

As is so common with the letters Paul wrote to the churches (and I believe this to be written by Paul), he has spent the first half teaching us incredible truths, which should form our understanding of **1)** who God is, **2)** what He has done for us, **3)** and how that should be impacting our living for Him. Which causes him to then somewhere around the halfway point of his letters **move to the practical application side**. Or, how we should now live to bring glory to God and to prepare ourselves to spend eternity with Him.

- At this point we are deep into the second half of **Hebrews**. And if you are like me, no matter how many times I come to the appeals or exhortations here, they always make me do some personal inventory.
- And based on the conversations I have with others, I don't think it's going to be any different for most of you. So with that, let's just jump in.

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

If you have missed a teaching or two in the last month or more, you might be asking what is the cause he must have noted earlier of their hands hanging down and their knees being ready to give way? **It's related to the chastening of God our Father**. And I say "God our Father" intentionally, because without that piece you can get this all wrong. Now if you were not here last week, I cannot repeat that message right now, but you can go back and listen to it. What I will say is if you believe this means God is just looking for a reason to beat you, you have it all wrong. But do know that God does counsel and correct His children, because He loves them.

And I like that he uses the terminology to **make straight paths** here, because this is in perfect keeping with where we have already been led in this chapter. For we know God has called us to run the course He has set before each of us (**verse 1**). At the same time, He has instructed us not to let the weights of life and the sins that so easily ensnare drive us off that course. Or possibly keeps us from even taking the field.

- And the imagery does not stop there, for the word **lame** means "to limp," "be stopped," or "be crippled in the feet and/or legs." The word choice is no accident. And **it should make us ask ourselves if something has happened that has caused us to be limping along when we should be running**.
- Yet it doesn't stop there either, because the warning is if something doesn't change, that limp can become a **dislocation**. Just imagine a runner who severely sprains his ankle and does not address it but rather attempts to keep running this way as though nothing has happened. One day, the bone on top, having little to nothing left to hold it, just slides off the bone on the bottom. Things like this don't tend to just get better without some form of action. They tend to get worse.
- And back in **verse 3** he spoke to them about the potential of becoming **weary and discouraged in their souls**. There he told us the way to remedy this is to **1) consider Jesus**, **2) what He endured**, and **3) the ultimate victory which came after the cross** (He finished the race and **sat down** in glory). That is the action we all need to take, all the time—to consider Jesus! But the point here is when someone is really injured, discouraged, maybe even coming out of needing to be corrected by God (who loves them), **they need other believers to come alongside them for encouragement**. And to help them set their eyes on the Lord when they feel like they cannot see Him any longer.

So in this one verse we see the instruction is **1)** for them to put their feet on straight paths (remove the obstacles and tripping hazards), **2)** for others to come alongside to encourage and support one another, and **3)** to understand God desires to bring about personal healing for each of us as we continue to run the course, while on this earth.

- I think this last one is so important because some seem to only convey they are being beat-up in this life. Yes, I acknowledge this is a fallen world, and trials are found in all kinds of places. But I can also acknowledge I came into this relationship with Jesus carrying a bunch of broken pieces of life, and now, with the accumulation of many more years of life since, that God has brought so much healing. Healing which could only have occurred through traveling with Him.
- For sure I have some personal responsibility. And I can bear witness to the incredible support and encouragement from other believers. **Yet no one can heal those broken pieces but God.** And folks, He wants to. The work of healing is sometimes easier than we expect. Yet other times it seems to be so challenging and long, because some of our wounds are old and deep.
- But one thing is for sure, if you are in Jesus, and walking with God, you are going to find that He is actively healing your heart and your past injuries. But we also do have a role to play, both for ourselves and others ([Rom. 14:19](#)). It's just that it's a supporting role.

As we come to [verse 14](#), he seems to be jumping to another topic or piece of instruction.

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

When [verses 10-11](#) talked about the chastening of God leading to our being able to be *partakers of God's holiness*, and that leading to *the peaceable fruit of righteousness*, it now brings us to the point of living out what we have received.

- What I mean by our receiving it is that not one of us produced holiness or righteousness by our actions or even our desire to do so. The Bible tells us there is not one righteous person ([Rom. 3:10](#), [Psa. 143:2](#)). And holiness (being separated perfectly unto God and His will for us alone) is impossible for us to do by ourselves. *Only through a relationship with Jesus can either of these be our reality.* And folks, if you are thinking you at least got closer than others did before knowing Jesus, stop being delusional ([Isa. 64:6](#)).
- Without what He did for us, not a single one of us would or will see Jesus and His kingdom. But once we have received Him in our hearts, then these realities are immediately assured to us. Because when the Father sees us, He sees the righteousness and holiness of Jesus covering us. I never get tired of saying that 😊.
- And now comes our part. And it is to *pursue* ("chase after" or "make every effort" at) *peace with all people.* But this is not the only place we find instruction about our responsibility to pursue this peace with absolutely everyone else. We'll come back to that in just a minute.

First, here's the reality God wants us to grasp. Because He pursued peace with us, we are to do the same with others. And His pursuit was clearly 1) intentional 2) and required both initiative and perseverance. He didn't just sit back wishing or waiting for peace with us to maybe somehow occur. He sent His Son into the world to die for the peace we have with Him today.

- And He was in no way responsible for the loss of our peace with Him (as some suppose to be the case). It was our abuse of the freewill He gave us that we then used to sin against Him. Which, because of His complete holiness, necessitated His severing the spiritual connection we had with Him ([Hab. 1:13](#), [Heb. 9:7-8](#)).
- In turn that led to the reality that we were spiritually dead until Jesus came and made a way of reconciliation between us and the Father ([Col. 2:13](#), [Eph. 4:18](#)). *He was actively pursuing us even then!* And because of that act of God, we can once again have spiritual life and peace with Him ([Col. 1:21-22](#), [Eph. 2:13-16](#)).

- So you may want to pay close attention now, because what that means for us is vital to answering some of the questions we have about making peace with others. Here is where some of those other passages about this topic come into play.

I'm going to quickly go through a few of these and then sum up some of the steps we are instructed to take.

- Eph. 4:32 says to us, *"be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."* That's a pretty high standard. As those who have received the grace of God, we are to be giving a similar level of grace to others. You know, *"forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us..."* (Luke 11:4). How are we doing with this?
- Rom. 12:18 gives us the instruction that, *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men (people)"*. It takes two or more to make or keep the peace. Meaning it's not possible to be at peace with everyone. *But it's our side we are responsible for.* So what does that look like?
- Here in these verses in Heb. 12:14 we see *the connection between peace and holiness*. And this goes both ways. 1) It's hard to pursue peace with others if you are not walking in holiness. We tend rather to see people then **not** as God sees them. And when we do so, we make them expendable, loathsome, objects of our self-gratification, ridicule, or contempt. 2) But the other side of this is that we cannot let our call for peace cause us to water down truth or our own walk with God. I can gladly go to someone in open rebellion to God and share the gospel with them. I know God loves them and wants them to come to salvation. But I am equally aware that without them coming to Jesus, there is only so close I can get with them (2 Cor. 6:14).
- And we have instruction on church discipline which tells us there are times when we must treat someone who is not willing to repent *as a tax collector and heathen* (Matt. 18:15-17 [see also Titus 3:10-11]). *But do note in these same verses it begins with the stages of conflict resolution and repentance first. And only after these have failed are you to take this last step.*
- And finally (although we have not covered everything the Bible has to say on this subject), in Matt. 10:34-36 Jesus proclaimed to all of us, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'"* I think this one is possibly the hardest to digest for some because it hits home directly. Jesus is making the point that the gospel is offensive to those under the law, any other religious system, or the idea of self-empowerment. Because He is putting them on notice that there is no way to be right with God other than receiving Jesus (John 14:6). But this does not mean He came to cause division over where to eat dinner, whose in-laws you are spending Thanksgiving with, or if you get your way or not. This division is only over the one way to salvation. And even then we are to pursue peace, yet without compromise in regard to the gospel.

So here are some of the steps the Bible encourages to take in pursuing peace with someone we are in conflict with.

1. If they are a believer in Jesus, the first step is to see what you can just let go of (Prov. 10:12, 17:19, 1 Cor. 13:5). This really should be our default setting for all those stupid little things said or done.
2. But if the offense is serious or ongoing, follow the instructions of Matt. 18:15-17 (see also Luke 17:3).
3. Determine if there is a level of separation necessary for there to be peace. If another's actions are unrighteous and unholy, there is going to be a point at which you cannot walk with them (Matt. 18:17, 2 Thes. 3:6). The Bible asks us the question, unless two be in agreement, how can they walk together (Amos 3:3)? Until something changes, they cannot (but don't use this as an excuse to separate from your spouse. The Bible has something else to say about that [1 Cor. 7:12-14]).

4. Do not hate or retaliate against others who hate you, or act like they do ([Luke 6:27-28](#), [Rom. 12:17-21](#)).
5. And the same passage in [Luke](#) tells us to pray for those who you are not at peace with. This is the responsibility of every believer. Lift [1](#) them, [2](#) you, [3](#) and the situation up before God—regularly. Because sometimes peace doesn't depend on you. But you can still pray. In this way you will know your battle with them is over, because you love them enough to carry them into the presence of God. This might be all the peace you can have with them at this time.

Folks, this is a serious subject to the Lord. That's why we spent so much time on this today. And it's why so many of us have agonized at points over relationships where peace is absent or seemingly impossible. All we can do is our part. Seek the Lord and follow the instructions of the Bible. This is our duty. And failing to do so might cause anyone of us to come up lame for the time being.

Now as we close out today, he finishes with three exhortations or things we are to be on the watch for, so we or other believers don't fall short of the grace of God (we'll take them in two chunks).

¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

First off, is it intended for this to be tied to pursuing peace with everyone? And [2](#) what is he talking about in *falling short of the grace of God* here? [3](#) Is it us falling short and therefore not receiving God's grace? [4](#) Or is it us falling short of giving the same grace that was given to us? [5](#) Or both? Not only is it ok for us to start by asking these questions, it's wise for us to do so.

- The ESV tends to equate this with our failing to obtain the grace of God personally. But I believe it's intended to convey **both**. And for these Jewish believers in Jesus, we remember they were considering turning back to the law, which would be to forfeit grace for works ([Gal. 5:4](#)).
- And in terms of *looking carefully*, this too doesn't imply looking out for yourself only, but for others. Reinforcing the call here to help one another. But it certainly includes being on guard for yourself too. Because in each of us there is a little Pharisee who, for one reason or another, is drawn to at least a little bit of legalism (at least towards others—initially).
- So to answer the first question, yes, I do believe this is tied to our pursuing peace with everyone. Because when we let that Pharisee in us come out, the grace we received, and are to be giving to others, turns into judgment. Of course we call it discernment. But in reality, it's most often judgment bringing about condemnation. And the reality is if we are seeing others in this way, it's not too far of a step to place ourselves under that legalism. Which causes us to loathe and condemn ourselves too (see also [1 Cor. 4:3-5](#)).

Grace is so amazing. Don't let yourself, or anyone else you can influence, fall short of this incredible gift of God. But if you harbor resentment or condemnation for others, do know that *a root of bitterness is going to move through your and their lives, wreaking havoc.*

- And such an attitude will be used by the enemy to divide and injure the church.
- I like the way David Jeremiah's Study Bible likens this as a call for the believer to be more like the physician who is keeping a lookout for the symptoms of disease so they can help bring fellow believers to spiritual health, than an officer looking for a guilty offender.

How do you tend to see others?

¹⁶ lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Let's start by noting this is not some kind of word picture saying that Esau could not afterward choose to repent, believe, and receive God in faith. Or that in doing so he could never change. We just went through the hall of faith and examined the lives of many there who had done some terrible things. **But the one thing they all had in common was they put their faith in God. Esau had not.** And because he had not, he simply disregarded God's instructions for how he was supposed to live and conduct his life. He was part of God's covenant people and yet did not care about anything God had to say.

- The repentance spoken of here addresses that although he despised (finding no value) in his birthright, once he realized it came with a double portion of the inheritance, he wanted it. The only sorrow he had was in losing the financial gain. Because his worldly appetites set the course of his life, not his view of God.
- The Holy Spirit identifies him here as *profane*, meaning "someone who treats sacred things as though common or worthless." He also chose to marry Canaanite women, leading him into further idolatry ([Gen. 26:34-35](#)).
- David Guzik brings this home noting that, "Some Christians today 'sell' their birthright—a relationship with God—as cheaply as Esau sold his birthright." And if these believers being written to here went back to the law, they would do this very thing.

We covered several different exhortations today. And I hope at least one of those really spoke to you or answered a question or two you might have been pondering. **But the one thing that tied them all together was the call for us to not just examine our own walks with God, but also to be there to help others in the body of Christ to cross the finish line of faith as well.**

- Although each of us has our own course to run, God has clearly made this a group effort. Have you and I?
- This race is not getting any easier, but our peace should be growing. And we should be helping one another to continue to pursue that peace. **Which is to keep pursuing Him.**

Are you on the team, or trying to run alone? Are you a tripping hazard in the course, or one who is helping to make paths (yours and others') straighter? Not only has God set our courses, He's also told us how to win. But I think each of us can attest to instruction we've failed to listen to. It just doesn't have to be that way going forward. It shouldn't be that way. If we will receive God's correction, we'll find His peace.

CROSS REFERENCES

Heb 12:1 NKJV - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Heb 12:3 NKJV - For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Rom 14:19 NKJV - Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Rom 3:10 NKJV - As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;

Psa 143:2 NKJV - Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no one living is righteous.

Isa 64:6 NKJV - But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Hab 1:13 NKJV - You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

Heb 9:7–8 NKJV - (7) But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; (8) the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

Col 2:13 NKJV - And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Eph 4:18 NKJV - having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

Col 1:21–22 NKJV - (21) And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled (22) in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

Eph 2:13–16 NKJV - (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, (15) having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, (16) and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Luk 11:4 NKJV - And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."

2Co 6:14 NKJV - Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

Mat 18:15–17 NKJV - (15) "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (16) "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' (17) "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Tit 3:10–11 NKJV - (10) Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, (11) knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

Jhn 14:6 NKJV - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Pro 10:12 NKJV - Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

Pro 17:19 NKJV - He who loves transgression loves strife, And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.

1Co 13:5 NKJV - does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

Luk 17:3 NKJV - "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

2Th 3:6 NKJV - But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

Amo 3:3 NKJV - Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

1Co 7:12–14 NKJV - (12) But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. (13) And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. (14) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

Luk 6:27–28 NKJV - (27) "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, (28) "bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

Rom 12:17–21 NKJV - (17) Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. (18) If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (19) Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (20) Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gal 5:4 NKJV - You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

1Co 4:3–5 NKJV - (3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. (4) For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. (5) Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

Gen 26:34–35 NKJV - (34) When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. (35) And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.