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# Words of Truth

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## Hebrews 12:14

By: Brian A. Yeager

The text in this letter goes from being corrected and moving forward (Hebrews 12:5-13) to another subject. The Lord's next instruction is: *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14).

Jesus taught about peace while He was on this earth. He taught: *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"* (Matthew 5:9). Most division/discord is sinful (Proverbs 6:16-19, I Corinthians 1:10, and I Corinthians 12:25). Yet, Jesus also taught: *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"* (Matthew 10:34-37). So, the subject matter of following peace with all men is not that simple.

Jesus took stands while He was on earth that did not bring about peace with all men (John 2:13-17, John 7:32-43, John 9:1-16, and John 10:1-21). There are situations wherein a faithful Christian has to stand for the truth and that will not bring about peace (i.e. Acts 17:1-15). We cannot sacrifice the truth upon some invented altar of peace (Proverbs 23:23, Proverbs 28:4, Romans 16:17-18, Philippians 1:17, Jude 1:3-4, and Revelation 2:14-16). So, the instruction to follow peace with all men has to be understood in light of the fact that peace is not always attainable when living and teaching the truth. Paul's inspired instructions to the saints in Rome is very helpful on this subject matter. Notice: *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:17-21). Now, think about how following peace with all men includes holiness.

God did not call us to live unclean, but rather for us to be holy (I Thessalonians 4:7). For us to understand what it means to be holy, we have to look at God and imitate His character. Notice: *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children,*

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*not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:13-16).*

When we consider the instructions to follow peace with all men and to be holy together we get some clarity. For example, think about the following two Scriptures: *“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (I John 1:5-6). The God of peace (Romans 15:33, Romans 16:20, Philippians 4:9, I Thessalonians 5:23, and Hebrews 13:20) will not change His character for the sake of peace. He will not allow darkness to abide in Himself. If we therefore are holy as He is holy, we will never compromise our holiness to try to create peace. If any one of us ended up doing so, our relationship with our Lord would be over (II John 1:9). We have to walk in the light as He is in the light (I John 1:7).

In considering our relationship with the Lord, that brings us to the end of the verse we are studying. The end of Hebrews 12:14 says: *“without which no man shall see the Lord.”* This is not all that simple of a phrase. Is this talking about Jesus? Is this talking about God our Father? The word translated “Lord” appears in nearly seven hundred New Testament Scriptures (KJV). That study is both exhausting and inconclusive. Most of the verses clearly refer to Jesus. Some clearly refer to the Father (i.e. Acts 3:22 and Acts 7:37; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Other Scriptures are not so clear. For example, Matthew 21:42, Luke 13:35, or James 4:10 could refer to the Father or the Son. Then there are passages wherein that same Greek word is used and is not about the Father or the Son (i.e. Acts 16:30 [translated “Sirs”]).

The phrase is not clear. However, other Scriptures clarify that all will see Jesus. Therein we have our answer. Notice: *“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen”* (Revelation 1:5-7). Furthermore, other Scriptures state: *“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God... For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (Romans 14:9-12 and II Corinthians 5:10). So, without following peace with holiness we will not see our Heavenly Father. Like all spiritual truths, take this information and apply it to your life (James 1:21-25).*