



Hebrews 12:14-17

¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ 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; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ 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.

SUMMARY

The author has pleaded with his audience not to "grow weary or fainthearted" at God's discipline, but to endure it, knowing it proves they are his children and that he does it "for our good, that we may share his holiness." (Hebrews 12: 3, 7, 10) The need for endurance and holiness converge again here in this brief encouragement and warning.

First off, this community is to "strive" to have peace with one another. Peaceful coexistence with others isn't always possible, but "so far as it depends on" us (Romans 12:18) we should pursue it and avoid being the initiators of conflict.

They are also to strive "for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Seeing God's character reflected in our own life is to be our constant pursuit as his people. Being conformed to his image is what the Christian life is, and pursuing holiness is what makes living at peace with one another even possible.

He also reminds them that they are responsible for each other's spiritual well-being (v 15; Galatians 6:1-2). Striving for holiness and peace is a community project. The *individual* flourishes only within the *community's* encouragement, support, prayers,

correction, and counsel. To help foster this kind of environment, this church needs to be on guard against any “root of bitterness” growing in their midst, because the sins of a few - gone unchecked - can affect the whole community (see Deuteronomy 29:18-19).

Finally, he warns his readers to avoid Esau’s example. Selling his inheritance for a bowl of stew was a ridiculous trade, even more so considering what the inheritance was. Being Isaac’s firstborn son and Abraham’s grandson, Esau stood to inherit everything God had promised to those men (Genesis 12:1-3; 26:3-5). Yet being an integral part of God’s plan for the world meant less to him than his stomach (Genesis 25:29-34). “Physical appetites had meant more to him than spiritual privileges.”¹

Like Esau, we are children who stand to gain an inheritance (vv 5-11; Ephesians 1:11-14). But the Christian life is a difficult marathon that must be run with endurance. In our exhaustion, we’ll be tempted to quit the race to satisfy immediate, physical cravings. The author’s warning here is the same as it was earlier in the letter: “while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.” (4:1)

DISCUSS

Pursuing holiness leads to peace with one another, while unholiness leads to conflict. With this in mind, read Galatians 5:19-21. How do the “works of the flesh” described here produce conflict? How does the “fruit of the Spirit” in verses 22-23 produce peace?

“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God” (Hebrews 12:15). Who are the people at Providence Church that you are around the most? What does it practically look like for you to uphold your responsibility for their spiritual well-being?

When are you tempted to make a foolish tradeoff like Esau? What spiritual privileges has God given to you as a Christian that you can call to mind in moments of temptation?

¹ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, p 239