

58-12-04.wpd -- Three Concerns of a Caring Lifestyle
 peace, holiness, grace, bitterness, lust, worldliness
 Heb 12:14-17

Christian faith must be manifested in proper human relationships

INTRODUCTION:

--Since we are created in our God's image, then our human happiness, our human fulfillment depends on a life patterned after the behavior of our Creator. God is love, and His life is a caring lifestyle, not only within the unity of His Person in what we call the Trinity, but in His relationships with His creatures, especially with us. When we follow God's footsteps, we will have a caring lifestyle (**title**). Those concerns are addressed in the **text** before us, and relate to one theme: **HOM.idea**.

I. A Lifestyle of Peace, v.14

- A. In a world of war and hostility, we often hear the slogan: "*Pray for peace!*" Our intrinsic desire for peace comes from being created in the image of "**the God of peace**" who wants us "*Make every effort to live in peace with all men*"
- B. The Bible appeals to our hearts because it talks in terms of peace:
 1. In Isa 9:6, Jesus is prophetically called "Prince of **Peace**."
 2. Isa 59:8 says that sinners do not know "the way of **peace**."
 3. In Ezek 34:25, God proposes "a covenant of **peace**" with His people.
 4. In Eph 4:3, tells us to maintain unity through "the bond of **peace**."
 5. In Eph 6:15, "the gospel of **peace**" is part of our Christian armor.
 6. In 1 Th 5:23a, Paul's prayer for believers is: "May God himself, the **God of peace**, sanctify you through and through" (This verse points to the pathway to a lifestyle of peace: *sanctification*, or "*holiness*")
- C. We make every "*effort to live in peace with all men*" by making every effort "*to be holy*."
 1. The key to understanding holiness is in the phrase that follows this exhortation: "*without holiness no one will see the Lord*." (Holiness has no meaning apart from being close to our holy God)
 2. *Holiness* is when normal people relate to God in a special way that makes them *separate* or *set apart* from others [Bible examples: Sinai among mountains, the Sabbath among the weekdays, Levites among the Jews, Jews among the nations, and Christians among the rest of the world. None are holy in themselves but only in their relationship to a holy God.]

TRANS: The *God of peace* is by nature *holy* or *set apart* from all else that exists. The *Uncreated Creator* is wholly *other* than *created beings*. Seeking peace with others ought to begin with seeking peace with the Ultimate Other, and that peace depends on our nearness to Him. So if **Christian faith must be manifested in proper human relationships**, we must begin with holiness, a closeness to the God of peace, out of which can flow the peace we need for peace with others.

II. A Lifestyle of Pardon, v.15 (NKJV), "*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;*"

- A. Where does bitterness come from? ["*root of bitterness*" starts with a *snub*, with an *offence*, with an *injustice*, with a *wrong*. Instead of letting go and letting God, we take hold and hold on tight to the injury. We nurse the wound until it festers, often come back to poke around in it mentally to keep the inflammation stirred up. We never let it heal.]
- B. Can we keep "*a root of bitterness*" to ourselves? No, it keeps "*springing up*" so that soon others are effected by it.
 1. [like a weed, if you try to get rid of it by cutting off its top, without pulling it out by the root, it soon produces seed that scatters and grows elsewhere.]
 2. Or [like an infected wound ... its drainage can spread from person to person by contamination, unless the wound is isolated and treated and healed.]
 3. Hidden resentments finally come out verbally or nonverbally, surfacing in conversation or settling in a person's reputation. ("*springing up*" they "*cause trouble, and by this many become defiled*," ruining a workplace environment, a family atmosphere, or a church fellowship).
- C. God provides a way to deal with wrongs and injustices before they become resentments and "*roots of bitterness*"-- 1 Cor 10:13 (NASB) No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.
 1. The "way of escape" is often the "*grace*" of forgiveness, which He offers us for our wrongs, and wants us to offer others.
 2. We miss "the grace of God" for pardoning others when will not let go of the wrong and let God heal us.

TRANS: To practice a *lifestyle of pardon*, we must keep short accounts

and forgive the way Jesus did, right in the very midst of the wrong ("Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing"). *We miss the grace* to pardon others when we fail to remember how much we have been pardoned.

III. A Lifestyle of Purity, v.16-17

- A. The perspective that keeps us pure in our personal relationships in a world of immoral gratification is our commitment to a godly character for eternity.
- B. The example of Esau illustrates how *immorality* and *godlessness* are connected [Esau, because he was hungry "for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son." His temporary hunger led his actions rather than his reverence for the promise of the Lord to Abraham] (Immorality is the temporary satisfaction of passing desires, while godliness is our persistent decision to live out in the present our future destiny with God).
- C. When we are confronted by situations that offer instant gratification of short-term desires, we must weigh our decisions in light of how it will effect others. (Two helpful questions: "What would the world tell me to do?" and "What would a good citizen of God's heavenly kingdom do?")

CONCLUSION:

--A caring lifestyle has an serious urgency to it. The writer of Hebrews says, "*make every effort...*" "*see to it...*" The tragedy of Esau's ungodly choices, choices made as if there were no God, was that, "*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.*" **Christian faith must be manifested in proper human relationships**, because some words we can't unsay, some actions cannot be undone. We must walk closely with God. Any holiness we get, we get from our nearness to Him. Get close up so you can see Him, because "*without holiness no one will see the Lord.*" Then we will have success in every effort we make to live *a caring lifestyle* in our relationships with others.

Heb 12:14-17 (NIV) Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. {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. {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. {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.