

## Yesterday, Today, Forever...right now. (Hebrews 12b)

1. Let's begin by remembering last week: this road we are on WILL get rough and rocky. Our response is to keep our faith and to make sure we are not making things harder than they have to be (make level paths for your feet).
2. Now, if we get that and it is firmly in our minds, we can go here: (Hebrews 12:14-17). In chapter 13 we will find a series of admonitions, but we need a few here before we get a peek behind the curtain and see our reality. First off, we are to make every effort to live in peace with everyone. Paul phrases it a bit differently in Romans 12:18. There is not one level of peaceful interaction for all people in all times – people and situations differ and so will the responses to those situations. That said, we are to make every effort within ourselves to live as peaceful people and create peace between ourselves and others.
3. Now, the admonition to be holy: the word used and the context do not insist that we be righteously perfect; it means to continue to be sanctified, separated, belonging to God. Our behavior is to be different from that expected by a person in the world. The best way to translate this word to us might be “separate and available for God to use.” Those are the people Jesus says he will welcome into heaven in Matthew 25.
4. Watch the roots of bitterness and do not let them grow. This is a root, not a weed: it only grows if you feed it. We will be hurt, we will be mistreated, and we will suffer injustice but we are not to take that home and tend it, watering it, and allowing it to grow until it makes us ungrateful and bitter.
5. And there is a hint of “leave no one behind” here as we are told to watch for everyone in the group so that “no one falls short of the grace of God.”
6. The passage about Esau seems a bit strange at first but it leads us into the next passage if we understand what the writer is trying to say. We are warned against sexual immorality (all impurity) and then told not to be like Esau. What was wrong with Esau? He considered

things of the world before he considered the things of God. He was worldly in the way he made his decisions. He was shortsighted. He fell for the way Satan switches the price tags and went for the thing that cost him most without thinking. Keep the long view. Keep your eyes up, focused on Jesus.

7. We are not to be focused on the here and now because the here and now is not all that is here...and now. Pay very, very close attention to the tenses used here [Hebrews 12:18-24] To the Jews and to many people groups outside the West, time is far more elastic (Indonesia verbs, rearranging order of events in the Gospels). The writer takes the Jewish Christians back to their history – you are not being taken back to Mount Sinai for Jesus to give you a new law. You are not going back to a system that is full of fear.
8. You HAVE COME to a new mountain, Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (every Jew understood that this meant we were already in heaven). We have also come to a place where angels live and move and do their work. You are also already in a place where the righteous who died live and praise God and wait for us.
9. We have already made it to the throne room of God and all the saints. Jesus made a different covenant on a different mountain, as befits a high priest from nowhere (Melchizedek). The blood of Abel cried out from the ground for justice and revenge. The blood of Jesus cries out “Peace on earth, good will toward all humankind.”
10. Jesus is reordering everything and we are a part of it. [Hebrews 12:25-29] We will not be shaken, but the world will be. We will not panic when the world panics. We will not be fearful when the world is fearful. We are separate – holy – and we are home with Jesus already...not just in our hearts and minds but in reality. As the country song said – we are already there. You are home. You are chosen. You are on the holy mountain of God for you are His holy people...now.