

## Hebrews 12:12-17

This section (12:15-29) begins the final of the five warning passages in Hebrews (2:1-4; 3:7-19; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39). As with some of the other warning passages the scriptures that should be included in the warning are in dispute but all agree this section of chapter 12 is the final warning of the book. Some see the warning as only verse 25; others as verses 25-29; others see verses 1-29 as the warning; and others see the warning starting in either verses 12, 14, or 15 and going through verse 29.

Since verse 12 starts with "wherefore" this indicates a new thought predicated on what has been taught previously. Verses 12-15 seem to be an exhortation to believers to "walk with the Lord." Verse 15 seems to be the start of the warning to unbelievers to come to true faith ([not] "fail of the grace of God"). It is possible to view the last part of verse 14 as the beginning of the warning ("holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord").

In these verses believers are encouraged to look after the needs of others being aware of the false teachers and teachings that lead people astray.

### 12     **Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;**

There is a subtle but important difference in the way modern versions render this passage. Most of the modern versions have "strengthen YOUR...." The ESV, NIV, NLT all insert "YOUR." The NAS, KJV and NKJV (Young's Literal is similar) do not have "YOUR" but simply exhort "strengthen THE hands..." The NAS, KJV, NKJV, YLT all indicate that this is a general exhortation to the readers to strengthen anyone's hands that are weak or knees that are feeble and this fits much better with the thought in Isaiah 35:3-4. The context of Isaiah 35 is the second coming when the LORD comes and delivers Israel and destroys her enemies.

- 3       Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.
- 4       Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

The exhortation here is to strengthen others. One of the main ways this is done, as verse 13 explains, is when we live for the Lord, others are encouraged to live for the Lord.

### 13     **And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.**

The specific concern here is that the true believing Jews, possessors, not have a weak Christian life that causes the unbelieving Jews, professors, who are inclined toward Jesus to reject Him and go back to the old system because of them.

Responsibility to others - "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called," Ephesians 4:1, so you do not cause others to stumble

Romans 14:7,13        "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

1 Corinthians 8:13; 10:31-33

- 13       Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.
- 31       Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.
- 32       Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:
- 33       Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

1 Timothy 4:12        "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

1 Peter 2:21         "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

## 14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

### Follow peace with all *men*,

Follow - διωκω	dee-o'-ko	Meaning: to press on: figuratively of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal; to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavour to acquire.
Peace - Romans 14:19		"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
2 Corinthians 13:11		"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."
Ephesians 4:3		"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
1 Thessalonians 5:13		"And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."
1 Peter 3:11		"Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

**and holiness** - is often translated sanctify and means "set apart."

Following holiness is saying that there will be a change in a person's life.

When there is a change there will be evidences of that change.

We looked at some characteristics of a believer in 1 John 3:1-10 in recent studies. All believers will have these characteristics.

If we don't have these characteristics it shows we are not a child of God and will not see the Lord.

"The generic meaning of sanctification is the state of proper functioning. To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer. A pen is "sanctified" when used to write. Eyeglasses are "sanctified" when used to improve sight. In the theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends. A human being is sanctified, therefore, when he or she lives according to God's design and purpose." Elwell, W. A., *The Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Baker Book House

### without which no man shall see the Lord

The lack of holiness in the life of an individual sets the person apart as an unbeliever.

"There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said that this is the imputed holiness of Christ. Do they not know, when they so speak, that, by an open perversion, they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the context, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Now, the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace; and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace; this is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace." We are to follow holiness, —this must be practical holiness; the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow; I mean, if we look at it imputatively. That we have at once; it is given to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed; it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus. This is another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as every one can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God, and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul, by which a man is made like God, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it. There it stands, whether men like it or not. There are some who, for special reasons best known to themselves, do not like it, just as no thieves ever like policemen or gaols; yet there it stands, and it means no other than what it says: "Without holiness,"—practical, personal, active, vital holiness,—"no man shall see the Lord." Dealing with this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth, and all enjoyment of Christ in heaven, I shall endeavour, first, *to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he hath this holiness or not*; secondly, *to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact*, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" and then, thirdly, to plead hard, in Christ's stead, with those who are lovers of gain, that they may bethink themselves ere time be over, and opportunity past."

"Holiness Demanded," A Sermon (No. 2902) Published on Thursday, September 22nd, 1904. Delivered by C. H. SPURGEON, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. On a Lord's-day Evening, in 1862.

**15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;**

- **“Looking diligently”** - ἐπισκοπεῖω ep-ee-skop-eh'-o  
Meaning: 1) to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for 1a) of the care of the church which rested upon the elders 1b) to look carefully, beware

The same Greek word is found in 1 Peter 5:2 translated *oversight*

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

The admonition is to exercise care over the lives of people in our influence. Here, especially, in relation to unbelievers that make a profession but are not truly saved.

The main way we exercise *oversight (looking diligently)* after the needs of people, saved or unsaved, is by teaching the word of God.

The first part of 2 Timothy warns about false teachers and their lies and supernatural deception in the lives of many people. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17 the antidote for this evil is presented:

- 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;
- 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
- 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- **“Fail of the grace of God”**

**Fail** - ὑστερεῖω hoos-ter-eh'-o

Meaning: to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end

Fail is a participle in the present tense which means something is in progress. This is speaking of those professing Jews who are going back to the old system and thus they negate the grace of God that has been at work in their life.

See Hebrews 3:12; 4:11; 6:4,6; 10:38

- 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.
- 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.
- 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
  - 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.
- 10:38 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

- **“Root of bitterness” will trouble and defile many**

Root is used here in the same way as Deuteronomy 29:18-19 and speaks of an evil person.

- 18 Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;
- 19 And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

Unsaved people, professing to be believers, will be among the believers and will eventually rise up and lead people astray, Acts 20:28-30.

- 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.  
29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.  
30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Evil people will lead many astray, deceiving them. 2 Timothy 3:13

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

**16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.**

Genesis 25:27-34

Unsaved people, participating in the church while living in sin, will eventually cause problems. Whether they are committing sexual sins or just living ungodly lives they need to be dealt with.

- 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
- 9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:  
10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.  
11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.  
12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?  
13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Elders have a responsibility to guard the flock from people like Esau.

- 1 Peter 5:1-2
- 1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:  
2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

If the church is not regularly guarding against “Esau” they are neglecting their duty!!!

“Esau” will cause problems in the church.

2 Timothy 2:15-18 (1 Timothy 1:20) - “of whom” implies that there are a number of people causing problems. These named are probably the leaders or most vocal.

- 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.  
16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.  
17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;  
18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.  
20 Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

**17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.**

This is the same type of warning to unbelievers that was given in Hebrews 6:4-6.  
A continued rejection of the Lord will produce a hardness of heart and the inability to repent.