

- c. Good coaches won't let us settle for less than our best efforts and they will stick with us even when things are tough. They will push us to dig deeper than what we thought possible, pushing beyond our own limits and finding strength and resolve we didn't know was in us.
- B. In our text this morning, the author seemingly takes on the role of a spiritual coach.
- 1. Remember that chapter 12 opened up with an exhortation to run with endurance. These people the author is writing to were facing tough times. They were being persecuted by both political and religious authorities and being shunned by family and friends for turning from Judaism to Christianity.
 - 2. Some, as we noted last week, were experiencing not only the attacks from the enemy, but also the chastening hand of the Lord. They were being stretched and challenged to grow, to move beyond the basics in their walk with the Lord, to take things deeper.
 - 3. And it is in that context that he now addresses his audience as if a coach on the sidelines calling out to their players, their athletes.
 - 4. He's telling them they need to endure, they need to push forward, despite the obstacles, regardless of the challenges, and even in spite of the chastening they are experiencing. The race continues on, and they need to get going in their race.
- C. As we go through our text this morning, we're going to note three commands the author has for his audience and three cautions.
- 1. The commands come as his pep talk, his words of encouragement and inspiration. While the three cautions are warnings that his audience must be mindful of and looking out for, pitfalls that can cause a whole lot of difficulty out in the race of faith.
- D. So, let's dive into our text this morning, looking first at the spiritual coach's **commands**, as the author tries to encourage his weary athletes. Look at verse 12 with me once again.
- III. Hebrews 12:12; Strengthen Hands & Knees
- A. Verse 12 begins with the word "therefore" as a way of connecting the points he was just talking about into an application.
- 1. They need to run with endurance, they need to overcome obstacles, they need to learn from their chastening. Why, well because the race of faith still continues on and because it still continues, here the author gives his audience some practical tips for continuing in the race.
- B. He begins with a command to **strengthen the hands** which hang down and the feeble knees.
- 1. Have you participated in or ever watched a marathon race before, or at the very least seen video clips of the runners that are doing their best just to finish the race?
 - 2. Some of them seem like they may not make it; their hands are hanging down, their knees seem wobbly and shaky.

- 3. The thought of them not being able to take one more step, let alone finish the race is something we wonder about in our minds as we see them struggling to continue forward.
 - 4. That is the picture the author paints with these words here. These runners are faint, their weary, their hands are hanging down low, their dangling by their sides. And their knees, they're feeble, they're weak, shaky, as if ready to give out at any moment.
 - 5. Maybe you're here this morning and you are feeling this same way. You're feeling weary and weak. You've been running for so long and it isn't getting any easier. Perhaps your hands are hanging down low and your knees are feeling wobbly.
 - 6. These words are for you this morning. Listen to what the author writes.
- C. The author calls out to his audience as a coach encouraging them from the sidelines and tells them they need to lift up their hands, they need to strengthen their knees. They have to keep going, the race is not done yet.
- 1. This exhortation and encouragement comes from the pages of the OT Scriptures. Coach is opening up His play book and recalling the words of the prophet Isaiah.
 - 2. The prophet Isaiah writes, "Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.'" (**Isa. 35:3-4**)
 - 3. The prophet Isaiah was speaking about the future glory of Zion. How, despite their circumstances, despite the attacks of the enemy and the chastening they were about to receive for their own idolatry, God assured His people that before it was all said and done, God was going to show up in a big way.
 - 4. He was going to bring His vengeance upon a world which had forsaken Him and He was going to come and lead His people in victory and set them upon the Highway of Holiness as described in Isaiah 35:8. (**35:8**)
 - 5. In like manner, Jesus had promised His followers that He too would return and that He would lead His people in victory against all who had forsaken Him, all who had not believed upon Him, and He would welcome His followers into His holiness in heaven.
 - 6. So even though they were struggling, they needed to lift up their hands, they needed to strengthen their weak knees and continue on their race, looking unto Jesus.
 - 7. But how can they do that? How can someone find strength to continue on, when they feel so weak, when they are so tired and worn out and beaten up, that they just want to throw in the towel and quit? How does one strengthen themselves?
 - 8. Well, let me tell you this. It definitely isn't through our own strength, or our own means. We lean upon a greater strength than our own. We lean upon the Lord and trust in Him to strengthen us.

- a. Psalm 145:14 declares, "*The Lord* upholds all who fall, And raises up all who are bowed down." (**Ps. 145:14**)
 - b. The sweet Psalmist David, writes in Psalm 18, "I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (**Ps. 18:1-2**)
 - c. Psalm 27 states, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is *the strength of my life*; Of whom shall I be afraid? (**Ps. 27:1**)
 - d. Psalm 73 states, "My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (**Ps. 73:26**)
 - e. Isaiah 40:31 proclaims, "But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint." (**Isa. 40:31**)
 - f. The apostle Paul found that in His weakness, Christ's strength was made perfect in him, so much so that he would boast in his weakness that the strength and power of Christ would rest upon him.
 - g. He said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." [In those things that make our hands heavy and our knees weak.]
 - h. He continued, "For when I am weak, then I am strong." (**2 Co. 12:10**)
9. Our strength is not in ourselves, but in the Lord. He is our strength, He is the one who will give us what is needed to endure the race. We look to Him, to empower us, to lift our hands and to strengthen our knees.
- a. By the power of His Holy Spirit inside us we are more than conquerors. And we can get back up and get back in the race.
 - b. Zechariah the prophet declares, "'Not by might nor power, but by My Spirit' says the Lord of hosts." It won't be by our might, nor our power. But by the power and might of God's Spirit at work in us. (**Zech. 4:6**)
 - c. When we are weak and tired and ready to throw in the towel we need to look to the Lord, to look to His Holy Spirit to empower us to continue on in the race, to not give up, and to press toward the finish line and the upward call of God upon our lives.
- D. So, we see here the first command is to strengthen ourselves and the only strength that we have that is worthwhile is the strength of the Lord. We must depend upon God's strength and look for the empowering of His Spirit as we continue to run the race of faith.
- E. But that wasn't all the author had for his audience. Take a look at verse 13 as we note yet another command he had for them.
- IV. Hebrews 12:13; Make Straight Paths
- A. Here he calls for them to **make straight paths** for their feet.

1. The word for paths is an interesting one. In the ancient Greek it was used to speak of a wheel track or a rut.
 2. Now normally, we think of ruts as being bad, we talk about getting stuck in a rut and how it can be difficult to get out of it. And that can be a difficult situation if we are in a bad rut.
 3. But a rut can be a good thing if it is leading us in the path God has for us. A well-established path can help us stay the course without getting us side-tracked or lost along the way.
 4. And that is how it is used here in our context. It is speaking about making a path that is going to keep us on the straight and narrow.
- B. And how are we to do this? How do we make straight paths? Well, I don't mean to sound like a broken record, but once again, this is something that we must look to the Lord for.
1. Proverbs 3:5 & 6 reads, "Trust *in the Lord* with all your heart, And do not lean on *your own understanding*. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And *He* will make your paths straight." (**Pro. 3:5-6; NASB**)
 2. You see, we often have the idea that we need to come up with a plan of our own, that we need to make our own path, but Proverbs 16 states, "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." (**Pro. 16:9**)
 3. God declares in Psalm 32:8, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye." (**Ps. 32:8**)
 4. It is the Lord who makes our path straight, it is God who leads us in the way we should go. So, our responsibility is to simply look to Him. To trust in Him and His ways, to yield ourselves and our ways to Him.
 5. We don't need to understand everything, we don't need to have all the answers, we don't have to have it all figured out. We just need to look to the Lord and let Him lead us, trust in Him and His ways, and let Him make our paths straight for us.
- C. If we do so, the author of Hebrews says that which is lame will not be dislocated, but rather healed.
1. The idea behind being lame here is the idea of being crippled, or maimed; implying weakness and frailty.
 2. If we look to the Lord and allow Him to make our paths straight, the lame, the weak, the frail, will not become dislocated, they will not be turned out, they will not get turned away from the way, but rather they will be healed, they will be brought back into fullness of health.
 3. And this becomes a very applicable analogy for the author's audience. They were feeling weak and frail. They were being tempted into turning away from the faith, away from the path God had them upon. But the author tells them don't get turned away, stay the course. Look to God and continue following after Him and He will bring healing; He will restore, He will see you through to the end. Don't give up.
 4. There may be times when this world beats us up and we are going through a ton of difficulties, the exhortation here in Hebrews 12 is for us

as well. We can't give up. Yeah, we may feel weak and frail, but we continue to look to the Lord, we continue to trust in Him and His ways.

5. And as we do, we see Him move, we see Him at work in our lives and the lives of those around us. He gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; (**Isa.61:3**)
6. God is able to do all this and more, as we look to Him and trust in Him and His ways.

D. Let's continue in our text and we'll note the third and final command this spiritual coach has for his athletes. Read verse 14 with me.

V. Hebrews 12:14; Pursue Peace & Holiness

A. This third command involves our relationships both horizontally towards one another and vertically towards the Lord.

B. We are to **pursue peace with all people** and we are to pursue holiness.

1. Pursuing peace with all people involves our horizontal relationships, our interactions with our fellow man.
2. Pursuing holiness involves our vertical relationship with the Lord.

C. This word pursue is written in the imperative mood which means it is a command that the author is giving. Just like the previous two commands to strengthen our hands and knees and to make straight paths, here we are commanded to pursue.

1. The word pursue as it is used here means to follow or press hard after, to pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain, to go all out with the desire of obtaining something.
2. In this case we are to pursue, to go all out, to press hard after peace with all people.
 - a. This small Greek word translated "all" in the English means "all" in the Greek. It's the same in both languages.
 - b. That means seeking after peace not just with those that you get along with and those who are just like you. But even those who are opposed to you, or those who think entirely different from you.
 - c. This would even include those who may in fact be actively persecuting you and coming against you.
 - d. We are to seek after peace with all people. Our desire ought to be that we want to see those who may appear as our enemies, turned from their ways and saved by the grace of God.
3. Listen, this isn't something that comes natural to us, especially when we are weak and tired and drained. We can easily be set off by the simplest of things. But we are exhorted, commanded here by Hebrews 12 vs 14 to pursue peace with all people.
 - a. And this isn't just a one off type of verse. Throughout the Scriptures we read of God's desire for us to live peaceably with all people.

- i. Psalm 34:14 reads, "Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." (**Ps. 34:14**)
- ii. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome, "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." (**Rom. 14:19**)
- iii. To the church in Thessalonica he exhorted, "Be at peace among yourselves." (**1 Thes. 5:13b**)
- iv. Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." (**Mt. 5:9**)

b. We are to pursue peace, there is no way of getting around it. But just because we pursue it, doesn't mean we will always obtain it.

- i. The apostle Paul also wrote to Romans saying to them, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." (**Rom. 12:18**)
- ii. If it is possible, means that it may not be possible to live at peace with all people. You may be willing to live peaceably, but someone else may not want that peace and so it is outside of your control.
- iii. As much as depends on you, you are to live peaceably, but you can't control how other people are going to treat you.

4. So, here we see yet another command that we are to follow that is somewhat out of our control. We can't force people to live at peace with us. But, as much as it depends upon us, we need to live peaceably with all people. We need to make sure that we are doing what we can to make every opportunity for peace to happen.

- a. Which means we may have to swallow our pride and learn to say "sorry", and we may have to humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness.
- b. It means that we need to keep short accounts with people and we need to be gracious with people.
- c. It means there may be times where we have to take the high road and let things go that are keeping us from peace.
- d. It may mean that we need to put some distance between ourselves and others who seem to rub us the wrong way.
- e. I'm reminded of Peter and his question for the Lord when it came to living at peace with people and being willing to forgive others. He asked the Lord, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (**Mt. 18:21**)
 - i. I don't know why, but I picture Peter saying this with a somewhat smug look upon his face, as if that was a very high and lofty goal.
- f. But this is what Jesus said to Peter, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (**Mt. 18:22**)

- i. And just so you know, Jesus wasn't expecting His disciples to be math majors. He wasn't saying forgive 490 times and then you don't have to forgive anymore.
 - ii. The idea is that you continually forgive, you keep short records, you forgive as your Father in heaven has forgiven you.
 - g. Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two." (Mt. 5:38-41)
 - i. Jesus was teaching His disciples not to retaliate, not to return insult for insult, or eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Take the loss, take the high road, do what is necessary to live at peace with one another.
5. How can we do that? Once again, not by our own strength, not by our own efforts. Consider what is written in Proverbs with me for a moment.
- a. In Proverbs 16 we read, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Pr. 16:7)
 - b. If our ways are pleasing to God, if we are looking to Him and following after Him, and living according to His will for our lives. The Bible tells us that even our enemies will be at peace with us.
 - c. So if we want to pursue peace with all people, the best option is to pursue God and His ways; to live our lives according to His Word.
 - d. If we do that we will have the best chance possible at living at peace with all people.
- D. Now, there was a second part to this commandment to pursue. We are to pursue peace with all people, but we are to also pursue holiness.
- 1. Holiness, as it is used here, speaks of sanctification; and specifically the process of sanctification.
 - 2. The Greek word is "hagiasmos" and it comes from the Greek verb "hagiazō" which means to sanctify.
 - 3. The Bible uses the terms sanctify and sanctification in two different ways, with two different Greek words.
 - a. As I already mentioned there is the word we have here in our text, "hagiasmos" which speaks of the process of being sanctified, of becoming set apart for the Lord and growing in our understanding of the Lord and His work in our lives. The idea is us becoming more and more like the Lord as we grow in our faith.
 - b. But there is another word in the Greek that is also translated as sanctified and it is the word "hagiosune". It speaks of the state of being sanctified. It is not a process but the result of a process.

- i. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ we were sanctified. We were set apart as holy unto the Lord. It speaks of our position in Christ. It is a done deal, a finished byproduct of our salvation.
 - ii. But that isn't the word that is used here.
 - c. Here in our text, it is speaking about the process of being sanctified. Of becoming holy in our walk with the Lord.
 - d. We are exhorted to be holy, to live a holy life unto the Lord. To continually grow in our walk with the Lord, to continue to live set apart for him all of our days.
 - e. Pursuing holiness involves continuing to look to God and yielding ourselves to His plan and His ways for our life.
4. With each of these commands we find ourselves having to keep on coming back to the Lord and looking to Him and trusting in Him. It's all about Him and His work in us. It isn't about us and our ability to do anything. It's all a work of God in us and through us.
- E. Which brings us to the first of the cautions the author has for his readers.
- VI. Hebrews 12:15a; Falling Short of the Grace of God
- A. The beginning of verse 15 starts with the words "looking carefully". The idea here is that we are to give special attention to something. We are to see to it that certain things either do or don't take place.
- 1. In this context, the author is going to write about three things that need to be avoided, three cautions that we must be mindful of in our race of faith, so that we don't get tripped up and further delayed in our race.
- B. Now the first thing the coach cautions his audience upon is the possibility of falling short of the grace of God.
- 1. Now, we want to be very careful here in coming to a proper understanding of what falling short of the grace of God means.
 - 2. Some translations use the word fail here as in fail to receive or fail to obtain the grace of God. The Greek word used here means to fail or come short of something, to miss out, or not to reach something.
 - 3. The bible uses this same Greek word in Romans 3:23 where it states how all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23)
 - a. Even in our best of efforts we fall short of the glory of God, we can never reach the glory of God nor obtain it in and of ourselves.
 - 4. But we have to be careful when thinking that way when it comes to the grace of God. The grace of God isn't something that can be earned or merited. By the very nature of what grace is, it cannot be earned.
 - a. For grace is God's unmerited, unearned favor. It isn't something we can reach for, or strive for, or work towards.
 - 5. In fact, the grace of God has been poured out for us all.
 - a. Titus 2:11 teaches us, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men," (Tit. 2:11)

- b. Paul explains how “the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.” (**Rom. 5:15**)
 - c. John wrote of Jesus stating, “And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace [meaning grace upon grace upon grace]. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (**Jn. 1:16-17**)
6. Grace has appeared to all men, we have been given grace upon grace upon grace. So how is it possible then to fall short of the grace of God, you may wonder.
7. To fall short of the grace of God is to reject the grace of God. It isn’t that you fall short of measuring up to the grace of God, but rather that you fail to take advantage of the grace of God.
- a. Instead of operating by grace, you attempt to go at it on your own.
 - b. Just like with the commands in our study, they kept all pointing back to our need to look to God and trust in Him and His leading and guiding, it’s the same here; we must ever depend upon God’s grace.
 - c. How do we strengthen ourselves? Or how does God strengthen us? It’s by His grace. God said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (**2 Co. 12:9a**)
 - d. The Spirit of God who empowers us is a gift of God towards us. We don’t earn God’s Spirit; He gives His Spirit to all who place their faith and trust in Him.
 - e. The same goes for God making our paths straight. It isn’t about us earning God’s help or favor. It’s a gift. As we place our hope and faith in Him, He works in our lives. His work in us is all about grace.
 - f. We don’t earn God’s grace or favor or help. Otherwise, if it were that way, we would have to say that God owes us for something. But God doesn’t owe us anything. Everything He does for us is a work of His grace and the outpouring of His love toward us.
 - g. How can we pursue peace and holiness? It’s by the grace of God. Paul writes in Galatians, how they had become estranged from Christ, thinking they could be justified, (sanctified) by the law and states how they had fallen from grace in Galatians 5:4. (**Gal. 5:4**)
 - h. Whenever we attempt to earn our way, or to operate in our own strength and power, we are in essence rejecting the grace of God and falling short of it.
8. In this race of faith, we must cling to the grace of God and never let it go. It is our only hope. If we every try to make it in our own strength, we’re not going to make it. We will fall short. If we want to finish our race, and we want to do so well, our only hope is the grace of God being lavishly poured out upon us.

C. So that is the first caution. Don’t fall short of the grace of God. But there is more. Take a look at the rest of verse 15.

VII. Hebrews 12:15b; Roots of Bitterness Springing Up

A. These cautions are tied together. The first caution dealt with a warning about falling short of the grace of God. This caution deals with **a root of bitterness** springing up and causing trouble.

1. I say they are connected because often times when we fail to receive the grace of God, we often will find that in its place grows a root of bitterness.
2. When we are looking to our own energy and our own efforts and it doesn’t seem to be working, and then we see other people and how easy life is for them, it often brings this root of bitterness in our hearts.
3. We don’t like that other people are doing so well, while we are over here suffering. And we become bitter. We become envious. We become jealous of others and question why God is being so easy upon others and it robs us of all joy in life, because we have rejected God’s grace.

B. And the terrible thing about that root of bitterness inside our hearts is that if not dealt with it will spring up in our lives and it will cause problems, it will cause trouble. Not only for ourselves, but for those around us as well.

1. James writes, “where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” (**James 3:16**)
2. When we allow bitterness and envy to control our lives, we are not a pleasant person to be around. We will lash out at others and be harsh towards the people around us. Our negativity will spread and we will defile those around us.
3. We have to be very careful that we do not allow any amount of bitterness or envy take root in our hearts. Ephesians exhorts us, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” (**Eph. 4:31**). Have nothing to do with it.
4. Instead of allowing bitterness to take root in our hearts, we want God’s Spirit to be actively growing in its place. That we may produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives rather than a root of bitterness.
5. As followers of the Lord and recipients of His Holy Spirit our hearts should overflow with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There ought to be no room whatsoever for any sort of bitterness.

C. The final caution is seen in verses 16 & 17. Let’s take a look and then wrap up our study for the day.

VIII. Hebrews 12:16-17; Giving into the Flesh

A. The final caution is one that is described as being any sort of fornicator or profane person and is illustrated for us through the life of Esau.

1. The word fornicator speaks of a sexually immoral person, one who engages in sexual activity outside the confines of God's design in holy matrimony.
 2. The word profane speaks of a godless person; one who is void of any sort of relationship or connection to God. A profane person lives for self and their flesh alone.
 3. These two are very similar. Both are willing to sacrifice what is holy and good for something that is sinful and evil.
 4. Both are led and controlled by the flesh. They give in to whatever the flesh desires. They have no self-control, no desire to honor God or live for the Lord. They are live for passing momentary pleasures and sacrifice what is good, and honorable, and holy.
- B. Again, these things are connected. If we allow bitterness to take root in our hearts it will often lead to the flesh taking control of our lives. We are ruled by our flesh and our sinful desires.
- C. This is the picture of Esau's life. Esau, if you are not familiar with his account, was the twin brother of Jacob and son of Isaac and Rebekah.
1. The details of his life are found in the book of Genesis.
 2. In Genesis 25 we read of how Isaac and his wife became pregnant with twins and how there was a struggle within her womb. So they went to inquire of the Lord and the Lord declared to them, "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger." (**Gen. 25:23**)
 3. And it came to pass that when she gave birth the first to come out was Esau and his twin brother followed shortly after who was named Jacob.
 4. Know typically the first born would receive an extra blessing from the Father, they were given what was known as the birthright. This would amount to a double portion of inheritance and the right to serve as leader of the family once your father passed away.
 - a. This should have gone to Esau seeing as how he was born first, all be it just a few minutes before his brother. But by the grace of God and by no effort of his own, God had pronounced that the older Esau would serve the younger Jacob.
 5. Later as the children grew into adults a day came where Esau had spent the entire day out in the field doing what he loved best, hunting wild game. And as he returned home, he found that Jacob had prepared a red stew.
 - a. And so he said to his brother, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." (**Gen. 25:30a**)
 - b. To which Jacob replied, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." (**Gen. 25:31**)
 - c. Now, I believe that the boys were full aware of God's prophetic word spoken over them while they were still in the womb. Jacob was the

- one who was going to get the birthright according to the Lord, but culturally it should have been Esau's. Jacob used this opportunity to get Esau to recognize the grace of God that had been upon his brother by formerly renouncing his birthright and delivering it to Jacob. That way there would be no misunderstanding down the road. Not only had it been decreed by the Lord, but Esau himself would testify that he had no claim to it because of giving it up in exchange for this stew.
- d. And so Esau responds to Jacob, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. [And it tells us] Thus Esau despised his birthright." (**Gen. 25:32-34**)
 - e. That root of bitterness had already taken hold of Esau's heart. He fell short of the grace of God and didn't like the fact that God had chosen to bless His brother with an extra special blessing. He despised the grace of God and bitterness took over.
6. Fast forward to a time where Isaac was growing old and wanting to officially pass along his paternal blessing to his son, he sought to give the birthright to Esau because Isaac loved Esau more than he did Jacob because he was like him, because they both liked to hunt and eat wild game.
7. Long story short, Rebekah got wind of Isaac's plans to bless Esau and concocted a plan with Jacob to trick her husband and Jacob's father into giving the blessing to Jacob instead of Esau.
- a. Now there's a ton more lessons here than what we have time for. Suffice to say this was quite the dysfunctional family.
8. Rebekah and Jacob succeed in tricking Isaac into giving his blessing to Jacob rather than Esau and when Esau finds out about how Jacob deceived his father into giving him the birthright and the blessing, he cried with great big tears, pleading with his father to bless him as well, saying "Bless me—me also, O my father!" (**Gen. 27:34**)
9. But as our text here in Hebrews states, he was rejected for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.
- a. Esau despised the birthright. He willingly gave it up just to feed his flesh. He gave up something of great value and worth for a simple meal of bread and lentils.
- D. Esau is the perfect example of someone who is led by and controlled by the flesh. He didn't care about spiritual blessings. He didn't care about the grace that had been given to His brother. He despised it. Instead of being happy for his brother, he was bitter with envy.
1. And he never had room in his heart for repentance. He was sorrowful that he missed out on the blessing, but he never repented from being led and controlled by his flesh.

2. He wanted the spiritual blessing, while still living by and according to the flesh.
 3. The caution here is plain to see. We must be careful not to become a person that is controlled by our flesh, or **someone who gives into the flesh**. Someone who is willing to live solely for the flesh without any care for spiritual things.
 4. When we are not yielded to the Lord and looking to Him for our strength and our guidance, when we are trying in our own efforts to do things our own way, we will fall short of the grace of God, we will become bitter people and we will ultimately become those who are completely given over to the flesh. And we will miss out on the blessing of an intimate relationship with the Lord. And we will be left to the wages of our own efforts, which inevitably will fall short of the glory of God. And we will be left out like Esau.
 5. Our only hope is that we humble ourselves and unlike Esau, find a place in our hearts for repentance. God's grace is there for each of us. If we will humble ourselves God's grace will be there.
 6. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 both say the same thing: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (**James 4:6b**)
 7. May we be those who are willing to humble ourselves, repent from our own self-righteous works and look to the Lord for His grace.
- E. And really that is the application here in our text this morning. It's quite simple. The author is exhorting and encouraging the audience with a very simple thing. Look to the Lord, **trust in Him and in His grace** to see you through.
1. By God's grace He will strengthen our weary hands. By God's grace He will lead and guide us. By God's grace we can find peace with one another and continue to grow in our relationship with the Lord.
 2. It's all about God and His grace. Trust Him, trust in His grace. He will see you through to the end. Amen? Amen.