

Dear Phil

weight and the easily ensnaring sin may have been laid aside, but we are in a fight! We do battle as we pursue holiness. The enemy will contest every advance in Christlikeness. There is no age, maturity, or state of grace which exempts us from this clash. The danger of becoming wearied and faint in our minds dogs us all. We persevere by considering Christ's endurance. Our Captain won through the devil's throng. By His grace, we may too! Are you persevering in the fight against sin?

Fifth, we pursue holiness by submitting to the Lord's chastening and enduring it thankfully (12:5-11). If we're pursuing holiness, we should not experience God's chastening hand, right? Wrong! That's not the way He works. In fact, God sovereignly permits and ordains hardships, as the case may be, to help us grow in Christlike holiness. The old adage, "No pain, no gain," speaks truly to our condition. We pursue holiness by humbly accepting Providence's rebukes with thanksgiving, for they testify of His loving passion for us to partake of His holiness. Are you thanking the Father for His holiness-inducing chastenings?

Sixth, we pursue holiness by strengthening one another (12:12-13). The world's motto is "every man for himself." Not so with the pursuit of holiness. Holiness must be pursued in community. We grow in Christlike holiness best when we live in structures of mutual accountability and edification. We run the race to holiness best when we link arms with fellow runners. If one stumbles, his partners help lift him to steady pace. Have you linked arms with fellow pursuers of holiness?

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HOW TO PURSUE HOLINESS: SIX STEPS

Hebrews 12:14 charges us, "Pursue holiness!" The holiness we must pursue is God's holiness, which is perfectly seen in Jesus, who was separated from all sin, blameless, pure, and righteous (Heb. 1:9; 4:15; 7:26). In response to an earlier question, "How do we pursue holiness," I noted that the passage we are considering, Hebrews 12:1-13, outlines at least six means by which we are to pursue holiness.

First, we pursue holiness by "laying aside every weight" (12:1). Marathon runners shed every ounce that slows them down. If there is anything that is hindering your pursuit of holiness, you must lay it aside! Media, money, music, pride, relationships—it doesn't matter what it is. If it's impeding your progress in holiness, it's past time to get rid of it. Have you laid aside every weight in your pursuit of holiness?

Second, we pursue holiness by "laying aside... the easily ensnaring sin" (12:1). Weights aren't the only things to be laid aside. The easily ensnaring sin must go, too. What is this sin? It's the one to which you most easily fall prey. All believers easily fall prey to self-centeredness, the primary manifestation of our corrupted nature. We lay aside this sin principle by coming to Christ for the cleansing of His Holy Spirit. Yet, even after your heart has been purified by

faith, there will be sins in which you may be easily ensnared. We lay these sins aside by doing all that Scripture prescribes for guarding ourselves from sin: make use of the means of grace (Psa. 119:11; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:13-18); make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (Rom. 13:14); flee from temptation by associating with those who pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace and who call upon God out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22); and walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Have you dealt with the sin that easily ensnares you?

Third, we pursue holiness by looking unto Jesus (12:2). Every runner knows that an unwavering focus on the finish line is a key to winning. A distracted runner is a losing runner. The word translated "looking" means to "direct one's attention without distraction, fix one's eyes trustingly" on someone. We must undistractedly and trustingly fix our soul's gaze upon Jesus. Why? Because He is the model for holiness. A sure way to falter in our pursuit of holiness is to look around and compare ourselves with others. To be holy as Jesus was holy, we must run focused on Him. Is your gaze fixed on Jesus?

Fourth, we pursue holiness by persevering in the fight against sin (12:3-4). These verses should jolt us free from any thought of sprinting easily to holy victory. Yes, every