

November 20

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NIV) ⁴Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ⁵See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

One of the great struggles of the flesh and spirit is over relationships. We expect a reciprocal kindness from those with whom we share our life. Sometimes we bare our soul to them and that makes us very vulnerable to them. So, when a family or church member turns against us, whether through misunderstanding or difference of opinion, the conflict almost always becomes very personal and painful.

The author of Hebrews asked the flock to make every effort to live in peace with all men. It is easier to live at peace with a semi-hostile world than it is with those who are close to us – because of our expectations. To give us some direction, the writer included holiness along with the effort to be at peace. Then, to put the screws on, he added that without holiness we wouldn't see the Lord. (*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*) Then, to give the flesh a final deathblow, he added that we are missing the grace of God if we let bitterness grow. Not only that, but our bitterness will end up defiling many. How can we let willful conflict continue when we see these consequences?

The way out of this downward destructive cycle is to be merciful. You have received mercy you did not deserve; pass it on! Be to others as God is to you. Make every effort! You may not be reconciled, but making every effort means that you will always desire reconciliation even if it means agreeing not to agree. Take the situation to God in prayer. Get inside the other person's shoes and try to understand them, rather than insisting on being understood. A dear friend of mine once told me: Look beyond the person at the situation – there lays the problem. The peacemaker is blessed and will inherit the earth.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to make every effort to be at peace with all men. Keep me from a contentious spirit that insists on my way. Make me an instrument of peace.

Thought: For me personally, this is my deepest spiritual struggle. Please pray for me.