

**Lenten Devotional Reflection**  
**2 April 2020 (Lent Day 32)**

**Scripture: Hebrews 12:14-end New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

<sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled. <sup>16</sup> See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal. <sup>17</sup> You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought the blessing with tears.

<sup>18</sup> You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, <sup>19</sup> and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. <sup>20</sup> (For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.”) <sup>21</sup> Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”) <sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, <sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup> See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! <sup>26</sup> At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.” <sup>27</sup> This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; <sup>29</sup> for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

**Message**

There is a Chinese proverb which says, “The leopards leave behind their skins after death, the humans their names.” It is used to show that no matter what difficulties and dangers a person encounters, he should keep his reputation, integrity and virtues with strong will. He should strive until death to retain his reputation, that he has established throughout his life. We, as humans, would not have been considered the wisest of all beings who are endowed with a spiritual quality, if we drift with the tide to change our values easily according to circumstances. In the past, Esau sold his birthright for red bean soup. He valued the physical needs more than God’s eternal blessings.

Verse 16 says, ‘See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person.’ The story about Esau selling his birthright can be found in Genesis Chapter 25. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, “Let

me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” So, he promised Jacob’s request, and sold his birthright to Jacob. The Bible says, “Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.” Esau looked down upon his identity as firstborn son, which has huge impact on his future interests, for satisfying his instant physical needs. Later, when he had discovered the seriousness of abandoning the birthright, he could never get his right back even though he cried bitterly in front of his father.

Immediate satisfaction of the desires of the flesh will make people irrational. In order to satisfy the desires of the flesh, people often speak exaggerated words and do something that goes against common sense. In order to have the food immediately, Esau said to Jacob, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” This statement was a real exaggeration. A person who is able to run home vivaciously from the wild is unlikely to die, even though he is hungry. Esau was a hunter. He always had game with him when he returned home. He could have borne the hunger and handled the prey before he enjoyed his feast. He wouldn’t die at all.

Exhortation on the pursuit of holiness: Let no root of bitterness spring up. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:15 “See to it that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.” This saying has its background from the Old Testament. “It may be that there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart is already turning away from the LORD our God to serve the gods of those nations. It may be that there is among you a root sprouting poisonous and bitter growth. All who hear the words of this oath and bless themselves, thinking in their hearts, “We are safe even though we go our own stubborn ways”. (Deuteronomy 29:18-19)

‘Root of bitterness springing up’ is a metaphor for bad influences. The reason why we cannot maintain holiness is bad influences. If people who have high level of status and who are considered to be outstanding become bad role models, their influence can be terrible.

The pursuit of holiness must not be affected by bad examples. Although the values and moral standards of our society have been distorted seriously, we as Christians should not be discouraged. Someone’s being able to get away from his wrongdoings is no excuse for us to commit sin.

### **Meditation**

Are you willing to pursue holiness? May God help us to stay away from sin. Even though the moral values are declining, one should not follow the world to lower the standard of holiness. Yield not to temptation of the flesh, lest we lose greater blessings.

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