

## Why is Holiness So Vital?

[Hebrews 12:12-17](#)

Hebrews, Day 47

*Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.*

- Hebrews 12:12-17, ESV

My dad taught me how to drive when I was 16 years old. I also took a driver's education class in school, but my dad was my primary driving instructor. I still remember, 28 years later, the things he taught me:

- Look ahead of you down the road, not at the front of the car.
- Keep a 3-second following distance between you and the car in front of you.
- Anticipate light changes and be ready to stop when approaching intersections.
- Let your foot off the brake slowly and look both ways when the light turns green.
- Always check over your shoulder before changing lanes.

It is possible to drive a car without following the rules, and sometimes I have been driving and I have forgotten to do what I know is right. When I do that, I often pay the price with a consequence. If I were to blatantly ignore all guidance about driving, where would I end up? In a ditch on the side of the road? In the hospital?

As believers, we are running a race, the race of faith, in which we must persevere to the end. Hebrews has been instructing us in how to run well:

- Lay aside sin.
- Fix your eyes of faith on Jesus. Focus on Him.
- Resist sin and temptation, even if it's painful.
- Accept hardship as discipline from your loving Heavenly Father.

Now, the writer of Hebrews shifts from our individual race to our obligation to help each other by strengthening those who are weak and striving for peace with one another. We are not running alone. We are part of a team, part of a unified body. We have our individual responsibilities and we have responsibilities to each other.

In our individual responsibilities and in our call to serve one another, holiness is centrally important. We need holiness, for without holiness no one will see the Lord. Here the author of Hebrews is probably building on what Jesus said in the beatitudes: "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" (Matt. 5:8, ESV)

When we reach the finish line of our race, we will see God. We will see Jesus face-to-face and be miraculously changed into His likeness (see 1 John 3:2). Do you want that? Is it your earnest desire to reach the finish line and see Jesus? If so, then you need holiness. If so, then you need to take seriously everything we've been reading in Hebrews.

What if you don't? What if it's not important to you whether you cross the finish line and see Jesus or not? What if you just can't be bothered? Well, that would make you like Esau, who thought so little of his birthright

that he sold it for a bowl of stew. If your attitude is so casual and callous to the things of God, you may come to a place where you want to change but you cannot.

So, pursue peace with one another and pursue holiness. Pursue them like your life depends on them, because it does. For only those who truly love Jesus and strive after His ways show that they belong to Him. They show by their hatred for sin, their commitment to Christ, and their pursuit of holiness that they are His and He is theirs. And, as we'll see next time, they can live in the confident assurance that they are citizens of a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and they will stand at the end with Christ, when all else has given way before Him.