

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Part IV

STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-TWO - HEBREWS 12:14-29

We are in the latter part of Hebrews chapter 12 and last week, the writer shared with us, the fact that life is like a marathon race.

And that we are encompassed about by a great cloud of witnesses; all those people in Hebrews chapter 11 that we have been studying the past several weeks.

They are sitting in the stands and they are there as a witness to say, “hey look, we did it and so can you.”

These Hebrew Christians are contemplating going back to Judaism because that would be a lot easier lifestyle.

And they wouldn't have to go through all the persecution and hardship that they are facing in their Christian life.

We also discussed last week the fact, that God knows what to do in our lives to accomplish His purposes.

He disciplines us.

**And many times in the adversity and the suffering
in our lives –
we ask,
“Why did that happen to me or
what did I do to deserve this?”**

And that’s not the issue at all.

It’s that God is looking inside and He knows us.

**Man looks on the outward appearance,
God looks on the heart.**

**And because He looks inside and knows what’s needed,
He prescribes a curriculum to accomplish His purposes
which are to make us more Christ like.**

**And so those verses from Hebrews 12:5-11
were describing that
to encourage these Hebrew Christians to realize,
God isn’t mad at you.**

**He’s not going to bring you into anything
that He’s not going to provide adequate grace
to get you through it.**

**So learn the lessons you need to learn and
don’t throw in the towel.**

And we kind of wrapped up there last week.

Now today we pick up in our study at verse 14 and He's going to wrap up basically the whole argument for the letter today.

There are four commands in the passage today. You are going to see them coming out one after the other.

And then he comes, basically, to a decision that has to be made.

So pick up with me if you will at verse 14 on your sheets and we will get right into it.

v. 14 Be pursuing peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

We have two commands in one command:

- 1. "BE PURSUING PEACE WITH ALL MEN" that's the first part of the command.**
- 2. the second part "BE PURSUING . . . THE SANCTIFICATION WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD."**

When he says to them "be pursuing peace with all men" he's talking about the horizontal relationship.

When he is saying “be pursuing . . . the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” he’s talking about the vertical relationship.

Isn’t it great that we would run into a word like PURSUING instead of PERSEVERANCE?

This word for pursuing is the word that a football pass receiver would use as he pursues his route to lay hold of the ball.

It’s the word that he would use if he were a defensive ball player and he’s pursuing the ball carrier to make the critical tackle.

That’s kind of the picture we have.

So it’s not going out for a Sunday walk or just trying to fall into something.

The word is pursue with intensity, run hard. It’s pursuing it with all you have.

What does he say next?

“Be pursuing peace with all men.”

You say, “Well I can’t do that.”

I have so many difficult relationships around me it’s tough to pursue peace, with just the ones I know.

This says; pursue peace “with all men.”

If you are a Christian, you're going to have a characteristic about your life that is known as PEACE.

This says; pursue peace "with all men."

That means your greatest witness to somebody who is not a believer is the fact that you can totally accept them and you can love them and you can be at peace in your relationship with them even though you are worlds apart in what you feel and in what you think and the way you act.

That's where Christianity really makes its greatest mark on the culture.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says it well. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.

Pursue with a passion peace with all men.

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of it, quietness and assurance forever.

I love this one, Colossians 3:15

**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called.**

Pursue peace with all men.

**Have the deepest concern in your heart
for the interest of others and
the contribution that you can make
to their lives rather than
what you're trying to gain from them.**

**Linus said it well on the Peanuts cartoon,
“I love the world. It's people that I can't stand.”**

Many of us have those experiences.

**Secondly, you are pursuing “sanctification without
which no one will see the Lord.”**

Now that's a big word.

What does the word SANCTIFICATION mean?

Sanctification means to be set apart.

Set apart for the intended use.

It means to be holy.

**Now if I say to you, “pursue sanctification”,
what do you think about?**

**You’re thinking, I’m going to do that,
I’m going to start reading my Bible and
I’m going to start praying everyday and
I’m going to start really being good.**

**I’m going to love my neighbor as myself.
I’m going to start giving my money.**

**And if you think of a big long list of things
that’s going to cause you to be able to
pursue sanctification, guess what, you just blew it!**

**You see, nothing you ever do is going to be
anymore than filthy rags in God’s sight.**

**The righteousness that comes from
a pursuit of human endeavor is a bunch of nothing.**

**If you are following this command and
you are pursuing with a passion the
“sanctification without which no one will see the Lord”
you have a relationship with the Lord today
that is deep enough and it is changing your life.**

**And because your life is being changed,
people are seeing Christ in you.
That’s pursuing sanctification.**

**When you have a walk with God
whereby you are deepening the relationship,
He's changing you and
His agenda is to make you more like His Son.**

**Remember what we learned last week
in verse 11 of chapter 12?**

**He said that it eventually,
“yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”**

**The result of the discipline,
the result of the circumstances,
the result of the intake of the Word of God and
the understanding of divine truth,
spending time and
meditation in prayer,
these things produce “peaceful fruit of righteousness.”**

It's not something I can produce on my own.

Verse 15 has command #2.

**v. 15 Be seeing to it that no one is coming short of the
grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up
is causing trouble, and by it many be defiled;**

Okay, what's command #1?

“Be pursuing peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

Now what’s he saying?

“Be seeing to it that no one is coming short of the grace of God” that’s the first part of it and then secondly, the fall out of that, “that no root of bitterness is springing up causing trouble.”

How can a person come short of the grace of God?

**You say, “Well, by not receiving Christ as Savior.”
And that’s true.**

If you are so locked into human performance in your life, that you never accept the gift of God’s grace in His Son, you *do* come short of the grace of God because the Word of God says:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

And if you go through life too proud to be humble and broken and receive the gift, you come short of the grace of God.

But he’s writing to Christians so that’s not what he’s saying.

**How would you as a Christian
come short of the grace of God today?**

**When we say come short of the grace of God
we're not talking about somebody coming short and
losing their salvation okay, that's not the issue.**

**“Coming short of the grace of God,” means,
you just told God that His grace ran out and
so you have an excuse to quit.**

**You see you're telling God
He's not adequate to handle the curriculum
that He's forged for your life.**

Do you see what the author is doing to them?

**You talk about hitting them powerfully
with the very thing that they need to be hit with
at this point is,**

**“Don't quit because the minute you quit
you're telling God that He's not adequate
to carry you through
to the finish line.”**

Now when you quit what else happens?

**You get bitter and you get resentful because
now you have God to blame for the fact
that you didn't finish.**

**And you blame Him because it was too tough to finish.
And bitterness comes up.**

**Now the second part “that no root of bitterness
springing up is causing trouble, and by it many be
defiled.”**

**First of all, let me give you a verse
that answers the grace of God.**

**Paul, when he thought God’s grace was not adequate
and he asked God three times to take this affliction
out of his flesh so he could be a better minister.**

2 Corinthians 12:9

**God said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you,
my strength is made perfect in your weakness,**

**So it’s always adequate.
It’s always there in abundance.**

**The question is, “Are we availing ourselves
of all the resources that He provides to be able to
negotiate life victoriously?”**

**Now having said that, then he says next,
don’t let this root of bitterness be springing up and
it does something.**

**When it springs up it causes trouble and it has fall out.
Many are defiled by it.**

**Now you are not in isolation.
When something happens to you
it affects everybody around you.**

**And when you have defeat,
it's going to affect people around you in defeat.**

**And when you have vibrance and
you have excitement and
you have anticipation and
you have enthusiasm,
it infects the people who are around you.**

They like that because they feed on that.

**But on the negative side of it
you could have the same picture.**

Now what is this “root of bitterness”?

**When God designs the curriculum and
you start being disciplined and
you resent it
instead of responding to it, what happens?**

When you resent it you get bitter.

Remember Hannah in 1 Samuel 1?

**She battled infertility for all those years.
And it says this in 1 Samuel 1:10:**

**In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much.
She was bitter inside over the hand of infertility
that had been dealt to her and she resented that.**

Listen to Ephesians 4:30-23?

Ephesians 4:30-32

**Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby you have
been sealed to the day of redemption. And let all
bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking be
put away from you with all malice. And be kind to
one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,
even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.**

Now listen to this.

I'd like to summarize verse 15.

**A WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD THE
CHASTENING HAND OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE
CAN KEEP A SINNER FROM COMING TO CHRIST
AND ALSO DEFILE YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER
IN CHRIST.**

**Now do you really want to put yourself
in that position?**

A wrong attitude toward the chastening hand of God in your life can keep a sinner from coming to Christ.

A person looks at your life and he says, “If that is what a Christian is like, I sure don’t want to be one because of that bitterness, that resentment.

And also it will defile a brother and sister in Christ.

The fall out from your bitter spirit is going to affect other people and they too are going to get discouraged.

And so he’s telling them, “hey look it’s going to affect your relationship with people and it’s going to affect your relationship with God so don’t quit. Stay in there.”

In verse 16 the writer is going to give us an illustration, he’s going to give us a person now to describe the difference between what he’s been telling us.

v. 16 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for one meal.

Esau is an illustration of a person who is immoral and he’s godless.

Now you know the story of Esau.
Rebekah was infertile for a long time
and then she had double trouble.
She had Jacob and Esau.

Rebekah demanded that Jacob be the one
to receive the blessing even though
he was second born.
She wanted everything for him.

But old daddy Isaac wanted everything for Esau.
And he was determined that Esau
was going to receive the blessing.

Esau was one of these guys that would go outdoors and
hunt all the time.
He loved to be outdoors and he went hunting
all the time.

One time he was out hunting and
his less sophisticated brother who was
kind of a homebody was learning to be a good cook.

And he was preparing his competition
for the Texas chili cook off and
he was in there putting this stuff together and
here comes Esau and man he is starving.

Esau walks in and he asks Jacob for a bowl of chili.
And when he does that Jacob thinks, ah ha,
I can get the birthright.

**I'll give it to you with one condition,
you give me the birthright,
I'll give you the bowl of chili.**

**Esau was totally living on the horizontal.
Here he is in the Messianic line right at the moment.**

**But he chooses for a bowl of chili and
he sells his birthright there to Jacob.**

**He just makes a choice and the choice he makes
determines his destiny.**

**Notice the word godless there in verse 16?
We usually think of godless as some individual
that doesn't care anything about God and
that's a good way to say it but it means more than that.**

**It's a person living life for personal gratification.
"I want to get everything out of it that I can
because I only go around once in life."**

I'm preoccupied with personal gratification.

**So when the time comes to make the choice
it's no big deal, a bowl of chili for a birthright.
Who needs a birthright?
That's basically the attitude that Esau has at this point.**

Now do you want the rest of the story?

Look at the next verse.

v. 17 For you know that even afterwards, when he was desiring to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Now some of you are thinking, “Does that mean that if I sinned so much that I sought God with repentance in tears, God wouldn’t hear me because it’s all run out?”

That is not what this verse is teaching.

Can I give you some comfort?

2 Peter 3:9 says:

The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

You can never run out of repentance.

And you will never run out of God’s grace available to you as long as you have breath in your body and you can talk to God it’s not too late for you to get your heart right with God.

The only thing that’s standing between you and your heart, right with God today is your personal pride.

And you have to deal with that and in brokenness come and receive what He has to provide.

Now what does this verse teach?

In order to do it, let's go back to the story. What happened? Shortly thereafter Isaac got old.

And as Isaac got old it was time to give the boys the blessing.

So mama Rebekah fixes it all up to get a meal ready for Jacob to go in and receive the blessing from his dad because his dad can't see anyway and to do all that while Esau is out trying to hunt for the venison to get it ready for daddy.

So Rebekah and Jacob put their plan in motion and get the blessing before Esau gets back.

When Esau gets back what does he do?

He prepares his meal, takes it in there, shoves it before his blind dad and says, now give me my blessing.

**Dad says too late, who was just here, if it wasn't Esau?
It must have been your brother Jacob.**

And what does dad say?

**Dad says there isn't going to be
a blessing for you right now.**

**In other words, the blessing has already been given,
I can't change my mind,
I cannot change what's been done.
The blessing has been given.
It'll not be any other way.**

**Let's look at verse 17 again, "For you know that even
afterwards, when he was desiring to inherit the
blessing," "he was rejected, for he found no place for
repentance, though he sought for it [the blessing] with
tears."**

**He was rejected,
there was no place for repentance in his life.**

He never was characterized by repentance.

**Because if he had been characterized by repentance,
God would have acknowledged and
responded to that
but he rejected any kind of brokenness and
response to God and
he didn't receive the blessing
although he sought for "IT" – THE BLESSING,
with tears.**

**He wanted his father to repent and
change his mind and
give him the blessing.**

**That's the whole story.
It's not that God's grace ran out.**

There's a very sober lesson from this.

**There are some choices you make in your life
that you can never undo,
choices that can never be changed.**

You made it and that's it. You have to go on from there.

**We're at the crossroads now in verse 18.
The arguments have been given.**

What are you going to decide?

**Are you willing to accept the consequences
of the choice you're getting ready to make?**

**The first thing we are going to do is we are going to
go to Mount Sinai because that's where the law
was given.**

**If you are going to go back under Judaism,
this is the kind of God you are going to have to
deal with.**

**And are you ready to pay the consequences
of living by human works and
trying to keep the law and
living by the Ten Commandments and
the golden rule?**

**You want to live that way, okay fine,
I'm going tell you, this is the God you're going to meet.**

And this is the way you're going to be dealt with.

**And then the writer is going to flip it over and
he's going to say this is what you're leaving behind
by the decision you're making.**

**v. 18 For you have not come to a mountain that may be
touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and
gloom and whirlwind,**

**v. 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of
words, concerning which sound those who heard
begged that no further word should be spoken to
them.**

He said do you want to do that?

He gives you SEVEN things there:

- 1. “A MOUNTAIN THAT MAY BE TOUCHED,”**
- 2. “A BLAZING FIRE,”**
- 3. “DARKNESS,”**
- 4. “GLOOM,”**
- 5. “WHIRLWIND,”**
- 6. “THE BLAST OF A TRUMPET,”**
- 7. “THE SOUND OF WORDS.”**

Is this really what you want to go back to?

v. 20 For they were not able to bear the command, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.”

You can’t even get close to the bottom of the mountain and you’ll lose your life in that one.

Is that really the kind of approach you want to make to God.

v. 21 And so terrible was the spectacle, that Moses said, “I am full of fear and trembling.”

Even Moses, friend of God is saying, I was really scared.

In the next three verses he lists EIGHT THINGS that they are leaving if they choose to go back to Judaism.

v. 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

v. 23 to a festal gathering and church of the firstborn who have been registered in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men who have been brought to perfection,

v. 24 and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which is speaking better than the blood of Abel.

This is yours all by grace, it's a gift as a result of your relationship, now what are you going to do with it?

- 1. You “COME TO MOUNT ZION,” that’s your address in that new place.**
- 2. And the “CITY OF THE LIVING GOD,” that’s the “heavenly Jerusalem.”**
- 3. And the “MYRIADS OF ANGELS.”**

**Do you believe in angels?
I do.**

**4. It's "A FESTAL GATHERING AND A CHURCH OF
THE FIRSTBORN WHO HAVE BEEN REGISTERED
IN HEAVEN."**

Who is that?

**That is us because when you come to know Jesus
your name is registered in the Lamb's book of life.**

Have you made your reservations for up there yet?

5. "AND TO GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL."

**6. "AND TO THE SPIRITS OF RIGHTEOUS MEN WHO
HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO PERFECTION."**

**There's the Old Testament saints there
right there with you in this wonderful,
wonderful place that God has prepared.**

**Steven Lawson tries to describe it
in his book *Heaven Help Us*.**

**In the new Jerusalem,
there will be *no* funeral homes,
no hospitals,
no abortion clinics,
no divorce courts,**

no brothels,
no bankruptcy courts,
no psychiatric wards,
and *no* treatment centers.

There will be *no* pornography,
no dial-a-porn,
no teen suicide,
no AIDS,
no cancer,
no talk shows,
no rape,
no missing children,
no gay rights marches,
no drug problems,
no drive-by shootings,
no racial tension,
and *no* prejudice.

There will be *no* misunderstandings,
no injustice,
no depression,
no hurtful words,
no gossip,
no hurt feelings,
no worry,
no emptiness,
no casseroles.

I love that one.

And your list goes on, doesn't it.

A Philadelphia law firm was going to send some flowers of congratulations to some friends who were opening their new offices and they had prepared their message but the wrong flowers got to them and it said "Deepest Sympathy."

And then the florist realized that he sent the other one to the funeral which said "Congratulations on your new location!"

7. Look at the rest of it "TO JESUS, THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT."

He's your court appointed attorney who is going to represent you there.

And he's representing you on the basis of the new covenant and He hasn't lost one yet so you're okay.

8. "TO THE SPRINKLED BLOOD, WHICH IS SPEAKING BETTER THAN THE BLOOD OF ABEL."

**What did the blood of Abel do?
It spoke of vengeance.**

The blood of Christ speaks of reconciliation.

So you get it all.

Why would you want to give all of that up for the terror of the law and for Judaism.

And then he finishes.

Look at the way he finishes.

v. 25 Be seeing to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who was warning them on earth, much less shall we escape who are turning away from Him who is speaking from heaven,

Don't harden your heart.

v. 26 whose voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven."

He's going to do that.

In the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:29 Jesus says the earth is going to be shaken, the stars are going to fall and the sky is going to be affected.

v. 27 And this expression, "Yet once more," is indicating the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of things which have been made, in order that those things which are not being shaken might remain.

That which is shakable is temporary and that which is unshakable is eternal and it's going to be there.

v. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be having grace (showing gratitude), by means of which we may be serving God in an acceptable manner with reverence and awe;

**Hang in there,
keep going,
you have all the grace you need.**

v. 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Yes, He is the same God as on Mount Sinai and we must surrender ourselves to Him and allow Him to be God in our lives.

**A prominent citizen was dying;
a very, very wealthy person.
And he said, "I'm *leaving* home, I'm *leaving* home."**

**Across town a very poverty stricken woman lay dying.
And she said, "I'm *going* home, I'm *going* home."**

Set your affection on things above and not on things on the earth.

Don't be an immoral, godless person like Esau who will sell out your birthright for a bowl of chili.

Max Lucado wrote this little piece. I think it describes well what I want to say today.

Suppose you gave me a gift. Let's say you presented me with a new tie. I take it out of the box and examine it. I say thank you and then reach for my wallet. "Now how much do I owe you?" I ask.

You think I am kidding. "It's a gift," you say. "You don't need to pay me."

"Oh, I understand," I respond, but then show I don't by asking, "Could I write you a check?"

You're stunned. "I don't want you to pay me. I want you to accept the gift."

"Oh, I see," I respond. "Perhaps I could do some work around your house in exchange for the tie?"

"You just don't get it, do you?" you state firmly. "I want to give this to you. It is a present. You can't buy a present."

"Oh, forgive me," I hasten. "Perhaps if I promised to purchase you a tie in return."

By this time you're insulted. In trying to buy your gift I have degraded your grace. I have robbed you of the joy of giving.

God has a gift to offer, don't pollute the gift by refusing in grace and humility to receive all that He's provided for you in Christ.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: We are to “Be pursuing peace” on the horizontal, and purification on the vertical.

LESSON #2: God has adequate grace for every circumstance that we face in the divine curriculum.

LESSON #3: Bitterness causes trouble and many are hurt by it.

LESSON #4: When times are hard two things can happen: (1) you quit; and (2) you get bitter.

LESSON #5: Learn well from Esau that it is possible to sell the eternal in pursuit of the temporary.

LESSON #6: There are some decisions that are made that the consequences of such can never be changed.

LESSON #7: Has your name been registered in the Lamb’s book of life as a result of your new birth experience?

LESSON #8: Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a New Covenant making it possible for us to be certain of our eternal salvation.

LESSON #9: Be seeing to it that you do not refuse Him Who is speaking.

LESSON #10: Let us never forget that “our God is a consuming fire.”

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PART IV

STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-TWO — Hebrews 12:14-29

v.14 Be pursuing peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

v.15 Be seeing to it that no one is coming short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up is causing trouble, and by it many be defiled;

v.16 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for one meal.

v.17 For you know that even afterwards, when he was desiring to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

v.18 For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

v.19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words, concerning which sound those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them.

v.20 For they were not able to bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned."

v.21 And so terrible was the spectacle, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling."

v.22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

v.23 to a festal gathering and church of the firstborn who have been registered in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men who have been brought to perfection,

v.24 and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which is speaking better than the blood of Abel.

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For if those did not escape when they refused him who was warning them on earth, much less shall we escape who are turning away from Him who is speaking from heaven,

v.26 whose voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven."

v.27 And this expression, "Yet once more," is indicating the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of things which have been made, in order that those things which are not being shaken might remain.

v.28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be

shaken, let us be having grace (showing gratitude), by means of which we may be serving God in an acceptable manner with reverence and awe;
v.29 for our God is a consuming fire.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read Hebrews 12:14-29 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What two things are we to “be pursuing,” according to verse 14?**
- 3. What are we commanded to be careful about, according to verse 15?**
- 4. Why was Esau rejected, according to verse 17?**
- 5. How does Moses respond to the spectacle on Mount Sinai, according to verse 21?**
- 6. How is Jesus described in verse 24?**
- 7. What is the warning that is given in verse 25?**
- 8. How is God described in verse 29?**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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