



**TITLE:**

Follow Peace and Holiness

**TEXT:**

*Hebrews 12:14-17*

**INTRODUCTION**

- Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews for Jewish believers in Judea who are experiencing trials that tend to renounce their faith.
- Hebrews 12 and 13 contain the concluding exhortation.
- Paul urged the believers to run with patience, to consider Jesus Christ, to despise not nor faint, and to endure the chastening of the Lord.

**FOLLOW PEACE AND HOLINESS**

- The word “follow” (διώκετε - diōkete) means to pursue, to seek after eagerly, to earnestly endeavor, or to acquire. It is translated as “persecute” in many passages (e.g., John 5:16; Acts 9:5). It is translated “press” in Phil. 3:14 - I “press” toward the mark.
- The word “follow” is an imperative or a command verb.
- Follow PEACE. In the context of the Jewish believers being persecuted by other men, Paul’s command is to follow peace with ALL MEN. See Rom. 14:19 and 12:18-21.
  - To follow peace with all men is NOT an absolute thing in the sense of having an ecumenical philosophy and compromise with all men.
- Follow HOLINESS or SANCTIFICATION. Instead of seeking revenge on your persecutors and foes, make it your aim to be holy.
  - Holiness is not a way of salvation but is evidence of salvation - “without which no man shall see the Lord:”
  - If holiness is not present, one’s salvation is not real.

**LOOKING DILIGENTLY**

- This is a participle - Present Active Participle. It is not a command, but it tells how to follow peace and holiness.
- The word “looking diligently” (ἐπισκοποῦντες - episkopountes) only appears twice in the Bible. The other one is in 1 Pet. 5:2 which is translated as “taking the oversight”. This is Peter’s exhortation to the elders.
  - See Heb. 13:17 - “watch for your souls”
  - Many pastors have the idea that what the people do and how the people live is not their business. This is a vain human tradition.
  - Looking diligently is not only the job of the pastors but it is the job of every church member.

**FOR POSSIBLE OUTCOMES**

1. Lest any man fail of the grace of God.
  - This doesn’t mean that a believer can lose salvation.
  - It means to reject the grace of God and to return to works salvation. E.g., a professing Christian who turns back to Roman Catholicism.
  - See. Gal. 5:4.
  - Observe these passages: Heb. 2:1; 3:12, 13; 4:1, 4:11, and compare it with Heb. 12:15-16.
2. Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.
  - The root of bitterness is a sin in the heart that eventually springs up. See James 3:14.
    - No one can control bitterness or keep it hidden. It always springs up.
  - The root of bitterness causes trouble.
  - The root of bitterness defiles, pollutes, or contaminates many.
  - The root of bitterness is a great danger. It has spoiled many churches.

3. Lest there be any fornicator.
  - Fornication is a broad term that refers to every sort of sexual sin. E.g., adultery, physical relationship outside of wedlock, entertaining lustful thoughts, pornography.
  - Fornication is a great danger in the church. See 1 Cor. 5:1, 6, 13 to know how Paul handled the fornication in the Corinth church. Church discipline is characteristic of a biblical church.
4. Lest there be any profane person.
  - The word “profane” is defined by Strong as “crossing the door-way”.
  - A profane person is someone who is not careful about crossing over into wicked thinking and ways.
  - Paul used Esau as an example. The allusion here is to one who should openly cast off his Christianity for indulgence in temporary pleasure, as Esau gave up his birthright for a trifling gratification.
    - He easily gave up his birthright and the accompanied blessing on it in exchange for one morsel of meat.
    - He sought the blessing carefully with tears, but he was rejected. He found no place of repentance.
  - Many in the churches today are profane like Esau. They profess faith in Christ, but they care far more about the things of the world.

### **IMPOSSIBILITY TO REPENT (RELATED TO A PROFANE PERSON)**

- Esau is an example.
  - He easily gave up his birthright and the accompanied blessing on it in exchange for one morsel of meat.
  - He sought the blessing carefully with tears, but he was rejected.
    - He tried to get his father to change of mind in giving the blessing to himself instead of Jacob.
  - He found no place of repentance.
    - Sorrow is not repentance.
- Heb. 6:4-6.
  - These unsaved people were:
    - Enlightened. They received the light that Jesus Christ is giving.
    - Tasted of the heavenly gift. They experience, partake of, perceive the flavor of the heavenly gifts.
    - Made partakers of the Holy Ghost.
    - Tasted the good word of God. They experienced the excellency of the truth of God; they had seen and enjoyed its beauty.
    - For those who tasted the powers of the world to come. They had seen the blessings of the believers to be expected in the future.
  - It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance if they shall fall away or apostatize.
- Heb. 10:26-29.
  - “Sin wilfully” doesn’t refer to the general sin that a believer can do. It is defined in verse 29.
  - After they have received the knowledge of the truth, they:
    - Trodden under foot the Son of God. It means to spurn, to reject with contempt, to treat with insulting neglect the Son of God.
    - Counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. It means to consider the blood and the sacrificial atonement of the Son of God as an unholy thing or common or unclean.
    - Hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. It means to insult the Spirit of grace - The Holy Spirit.
- Notice the progression of these outcomes: failing of the grace of God > bitterness > fornicator and profane person.
- We should look diligently for these things, especially for ourselves.