

The Hebrew (Jewish) believers were becoming down hearted and downcast. Weary and faint in their minds. Are we too? Eyes off self! Eyes off one another! Eyes upon Him! Consider Him! He endured the contradiction, the speaking against Him. God's chastening trains us who are His to endure under hardship we encounter. He will not allow us to be tried beyond what we are able, beyond what He gives grace for, 1Corinthians 10:13. We are not to face this alone. The Lord faced the three hours of abandonment on the cross so we wouldn't ever be alone. He Himself is with us. Yet He uses us to support and enable one another. And He exhorts us to make straight paths for our feet to clear out the obstructions and rough places that might trip someone, or injure them, Romans 14:1 - 15:7; 1Corinthians 8; and 10:23-33. Especially we are to look after the spiritually lame or weak, 1Thesalonians 5:14. He will lead us in treating one another's spiritual and emotional ills which are hampering the race.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

And no jostling one another in the race! We are on the same team. We are to follow peace with all men, saved or unsaved, Jew or Gentile. But not peace at the expense of holiness or sanctification. The Jews were accustomed to setting themselves apart from Gentiles. The Law commanded that, Deuteronomy 23:3-5. But nationally and religiously they had hypocritically accommodated sin in their midst. The worst among many examples was "Crucify Him [Jesus]!" "Release unto us Barabbas!" Yet on the day of Pentecost His disciples preached the gospel without bitterness against the leaders and people who had crucified their Lord.

We are again warned about some among us who might **lack** the grace of God. The KJV obscures the real warning against letting unsaved persons among them go on undetected. If self deceived they would be lost. Those with less than honorable motives would ultimately destroy the assembly of believers if allowed to go on unchallenged. Lacking the grace of God a person becomes bitter, if not so already. Not simply a temporary lapse into bitterness such as Paul earlier had warned the Gentile Ephesians and Colossians against, calling for forgiveness, Ephesians 4:30-32. But a deep, long-buried root of bitterness would spring up and trouble them all by its presence and activity among them. Many would be defiled by it. How easy it is for the faithful to be carried away by a complaining spirit and dissension. There would be harping on past wrongs and slights, real or fancied. We can look back to the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness where dissatisfaction, murmuring and complaining characterized them for forty years, Hebrews 3:14-19. Bitterness stems from self

centeredness, a lack of a forgiving heart. Believers have the grace of God to forgive one another, and even their persecutors as Stephan did. But unbelievers have no such resource within their hearts. To be a faithful witness in the Jewish world which had rejected its Messiah the saints needed to watch, be alert to spot bitterness. They also needed to be alert to maintain purity and a spotless testimony. They were to see that fornicators and profane persons were unwelcome among them, except as repentant sinners.

Fornicator? We all know fornication is any sexual relations outside of marriage as instituted by the Creator in the Garden of Eden. Scripture seems, in some places, less discreet in describing sinful acts than our sensibilities will allow us to be, particularly in mixed company. This even in the promiscuous, full disclosure culture we live in today. Yet it does draw a line which we should beware to cross.

Ephesians 5:12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret

The media and even classroom seem to be part of an orchestrated campaign to totally break down all moral restraint even in Christian religious circles. Romans chapter one describes the early descent of mankind into deeper and deeper aberration. But this is clearly linked to their spiritual departure from God. What we are witnessing in the world around us today stems from the same cause—conscious, deliberate rejection of God's order and authority— rebellion against the Creator. Solomon said there is nothing new under the sun. The horrible end results flowing from this latest adventure of the intellectuals ought not to be surprising to the believer, for scripture faithfully documents them. Don't be swept up into the enticing excitement of the false liberty offered nowadays. It is slavery of the deepest and most profound kind. The reminder in chapter 13 sums it up.

13:4 Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whore mongers and adulterers God will judge.

Profane? Esau, the well known son of Isaac and Rebecca, is presented as the example of a profane person. This despite the faith of his godly father and grandparents. What is a profane person? The Greek word implies one who disregards, scorns, disrespects sacred boundaries, wantonly trespassing prohibited territory. It is a lack of God awareness, a lack of faith. What did he do? Esau sold his birthright for a mess of (red) pottage Jacob was cooking. Stewed tomatoes?

Genesis 25:30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. {Hebrew, "with that red, with that red pottage"} {Edom: that is Red}

The profound promises God gave to faith, first to Abraham then Isaac, were of little significance to this hungry man. He was a man of the moment. Hungry? Get something to eat at all costs! Do you know anyone like

that? But Jacob, though an unscrupulous opportunist, had enough faith to value the promises entailed in the birthright, and later, the blessing of his father Isaac. But he had not enough faith to rely upon God to fulfill the prophecy He had given Rebecca, his mother, before their birth. He valued the birthright enough to take advantage of his twin brother's godless, lusty life of instant self gratification. He valued the blessing enough to steal it from his brother who had no place in his day to day life for long range thinking. Immediate action and self gratification was his game. Swindling and deception was Jacob's. To Esau's profane mind, what use was a future blessing if he starved to death? He demanded a meal from his brother and consumed it without thanks. How many decline salvation and eternal life for the sake of a little worldly "fun." Esau later regretted his hasty, thoughtless decision when he realized he would be deprived of the position, power, prosperity and well being that came with the birthright and blessing. He would not be head of the line of the promised blessing upon all men, the Redeemer.

Birthright and Blessing. Note it is the birthright before us here in chapter 12. Birthright by tradition went to the firstborn. The Birthright gave the possessor a double portion of the inheritance as well as headship of the family. If there were only twins the eldest would receive twice what the younger received even if born twins minutes apart. But in this case God's prophetic decree was that the elder would serve the younger. It reversed the customary practice. From Genesis we know that later Jacob, with his mother's prompting and help, also obtained the blessing of his father—through deception of a blind man!! The name Jacob means "supplanter," one who takes by the heel, for he literally grasped Esau's heel as they were being born. (Obvious proof he was not firstborn, but prophetic of his grasping character.) A Blessing was the calling down of prosperity, protection and well being from God Himself. In those days a blessing could be prophetic, not just fond well wishing. Can it be today?

Esau became interested in the birthright only upon realizing he was missing out on the good it carried. He realized there might be more to life than hunting and fishing. Curiously, Isaac favored Esau and encouraged his independent life style even though he demonstrated no evidence of the faith of his fathers. Isaac identified himself with his son's prowess in the field and enjoyed eating his game. God's prophetic declaration that the older would serve the younger was both a statement of His intent and of His foreknowledge. While Esau would be deprived of some earthly things coming to him he was never a subject of God's sovereign reprobation as some teach. Esau determined his own destiny. (See Romans 9 and "Dig" notes.). The Spirit reveals here in Hebrews 12, Esau sought the blessing with tears. But he seems to have never been able to bring himself to repent. I want it, I want it! Give it to me... Their parents had apparently not benefitted either of them with the training and chastening all children need.

Spoiled brats both of them. This was a dysfunctional, undisciplined family, the mother supporting her favorite and plotting to deceive her husband and deprive her other son of his blessing as firstborn. Even though Isaac was in the process of ignoring the prophetic statement Rebecca had received from God before their birth she was not justified in taking matters into her own hands. And sinning in the process. God knew she would do it but He did not move her to do what she did. She paid the price. She had to send her son Jacob away for his own safety reaping what she and he had sowed. She apparently never saw Jacob again. And Esau, though twenty years later he met Jacob in an amicable manner, apparently held his bitterness long enough to infect his sons and their progeny for all succeeding generations. Edom was a bitter enemy against Jacob's descendants during the following eighteen centuries, all the way to the cross of Christ. After centuries in which Edom, the nation, could have repented God finally proclaimed:

Malachi 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. 2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, 3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. 4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

But the kings called Herod were Idumean (Edomite) by descent. One attempted to kill the baby Jesus in Bethlehem and thirty years later another Herod interviewed and rejected Christ sending Him back to Pilate, to His death. A number of Old Testament scriptures speak of Edom, its hatred of Israel and its fate. At present Edom has apparently dropped out of the consciousness of the nations of the middle east, but will be identifiable in the days after the Rapture. The Lord Jesus (Jacob's Descendant) will personally judge Edom (Esau's descendants) in days to come. The elder shall serve the younger.

Isaiah 63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

Obadiah 10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.