



## Raising the Standard “The Pursuit of Personal Holiness” # 2 Hebrews 12:12-17

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Whether one agreed with Charlie Kirk’s position on political or moral issues, the overwhelming worldwide response to his death, especially among the youth and college-age adults, revealed a deep admiration and respect for men of conviction and courage – men who refuse to be, as the Apostle Paul said in Romans 12:2, **“Squeezed into the mold of a worldly man.”**

- Paul’s charge to the Church in 1 Corinthians 16:13 resonates as clear today as it did 2,000 years ago: ***“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong”***.
- To be watchful means to be alert, on guard against spiritual enemies, and the temptations of the flesh.
- To stand firm in the faith means to hold fast to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.
- To act like men means to be courageous, firm, and resolute; men who will not shirk their responsibilities as the spiritual leaders of their family.
- To be strong refers to one’s spiritual strength, which comes through prayer, and a reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

**1. What God Commanded – Hebrews 12:14-17 – *“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”***

- The word “pursue” means to chase after something, not with a casual attitude of hoping to find it along the road of life, but with a diligent, determined goal of not giving up until we have discovered that which we pursued.
- **Peace with all mankind** – to do all we can to be at peace with all people, and to maintain that level of peace with all men, whether they are believers or unbelievers.
  - ***“If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all people.”*** Romans 12:18
  - ***“Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you.”***
- **Holiness before the Lord** – not that pure holiness that God the Father imputed to us when we received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, but the manifestation of that holiness that was infused within us when we were indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- That pursuit begins with our daily disciplines of prayer, Bible study, personal worship, and remaining in an attitude of prayer.
  - ***“We strain to reach the goal to win the prize for which God has called us in Christ Jesus.”*** Philippians 3:13-14
  - ***“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”*** Ezekiel 36:26-27
  - ***“Let your lights so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*** Matthew 5:16

Until the day the Lord returns, the Church represents the Body of Christ in the world, which means we who make up His Body must live our lives in such a way that the unbelieving world can see the holiness and righteousness of Christ within us, for then the Holy Spirit can use our lives as witnesses of His transforming power.

- When the people saw Jesus, they were made aware of His holiness and righteousness, and therefore, their lack of it.
- When the people saw the boldness of the Apostles and the willingness of those 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians to be martyred for their expressed faith in Jesus Christ, they were made aware of their need for a Savior.
- We received the same assignment when we received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.
  - ***“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers,***

*they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” 1 Peter 2:11-12*

- *“Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”*

Galatians 6:9

**2. What God Expects – Hebrews 12:1-2 – “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

- Only those who are in the race and running the race by pursuing peace with all men and holiness are going to inherit heaven, for if there is no persistent pursuit of peace with all men and the characteristics of holiness, as manifested in Jesus Christ, there is no evidence of salvation.
- The “pursuit” of holiness is not the “achievement” of it, for none of us will ever reach that level of perfection.
- However, while the holiness and righteousness we are pursuing will never qualify us to live in heaven, if we are not pursuing them with that determined goal of not giving up until we have found them, where is the evidence of our salvation?
- The writer said, without the pursuit of holiness, we will not see the Lord, and that can’t mean anything less than spending eternity in the presence of God.
- 1 John 3:2 – ***“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”***
  - That is the day of our glorification.
- 1 John 3:3- ***“And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”***
  - This is the process of our sanctification – the pursuit of that which has been given to us by the Holy Spirit.
- 1 John 1:5-10 – ***“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 practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”***
- If we are walking in the light, i.e., committed to those daily disciplines and constantly practicing the righteousness of Christ, even though we will never achieve sinless perfection, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of all sin, so that we are constantly acceptable unto God.
- However, even though we made a “decision for Christ” years ago, if we are still walking in the darkness of sin, that decision did not affect our eternal life, and heaven is not our destiny.
- Galatians 5:19-21 – ***“People who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”***

