

THE CORPORATE PURSUIT AND OVERSIGHT

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Context: Persecution, suffering, pain

Previous exhortation: Run with endurance, look to Jesus, strengthen yourself...

Now: The corporate pursuit and responsibility.

Hebrews [12:14], “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

Strive: It is a command to continually press hard after, moving forward energetically, make every effort...

A. [12:14] Strive for peace with everyone...

Two aspects:

- 1. Peace with God:** The reconciled state with God because of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.

App: Don’t despise or become weary of God’s discipline. He is treating you as sons and integrating you in His holiness. Seek a peaceful relationship with God in Christ.

With everyone: Along with everyone [contextually sensible]

- ❖ **2 Timothy 2:22** So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

William Lane: “Peace” is to be actively pursued because this gift of Christ is given visibility in the solidarity [togetherness] of the community. It also is exhibited in the solidarity of responsibility for the welfare of one another.

- 2. Peacemaker:** Guard people’s faith in God and get people back to faith in God.

The Lord Jesus made the same link between peace and purity:

- ❖ **Matthew 5:9,** “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
- ❖ **Matthew 5:8,** “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

How to be a peacemaker? The author later explains.

B. [12:14] Strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Two aspects:

1. **Hebrews 12:10**, “God disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.”
 - **In suffering:** Seek holiness together [grow in the likeness of God]
2. **Strive for?** Communal holiness. [Later explained]

Qualifying clause: “Strive for holiness **without which no one will see the Lord.**”

- **Spiritual sense:** Fellowship with God
- **Eschatological sense:** Fully behold the Lord’s glory in His coming and eternity.

Instruction: Pursue peace and holiness as a community. How to strive for communal peace and holiness?

12:15, See to it that no one...

“**See to it**” reflects a Greek verb (episkopeō), meaning “overseeing” or “caring for.” It is from this word that we get the title “overseers” for church leaders.

- **NLT**, “Look after each other so that...”
- To oversee the welfare of the church is not just the responsibility of the leaders but also of the members.

Illustration: Movies about people journeying together on a risky path. They keep watching whether everyone is safe. When one goes missing, should they move ahead, leaving them behind, or should they risk everything to bring them back into the fold?

Similarly, Paul exhorts in Galatians 6:1, Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [love as I have loved you].

Bearing one another’s burdens? Restoring people from their sinful state.

The following must be interpreted based on preceding and following verses:

12:25, See that you do not refuse him who is speaking...

A) [15] See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God...

Grace: We do not deserve it, nor can we earn it, **but faith is necessary to receive it.**

Cross: Grace is God's love manifested through the work of Christ on the cross.

No one fails to obtain the grace of God:

- Afflictions and pain can tempt people to fall away from faith in God's grace in Christ due to unbelief. LOSE SIGHT OF THE CROSS.
- ❖ **10:9**, But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. [SECURITY AND CAUTION]

Church members' responsibility:

- ❖ **[15] See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God...**
 - Watch over those who are shrinking back from faith and perseverance and encourage them in the Lord. Be receptive too.
- ❖ **3:12**, Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **[13]** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
- ❖ **James 5:19**, My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth [falls away from grace] and someone brings him back, [20] let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

B) [15] See to it that...no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled...

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, [19] 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.'

Root of bitterness [William Lane]: "The citation of Deut 29:17b shows that the metaphor refers to a stubborn disposition that expresses itself in unbelief and apostasy."

Caution: Unbelief and stubbornness defile the church. It is contagious. It comes out in our conversations and conduct. Example of Israelites.

This is the contrary impact of Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...

Church members' responsibility: [15] See to it that...no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled....

- **Understand the difference between weakness and rebellion:** Weakness is willing to change but finds it helpless. Rebellion is unwilling to change.
- **Observe people's stubbornness and unbelief:** Encourage them or implement church discipline (if it is polluting the church).

[16] See to it that...no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

Esau: Sold his birthright for a single meal.

Genesis 25:29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." 32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" 33 Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

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.

Wescott: It would be equally true to say that in respect of the privileges of the first-born which Esau had sold, he found no place for repentance, and that in respect of his spiritual relation to God, if his sorrow was sincere, he did find a place for repentance.

[16] See to it that...no one is sexually immoral (pornos) or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

No evidence: Esau being sexually immoral (though he married pagan women)

Context: Why suddenly speak about sexual immorality in the context of apostasy?

Sexually immoral/holy: Figurative of spiritual unfaithfulness to God [common in OT].

- Immediate relief from suffering [I am exhausted, I am about to die].

- immediate gratification of comfort [Let me eat some of that red stew].
- Ignored the value of inheritance (what use is a birthright to me? The covenant blessing was given to Jacob instead of to Esau)
- Example of throwing away heavenly inheritance for earthly comforts and escape from suffering.

Church members' responsibility: [16] See to it that...no one is sexually immoral or unholy. WATCH OVER OTHERS SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS.

Applications:

1. Life is hard, and we need each other to pursue peace and holiness together on our journey to heaven.
2. If you are not a part of God's community, who is going to oversee you in these areas?
3. We join churches not just to attend meetings and services but also to watch over one another to keep our feet steadfast in the Lord.
4. **Individualism:** Work hard for the welfare of others. **Hebrews [12:14]**, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Take the role of Christ—peacemaker.
5. **In suffering, you must strengthen yourself and others, guard your heart and the hearts of others.**
6. This oversight does not happen if we just meet on Sundays. We must cultivate a healthy relationship with one another so that we may watch over one another with love.
7. You don't have to be perfect or possess great maturity to do so. As you struggle with your own sins and seek to grow in the Lord, watch over others with humility.
8. In fact, you guard your own soul by watching over the welfare of others' souls.

Illustration: Sadhu Sundar Singh [walking in Himalayan mountains]