

**I. Introduction and review: Are you your brother's keeper?**

**II. Watch out, lest anyone come short of the grace of God. v. 15a**

- A. What does it mean to fall short of God's grace? II Cor. 6:1
1. Carelessly disregarding the grace of God made available in the gospel. 4:16 2:9
  2. Some are inclined to go back to external religion and works. Gal. 3:1-3,11ff 5:4,7
  3. Some draw back into unbelief and forsake the assembly. 10:25,39
  4. They are at risk of falling short, as did the wilderness generation which failed to attain what was promised. 4:1
- B. What can be done to ensure we do not fall short of God's grace?
1. Actively rely upon His grace both for justification and sanctification. John 15:5
  2. Draw near to the throne of grace through Christ and seek more grace. 4:16
- C. Watch out for one another.
1. You are to be overseers of one another's souls. I Pe. 5:2 Acts 20:28 I Ti. 3:2
  2. Rescue those who may be drifting away. 10:24 Gal. 6:1-2 Mt. 18:15f Rom. 15:14
  3. Be accountable to one another. Pr. 27:17
  4. The stakes are high. Js. 5:19-20
  5. Encourage one another. 3:13

**III. Watch out, lest a root of bitterness springs up causing trouble. v. 15b**

- A. What is this root of bitterness?
1. I don't believe this text is about being bitter against another person in a conflict. Prov. 18:19 20:3
  2. This text refers to those who have departed from the truth and are spreading their errors among the covenant community. Deut. 29:18 Acts 8:23
  3. Such a person is under God's severest judgment. Deut. 29:19-21
- B. What particular problems should concern us?
1. The author was most concerned by those who could go back to Judaism.
  2. Is idolatry and error less of a problem in our day?
  3. There are professing Christians today who teach that Judaism is still a way to God. 10:18 John 14:6 Acts 4:12
  4. Most of Christendom relies upon external rituals and works as the means to approach God. 10:14 Gal. 2:16
  5. Some well known "evangelical" and "reformed" teachers are promoting a "new perspective" which muddles justification and sanctification. Eph. 2:8-9
  6. There are many other dangerous heresies abroad in our day.
- C. One person who has gone astray can cause great harm in the body.
1. The bitter root of sin and error spreads rapidly, defiling many. Ga. 5:8 I Cor. 5:6
  2. We must eradicate these destructive weeds before they cause extensive harm.
  3. Sometimes drastic action needs to be taken to protect the covenant community. Deut. 13:5-11 Rom. 16:17-18 Titus 3:10-11 Mt. 3:10 Acts 20:28-30
  4. Many churches are unwilling to root out sin and error.

#### IV. Watch out, lest one of you becomes immoral and godless like Esau. v. 16-17

- A. Esau is a paradigm of unbelief and apostasy, in contrast to the examples of faith in chapter 11.
- B. He was sexually immoral. v. 16a 13:4
  - 1. To what events in Esau's life is our author referring?
  - 2. Some believe the reference is to his unfaithfulness to God. Js. 4:4 Deut. 31:16 Ex. 34:15-17
  - 3. There are extra-biblical Jewish traditions about Esau's immorality.
  - 4. He married pagan (Canaanite) women. Gen. 26:34-35 24:3 Dt. 7:3-4 I Ki. 11:1-8
  - 5. We need to guard against the same dangers among us. 13:4 I Co. 5:9ff Eph. 5:3,5 II Sam. 11
  - 6. Sexual purity is an opportunity to affirm God's lordship in your life.
- C. Esau was profane, placing little value on spiritual things. v. 16b
  - 1. His godlessness was demonstrated by the low value he placed upon his birthright: A deal for a meal. Gen. 25:27-34
  - 2. Esau gave up the unseen future promise of God for that which was seen and visible. 11:1 Gen. 3:15 12:2-3 15:18-20 17:3-8,16,19-21 25:5 27:28-29
  - 3. Esau is typical of those who live for the present.
  - 4. We live in a world full of Esaus who live to gratify their appetites and place no value on the promises of God. Isa. 55:1-2
  - 5. For you to abandon Christ now would be more profane than what Esau did.
- D. Esau's apostasy was irreversible. v. 17
  - 1. What did he seek with tears? Gen. 27:34,38
  - 2. The blessing was irretrievably lost. Gen. 27:33 Mt. 25:1-13
  - 3. Esau was hardened beyond repentance. II Co. 7:10b Mt. 18:12
  - 4. The severest judgment of God is to give people over to their sin. Ro. 1:24,26,28
  - 5. Esau exemplifies the strong warnings against apostasy in 6:4-6 and 10:26-31.

#### V. Concluding applications.

- A. Watch out lest you, or any other member of the church, should fall away.
- B. Those who are truly in Christ are kept by His power and await their inheritance. 10:10 1:4,14 9:15 11:8 I Pe. 1:3-9
- C. Do you have a sense of your sin and guilt before God?

#### Discussion questions

- 1. Why are warnings like those contained in Hebrews 12:15-17 in the Bible?
- 2. What does this text say about our responsibilities to each other?
- 3. What does it mean to come short of the grace of God?
- 4. What is the root of bitterness in verse 15?
- 5. What harm does such a root of bitterness cause in the church?
- 6. What must be done with such a root?
- 7. What threats did the original readers face? What threatens the church today?
- 8. What was so awful about what Esau did?
- 9. How does Esau's sin relate to previous warnings in Hebrews?
- 10. Why couldn't Esau repent?