# A Root of Bitterness

Paul commands: *Let all bitterness, anger, and wrath, shouting, and slander be removed from you, along with all malice.* The first word in Paul's list is *bitterness*. Usually, everything else starts there. Today, we'll focus on Hebrews 12:14-15, where the writer of Hebrews speaks to local congregations and urges them to be vigilant and watch together for any roots of bitterness that spring up. Today, we'll talk about how this is accomplished.

**I. Peace Has to be Chased**

A. Hebrews 12:14: ***Pursue*** *peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord.*

B. Paul writes: *So then, let us pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.*

C. Peter quotes the Psalm: *Let him seek peace and pursue it, …* (1 Peter 3:11)

**II. Who We Pursue Peace With**

A. Hebrews 12:14: *Pursue peace* ***with everyone****, and holiness…*

B. Hebrews 12:14: *Pursue peace …, and* ***holiness*** *—without it no one will see the Lord.*

1. How we treat each other and how we stand with God are not separated.
2. 1 John 4:20: *If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*

**III. Roots Grow in the Dark**

A. Hebrews 12:15a: ***Make sure*** *that no one falls short of the grace of God …*

1. "Make sure" means to look over, to keep watch. It is given to all of us.

B. Falling behind what?

1. Hebrews 12:15a: Make sure that no one falls short of ***the grace of God*** …
2. *Falls short* means to lag behind, to come up lacking.

C. Now the phrase itself. *No root of bitterness.*

1. Hebrews 12:15b: *that no* ***root of bitterness*** *springs up, causing trouble and defiling many.*
2. See Deuteronomy 29:18-19. In Moses' day, the root was a person — one man, one family, one clan whose heart had quietly turned away from God.
3. Bitterness doesn't always grow out of a grievance against somebody else.
   a) Sometimes it grows out of grief.
   b) Ruth 1:20: *"Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara," she answered, "for the Almighty has made me very bitter.*
   c) Even this type of bitterness must be dealt with:
      (1) Ephesians 4:32: **Let all bitterness**, … be **removed from you**, …
      (2) You don't negotiate with a root in the sewer line. You get it out.

**IV. Bitterness Never Stays Home**

A. Hebrews 12:15: …*that no root of bitterness springs up,* ***causing trouble*** ***and defiling many***

1. Bitterness is not a private matter.
2. A root that springs up doesn't stay in one heart. It defiles many.

B. How does that happen?

**V. Looking to Jesus: Blood That Speaks a Better Work**

A. Hebrews 12:3: *For* ***consider him*** *who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you won't grow weary and give up.* If anybody in history had a right to a root of bitterness, it was Him.

B. 1 Peter 2:23: *when he was insulted, he did not insult in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but* ***entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.*** — You hand the case to the Judge —

**VI. As We Close…**

A. Look for the root in yourself. (Psalm 139:23-24)

B. Decide that you won't be anybody's soil.

C. Keep an eye on each other. *Roots are patient. Grace is stronger.*