reenacted almost daily. Here is a man who has maintained a good testimony for years. He has the love of a fine family and the respect of his Christian fellowship. When he speaks, his words carry spiritual authority, and his service has the blessing of God upon it. He is a model believer.

But then comes the moment of fierce passion. It seems as if he is being consumed by the fires of sexual temptation. All of a sudden nothing seems so important as the satisfaction of this physical drive. He abandons the power of rational thought. He is willing to sacrifice everything for this illicit alliance.

And so he takes the insane plunge! For that moment of passion, he exchanges the honor of God, his own testimony, the esteem of his family, the respect of his friends and the power of a sterling Christian character. Or as Alexander Maclaren said, "He forgets his longings after righteousness; flings away the joys of divine communion; darkens his soul; ends his prosperity; brings down upon his head for all his remaining years a cataract of calamities; and makes his name and his religion a target for the barbed sarcasms of each succeeding generation of scoffers."

In the classic words of Scripture, he sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE - In 1986, Texas gem dealer Roy Whetstine was pawing through a Tupperware bowl of cheaply priced rocks at a mineral show in Arizona when he came across a lavender-gray, potato-size stone that looked a bit special. "You want \$15 for this?" Whetstine asked the amateur collector. "Tell you what," replied the collector. "I'll let you have it for \$10. It's not as pretty as the others." Whetstine walked away with the world's largest star sapphire, later valued at as high as \$2.28 million! He planned to sell his 1,905-carat bargain in its uncut form for \$1.5 million and put the profits in trust for his two sons, each of whom had given Dad \$5 to bring back a little something from the gem show (*Newsweek* [11/24/1986], p. 75). If you don't know what you possess, you may disregard it or let it go for something worth far less. Esau did that—he didn't appreciate the value of his birthright, which entitled him to the blessings of God's promises to Abraham, and so he traded it for a bowl of stew. He gave away eternal blessings for instant gratification. (**ED: GIVEN THAT HIS GRANDFATHER ABRAHAM HAD BEEN ALIVE FOR ESAU'S FIRST 15 YEARS, IT IS LIKELY THAT ESAU AT LEAST HAD SOME INKLING OF WHAT THE BIRTHRIGHT ENTAILED**). Bad trade! But that's what the original readers of Hebrews were in danger of doing! Under the threat of persecution, they were tempted to abandon Christ to return to their Jewish faith. So the author here contrasts the terrors of Mount Sinai, representing Jewish life under the law, with the glories of Mount Zion, picturing the joy of life under the new covenant. He wants us to know that right living flows out of right knowing. If you know the riches that you possess in Christ, you won't want to go back to the empty, fleeting pleasures of the world. John Newton put it this way ("[Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken](#)," verse 4) ([Are You Living in Sinai or Zion](#))

His Rights Forfeited

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.—Heb. 12:16.

Before a court in the province of Pesth, Hungary, a suit was pending in which an aged Jew was to make a statement under oath. He was ready to take the oath, when another Jew arose and protested against it.

"This man dare not take an oath."

"Why not?" asked the judge.

"There exists a Hebrew prayer which contains the sentence that 'every Jew has a share in the life to come.' It is now about twenty years ago, and I was present, when the man who is now about to take an oath sold his 'share in the life to come,' guaranteed to him in the prayer, to another Jew, a Mr. Y., who paid him a certain amount of money for it. As he, therefore, can not count any longer on a future existence, he has nothing to fear or hope for in the life to come; it must be certainly indifferent to him whether he swear to a truth or a falsehood."

The matter was examined into, and as the strange transaction was found to have taken place in reality, the court granted the protest of the old man, and the party who sold his "share in the life to come" was declared incapable of taking an oath.

R C Sproul - Three Great Corruptions

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. [Heb. 12:14]

Once again the author of Hebrews exhorts us to persevere. This time we learn of three great corruptions that undermine the walk of the Christian. The first is a belligerent spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life makes a peace-loving person. "Blessed are

the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9).

Some people have a contentious spirit. They wind up in one conflict after another. Some Christians have this problem as a besetting sin. The author of Hebrews warns that if we don't mortify a belligerent nature by pursuing peace, we will drift away from the kingdom.

The second great sin is bitterness. Heb 12:15 says that bitterness will cause us to miss the grace of God. Bitterness comes from unresolved anger, perhaps harbored toward God because he has taken us through rough times. A bitter person causes trouble and defiles others, killing their joy and leading them away from trust in God's good intentions.

The third great sin is sexual immorality (Heb 12:16). Our minds are tricky, and when we go through hard times we may begin to think we have earned the right to sin. "I'm suffering anyway, so I might as well sin." Sexual temptation is one of the most profound human temptations. Our negative example here is Esau, who married several Canaanite women instead of seeking out one godly wife. In Esau's case, sexual immorality seems to have played a part in reinforcing his general godlessness and violence.

The great warning comes in Heb 12:17. One day Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils. He did not care about God, and he did not think that he would have to honor his deal with Jacob. He expected to inherit anyway. But God heard Esau's word and honored it. Esau lost the birthright. Afterwards he was bitterly grieved, but not truly repentant. So he decided to kill his brother. Esau was rejected.

G Campbell Morgan - THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. HEBREWS 12:2

IN THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF Hebrews, at verse 16, we read: "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." That does not mean that he did not repent, but that he could not make his father repent, though he sought to do so with tears. The old man, feeble, ashamed, knowing he had played the fool and had attempted to play a trick on God, which trick having been invalidated by another trick, God was vindicated; when he found that was so, he would not withdraw that blessing. He stood by it. "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau." Faith insisted upon the fulfillment of the divine purpose.

As we ponder this story, how true it is that sometimes the deepest faith a man has in God is seen in his attitude towards his own wrong-doing. That was the deepest fact in Isaac; that faith in the God of his father Abraham, that faith that had been the inspiration of his quiet, passive life, and that faith that prevailed after all. He attempted to change the divine purpose as declared to him, but faith nevertheless was the greatest thing in his personality. We see it plainly in his attitude resulting from his failure, when he stood rebuked in the presence of the purpose of God, and the God of purpose. This is often so. It was so in the case of David. It was never more completely revealed than in the attitude he took up, after his outstanding sin. It was so in the case of Peter. He cursed and swore that he did not know Jesus. But watch him, see the breaking heart, and watch all that followed after. Out of absolute failure, resulting from a failure of faith, at last faith burned brightly and triumphed.

Sexual immorality: blinds the eyes, dulls the conscience, enslaves the will, robs the blessing, elevates the flesh above faith. It is the selling of the soul for a bowl of stew.

THOUGHT - Do any of my habits place me in the path of temptation? Do I quickly sacrifice long-term blessing for short-term pleasure? Have I "sold" any spiritual birthrights through secret sin? How seriously am I pursuing holiness (Heb 12:14)?

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.

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](#). (3SAPI) [metanoias gar topon ouch euren](#). (3SAAI) [kaiper meta dakruon ekzetesas](#) (AAPMSN) [auten](#).

BGT στε γ ρ τι κα μετ πειτα θ λων κληρονομ σαι τ ν ε λογ αν πεδοκιμ σθη, μετανο ας γ ρ τ πον ο χ ε ρεν κα περ μετ δ ακρ ων κζητ σας α τ ν.

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](#))

KJV For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

NKJ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

NET For you know that later when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no opportunity for repentance, although he sought the blessing with tears.

CSB For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected because he didn't find any opportunity for repentance, though he sought it with tears.

ESV For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

NIV Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

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.

- **when he:** Ge 27:31-41
- **he was:** He 6:8 Pr 1:24-31 Jer 6:30 Mt 7:23 25:11,12 Lu 13:24-27
- **for he found no place for repentance :** He 6:4-6 Heb 10:26-29
- [Hebrews 12 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Hebrews 12:15-17 Finishing the Race Together](#) - Steven Cole
- [Hebrews 12:12-17 Falling Short of the Grace of God](#) - John MacArthur

Related Passages:

Hebrews 6:4-6+ (See [comparison with Esau](#)) For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Hebrews 10:26-29+ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. 28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Isaiah 55:6-7 **Seek** (command) the LORD while He may be found; **Call upon** (command) Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. Beware, dear reader, when repentance is delayed, the heart hardens.

Hebrews 11:6+ (AN APT DESCRIPTION OF ESAU) And **without faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (ESAU SOUGHT THE REWARD, NOT THE REWARDER!)

2 Corinthians 7:9-10+ I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10 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.

TOO LATE FOR TEARS TOO LATE TO REPENT

For ([gar](#)) is another use of this helpful term of explanation which we do well to learn to pause and ponder. For gives the reason Esau is called godless—because he was rejected after selling his birthright. It is a bridge between warning and consequence. It reminds us that choices have eternal weight, and that true repentance must not be delayed. It illustrates the danger of despising spiritual things and expecting to reclaim them later. Esau had "heard God's voice" but he hardened his heart (Heb 3:15)

You know that even afterwards - You know is addressed to his Jewish readers who knew full well the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis. The writer is using Esau's tragic decision to stir his readers to not make a similar mistake with Jesus! They knew the story 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)

When he desired ([thelo](#)) **to inherit** ([kleronomeo](#)) **the blessing** ([eulogia](#)) (Ge 27:34, 35) - Esau had treated grace with contempt and the writer explains (truths they knew) the course and consequences of falling short of the grace of God. **When he desired** ([thelo](#))

indicates that Esau now strong personal desire for the blessing, but as the story unfolds his was emotional and self-centered, not spiritual. He regretted the loss, not the sin. His belly was full, but his heart was empty! **To inherit** ([kleronomeo](#)) speaks of receiving what was promised, in this case the covenantal blessing that belonged to the firstborn—even though he had already despised and sold his birthright (Genesis 25:29–34). He must have known something of the blessings associated with the birthright or he would not have desired it. The problem of course is that he wanted the benefits of the inheritance without honoring the God Who gave the blessing! **The blessing** ([eulogia](#)) refers specifically to the patriarchal blessing Isaac was to give to his son, even as Abraham had passed it to him (who also was not the "firstborn"). This blessing was material (the Land) and spiritual (seed like the sand of the seashore) and Esau knew these promises of God in the unconditional, immutable covenant He had made with Abraham. It is tragically ironic that now Esau attempted to reclaim what he had previously despised. His desire was real but fleshly.

THOUGHT - The preceding phrase is a sobering warning: it is possible to desire God's blessings without desiring God Himself. Esau's story teaches us that spiritual privileges must not be treated lightly. When we despise the things of God, we may find that some consequences cannot be reversed, even if we later regret them. Are you (am I) treating lightly any of God's spiritual privileges He has bestowed on my as His child? E.g., am I taking His forgiveness for granted, knowing that even if I willfully sin (most sins are willful beloved), all I have to do is confess (1Jn 1:9+) and I am forgiven? Such an attitude thinks somewhat lightly of the cost Christ paid for our sins on the Cross!

He was rejected ([apodokimazo](#)) - **He was rejected** ([apodokimazo](#)) signifies that Esau was not just denied, but that he was given a decisive and final rejection. He had been "tested" with fleshly desire and he failed the test, selling his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. The use of **rejected** ([apodokimazo](#)) reveals the irreversibility of Esau's loss and the seriousness of despising spiritual blessings. This is a very strong verb and was used of Jesus who was "**rejected** by the elders" and by Peter describing "the stone (metaphor for Jesus) which the builders (Jewish religious leaders) **rejected**." (1Pe 2:7). Esau's rejection meant he was evaluated and found unworthy to receive the blessing. His desire to reclaim the blessing came too late. His tears were not evidence of true repentance, but of regret or remorse over the lost privilege. The rejection was final, but not because God is unwilling to forgive, but because Esau's heart remained unchanged and he was unwilling to genuinely seek God's forgiveness. Esau was not rejected because he sinned, but because he despised spiritual things and later sought the blessing without repentance.

THOUGHT -The use of [apodokimazo](#) in this verse is a sobering warning. It reminds us that God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7+), and that spiritual opportunities can be lost if we treat them with contempt. In short, Esau's rejection is a picture of what happens when someone values temporary pleasure over eternal blessing. The writer's earlier words ring even louder and clearer stating that "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." (Hebrews 3:15) I do not know who is reading this note, but if you do not know Jesus, in reading these words you have heard His voice and are accountable, so I strongly encourage you to fall to your knees and repent. Now! Not tomorrow! Not after you think about it for a few days! Do not despise God's gracious offer for you to enter into His New Covenant by grace through faith, and thereby enter into eternal life the very moment you believe! This verse calls us to take God's grace seriously, to repent and believe while there is time, and to seek the Lord with a sincere heart (Read Isaiah 55:6–7).

For ([gar](#)) **he found** ([heurisko](#)) **no** ([ou. ouk](#) - absolutely no) **place** ([topos](#)) **for repentance** ([metanoia](#)), **though he sought for** ([ekzeteo](#)) **it with tears** ([dakruon](#)) - **For** ([gar](#)) explains why the rejection was complete and final. This is surely one of the most sobering warnings in the New Testament. It describes Esau's tragic spiritual condition after he had despised his birthright and later tried to reclaim the blessing. **He found** ([heurisko](#)) is interesting because it means to look for something, in Esau's case he looked for an opportunity or possibility to reverse what had happened—but he could not find it. **He found** ([heurisko](#)) is in the active voice indicating that Esau made an willful, active search, but as **no** ([ou. ouk](#) - absolutely no) indicates he came up empty! There was no possibility, not even a sliver of hope, for what he was seeking. Esau was searching for a way to undo the consequences of his rejection of his birthright, but absolutely **no** way was **found**.

Place ([topos](#)) in this context is figurative (not a physical place) and speaks of an opportunity. It seems that Esau did not know the old adage that "opportunity knocks but once." God had placed extraordinary spiritual privileges before him—birthright, blessing, covenant, and the honor of carrying forward the Messianic line. These were sacred opportunities designed to shape his destiny and the destiny of generations after him. But when the moment came, opportunity knocked—and Esau traded it away for a bowl of stew. He lived for the now, not the eternal. He valued appetite over inheritance, impulse over promise, and comfort over calling. And so the door of opportunity was slammed shut!

Repentance ([metanoia](#)), **though he sought for** ([ekzeteo](#)) **it with tears** ([dakruon](#)) - **Repentance** is a change of mind which results in a change of direction— from sin and unto God (cf this dynamic illustrated in 1Th 1:9+) True repentance involves godly sorrow (2Co 7:10), not just regret or emotional distress. Esau's tears were not evidence of true repentance, but of remorse over lost privilege. He wanted the blessing, not the heart change that repentance requires. **He sought for** ([ekzeteo](#)) **it with tears** ([dakruon](#))

describes Esau seeking the blessing earnestly, but not seeking God earnestly with a repentant heart. Esau's **tears** were real, but they were not accompanied by true repentance. As Paul says Esau's sorrow was worldly sorrow, not godly sorrow (2Co 7:10). He cried over what he lost, not over the sin that caused the loss. **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.

THOUGHT - This verse is a sobering warning to all who would treat God's grace lightly. Esau's story shows that: Regret is not the same as repentance. Tears do not guarantee forgiveness if the heart remains unchanged. Spiritual opportunities can be lost if we despise them. Esau wanted the blessing, but not the God of the blessing. He was sorry for the consequences, but not for the sin. His example warns us not to delay repentance or presume upon God's mercy. "**Behold, NOW** is 'the acceptable time,' **behold**, now is 'the day of salvation.'" (2Co 6:2+) If you have procrastinated and put off placing your faith in Jesus for salvation and eternal life, notice Paul gives two dramatic "**BEHOLD's**" which is a strong call to pay very close attention to what follows! I pray today is your best DAY in all eternity as you enter into the Kingdom of God by grace through faith in Christ. Amen.

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 (because of their pursuit of Christ) was a manifestation of God's loving discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11) so that they should not lose heart (Heb 12:3) but run with endurance (Heb 12:1), eyes of their heart fixed on Jesus (Heb 12:2), at the same time strengthening the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble (Heb 12:12-13).

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+), sinning willfully against God (He 10:26+). 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 (cf 1Co 6:9,11)! Such a man or woman may exhibit great emotion, even with loud weeping and wailing, but their emotions reflect only a worldly sorrow (2Co 7:10) which leads only to remorse and ultimately to eternal death in contrast to genuine godly sorrow (2Co 7:9-10) which leads to repentance and ultimately to 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) 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.

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!

Grant Osborne - So when he later "wanted to inherit this blessing," he was "rejected" by God (Heb 12:17) in the same way that all apostates will be rejected (Gen 27:1-40), echoing the point of Hebrews 6:4-6 and Heb 10:26-27 that such an apostate has committed the unpardonable sin and will never be accepted back. Some think that when he repented and "sought the blessing with tears" (Heb 12:17) he should have been forgiven as in the New Testament. However, we must realize that these were not tears of repentance but merely a secular "change of heart" that reflected a desire only to get his inheritance back, not get right with God. He never really turned back to God and merely desired the greater wealth and prestige of his birthright. His was worldly sorrow, not godly grief. He never could "change what he had done" because, like in 6:6, he had in reality "subjected (God's offer of blessing) to public disgrace" and never truly sought an actual new relationship with God. (See [Hebrews Verse by Verse - Page cxxii](#))

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

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+ and of Joshua's words - Joshua 24:15. See also Ru 1:15,16+ 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.

Esau demonstrates no "repentance without regret" and thus the result for Esau was eternal 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! O, the deceitfulness of sin, for the wages of sin are always death.

THOUGHT - God's message to all who run the race is unmistakably clear: giving free rein to sexual ("immoral and godless") and fleshly appetites will ruin the race—and if such behavior marks the habitual pattern of one's life (we are speaking of direction, not perfection), it reveals that the person was never truly regenerate and does not possess the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who directs the heart toward holiness and away from godlessness. As Paul warned the Ephesians: "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. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph 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" (Heb 2:2-3+).

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.

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

Was rejected (593) (**apodokimazo** 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) 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+](#), 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's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

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+ 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+ 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+ 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.

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."

Repentance (3341) **metanoia** from **meta** = after + **noéo** = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and implies a change of mind. From the NT uses, it is clear that **metanoia** means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. **Metanoia** is a conversion in every sense of the word. Jesus' teaching would support this conclusion for our Lord declared...

METANOIA - 22V - Matt. 3:8; Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 5:32; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 24:47; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 2 Co. 7:9; 2 Co. 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 6:1; Heb. 6:6; Heb. 12:17; 2 Pet. 3:9

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance** from dead works and of faith toward God,

Hebrews 6:6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to **repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

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.

I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** (**metanoéo**), than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no **repentance** (**metanoia**). (Luke 15:7+)

Bishop Ryle offers this descriptive definition of repentance - **Repentance** is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "**repentance**." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." ([Repentance](#))

R Kent Hughes - God's message to all who are in the race is so clear: Sexual and physical appetites, given free rein, will ruin our race. Sure, we can repent of any sin, but Esau-like sins will leave deficiencies that can never be regained. How tragic, then, that so many today are selling a glorious finish for a cheap meal!

Do we want to finish well? Then here is what we must do:

- Run tough—"Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees" (v. 12).
- Run tough together—" 'Make level paths for your feet,' so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed" (v. 13).
- Run after peace and holiness—"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see

the Lord" (v. 14).

And here is what we must guard against:

- Gracelessness—"See to it that no one misses the grace of God..." (v. 15a).
- Apostasy—"... and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (v. 15b).
- Appetites—"See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son" (v. 16).

The joy of the Christian's marathon will be finishing. May we finish well! (See [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#))

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 McCheyne 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.

Norman Geisler - HEBREWS 12:17—Why couldn't Esau repent if he sought it with tears? [When Critics Ask](#)

PROBLEM: The Bible informs us here that Esau "was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." But why wouldn't God accept his sincere repentance, when He commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) and is patiently waiting for people to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

SOLUTION: There are two important things to observe about this passage.

First, the statement "no place for repentance" may refer to his father's inability to change his mind about giving the inheritance to Jacob, and not to Esau's change of mind. At any rate, the circumstances did not afford Esau the opportunity to reverse the situation and get the blessing.

Second, tears are not a sure sign that a person has genuinely repented. One can also have tears of regret and remorse that fall short of true repentance or change of mind (cf. Judas, Matt. 27:3).

Finally, this text is not talking about spiritual blessing (salvation), but earthly blessing (inheritance). God always honors the sincere repentance of sinners and grants them salvation (Acts 10:35; Heb. 11:6).

James Smith - THE BARTERED BIRTHRIGHT

Genesis 25:27–34; Hebrews 12:17

Esau, like Cain, stands out in the Word of God as a beacon of warning—like the mast of some sunken ship still seen above the

overwhelming tide. Observe here a—

I. Privilege Inherited. Esau was the first-born, and so by birth he had the opportunity of becoming heir. Although it is true that natural birth will not bring us into the heirship of God's promises, yet it does bring us into a marvellous place of opportunity compared with those who, through no fault of their own, have been born in the darkness of cannibalism. All born in Bible lands are heirs of a priceless privilege.

II. Privilege Despised. Esau said, "What profit is this birthright to me?" (Dt 25:32). It could be no profit to him when he esteemed other sensual things of more importance. The pottage to him was the chief thing at that moment. He allowed his appetite to overrule the higher instincts of his nature. Men constantly make this mistake when they suffer temporal things to take the place of spiritual. Things of first importance should always be put first. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and these things for which so many hunger after shall be added. To despise Gospel privileges is to despise your birthright.

III. Privilege Lost. "He sold his birthright" (Dt 25:33). He deliberately parted with it as a thing of no value. An opportunity not accepted is an opportunity lost. There are always plenty of the Jacob sort about, who are ready, at any cost to others, to make personal gain out of their spiritual stupidity. Moses looked at his birthright with a very different eye when he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25, 26). The heart is never more deceitful than when it covets the things which are seen and temporal, and lets slip those things which are eternal. It is a bad bargain to sell the spiritual for the natural.

IV. Privilege Lamented. "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, ... though he sought with tears" (Heb. 12:17). The sin of unbelief is sure to be followed with a terrible "afterwards." His dying father brought conviction home to his heart and conscience; but his tears, though many and bitter, did not avail to bring him into the hitherto despised blessing. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime received good things," was a stinging "afterward" to the rich man spoken of in Luke 16. How shall we escape the sorrowful afterward "if we neglect the great present salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

James Smith REPENTANCE.

The law does not demand it, because it cannot offer forgiveness.

1. Christ Declared the Need of It, Matt. 4:17
2. Christ Exalted to Give It, Acts 5:31
3. Offered in His Name, Luke 24:17
4. Commanded by God, Acts 17:30
5. Produced by the Goodness of God, Rom. 2:4
6. Necessary to Forgiveness, Acts 3:19
7. Accompanied with Faith, Mark 1:15
8. Joy in Heaven Over It, Luke 15:10
9. May be Sought Too Late, Heb. 12:17

LOST OPPORTUNITIES - F B Meyer

"He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."-- Heb 12:17.

"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 McCheyne 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.

A W Tozer - [My Daily Pursuit: Devotions for Every Day - Page 204](#)

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. HEBREWS 12:17

The average Christian thinks that because he has heard a truth he now owns that truth. Spirituality is not like education. In education you read the textbooks, memorize a few facts and you have mastered the subject.

Not so with spirituality.

Only the Holy Spirit can give you the illumination that will make the words you hear become part of your spiritual nature. The Holy Spirit wants to open up our hearts so that the truth becomes part of us.

Things often stand in the way of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. It will be different things for different Christians. Clearing out spiritual debris is an ongoing process, and the tool to use is repentance.

We need to begin to repent of our lack of holiness in the presence of the Holy; repent of our self-indulgence in the presence of the selfless Christ; repent of our harshness in the presence of the kind and forgiving Christ. We must repent of our lukewarm attitude in the presence of the zealous Christ burning like a fiery flame.

The Holy Spirit will guide each of us in the area where we need to do our repentance.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
Until my heart is pure.
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.
EDWIN HATCH (1835–1889)

Theodore Epp - BAD ATTITUDE BRINGS SPIRITUAL LOSS

Genesis 27:30-40

Esau was bitter toward his brother because he had taken advantage of him twice. Desperate to have something, Esau asked his father, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" (Gen. 27:36).

Isaac answered, "Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?" (v. 37).

Esau became more desperate and said to his father, "'Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father.' And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept" (v. 38).

Esau did not weep because he was concerned about spiritual values but because he could not change his father's mind.

Hebrews 12:17 says of Esau, "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it [the blessing] carefully with tears."

Esau was not repenting of his sin. He was trying to get his father to repent, or change his mind, of having given the blessing to Jacob.

Esau was as much to blame for the loss of the birthright as Jacob was in securing it through deceit and cleverness. Had it not been for Esau's attitude toward his birthright, it would not have been so easy for Jacob to take it from him.

Let us be careful about our attitude toward spiritual truths.

"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" (Heb. 12:15).

Opportunity comes to everyone. (Adapted from W H Griffith-Thomas)

It's true that God intended Jacob to receive the spiritual blessings of the covenant, yet Esau also had **every opportunity** to experience God's blessing. He grew up in a godly home under the influence of both his father and mother. And from the later story, it's clear that Esau eventually realized—far too late—the value of the blessings he had thrown away. This shows that he had been

taught to treasure those blessings, but he **deliberately rejected** them and treated them lightly.

No one will be able to claim on the final day of judgment that they “never had a chance” to do what was right. God is perfectly righteous and never puts anyone at an unfair disadvantage. **Opportunity comes to all**, but it can be lost through carelessness or unfaithfulness.

When Esau later wanted to inherit the blessing, “he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it with tears” (Heb. 12:17). The word “**afterward**” stands as a solemn warning. It speaks of a conscience awakened too late, and of hopes that were never fulfilled.

One man once said that much of his life had been spent “raising tombstones over the graves of lost opportunities.” The warning comes to every one of us in the words of Jesus: “**How often I wanted... but you were unwilling.**”

Jay Adams - [Fifty Difficult Passages Explained](#)

HEBREWS 12:17 “he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

You know, of course, that afterward when he wanted to inherit the blessing he was rejected. He found no opportunity to change his mind, even though he sought it with tears.

When Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of red bean soup, he made a terrible mistake. Of course, in the providence of God, by which He works all things together for the good of those who love Him, it was a good thing—for Jacob. But for Esau, it turned out, the exchange proved to be nothing more than a hasty, foolish move. Its consequences for him were grave, since the birthright was an important thing in biblical culture. His act was sinful.

“But, could he not repent of his sin?” you ask. Why of course he could. “I thought the passage says that ‘he found no place of repentance.’ Those words would seem to say that he could not repent of his sin.”

It is not always proper to translate the original Greek by the English word, “repent.” There are passages in which this may lead one astray, as it does in this one. It is better to translate the term into simple English, as I have done in the larger translation above: “He found no opportunity to change his mind.” The word “repent” means, simply, “to change the mind.”

Now, the real question was, “Did Esau want to change his mind about the way he chose to act, insulting God by treating the birthright blessing in so cavalier manner—or about something else?” That question goes to the heart of the matter. Esau was a “profane” or “godless person” (Hebrews 12:16) who was not at all interested in confessing sin to God. Once his belly was full he came to his senses about what he had done, and changed his mind. He wanted to get his birthright back. But there was no opportunity (or way afforded) for him to do so. He was stuck with the consequences of his decision. Even his tears would not bring it back!

Repentance (metanoia, the Greek word used here), we have seen, means “to change the mind.” The Old Testament Hebrew word for repentance is shuv which means “to turn around.” Together, they constitute the full understanding of repentance over sin. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of direction. In Isaiah 55:8, 9, God says that his hearers’ ways were not God’s ways and that their thoughts were not His thoughts. Repentance deals with both problems: it changes one’s ways by changing his thoughts so as to bring both into conformity to God’s. There was nothing like that in the heart of Esau who, instead, was like many who whine over the consequences of their sins when they cannot change them.

David W Gooding - Anyone who thinks that salvation by grace means permission to live an unholy life, has not yet understood God’s grace. He hasn’t yet come anywhere near it. He has come short of it, he has missed it altogether (Heb 12:15).

When Moses was expounding the terms of the old covenant to the assembled people, he warned them of the possibility that there might be among them what he called ‘a root that bears gall and wormwood’ (NIV, ‘**a root that produces such bitter poison**’; Deut 29:18–21). He meant that kind of person who, even while listening to God’s solemn warnings, invokes a blessing on himself and thinks, ‘I will be safe even though I persist in going my own way.’ He hears God’s call to faith, loyalty, righteousness and holiness, and the solemn curses on those who reject the call. He has no intention of obeying the call. Far from it: he is intent on following other gods. But he persuades himself that everything will be all right nonetheless. God’s curses, he thinks, do not really mean what they say. There is somehow a third way in which rejection of God’s word, outright idolatry, disobedience and sin are perfectly compatible with salvation and blessing.

The writer repeats the warning (Heb 12:15), not so much for the sake of the person himself—he is an obvious unbeliever and will perish—but for the sake of the effect such a person can have on the genuine believers while he mixes among them under the pretence of being a believer himself. They can become defiled, and encouraged to lax living and compromise. Carried away by the error of lawless people, as Peter puts it, they can fall, not from their salvation, but from their steadfastness (2 Pet 3:17).

So let there be no Esau among you, says the author (Heb 12:16). Esau was a decent enough man, as men go, but he was utterly profane (NIV 'godless'). By God's gracious providence he was Isaac's eldest son and so held the birthright. If there was anything at all in the promises of God to Abraham and Isaac, then the firstborn son's inheritance-rights were an exceedingly valuable thing. But to Esau they meant virtually nothing.

Jacob was cooking some stew one day when Esau came in from the open country rather hungry. 'Quick,' he said to Jacob, 'let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished.'

'Sell me your birthright,' said Jacob, 'then I will.'

'Look, I'm about to die,' Esau said. 'What good is the birthright to me?' So he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew.

Now some young men are given to violent exaggeration; so when Esau said, 'I am about to die,' we may take it, I suppose, that he was quite hungry, perhaps painfully so. But to barter his God-given birthright for a bowl of stew to pacify his momentary hunger-pangs—God brands it as profanity. 'He despised his birthright,' says God, and all things sacred with it. God's promises to Abraham and to his descendants, wonderful though they were, necessarily related to the future. Esau was saying, in effect: 'As for all those promises for the future, you can have the lot, Jacob, if you like. As far as I'm concerned, one bowl of stew now is worth more than all those promises for the future. I'm not prepared to put up with the pangs of hunger for the sake of a few promises, even God-given promises. I intend to have a full stomach here and now. If holding on to the promises means hunger and pain, you can have them. Give me relief from pain, present satisfaction and enjoyment.'

The relevance of the lesson to the readers of this letter is obvious. For them as for us there were but two alternatives. One was to follow Christ, which means taking up the cross and sharing the rejection he suffered at the hands of the world that gave him that cross. It can lead—and for our readers it had literally led—to a very empty feeling in the stomach. On the other hand they could refuse Christ and his cross and say with Esau, 'I care nothing for God's promises in Jesus Christ. I care nothing for living by faith. Hunger-pangs, persecution, social ostracism are more than I can, or will, put up with. I demand to have a good time and a full stomach now. You can live on empty promises if you like. I will not put up with rejection by my family, social group and nation, not even for Christ's sake.'

Two alternatives then, and only two. Where shall we find strength to make the right choice? ([BORROW An Unshakeable Kingdom: The Letter to the Hebrews for Today page 244](#))

COMPARISON OF TWO MEN: Hebrews 6:4-6 and Esau

Issue	Esau (Heb 12)	Apostate (Heb 6)	Similarity
Spiritual Privilege	Born into covenant family; heir of the birthright	Exposed to gospel light; "tasted the heavenly gift"	Both enjoy spiritual privilege but squander it
Responsibility	Should have valued his covenant blessing	Should have embraced Christ wholeheartedly	Both reject God's gracious offer
Fatal Choice	Sold birthright for a single meal	"Fallen away" after full light	Both trade eternal blessing for momentary satisfaction
Heart Problem	"Godless" (bebelos) = profane, secular, worldly	Willful rejection of Christ after full knowledge	Both manifest deep-hearted contempt for spiritual things
Outcome	"Rejected"	"Impossible to renew again"	Divine rejection (judicial, not arbitrary)
Repentance	Sought blessing with tears but no repentance	Cannot be renewed to repentance	Repentance becomes morally/spiritually impossible
Warning	Example of tragedy	Doctrinal explanation of tragedy	Esau is an illustrative prototype of Heb 6 apostasy