

## **“Follow After Peace With All Men ...”**

*“... and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled ...”* (Heb. 12:14f).

The appeal to *“follow after peace with all men”* is similar to Paul’s instructions that the Romans *“follow after things which make for peace and things whereby we may edify one another”* (Rom. 14:19). The similarity is one of the many expressions the Hebrew letter has with passages from Paul’s epistles which sounds very much alike. This similarity contributes to the opinions of many that Hebrews was also the work of Paul; an interesting, albeit not a compelling argument for one can find similarity between words Peter wrote with that of Paul as well, especially true when they wrote of the same subject.

It must be understood that the command, *“Follow after peace with all men”* has its limitations: with some, peace is impossible. Paul acknowledged this, in essence, when he said, *“If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men”* (Rom. 12:18). With some there can never be peace for: 1) Some will not be at peace with you; and, 2) with some peace is only possible if one compromise certain matters of truth and principle. Still, we fear, that too little effort is expended to *“follow after peace and the things which make for peace.”* Some particularly are looking for something they may challenge others about. For some, a person is not sound unless he is adversarial in nature ... looking for and picking a fight with all around.

We must also follow after the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord. The Lord does for me what I cannot do for myself: He sanctifies and cleanses me from the guilt of my sins through my obedience through faith to His gospel. I cannot remit my sins, only my Lord can do that. But I can, and must, sanctify myself from the love and practice of the sins which separate me from God. James wrote, *“Cleanse your hands ye sinners. Purify your hearts, ye double minded”* (James 4:8). What is this but an appeal to sanctification? Paul expressed the same. *“Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilements of the flesh and of the mind, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord”* (2 Cor. 7:1). It is written, *“Ye shall be holy, for I am holy”* (1 Pet. 1:16). Holiness = sanctification.

We are to look carefully *“lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness, springing up trouble you and thereby the many be defiled.”* Bitterness, disenchantment, and dissatisfaction are highly

contagious. Korah's dissatisfactions with Moses and Aaron spread and more than 250 of the chief men of Israel joined him in his rebellion against God's appointment. And, no matter that God enjoined it; many more of Israel murmured, "*Ye have killed the people of God*" (Numbers 16:41). This sad chapter from Israelite history underlines that a "*root of bitterness*" easily can spring up and defile many. And, had not the apostles acted speedily to correct a perceived wrong (neglect of Grecian widows in the daily administration, Acts 6) the murmuring of the Grecians could easily have grown into a real problem for the infant church. Distrust between Hellenists and Hebrews was always a latent problem and care had to be exercised so that wholesale dissension not result from it.

How true today! How often "*bitterness*" finds an audience and the peace and harmony in congregations is ruptured. Satan knows full well that brethren can fight and war with each other and lose their persistence in boldly preaching the word, as well as endanger their own souls by the bitterness and malice they hold toward one another. Let us look carefully lest a root of bitterness spring up and trouble us!

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