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: Holiness.

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.]

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’s 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.