

Hebrews 12:15-17
September 11, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Last week I introduced this section of Scripture by using an analogy of being a part of a homeowner's association. A HOA is formed to enforce the deed restrictions and protect the value of the community assets, one of which is your home. So when you become a resident within a community that has homeowner's association, you are agreeing to do your part to be a good citizen who honors the rules of the HOA for the greater good of the community.

Transition: We find ourselves in a similar situation in that we are citizens of God's kingdom and there are some guidelines we need to follow to help us function in this community well. Because God is over His kingdom, He has certain "homeowners association" rules of conduct. All of us CAN show our highest respect and reverence to God BY exercising the RESPONSIBILITIES He gave us to be exemplary citizens in His kingdom. Last week we spent our time processing what it looks like to "make every effort to live in peace with all men and be holy." So we will pick up where we left off and look for other responsibilities we have to be exemplary citizens of God's Kingdom. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Heb 12:15-17]

V.15:

- See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

V.16:

- See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.

V.17:

- Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

Q v.15: What is another responsibility we have as citizens in God's kingdom? [See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.]

Q: How do you make sure that "no one misses the grace of God?" [Let people struggle.]

Q: How do you "see to it that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many?" [It appears that "missing the grace of God" perhaps leads a person to develop a bitter root.]

Note: As a grim reminder of what can happen among believers, the writer warned that **one** who **misses the grace of God** may become like a **bitter root** whose infidelity to God affects others. Here the author had in mind Deuteronomy 29:18 where an Old-Covenant apostate was called a "root ... that produces such bitter poison." Such a person would be **godless** (*bebēlos*, "profane, unhallowed, desecrated") **like Esau**.

Q v.16: What is the next responsibility we have as citizens in God's Kingdom? [See to it that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau.]

Q: How in the world do we have any control to make sure others aren't sexually immoral or godless!! I can't wait to hear your answer because I don't have a good one!

Q: It seems like an oxymoron to be a part of God's kingdom, yet be godless. How can that be true? Are these the folk we like to call "carnal Christians?" [People who profess Christ as their Savior but don't show any interest in the things of God.]

Q: The writer reminds his readers of the painful example of Esau. What was the author trying to emphasize here? [Esau missed the grace of God. He discounted the grace and blessings of God and was so casual about his inheritance that he impulsively gave it up for a short-term appetite.]

Q: What sins will rob us of the enabling of God's grace? [These verses tell us: lack of spiritual diligence, bitterness against others (see Deut. 29:18), sexual immorality, and living for the world and the flesh. Some people have the idea that a "profane person" is blasphemous and filthy; but Esau was a congenial fellow, a good hunter, and a man who loved his father. He would have made a fine neighbor—but he was not interested in the things of God.]

LOOK:

In order to make sure that no one misses out on the grace of God and to not let any bitter root grow up to defile many, let's be encouragers to one another. Where there is bitterness, there is probably hurt. Listen well to the people in our circles of influence and pour into them encouragement and love. You will experience gratitude from those you take the time to encourage and love.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 325). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Look back—the bad example of Esau (vv. 15–17). Esau certainly failed to act on God's grace. The account is given in Genesis 25:27–34; 27:30–45. Esau was “a profane person,” which means “a common person, one who lives for the world and not God.” (Our English word literally means “outside the temple,” or not belonging to God.) Esau despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob, and he missed the blessing because it was given to Jacob. (It was supposed to go to Jacob anyway, but it was wrong for Jacob to use trickery to get it. See Gen. 25:19–26.) Afterward, Esau tried to get Isaac to change his mind, but it was too late. Even Esau's tears availed nothing.

What sins will rob us of the enabling of God's grace? These verses tell us: lack of spiritual diligence, bitterness against others (see Deut. 29:18), sexual immorality, and living for the world and the flesh. Some people have the idea that a “profane person” is blasphemous and filthy; but Esau was a congenial fellow, a good hunter, and a man who loved his father. He would have made a fine neighbor—but he was not interested in the things of God.

God's grace does not fail, but we can fail to depend on God's grace. Esau is a warning to us not to live for lesser things.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). *Daniel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 810-811). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

12:15–17. As a grim reminder of what can happen among believers, the writer warned that **one who misses the grace of God** may become like a **bitter root** whose infidelity to God affects others. Here the author had in mind Deuteronomy 29:18 where an Old-Covenant apostate was called a “root . . . that produces such bitter poison.” Such a person would be **godless** (*bebēlos*, “profane, unhallowed, desecrated”) **like Esau**, Jacob's brother, whose loose and profane character led him to sell **his inheritance rights as the oldest son** for the temporary gratification of **a single meal**. He warned the readers not to yield to transitory pressures and forfeit their inheritances. If some did, they would ultimately regret the foolish step and might find their inheritance privileges irrevocably lost as were Esau's. This would of course be true of one who ended his Christian experience in a state of apostasy, which the writer had continually warned against.