

Hebrews 12:14-17

“Don’t Despise The Birthright”

We’ve been receiving a word of *encouragement* here in the 12th Ch of the book of Hebrews regarding *discouraging* times in our lives. When times are trying, when our days are difficult, when it seems like our world is falling apart & we seem to live in one continual crisis.

#1 The author says, “Consider Jesus & all that He endured, the hostility against Him personally, the violence that was unleashed upon Him specifically, lest you become weary & discouraged in your soul.” After all how many of us have yet to shed blood for the specific reason of striving against sin, I mean how bad do we *really* have it?

#2 When trials or various difficulties enter the equation of your life don’t forget the exhortation that speaks to you as to sons. & I would restate that not every aspect of suffering or tribulation is God’s heavy hand of discipline but certainly we should be open to God getting our attention & training us through difficulty & adversity. Or as it says there in Vs 5-6 (read).

So if hardship is visiting your life, seek the Lord, inquire of the Lord, “God is there a lesson You want me to learn here? I don’t want to despise Your chastening, I don’t want to be discouraged at Your rebuke, because I know that what You do You do for Your glory & my good, it’s for my profit, that I might be a partaker of Your holiness. I want to be trained *by* it, prepared for Your plans for my life *through* it, if there’s sin in my life I want to repent *of* it.” Hey, if you go w/out chastening all that does is bear witness that you’re not God’s child, you do well to be concerned for your salvation if you’ve never experienced God’s hand of correction upon your life. Because how many sons does He chasten, deal w/& scourge (that is discipline) that He receives? “Every” Every one of them, & I might add that we never get to a point of maturity that we no longer need it. You know we basically discipline our children up to a certain point, but then after a certain age, they’re on their own, they’re all grown up. Doesn’t work that way in God’s family, as long as we belong to Him, & there’s a sin nature in us, there’ll be room for growth & development & a need for discipline.

Now it’s not fun, it’s not pleasant, it’s painful, but the fruit that it yields afterward by those who’ve been trained by it, is peaceable. God is developing you, because He has a plan for you. Think of David, out there in his dad’s field, here comes a lion preparing to pounce on the sheep, David kills the lion but it wasn’t a walk in the park. Or the bear that comes upon him in the same scenario, I mean, “God what are you doing, that bear could’ve ripped me to shreds, my heart stopped, why are You allowing this to happen to me?” But if David had been able to see down the road a bit, there was a giant by the name of Goliath that he was destined to face, & God was using *those* difficulties to prepare him for *that* day. & God has a plan for you, & in His mercy He prepares us *now* for His plan for us *later*.

So don’t grow weary, don’t be discouraged because of the difficulty currently confronting you. Christ endured, you endure; & don’t forget that God deals w/you as His child. Those are the principles, as for how it looks in the practical, check out Vs 12.

Vs 12-13

“Hey, shape up & get it straight!” Isn’t this what we need sometimes? Here we are all down in the dumps, discouraged & deflated, & we just need that faithful brother or sister to come alongside of us in the love of God & say, “What are you doing? You’re walking around w/your hands all droopy, you’re all weak in the knees, you’re dragging & lagging, knock that off! Strengthen those hands, make strong those knees once again, make *straight* paths for your feet, & let God use your life.”

“You’ve wasted enough time ‘poor me ville’ now get to walking w/God again, place Him as the priority of your life.” & Once that happens there’s some necessary things that follow. Once you get yourself centered, it’s time to actively pursue others in a right way. Generally when we’re discouraged we’re not thinking about anyone else, but as believers we’re called to *not* focus on self, but rather we’re to prioritize *others*. & So not only are you to get strong, you’re to get right, you’re to get right w/man, & you’re to get right w/God, notice.
Vs14-15

Oh how *bitterness* will pollute & poison your life. “Pursue peace” notice “w/all people.” Now that word “pursue” you have to know is not a passive word, it’s very active. It’s a word that takes the initiative, will make the 1st move, it speaks of seeking after *eagerly*, or endeavoring *earnestly* to acquire. You should also know that there’s no biblical blessing on *breaking* peace, only on *making* peace. Breaking peace is pretty easy, just offend me once & I’ll have no problem avoiding you, being rude to you, speaking ill of you, & just generally breaking peace w/you. However *making* peace...well that’s another story isn’t it? That takes humility, a setting of myself aside, a readiness to forgive. No blessing on the peace breakers. Jesus said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*” Matthew 5:9 He said, “*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*” Matt 5:43-44 “Pursue peace w/all people.” In the book of Romans Paul put it like this, “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*” Rom 12:18

Now you might note the phrase, “If it is possible,” in some cases it’s going to be *impossible* there were those who *would not* live peaceably w/Jesus, they wouldn’t rest until He was out of the equation. But you & I are to *pursue* peace, we may not always *get* peace, but as much as depends upon us, as for our part, we’re to pursue peace, & live peaceably.

Now, if we’re to pursue peace w/all men, even loving our enemies, let me state the obvious. How much more are we to pursue peace, or extend forgiveness, or live peaceably w/our brothers or sisters in the body? The bible calls us to, “...walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Eph 4:1-3 What is it that binds us together in the unity of the Spirit? The bond of peace, pursue it, endeavor *earnestly* to acquire it.

“& Holiness w/out which no one will see the Lord.” Hey, it’s important that you be right in your relationship w/other people, but it’s absolutely essential that you be right in your relationship w/God. & The 2 are linked together here for a reason, I can’t completely disregard my relationship w/my brothers & sisters, be rude to them, break peace w/them & pretend that everything is ok between me & Jesus. It doesn’t work that way. We need a clean slate all the way around, we need to be right w/each other, if we’re to really be right w/God.

Now don’t misunderstand the point here & begin to think of rules & regulations, things *we need to do* if we’re to be holy & righteous. The author has worked too long & too hard dismantling any & all forms of legalism to confuse us or loose us now. Positional righteousness & holiness is perfect in Christ, but your position should be being worked out in your practice, it’s called growth & maturity. There’s no getting around the fact of human responsibility regarding the maintenance of our walk & relationship w/Christ. Now the difference is in the motive. If I do what I do to try & make myself right w/God, that’s works, that’s legalism, if I do what I do because God has cleansed my life, & I want to honor Him, safeguard the intimacy I enjoy w/Him, that’s love, that’s wisdom.

One is an outward show, the other is an inward working of my heart displaying itself in the outward actions of my life. & They may look similar, but they're worlds apart. & I'm just going to say it, a lack of personal holiness in your life is going to hinder (at the very least) your relationship w/God...period. God is jealous over His relationship w/you, He doesn't want to share you w/some sin, or some other priority. & The bible teaches us that sin separates us from God, but God wants us to draw near to Him, pursue holiness, pursue Christ (our righteousness) be obedient to the word of God. That's what this is talking about, we don't need to get overly spiritual here. I mean there's always going to be some critic saying you're trying to bind him into legalism but the bottom line is that obedience to God's word isn't legalism, it's love & it's wisdom. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." John 14:15 If you love the Lord, you'll obey the Lord, or as we have it here, you'll pursue peace w/people, & holiness before God.

"W/out which no one will see the Lord." To this I would just say that I can't lighten the load, or soften the blow of the Word of God. If you can go around w/a sin infested life w/out regard for God, w/no drive or ambition, no passion toward purity & holiness before God. No desire to give way to the power & the work of the Spirit of God in your life, then I'd have to seriously question your salvation. & That's not a matter of judgment, that's a simple observation of the facts. If I didn't want to lead my life set apart to God, then why would I for some reason think that I was going to reap the benefits of godliness? (More on that toward our close). But the bottom line here is that the bible calls us to be holy for the Lord our God is holy. & I would just echo a previous statement, holiness (or sanctification) starts in the inner man & then works it's way out. It doesn't start by trying to bridle my flesh & hope that it will somehow work it's way in. It's always from the inside out, when God has a grip on your inner man He'll have a grip on your outer man. But you can discipline the outer man & never give to your inner man, your thoughts & the inclination of your heart, & that's what God wants...your heart.

So we have a couple exhortations to obey, pursue peace w/people & holiness before God. Next we'll see a couple errors to avoid.

Vs15

"Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God;" The word translated "looking carefully" is the Greek word, "Episkopeo" it's a word related to an overseer of the church. The idea being that there's to be extreme care, diligent attention given over to making sure that you don't fall short of the grace of God. I'm not saying it's the overseer's job to evaluate you, I'm saying that the emphasis placed on self-evaluation here is significant. To the Corinthians Paul said it like this, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified." 2 Cor 13:5 Peter said it like this, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10 & Again, "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;" 2 Peter 3:14" Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God."

& This takes us back to what I was mentioning a moment ago, the moment we begin to try & make ourselves right w/God by means of what we do, rather than trusting in what He's done in the person of J.C. we're falling short of God's grace. Remember this Vs? "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Gal 5:4 & You may not struggle w/the Mosaic law, but how easily we slip into our own little set of "do's & don'ts" that make for our own legal parameters of righteousness. But as soon as we start thinking, "Of course God loves me, of course I'm ok w/God I do this & this, I don't do that or the other..." That's law thinking my friend.

The bible says, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*” Eph 2:8-9

“...lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, & by this many become defiled.” That’s no understatement is it? How many become defiled, corrupted, & polluted by bitterness... resentment, unforgiveness. You feel someone has somehow & in some way wronged you, & bitterness begins to set in. & I don’t know what it is about the human nature but we have an uncanny ability to hang on to bitterness w/a vicious tenacity & determination. As we’ve mentioned before we’re supposed to be tough skinned & tender hearted, not easily offended, yet quick to forgive. But as a general rule we’re soft skinned, & hard hearted, easily offended & unwilling to forgive.

& That root of bitterness that springs up in us, well it causes trouble, a bitter root will produce bitter fruit. & It has a tendency to permeate through the body like leaven through a lump of dough. If it’s not dealt w/it can just corrupt the whole thing. & The reference here is to Duet Ch 29 Vs 18 whereby the warning is being given to the nation of Israel to be careful to guard their heart lest it turn away from the Lord & be given to an idol, or follow after pagan practices, lest there be among them a root bearing bitterness. The NT says it like this, “*Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’*” 1 Cor 15:33 The proverbs say, “*The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.*” Prov 12:26 & Again, “*Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul.*” Prov 22:24-25 The point being that it’s simply not wise to associate w/bitter company. Because it’ll defile you, it’ll pollute you, & cause trouble for you.

But what do you do if you’re not the one in danger of being *around* bitter company, what if you *are* the bitter company? The remedy is simple, remember the grace & the forgiveness that God extended to you & now you go & do likewise w/others. You see, you’ve forgotten the overwhelming insurmountable ocean of grace that God has lavished on you. That you’re where you’re at because you somehow deserve it. “Top 10 answers on the board, survey says!” “X” Maybe someone did something & just set you off, & perhaps you’re right, they don’t *deserve* your forgiveness...that’s why it’s called “grace.” It’s *unmerited, undeserved* favor, isn’t that what God gave you? I know that’s what God gave me. Now what’s the bible say? “*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*” Eph 4:31-32 Forgiveness...as a believer it’s imperative to you, unforgiveness will do nothing but damage to you, brings trouble to you, it tortures you. Leave Heb Ch 12 & turn quickly to Matt 18 (Vs 21-35)

Now I think you get the principle at hand there, the idea found in this passage is that it doesn’t matter how much you think someone owes you, or how badly they’ve wronged you. It’s like pennies compared to how much you owe God, to how badly I’ve wronged God. & Yet one day you got on your face in your heart (if not literally) before God & you cried out for His mercy, you begged for His forgiveness. You had wracked up a sin debt against His holiness that you could never repay...& you *knew it*, so falling down *before* Him, baring your heart up to Him, you pleaded for His forgiveness. & His heart was moved w/compassion for you & He forgave you *all* He wiped your slate clean, marked your account *paid in full* by the blood of J.C. In the book of 2 Cor the Holy Spirit says it like this, “...*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17-18 Now how is it that you & I have the audacity (being the recipients of such undeserving forgiveness) to w/hold forgiveness from another, to hold onto our bitterness w/such vicious, unrelenting tenacity? It ought not be.

Vs 16

Now w/regard to the fornication mentioned here it's possible that he's speaking literally here & certainly it holds true either way. But I'm of the persuasion (simply because of the overall context) that he's in reference to spiritual fornication here which is a turning away from God unto anything or anyone else. Esau was profane, & don't misunderstand that to mean that he was some God cursing blasphemous man. The word "profane" here simply means "outside, or against the temple." It means that he was a godless man, he didn't belong to God. But as for his general character he loved his dad, was a good hunter, would've made a fine neighbor. As a matter of fact if you had to choose who to trust between Esau & his brother Jacob simply based upon the general pattern of life they lived you'd probably go w/Esau.

But Esau was w/out God, he wasn't interested in the things of God, he set his sights on the things of the flesh. The things of this world, if he couldn't touch it, grasp it, or somehow gain something from it right here & now he wasn't interested. He didn't look toward the eternal, he lived for the moment that was right in front of him.

Consequently one day he'd been out in the field & his brother Jacob had cooked up some stew. He came in & man he was starving, & he was wiped out. He said, "Jacob, you've got to give me some of that beef stew." Jacob said, "Let's consider it the purchase price of your birthright." & Esau was all, "What does it matter to me, I'm about to die here?" & So he traded his birthright for some simple, immediate yet temporary gratification. Esau said, "I'm about to die here, what is this birthright to me?" What's the birthright to you!? Hey, the implications, the connotations behind the birthright were enormous, it should've been *everything* to him. It was his inheritance, not only physically, but most importantly spiritually. & That's what he didn't get, or perhaps I should say he didn't care to get it. Jacob was a bit of a scoundrel, but he had a heart toward the things of the Spirit. Esau was just the opposite.

Now listen, here's where it gets personal. How many Christians seem to be unable to place a priority on the things of the Spirit & sell out their birthright for a simple yet temporary gratification of the flesh here & now? They give up their spiritual inheritance for the things of this world because life seems too hard, they're too weary, what does the future matter if I can't make it through today? & They sell out for a quick fix in the here & now. Look at Vs 17

Vs17

The book of Genesis tells us that Esau despised his birthright, yet later on he wanted to inherit the blessing...but it was too late, it had been given to Jacob. It seems so typical, people despise the idea of being "born again" yet in the end they want to inherit the blessing. But you have to understand that the inheritance, the blessing is tied directly to the birthright. You have to be born again.

There came a time when Esau wanted that blessing, but he was rejected. Why? Mark it well, because he found no place for repentance, oh he wept, he cried, he boo hooed & hollered about it, he certainly regretted what he'd done. But he never repented over what he'd done. The bible tells us that we're to bear fruits worthy of repentance, & not to take away from the sincerity of the emotion behind tears, tears are not the sign of true repentance. A turn away from our sin & unto J.C. is. A repentance is marked by a change in my life, being "sorry" over any # of things might bring me to tears, that doesn't mean my life is going to change. I might regret something, & still never repent. I think Judas is a prime example of that. He sure regretted what he'd done, cried over it, was sorry about it, felt guilty because of it, but his life didn't bear the fruit of repentance, he went out & hanged himself.

Peter on the other hand, well, he denied the Lord 3x's, cried over it, was sorry about it, felt horrible about it, but he repented, he was restored, became a foundational player in the establishing of the NT church.

Esau found no place for repentance. Now don't misunderstand this here to think that he sought repentance w/tears but God wouldn't have it. Believe me when I tell you that God doesn't refuse an individual's repentance. God's not looking for reasons to penalize people He went to great lengths to see them saved.

The "it" that he sought w/tears wasn't repentance, it was the blessing, it was the benefit. Read the account (Gen 27). He sought the blessing w/tears & an emotional fervor, but he found no place for repentance, he's an example of how bitterness can root *in* you, & bring trouble *to* you. It would be easier for us to understand this Vs like this, "For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, though he sought it diligently w/tears, for he found no place for repentance."

& There comes a time when it's too late, when you're standing before the Father begging for the inheritance, pleading w/tears, it'll be too late because you found no place for repentance. The blessing is attached to the birthright, you've got to be born again. You've been born once of a natural birth, you need to be born again of a spiritual birth. & That's the transaction that takes place when you repent of your sin & place your faith in J.C. Don't despise the birthright, lead your life set apart to J.C. set the things of the Spirit in their proper place giving them priority in your life. Pursue peace w/people, & holiness before God, don't give way to that root of bitterness, extend forgiveness, give grace, even as God in Christ has forgiven you & extended *His* grace to you.

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful for Your word. & It's our desire to want to lead lives that are well pleasing to You. & So may you pour Your Spirit out fresh upon each & everyone of us & may we not resist the work of Your Spirit in our lives. & Lord if there's a need of reconciliation, a need of repentance, or forgiveness, may we place what You've taught us today into practice. Bearing fruits worthy of repentance, forgiving others even as You've forgiven us. So that as much as it would depend upon us, we'd live peaceably w/all people.

& If you've not surrendered to Christ, you've not repented, that is turned away from your sin consciously & came to Christ intentionally you should know that there's an inheritance waiting for you. But it's attached to the birthright, you have to be born again. God wants to wipe your slate clean, to give you a new heart, & new life, & it's available to you in Christ. If God's dealing w/you, don't harden your heart, open your heart, turn *from* your sin, turn *unto* Him & He'll forgive your sin & make you brand new.