

CHAPTER 16
The Epistle to the Hebrews
THE FIFTH WARNING (Part 1) (Hebrews 12:14-17)
by G. H. Lang

Chapter 12:14-17

14. Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord:
15. 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;
16. lest *there be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright.
17. For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears.

1. The Christian Course (ver. 14).

i. *Its Principle—Peace* (ver. 14). By the word *diokete*, follow on, pursue eagerly, the picture of the race is resumed from ver. 1. It is the word used twice by Paul in Phil. 3:12-14: “I *press on* . . . I *press on* toward the goal unto the prize.” Paul had in view the final end, the prize; our Writer has regard to an immediate object necessary to reaching that final object, even the leading a life of peace with all men. The believer is to be as zealous in walking in peace as the racer is to secure the crown. In a world marked by greed and contention this is indeed a strenuous affair. It will not be obtained haphazard, but only by such as pursue it as an all-worthy, all-desirable object, and who make every sacrifice to secure it.

In the eighteenth century an American, John Woolman the Quaker, saw clearly and truly that the principle of acquiring and retaining is a basic and inevitable source of strife. The pursuit of wealth (vast or small) will always bring contention the pursuit of peace alone will change this.

When a certain village refused to grant hospitality to the Son of God two disciples proposed righteous and summary vengeance: “But He turned and rebuked them. And they went to another village” (Luke 9:51-56). They had not learned His earlier lesson: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:8). The very God of peace sent into this warring world the Prince of peace, Who made peace by the blood of His cross, peace between God and man, and man and man; therefore to us who know this the exhortation is: “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18). If there is to be contention, see to it that it arises wholly from the other party.

The effect on personal character of this one habit and practice is immeasurable. The immediate result is an ever-increasing moral likeness to the Prince of peace; the son of God becomes more and more like the Son of God; which has intimate bearing upon that final goal when the son is to share the glory of the Son.

For by the very grammar of this passage this pursuit of peace is linked indivisibly with the development of that “holiness without which no one shall see the Lord”—it is all one pursuit, one present object. It is obvious that one who is selfish and contentious cannot be holy, for the Holy One is the God of love and peace. To promote peace God made the supreme sacrifice of his well-beloved Son and the Son of God of his life. To be holy like God involves of necessity that the child of God must “seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:11; Psa. 34:14) at whatever personal sacrifice.

ii. *The Character of the Christian Course, Holiness* (ver. 14). The A.V. “holiness” is too indefinite. The Writer used the definite article—“the holiness.” This is not a usual English expression, and the R.V. gives “the sanctification.” The force of the word *hagiasmos* can be learned from its New Testament use.

(1) Rom. 6:19: “For as ye presented your members slaves to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, thus now present your members slaves to the righteousness unto *sanctification*.” “The righteousness,” that is, that practical righteousness just before mentioned (ver. 13), which is wrought out in our bodies by them being dedicated to God as His weapons in the battle against sin. Having by grace been made free from sin we have become slaves to this righteousness. In ver. 22 this *sanctification* is described as a “fruit” of that dedication to God, which shows that it is not the root, justification, but a living growth from the root; and the end of this process is “life eternal,” in full development.

(2) 1 Cor. 1:30; “Christ Jesus became unto us wisdom from God, even (*te kai*) righteousness, *sanctification* and redemption.” Righteousness as to standing in law before God, sanctification as the power of a holy life now, and redemption as to the perfecting of the work of salvation at His coming. Here sanctification is the connecting process between justification and perfection, and is thus distinguished from both. Comp. Eph. 5:25-27.

(3) This practical application of the word is shown with emphasis in 1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7 where it refers to sexual purity.

(4) In 2 Thess. 2:13 a yet deeper practical work is in view in the expression “*sanctification of spirit*,” that deeper inner realm which prompts and controls the dedicated body by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

(5) In 1 Tim. 2:15 habitual *sanctification* is connected with faith, love, and sobriety in a woman as conducive to safety in childbirth.

(6) 1 Pet. 1:1, 2 shows that the choice God made according to His foreknowledge operates “in sanctification of spirit” (*en hagiasmos pneumatōs*, as 2 Thess. 2:13); that is, God’s choice takes effect in the realm of man’s spirit as sanctified by the energy of the Holy Spirit, which leads to obedience and consecration to God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

These are all the occurrences of this word and they emphasize that it points to practical holiness, which the believer is to consider altogether desirable and therefore to cultivate with diligence, to pursue it as more to be desired than fine gold.

That the holiness here in view is not that righteousness which is imputed to the ungodly when he first places faith in Christ is clear from the very fact that the already justified are here exhorted to pursue it. That they had received as a free gift (Rom. 3:24); *this* they are to pursue.

iii. *The Goal of the Race—Seeing the Lord* (ver. 14). Two questions arise: (1) Who is “the Lord”? and (2) What is meant by “seeing” Him?

(1) Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ it is written that before Him “every knee shall bow” (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10, 11) and that “every eye shall see Him,” including those who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7). Therefore holiness is no prerequisite for seeing Christ.

But the title “the Lord” is definitely applied to God the Father. This usage follows the Old Testament. In Ps. 2:2 “the Lord [Jehovah]” is distinguished from “His Anointed,” which passage is quoted in Acts 4:26, followed in vers. 29, 30 by “And now Lord... grant... that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus.” The same distinction is made in Paul’s words: “the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:14). Christ Himself had addressed His Father as “Lord of heaven and earth” (Matt. 11:25); and James echoes this by speaking of “the Lord and Father” (Jas. 3:9).

It would therefore seem that in our passage it must be the Father for the sight of Whom practical holiness is essential.

(2) As to the sense of the word “see,” here again the Old Testament will show what is meant.

(a) Gen. 32:30. The “man” Who wrestled with Jacob was so actual and visible that Jacob said of Him, “I have seen God face to face,” and therefore he named the

place Peniel, which means “The face of God.”

(b) Exod. 24:9-11. Moses, Aaron, and seventy-two others, were called by God to go up into Mount Sinai, where “they saw the God of Israel... they beheld God.”

(c) Exod. 33:22, 23. To Moses God said: “I will put thee in a cleft of the rock . . . and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

(d) Judges 13:22. After open intercourse with an angel “Manoali said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.”

(e) 1Kings 22:19. Micaiah said to Ahab: “I saw Jehovah sitting upon His throne, and all the angels standing by Him.”

(f) Job 19:26, 27. “From my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold.”

(g) Isa. 6:1. “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne.”

In all these places the Septuagint uses the same verb “to see” (*horao*) as in our passage. It means, “to see with eyes.” The very noun “eye” (in Greek) is derived from it. So that all these places show that whether it was by bodily sight or ecstatic vision, an actual sight of an actual person is meant by the term “see.” In those times the Person it is true was the *Son* of God; but this does not affect the sense of “to see,” and

(h) Dan. 7:9 carries the matter further. Daniel said: “I beheld till thrones were placed and One that was ancient of days did sit,” Whose appearance the prophet then described. This Ancient of days was the Father, for the Son of man is shortly brought before Him (ver. 13).

Thus to this expression “see God,” as to so very much else in this Epistle, there is an Old Testament background, and it creates the notion of a literal sight of a literal Person. The New Testament follows to the same effect.

(i) Matt. 18:10: “in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father Who is in heaven.”

(j) 1 John 3:2. “We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is.”

(h) Rev. 22:3. And of the final beatific vision in glory it is written: "His servants shall do Him service; and they shall see His face."

Plainly as all these statements point to a face-to-face sight of God, either of the Son or the Father, there is yet another statement even more completely parallel to our present passage. It is

(l) Matt. 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"; and, as in *Hebrews*, this is immediately associated with peaceableness by the directly following words: "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called sons of God." The mention of *sons* of God shows that "God" here is the Father, and thus the Son pointed forward to a sight of the Father.

(m) This is the evident sense of the sublime doxology in Jude 24, 25: "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, etc." "God our Saviour" must here mean the Father, for the glory is rendered to Him "through Jesus Christ our Lord"; and the prospect opened is of a permanent position ("set" you) before the very personal glory of God.

It is essential to this that there be conferred a body of glory, spiritual and of heaven, which can endure the blaze of that uncreated light. The natural, earthly body cannot do this: "Man shall not see Me and live" (Exod. 33:20) for "the blessed and only Potentate," the Father, is "dwelling in light unapproachable; Whom no man hath seen, nor is able to see" (1 Tim. 6:15, 16). The heirs of glory must be "clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven" (2 Cor. 5:2), at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:35-38).

iv. *The Prize of the Course is Conditional* (ver. 14).

The prospect thus opened to faith is of inconceivable sublimity. No higher dignity will ever be possible. God has exhausted His resources for displaying grace, for He proposes to bring His sons to His own presence, to share the love, standing, and glory which He has granted to His own beloved Son. More than this He can never design or do, for He cannot place anyone *above* His Son. Therefore could Paul say of this secret counsel of God that it "completed the word [message] of God", brought it to full development (Col. 1:24-26: *Variorum Bible*).

But the attaining of this high dignity is conditional upon development of godliness. "Pursue the sanctification apart from which [*hou chtoris*] no one shall see the Lord." The first privilege which God in His grace confers is a standing in law as justified before Him as Judge; the final privilege which that grace will grant is a standing in person before His presence as the Father of glory. Both of these privileges are conditional. The former

is conditional upon the guilty sorrowing over his sins and humbling himself to accept the pardon of His offended Sovereign on the sole ground of the meritorious sacrifice of the Redeemer. The latter is conditional upon the justified giving diligence to advance in personal holiness.

The pathway from starting point to goal may be long and dangerous, but God is able to guard from stumbling till the goal be reached (Jude 24). And God *will* guard all who on their part “add all diligence” in developing, by the Spirit of Christ, the character of Christ. “Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for, *if ye do* these things ye shall *never stumble*; for *thus* shall be *richly* supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1-11). God does *not* say to the *ungodly* “*If ye do* these things” you shall be justified; but He *does* say to the *justified* “*If ye do* these things” ye shall never stumble, and *thus* your entrance into the kingdom shall be noble, in place of being humble.

Mr. Carnality and Mr. Faint-heart would fain take comfort from Jude’s assurance that God is able to guard from stumbling and set us before the presence of His glory; but they wish to forget the state necessary for that august Presence, even the being “without blemish.” Or they fondly suppose that God will produce in them that unblemished and unblameable state without diligence on their part. They will be bitterly disappointed at last. It were wise for such to learn from present experience. If a child of God ceases to give diligence to walk in holiness he loses that present enjoyment of the invisible presence of God which is the joy and strength of the godly. How shall one unfit for that Presence now be found fit for its visible glory where nothing that is unclean shall in anywise enter? (Rev. 21:27). Let such therefore “wash their robes” betimes (Rev. 22:14).

Indeed, it is the wisdom of each aspirant for that glory to ponder the Lord’s words quoted above from Matt. 5:8: “Blessed are the *pure in heart*, for they shall see God.” “A pure heart is one to which all that is not of God is strange and jarring” (Tauler). How terribly easy it is to indulge in the heart feelings, cravings, purposes unknown to the heart of God, strange and jarring to Him. Yet He can cleanse the heart from these if there be faith on our part, as He did the hearts of the heathen gathered in the house of Cornelius (Acts 15:9) Let us therefore, with a defiled believer of old, cry “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). For we maybe well assured that outward correctness will not by itself suffice for Him Who searcheth the heart, Who is, as Peter described Him, “the heart-knowing God” (Acts 15:8). A clean life must grow from a pure heart, or it will be but a plant without root, doomed to wither quickly.

One clear day an unbeliever was seen searching the sky with a telescope. Asked what he was doing he answered: I am trying to find your God, but I cannot see Him anywhere! The fitting reply was given: And you never will, for it is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they* shall see God." Most true, now and for ever! A king has millions of subjects, most of whom never see him in his palace. It is the few who are counted worthy of this honour. "Many are called, few chosen"; "many shall be last that are first [in opportunity and outward standing]; and first that are last" (Matt. 19:27-20:16).

2. Three Perils (vers. 15-17).

There are three ever-present perils against which the heir of glory must have an ever-open eye. Even as the *episkopos*, the elder of a church, must maintain the keen watch of the shepherd (*episkopountes*) over the welfare of the sheep (1 Pet. 5:1, 2), so must each Christian be ever "looking carefully" (*episkopountes*) against these dangers, lest as wolves they devastate the life.

i. *Falling short of the grace of God* (ver. 15). In ch. 4:1 this term *hustereo* means *to fail to attain* a given privilege, the rest of God. In Rom. 3:23 it means *to fail to live up to* a standard, the glory of God. 1 Cor. 1:7 states that the Corinthian believers did not *lack* any of the gifts available in Christ. Our present passage may be compared with Gal. 5:4: "Ye are brought to nought from Christ, ye who would be justified by law; ye are fallen *out* of grace" (*ek-pipto*). You have ceased to be in the realm where grace reigns. Our Writer does not go so far as this, but speaks only of "falling short from (*apo*) the grace of God," of not attaining to and enjoying all that grace makes possible. How many a Christian life is sadly *deficient* of this or that heavenly quality necessary fully to glorify God and to acquire His highest gifts.

It is the personal servant ("his own servants," Matt. 25:14), who lacks the zeal and devotion to use the pound entrusted to him while his Lord is away, of whom it is said that, at the Lord's return, he must hear the solemn sentence: "Take away from him the pound . . . from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him." This unfaithful servant is not killed as are the enemies of his Lord, but he pays a severe price for having fallen short of the grace of God. He did not appreciate grace in his Lord and therefore lacked it in himself (Luke 19:24, 26, 27, 21).

ii. *Bitterness* (ver. 15). A feeling in the heart is like a root in the ground; it must either wither and die, or be dug out, or else it will spring up. There is no such thing in this present life as the removing from the believer of the evil soil, the carnal nature, in which evil roots grow; but the roots themselves can be eradicated by watchful and strenuous care, in the power of the Spirit of holiness.

If the heart be flooded with the love of God (Rom. 5:5), if by obedience the disciple abides in the continual enjoyment of the love of Christ (John 15:9, 10), then love will kill bitterness, and the Christian will fulfil the exhortation "Let *all* bitterness "with its evil fruit of wrath, anger, clamor, railing, and malice, "be put away from you" (Eph. 4:31). Thus the root will not spring up, nor its evil fruit mentioned cause the many [equals, the majority] to be defiled.

But if the child of God, by selfishness and carelessness, allows bitter feelings against another to poison his heart, so that others become involved and defiled, then he is not developing that sanctification without which no one shall see the Lord.

iii. *Sinful indulgence of the body is the third peril* (ver. 16). Of this two instances are mentioned: (1) sexual sin, fornication; and (2) evil indulgence in eating. Perhaps man's deadliest snares are not acts wrong in themselves, as blasphemy or murder, but right acts done wrongly, as these here in view.

(1) For sexual intercourse is an ordinance of God for mankind, but its illicit indulgence is a crime of first magnitude, of which it is written plainly, and to Christians, that "the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified" (1 Thess. 4:1-8); that is, God Himself sees to the execution of the penalty.

This vice is universal still, as it was when Paul was writing. The craving of the individual is aggravated by the ease of indulgence, and the general consent dulls the conscience. In Christ the child of God is elevated to a purer moral region and is given moral power by which to escape "from the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Pet. 1:3, 4); but let him watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation, for the higher the standing the deeper the fall; and a brother in the family of God in Corinth had fallen lower than even the debased heathen would tolerate (1 Cor. 5:1).

This vileness was an aggravation of the sin of Reuben. He indulged once with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22); this Corinthian Christian was living habitually with his father's wife. And the atmosphere was infectious; there was the deadly danger of the whole church becoming leavened (1 Cor. 5:2, 6). Reuben paid the severe penalty that he lost his priority, his dignities as the firstborn in the family (Gen. 49:3, 4); this Corinthian was in imminent danger of losing his life by judicial action of Satan, though secure of his salvation in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:3-5). It appears that he repented promptly and the sentence was cancelled (2 Cor. 2: 5-11).

The most cogent argument on this urgent topic is in 1 Cor. 6:12-20. Its conclusion is that we should "Flee fornication" and glorify God in our body (vers. 18, 20).

(2) Profanity (vers. 16, 17). The profanity of Esau's mind was shown in that he esteemed a passing gratification of the palate above noble permanent privileges

ordained of God. He “despised his birthright” (Gen. 25:34). It is a vigorous word here used, the one which describes the contempt with which carnal men treated the Son of man: “He was despised and rejected” (Isa. 53:3), “a reproach of men and despised of the people” (Ps. 22:6). The Septuagint gives a word (*phaulizo*) which means that Esau regarded the birthright as paltry, a mere trifle, and so he sold it, he bartered it away for a trifle.

The word *apodidimi* “sold,” in the middle voice here used, implies that the article sold is *one’s own*, a material point to observe. It shows that Esau was not a mere pretender to the birthright, nor self-deceived on the matter. He was Isaac’s legitimate elder son and therefore the birthright was his by law of primogeniture. Therefore he cannot be taken here as a type of a mere professor of Christianity, or one self-deceived as to relationship to Christ. Such a one cannot be warned not to lose or sell a birthright to which he has no title whatever. Esau can be here only a type of a real child of God, one who is the true holder of the birthright. He did not have to acquire this dignity, for the title to it was his by birth; but he did need to value it and retain it, and because he did neither he forfeited it.

“Birthright” is a plural term in both Gen. 25:31, 34 (in the LXX) and in our passage, *ta prototokia*. It should be rendered “the rights of the firstborn,” for these were three.

(a) *The* firstborn son was ruler of the household under and for the father. Thus David’s elder brother “commanded” his younger brother to attend the family sacrifice at Bethlehem, which fact David and Jonathan considered should be adequate reason for absence from the table of even the king (1 Sam. 20:29).

(b) *This* shows also that the eldest son acted as the family priest, for he is shown acting as chief on occasion of a family sacrifice.

(c) *By* the law of God the firstborn received a double share of the father’s estate (Dent. 21:17); that is, if there were six heirs, the patrimony was divided into seven portions of which the firstborn took two.

No alien, no bastard, no pretender had any rights here; and so the legitimate sons of Gilead drove out of the house Jephthah, because he was the son of a harlot, saying, “Thou shalt not inherit in our father’s house; for thou art the son of another woman” (Judges 11:1,2).

God keeps a full register of all His universal family (Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; etc.), and therein some are entered as being “firstborn.” The reference is probably to the registers kept at the temple in Jerusalem. Who in a numerous family was the firstborn son could be settled beyond controversy, for each such had to be presented to God in

the temple (Exod. 13:2, 11; Luke 2: 21-24). God has the names of His firstborn sons duly recorded as such in His register in heaven.

The three above-mentioned rights typify most accurately the triple dignities of the firstborn sons of God who are being brought unto His glory. For they are to rule the universe as kings; to serve as priests, mediating the merits of Christ's redemption and so aiding the intercourse of man with God; and theirs is the rich heavenly portion, instead of only earthly blessedness. The title to these privileges they do not have to acquire; they hold it, for it is a gift that the grace of God has attached to their calling; even as the sons of Abraham did not have to acquire a title to Canaan. But we, as they of old, do have to value these privileges and so walk and so fight as to get possession and keep it, and as they lost their birthright, so may we forfeit ours.

Of this royal dignity, the "crown" is the symbol: therefore the warning: "hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11), as Jacob took the birthright that Esau despised.

Other Old Testament passages make clear that the birthright was forfeitable. I Chron. 26:10 mentions that of a certain family of Levites Shimri was the chief ("for though he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him chief"). This shows that the essential idea of being "firstborn" is priority of rank, not accident of birth; which is the force of Col. 1:15 that Christ is "the firstborn of all creation," not meaning that He was the first to be born and so had a beginning, but that He owns and rules the whole universe by the appointment of His Father (see Heb. 1:2).

1 Chron. 5:1, 2 (and see Gen. 49:3, 4) applies this forfeitableness of the birthright to Reuben, "forasmuch as he defiled his father's couch." The ruler's staff went to his brother Judah, "of him came the prince" (Gen. 49:10); the priesthood went to Levi; and the double inheritance was given to Joseph, whose sons Ephraim and Manasseh each became a tribe in Israel. Here also the one who was the first to be born did not become the firstborn as to rank, for Jacob "set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Gen. 48:8-20).

Thus from the case of Esau the Writer again warns his brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling (ch. 3:1), that the noblest gifts offered in Christ may be missed, yea, *will* be missed if things earthly and present be valued more than things heavenly and future, if the body be gratified at the expense of the spirit.

This last was the sin of our first mother Eve; she forfeited fellowship with God by a false gratifying of the body, by eating wrongly. The spirit succumbed, the body dominated, and thus it has been with all her children. From this slavery to the body God sets us free by redemption and regeneration. It is for each believer to imitate Paul: I buffet my body, and enslave it (*doulag6ga*); lest by any means, after that I as a herald have called others into the race, I myself should be disapproved and refused the crown

(1 Cor. 9:27).

(3) The *Loss is Irrecoverable* (ver. 17). The case of Esau shows, indeed, that the sin, which involves so serious loss, is not casual or unintentional, but deliberate. When Jacob proposed the cunning bargain Esau turned it over in his mind, briefly but sufficiently: "Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?" The compact was made the more conscious and deliberate by Jacob demanding that it be confirmed by oath (Gen. 25:31, 33). Thus Esau did not lose his rights by accident or mistake but by compact; with his eyes wide open to what he was doing he *sold* the birthright.

This greatly aggravated his guilt and rendered the position irreversible in two major elements.

First, Esau never after really changed his mind or was sorrowful for his willful sin in this matter. Gen. 27:34, 36 shows him blaming Jacob, not reproaching himself. He mourned his loss but not his sin. In this also he proved himself a true son of his first parents, for Eve and Adam each blamed another for their guilty conduct. In each of the three cases there was a measure of truth, for those others blamed were in part responsible; but godly sorrow for sin seeks no such shelter, but accepts its own responsibility and is humble. This change of mind Esau neither showed nor sought.

Secondly. Esau's act had been ratified by God, and Isaac as a prophet was moved to give to Jacob the blessing that attached to the rights of the firstborn, and his God-inspired prophetic utterance could not be recalled. Esau's cupidity sought the blessing that, by his own act and deed, was no longer rightly his, but his bitter tears could not avail to change Isaac's mind: "he found no place for a change of mind in his father" (*American Standard Version*).

It was Kadesh Barnea enacted in advance in a single individual. When Israel stubbornly refused to accept the privilege available God withdrew the possibility of gaining it. How urgently does Esau bring home to each as an individual the earnest exhortations of ch. 3:12 that we must each "Take heed" that there be no "falling away from the living God," and that of 4:1, "Let us fear lest haply . . . any one of you should seem to have come short."

The forfeitability of the birthright is further indicated and emphasized in the case of Reuben. Being Jacob's eldest son this honour was his; but because of his yielding to an unnatural sensual craving, it was taken from him (1 Chron. 5:1), and was given, as to the territory, to the sons of Joseph, the latter thus, in his children, receiving the double portion; and as to sovereignty, to the tribe of Judah, in the person of David and his sons, including Messiah; and as to the priesthood, to Levi. Was this in the Writer's mind when he specified in our passage the sin of fornication?

Yet Reuben remained of the family, and was blessed in measure; but as showing that the rights in question if once lost cannot be regained, it is to be remembered that in the days of the future kingdom the status created by Reuben's misconduct will still abide: the King will be of the house of Judah, the priesthood in Israel will be in the family of Zadok the Levite (Ezek. 48:11), and Ephraim and Manasseh will hold their double portion. These things Reuben lost for ever, though for ever remaining of the house of Israel, and sharing a portion, though this of ordinary and not special degree. All this is seen by comparing the final and prophetic announcements of Jacob (Gen. 49:1-4) and Moses (Deut. 33:6); for Jacob declared that the dignity of the firstborn with its pre-eminence and power belonged to Reuben, yet should not be his, not even in the latter days; yet Moses guaranteed *life* to the tribe, but nothing more: "Let Reuben live, and not die; yet let his men be few."

[*Note.* Mal. 1:2-5 does not deny that in Heb. 12 Esau is a type of a child of God to-day, but rather establishes it. For Esau is there called "Jacob's brother." as in full fact he was. Now in Heb. 11:9, 21 Jacob is cited as a man of faith, a sample of all such, and therefore as a child of God. His "brother" therefore cannot in Malachi typify an unregenerate man or Jacob also must be so, for they are of the same family.

It is also to be stressed that Heb. 11:20 shows, as does the history in Gen. 27:39, 40, that Esau received definite blessings, though inferior to those of the firstborn son. He is therefore not a type of the unregenerate, who are not related to the regenerate, and who are under the curse and wrath of God (Gal. 3:10; John 3:36); but he typifies one who has forfeited priority and privilege, though retaining some measure of blessing.

Thus did the men of war forfeit Canaan and fell in the wilderness, though God in grace treated them as still of the redeemed family and did the best He could for them *in the desert* (Isa. 63:9, 14).

Love in God is not impaired by that weak partiality, which often infects human love, nor is hatred in Him vitiated by that evil bitterness which makes it wicked in man. In God both are harmonious with His holy preference for piety and holy abhorrence of impiety. It is in this sense only that He "loved" Jacob and "hated" Esau.

It should also be observed that in Malachi it is Esau in his, posterity, Edom, rather than in his own person, on whom because of their wickedness the judgments are inflicted, and to whom God's holy "hatred" is shown.

Of Esau himself the history gives, as the final pictures, a man who has risen above his earlier hatred of his brother, welcomes him back with love, is ready to

protect him and his substance (Gen. 32 and 33), and who at last joins him at the graveside of their father (Gen. 35:29). Thus is he a type of one of the family of God who lapses into carnality and bitterness, but years after is restored in soul, yet who nevertheless cannot regain the full position and priority originally owned. He is the first that shall be last, though still in the family.

A wealthy commercial magnate of two generations ago had two sons. The elder did not live worthily and the father left him only enough to maintain him decently; but the title, castle, fortune, and business went to the younger son. Yet the elder remained one of the family and received as much as he deserved.

This is the force of Rom. 8:16, 17: "we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs indeed (*men*) of God, but (*de*) joint-heirs with Christ [Messiah, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified with Him." For every child, however wayward, inherits something from the Father—His life, nature, love, with food, clothing, training; but sharing with the Firstborn in glory is conditional.

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