

## THE CALL TO RENEWED SPIRITUAL VITALITY (HEBREWS 12:12-17)

**12:12-13.** The author sensed the tendency to spiritual weakness in his readers, and in the light of the truths he had expounded he encouraged them to renew their strength. If they would do this and would pursue the **level paths** which real righteousness entails, the weakest among them (**the lame**) would not be further **disabled, but rather healed**. Their own strength would benefit weaker Christians.

- A. What is the “therefore” there for? What instruction or examples precede verse 13? Look at the context not only earlier in Chapter 12, but also Chapter 11 (Hall of Faith).
- B. Who is being given this command?
- C. The author is describing parts of the human body being subject to being weak & feeble, who is he describing? See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- D. What then is the goal for the one who is receiving encouragement amid their time of weakness? How about the one who is giving the encouragement?
- E. Who can be identified as the stronger Christian? Who can be identified as the weaker Christian? See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

**12:14. Peace with all men** as well as personal holiness must be vigorously sought since **without holiness** (*hagiasmos*) **no one will see the Lord**. Since no sin can stand in God’s presence, Christians must—and will be—sinless when they see the Lord (cf. 1 John 3:2). That realization offers motivation for pursuing holiness here and now. But the author may also have had in mind the thought that one’s perception of God even now is conditioned by his real measure of holiness (cf. Matt. 5:8).

- A. Two commands are being given here:
  - 1. Pursue peace. With who? What is the goal desired in having this as a controlling attitude of the believer? See Romans 12:18
  - 2. Pursue sanctification. What is the goal of this display to other believers and then to the outside world? God’s path
- B. Writer is not preaching peace at any price, but if all possible and still representing our Faith in God’s Way, not the worlds way.

**12:15-17.** As a grim reminder of what can happen among believers, the writer warned that **one who misses the grace of God** may become like a **bitter root** whose infidelity to God affects others. Here the author had in mind Deuteronomy 29:18 where an Old-Covenant apostate was called a “root. . . that produces such bitter poison.” Such a person would be **godless** (*bebēlos*,

“profane, unhallowed, desecrated”) **like Esau**, Jacob’s brother, whose loose and profane character led him to sell **his inheritance rights as the oldest son** for the temporary gratification of **a single meal**. He warned the readers not to yield to transitory pressures and forfeit their inheritances. If some did, they would ultimately regret the foolish step and might find their inheritance privileges irrevocably lost as were Esau’s. This would of course be true of one who ended his Christian experience in a state of apostasy, which the writer had continually warned against.

These verses are presenting three negative warnings:

- A. Do not let anyone come short of grace! How do we do this? Do we exhibit an attitude of legalism (within the law) or do we exhibit and live within the realm of grace? What is the danger of the exhibition of legalism, both within and without the Church? How about the benefits of the exhibition of grace, both within and without the Church?
- B. Do not allow bitterness to take root! Have you ever planted an orange tree? After planting, what are the processes (horticulturally) that we know are taking place? One we can’t see and one that we can see? How does this illustrate the word picture used in this verse of the problems that bitterness can cause?
- C. Do not be like Esau! He acted with a worldly mentality (buy whatever you need to satisfy yourself, sell whatever is necessary to find pleasure. See Genesis 27 for the full story! What were the consequences of Esau’s actions? Was repentance possible?  
Genesis 27:34-38

Conclusions and observations considering the first verse in Chapter 12 in using an analogy of an athletic event (a race):

- A. If you are running the race of the Christian life and see that a brother or sister needs help, you need to “pursue peace”: pursue being different in order to help them. Likewise, if you are the one needing help, please be willing to receive ministry from your brother or sister, don’t let pride get in the way.
- B. In running the race, your tendency may be to pull out of it or make a pit stop. When you do, your tendency will then be to delve into the worldly system, you must weigh the consequences before taking such action.

One of the main reasons we exist as a Church, commands and warnings related to being part of the Body of Christ – Hebrews 10:23-25