

The Pursuit of Holiness (Part 8)

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[0:00] Hebrews chapter 12 and 5 verse 14.

! And I understand that.

I've given you the outline from last week and everything that we discussed last week. I've filled in the blank for you so you're up to speed.

And then we'll kind of carry on from there. But just to remind you, and you can kind of follow through there, we're talking here about the practical side of holiness or this pursuit of holiness.

In this section, verses 12 through 17 of chapter 12. And I gave you some preliminary observations that we need to kind of get before we get into it.

[1:07] We discussed some of this, but let me just name them again. The pursuit of holiness is not an every man for himself proposition. That's something we need to really get ingrained in our minds as fellow believers or brothers and sisters in Christ who are members of Highland Park Baptist Church.

Let's not think that our kind of progressing in maturity, spiritual maturity, our sanctification, our pursuit of holiness is just something that we're responsible for ourselves and that everybody is responsible for it individually.

And if they don't make it, that's their problem. If they struggle, that's their problem. I'm looking out for me. Everybody else is looking out for themselves.

And that's not the idea. We're in this thing together. And we not only have from God's Word instruction on how our journey is to be and how we are to individually participate with God in this process, but we're also to participate with God as He works in the lives of those around us as well. So it's not an every man for himself proposition. And so then we have an inescapable, I believe, inescapable responsibility to help others in their pursuit of holiness.

[2:33] Because the church, like any organization, but I think is especially true to the church, is no stronger than its weakest person. And we need to remember that. Because in every church there are those who struggle.

And those who may be young in their faith. Or those who have struggled with sin and maybe even fallen. And they need to be helped.

Not kicked out. They need to be helped. In fact, the whole design of church discipline is not just simply to rebuke people or to cast them out.

The whole design of it is to restore. And a healthy church is a church where all of God's people in that family, and that's a good way to think of this fellowship, we're a family, a good healthy church is a church that rallies around everyone within the body and helps those who need help.

And so we kind of introduced it that way. And then several points. Number one, we're to strengthen the weak among us. That's the idea there in verse 12.

[3:44] Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees. The idea there is not that believers lift up their own hands or lift up their own feet.

Now certainly, we can find in Scripture instructions for that. We are responsible for the way we live and how we act. And we are responsible for our spiritual growth. But the idea here is we're to help others whose hands are hanging down, whose knees are weak and so forth.

And so we help others, each other, in all areas of weakness. And not just financial problems. We're kind of quick to help people sometimes within the body who are having some material struggles.

And that's easy to do. But those within the body who are weaker in their faith, but also those who have sinned, who have failed in that way as well.

Alright? Then number two, we said that we need to strengthen... Here's the point. Strengthen your way. Not just strengthen your weak, but straighten your way.

[4:57] That's the idea there in verse 13. And make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame, as those who are lame around you, may not be dislocated or be turned out of the way, but rather be healed.

Paul's emphasis here is on influence. Our influence for those around us. And because there are those around us and those who will come after us who need a straight way to follow.

And the way we walk, the way we're going, is either going to lead or mislead those who are following us. And like I mentioned last week, every one of us would be surprised just how much influence we do have on people around us.

And you may think that no one around you is looking up to you or looking at you or following your path, but I guarantee you that there are those who are following your lead.

And so you want to lead them in the right way. So that's why we need to straighten our own path. A straight path is especially needed for those who are weak in the faith. And then number three, sanctify your worship.

[6:10] Sanctify your worship. And now we're up to speed. And that's kind of where we left off last week. Verse 14. Pursue peace with all people.

Or with all. And holiness. So pursue peace with all people, all men, all people, and holiness. Pursue those two things without which no one will see the Lord.

That's an interesting passage of Scripture. And this all ties into the instruction here. We're talking about our influence, our help, our responsibility, inescapable responsibility, to help those around us. And part of that is our worship. Now, in a broad sense, and this is A on your outline, everything a Christian does in his or her life should be an expression of worship.

So I use the word worship in that very broad sense. And that everything we do is part of our worship.

[7:18] It's not just what we do on Sunday mornings up there in the sanctuary when we sing together and I preach and so forth. We typically think of worship in that context only.

I never will forget the illustration from Ruth Graham. And some of you may have heard this, but she, as the story goes, had a plaque made, especially, to hang right above the kitchen sink where you wash the dishes.

And the plaque said, worship services held here three times daily. And now, there's the connection that extends this whole idea or concept of the Christian's worship to everything that we do in life as a part of that.

B, Paul divides expressions. Now, I'm talking about expressions of worship. Like our worship service on Sunday morning, that is an expression of our worship.

Now, you're either expressing worship there or you're not. You know, we call it a worship service, but not everybody up there is worshipping. Because worship is an expression.

[8:37] And Paul, in this verse, I believe, is dividing expressions of worship into two. Into two. Number one, pursuing peace with all people.

Or with all men. As the King James, I think, people is inserted there. It just says in the original text, pursue peace with all.

You can fill in the blank. Whether that's all men, all women, all people. Or, of course, the context is within the body of Christ here. So, we're to pursue peace with all.

Romans chapter 12. I'll just read it to you. I think I may have listed that down there so you can look at it sometime on your own. But in Romans chapter 12, verse 18, listen to what the Bible says.

If it is possible, or if at all possible, if you can do it, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all.

[9:42] All men or all people. So, here's the admonition from Scripture. It's very clear. We're to pursue peace with all.

And especially with those who are inside this assembly, this church, our brothers and sisters in Christ. And even others who may be a part of the body who are not believers.

We're to pursue peace with them. And is that easy all the time? No, it's not always easy. It's not always easy, even with fellow believers.

Sometimes. I mean, we all know that, don't we? There's not been a church, I don't think, certainly not one on the face of the earth right now, that doesn't have some struggles in this area of interpersonal relationships.

And having peace within the body, it's not always easy. As someone put it, and I think I included this in your notes, to dwell above with saints we love, oh, that will sure be glory.

[10:46] But to dwell below with saints we know, well, that's another story. And, yeah, it's so true. And we chuckle at that. But that identifies some of the struggles we have.

And so, what is the admonition for us? This is part of our worship, expressions of worship, that we pursue. I mean, it's a deliberate thing. It's steps we take.

And sacrifices we make. And it does take sacrifice, personal sacrifice, sometimes, to bite your tongue, if that's what it takes.

You bite it clean off sometimes. Just so that you pursue peace with all. Now, the second expression is to pursue holiness with God.

Paul mentions holiness here. And the idea behind the word there is purity. It speaks of purity, obedience, holy living. These are expressions of our worship.

[11:47] It speaks of our desire to be set apart for God's glory. And, you know, when you really love God, you want to be set apart for Him. And you want to be like Him.

And so forth. Now, all that's great. But the real point here in this passage comes in the last phrase of verse 14. I'll call your attention to it again.

Without which, this is key to the verse, without which no one will see the Lord. Now, that's key to understanding Paul's point here.

But it's also kind of confusing. What does that mean? It does not mean, I can tell you this, does not mean that if you and I are not successful in pursuing peace with all men and not successful in pursuing holiness with God, that somehow we're not going to be saved.

It does not mean that. Otherwise, that would define a works-based, a works salvation. So, what is Paul talking about when he says, without which no one will see the Lord?

[12:59] Well, just this. And this is C on your outline. Paul, I believe, is identifying here, he identifies an evangelistic element in our pursuit of holiness.

An evangelistic element. He's referring to the effect, our worship, pursuing peace with all men, pursuing holiness with God, the effect of our worship, that our worship has, on the unsaved.

It's evangelistic. It's part of our witness. And when I say unsaved, certainly that applies not only to the unsaved outside of the church, because, see, our worship extends.

These expressions of worship extend beyond the four walls of this building, but also the effect that it has on the unsaved, unregenerate, who are in the church.

There are some, you know. You may not know who they are, and God knows, but there are in every church, I would venture to say, every church, there are unregenerate people who are attending the church, whether it's the ministries of the church, or maybe even members of the church, who in reality are not saved.

[14:18] So our worship, our expressions of worship, pursuing peace with all men, pursuing holiness with God, is something that's observable. See, you need to understand here, that Paul did not say, follow peace, follow holiness, without which you will not see the Lord.

He didn't say that, did he? No. He said, without which no one will see the Lord. And so the idea here, he's not making this personal for you, otherwise, that would add a works to our salvation. What he is saying is, this takes your view outside of yourself, to those around you, and the gospel, or the evangelistic element of our worship.

He's talking about unbelievers. That's the focus here. Outside and inside, I think, in the context of the passage here, he's talking about those inside the church.

Lost people inside the church. He's talking about unbelievers, who observe the practical side of our holiness, because that's the side you can observe. That's where the positional holiness, comes on the outside, and it affects our conduct, and people are watching, and they're looking to see what kind of actions you take in life, and reactions you take in life, based upon circumstances, and all these other things.

[15:56] And people are observing those, and the potential is that many of those who observe, will trust Christ themselves.

There's the evangelistic element. See, Christians are holy already, positionally. We're holy because we've been declared holy, by a holy God, because Christ is holy, and we're in Him.

But, as Christians, we are also holy in practice. We're to be holy in practice. And our practice must match, should match, our position.

What's on the inside, must come out on the outside, or, there's really no warrant for us to believe, that what's on the inside is true, is real. There must be the outside, the practice of our holiness. And when it does match, as it should, then the lost, respond, and find the salvation, that they see that we have. Without which, that's the idea, without which, no one shall see the Lord.

[17:01] We'll see the Lord. The Bible says in John 13, 35, for example, By this shall all men know, that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another, that you follow peace with all people.

See, loving men. And what about our holiness with God? Our set-apartedness? That's not really a word, but you understand what I'm saying. What about that part?

Is that observable? Yes, it is. Do people, is God gracious to save people, partly because of that witness in our lives?

I think so. I think that is somewhat behind the idea, or what Jesus said in John 17, 21, when He said that they, all may be one, as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe, may believe, that you have sent Me.

Five pastors, I heard about five pastors who were discussing the merits of some of the various Bible translations, and one of them said he liked the King James Version because of its familiarity and the beauty of its language and so forth.

[18:16] Another one said he liked the New American Standard Bible because it was such a literal translation. Another one said that he liked the NIV, the New International Version, because it was easier to understand.

Still another said that he liked the Living Bible because of its contemporary language and the paraphrase and so forth. And the fifth pastor was listening to all this and kind of sat there silently for a while until these guys were done deliberating about their favorite translation.

And he said, he finally spoke up and he said, you know, I like my mother's translation of the Bible. And he said, she translated her Bible into her life. It was the most convincing translation he had ever seen.

And that is so true. Let me give you another little poem. I don't think I included this one in there, but someone wrote this. We are living a gospel, a chapter each day.

By deed that we do, by word that we say, men read what we live, whether faithless or true, say, what is the gospel according to you?

[19:24] And I think that really puts it in the right perspective. All right, number four, as we're kind of moving along and really just kind of introduce this one tonight.

You don't have anything in your notes other than the point itself, and I'm going to give that to you here in a minute. But there's nothing in your notes to fill in because this is kind of introductory. But we're going to spend a little time on this one because it's very important.

Well, all these are important. But Paul's going to kind of flesh this one out, this idea out, over the next few verses. And it's this, number four, share your wealth.

Now, I mentioned this one last week or just named it only. And I'm cognizant of the fact that just the bare point, the point by itself, makes you think about money or material things, but that's not the idea here.

We have another kind of wealth or riches, and it's the grace of God. We have grace, and God's marvelous grace.

[20:33] And we, if you name the name of Christ, we've been born again. You're a recipient of God's marvelous, wonderful grace.

And so the idea here in verse 15, and I'll read it here in just a minute, is to see to it that those around you get that grace too.

To take it upon yourself as a responsibility, whether you're, you know, a pastor or an elder or a deacon or a Sunday school teacher or in some other area.

Maybe you don't have a particular ministry at all, but there are those that you're responsible for, those who are kind of, maybe, your circle of acquaintances in the church.

Every one of us have a responsibility. We ought to take it as a responsibility to make sure everyone gets the grace of God. Gets God's grace. Now, what do we need God's grace for?

[21:35] Well, I could sum it up with one word. Everything. The word's everything. We need God's grace for everything.

Now, we certainly need and must have God's grace to be saved. There's no salvation apart from God's grace. And, no one's saved apart from that.

The Bible says in Ephesians 2, 8, for by grace are you saved through faith. So, we've got to have grace. And, like the old hymn that we all know, amazing grace.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found. One was blind, but now I see.

Amazing grace. But now, the work of grace, you know, does not end at salvation. We don't just need it to be saved.

[22 : 33] The work of grace goes on. It continues on. And, I need God's grace for everything. I need it every day.

And, the hymn Amazing Grace brings that truth out as well. In another verse, through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come. 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

And, where's that? that's with the Lord. So, we need God's grace all the way through, and it's there for us all the way through. How would you define it? Of course, there are a lot of ways to define it, but maybe definition is not what I would get at here, but maybe a description of grace.

I'll tell you, there's a verse in Philippians, Philippians 2, one of my favorite verses. And, the word grace doesn't appear there, but it is a, I think, perfect description of God's grace, not just saving grace, but the ongoing work of grace in our lives.

And, the Bible says in verse 12, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, we're familiar with that part of the verse.

[23 : 58] And then verse 13, For it is God who works in you both to will and to do. Really, literally, of His good pleasure.

To do for His good pleasure. It's God that works in you. That's great. That's God's grace. Working in our lives to accomplish accomplish two things.

To give us the desire to do what pleases Him. We need that, don't we? In fact, before we can do what pleases Him, we need the desire to do it.

And, God's grace works in our lives give us the desire, but not just the desire to do what pleases Him, but it says to will and to do.

And I think the idea there is there is the power to do. So, the desire and the power to do what pleases God.

[25 : 04] And, that's applied to every, every aspect of our lives. Now, folks, apart from God's grace, we don't have any capacity whatsoever.

Not only not to desire, to desire, we don't have the capacity to do that, but to actually carry it out and do it. Anything that would please God.

So, it's His grace working in our lives. It's that dynamic of God working in our lives to give us both the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

I think that describes the grace of God. And we need that, don't we? And so, as a born again believer, I need God's grace, the desire and power to do His will or do what pleases Him.

And I need it when? Every moment. Every moment in my life. And I need it for what? Everything. In my life. Even some of the most mundane things.

[26 : 06] If we are commanded and we are in Scripture to do all for the glory of God, then the most minute and most mundane things in our lives are to be done with this in mind, with this view that would bring glory to God.

And there's only one way to do that. And that is by His grace. His grace operating a dynamic of the power of God operating in our lives. to desire to do His good pleasure.

And so, on a personal level, I mean, directing that to ourselves, this truth to ourselves, each of us individually, don't fail to get God's grace.

We need it every day. Say, how do I get it? Ask for it. Now, God's gracious to give it, but we need to ask Him. And we need it every single day. Don't fail. And this is how most approach the text here in Hebrews and think that's the meaning here that what he's saying is as a believer, as an individual believer, don't fail to get God's grace.

You need it. Well, that's true. But the idea here, again, is to look outside of ourselves. That the principle is not, at least in the context of what Paul's writing here in Hebrews 12, is not just for ourselves.

[27:25] But it is a responsibility toward others within the body of Christ. And so, we need to look outside ourselves.

And Paul says here that we need to see to it. I mean, that's really the idea here in verse 15. Look carefully.

Or looking carefully. Or in the King James, I think it's the word diligently. We could translate or paraphrase it. See to it that you do not fall or that no one, rather, fails or falls short of the glory of God.

See to it or look diligently. Actually, in the Greek text, that's one word. And I'm not going to give you the word itself, but to tell you how we might also translate it.

And how it is translated in other places in the Bible. The word is overseer. It's translated overseer. In fact, Peter used that very word in 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 2 when he was describing or speaking to elders, to pastors.

[28:38] He said, you might remember the verse, shepherd the flock or feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.

and that's the same word that's used here in Hebrews that is translated at least in this particular version looking carefully or looking diligently or again we could say see to it.

It's the word oversee. And so in a sense, obviously, I am an overseer here in the church. I'm the pastor. And I hold God-ordained office of pastor.

But in the sense that Paul is using the word here in Hebrews 12, we are all to be overseers in this sense. Looking out for others, overseeing others, looking diligently so that no one around us does what?

Falls short or fails to get the grace of God. That's the idea here in the passage here in verse 15.

[29:47] We're to see to it as much as it is in us and however God may use us. We're to see to it to be diligent to make sure that those around us do not miss out on the grace of God.

Now, the focus here is not so much believers but unbelievers. within the body that would fall short or fail to get God's saving grace.

I think that's the idea here in Hebrews 12, verse 15. Now, both aspects are important. That is God's grace. Not just saving grace but also the ongoing work of grace.

And certainly we could make a case in other places in Scripture that we have a responsibility to reach out to those and look diligently to those around us within our body, our fellowship here, make sure that our fellow believers, brothers and sisters in Christ, don't fail to get God's grace for maybe something they're facing or some problem they are enduring or some point of affliction or maybe even some point of sin that they have fallen into.

And take it as a personal responsibility to make sure you encourage them and lead them to get God's grace for that. But the Bible, I think the idea here is for unbelievers around us.

[31:21] Notice the phrase there in verse 15 again where he says, looking carefully, lest anyone fall short.

for the grace of God. Anyone. The word fall short means to come behind, to fall short, to miss out on it.

And it describes a person, I think, who has heard the gospel many times. We're talking about somebody right here inside the context of this church right here.

Someone who has heard the gospel. Many times possibly, it could be a family member. It could be a good friend here.

It could be someone who's attending a certain ministry of our church. Maybe in the youth department and children, youth, and in other areas of ministry.

[32:25] It could be even someone whose name is on the roll of our church. And yet, that person is not saved.

Unregenerate. Never, ever really been born again. And that person's close in some sense of the word. That is, gradually, these kind of people that might be within the organized church.

They are moving, they have moved toward faith, but they've not yet believed. God's grace has been working in their hearts, and their hearts are becoming tender and open to the truth.

And right here in our fellowship, the Holy Spirit has been convicting these people and wooing them and drawing them, but as yet, they have not yet responded in genuine faith, repentance and faith.

Now, there are countless thousands in the world who are at that point, I would say in our nation, for sure, in this very Christianized nation where the gospel is just preached, you know, just 24 hours a

day and every day of the week, and where the opportunity to hear the gospel is still, even though maybe not as much as it once was, it's still very prevalent in our culture.

[34:04] And yet, there are still countless thousands in the world who have heard the gospel, over and over again, but they're not saved. Paul, I think, is talking about those in the church. He's writing to the church, he's encouraging the believers of the church.

Not only encourage other believers, those whose hands are hanging down or knees are wobbly and are struggling, but also that we need to look diligently, work very hard to make sure those within the body or within the organized church who are unbelievers, that they don't fail to get God's grace.

That they would get saved. We don't take that as a responsibility. Now, is salvation our business?

No. Can we save anybody? No. But do we have a responsibility to lead people to Christ?

Absolutely. Do we have a responsibility to make sure that everyone hears the gospel, even within the four walls of the church?

Yes, we do. whether they're children and on up. Do we have that responsibility? Yes, absolutely.

That's what I'm talking about, the responsibility to make sure that no one fails to get God's grace.

[35:14] There are those who we worship with who are real close. Now, they're close because they've heard the gospel and they've heard the teaching of God's word and they've been brought up to the very brink but they've not yet believed.

and they've not yet, so far they have not been saved and there's kind of a danger point there that they would fail to get God's grace.

We ought to take it very personal. So they are professors, maybe even professors of Christ, but they're not possessors. They're people in the church just like that.

Jesus describes them in Matthew 7.21. He says, Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?

In thy name have cast out demons? In thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work in equity.

[36:18] Talking about people who were religiously involved all their lives. And maybe even thinking they were saved, but they're not saved. And there are those right here among us quite possibly.

And we have an inescapable responsibility, I think Paul is saying to us, to see to it, take it as a very personal responsibility, that those who are attending our worship service, those attending our ministries, that they do not fail to get God's saving grace.

Paul indicates that, I think, and this is where the study goes on, I'm going to end it here, but I think Paul is going to teach us here that failure to do this, we don't take this as a personal responsibility.

Be very evangelistic even within the confines of this church. Failure to do that will result in some very devastating consequences.

of this I have to go to the!