

Hebrews 12:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Analysis

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. This verse combines two essential pursuits for believers: horizontal peace with others and vertical holiness before God. "Follow" (diōkete, διώκετε) means pursue actively, chase eagerly, hunt down—the verb conveys intensive effort, not passive hoping. The present imperative indicates continuous action: keep pursuing throughout life.

"Peace with all men" (eirēnēn meta pantōn, εἰρήνην μετὰ πάντων) emphasizes the broadest possible scope—not just fellow believers but everyone, even enemies (Romans 12:18). Biblical peace (eirēnē, εἰρήνη) transcends mere absence of conflict, encompassing reconciliation, right relationships, and shalom—wholeness and well-being. Christians should be peace-makers and peace-keepers, pursuing harmonious relationships wherever possible (Matthew 5:9, Romans 14:19).

"And holiness" (kai ton hagiasmon, καὶ τὸν ἀγιασμόν) denotes sanctification—the process of being set apart for God, progressively conformed to Christ's image. This isn't sinless perfection but persistent pursuit of godliness, progressive separation from sin, and increasing Christlikeness. "Without which no man shall see the Lord" (hou chōris oudeis opsetai ton kyrion, οὐ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον) establishes holiness as essential, not optional. "No man" (oudeis, οὐδεὶς) means absolutely no one—universal requirement. "Shall see" (opsetai, ὄψεται) refers to eschatological vision—entering God's presence eternally. This doesn't teach

salvation by works but affirms that genuine salvation always produces holiness (sanctification evidences justification). Faith without holiness is dead (James 2:17).

Historical Context

The original Hebrews audience faced internal community tensions (Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:1-3) and external persecution. Some believers, under pressure, became embittered, divisive, or compromising. The author calls them to simultaneous pursuit of peace and purity—neither compromising holiness for superficial harmony nor abandoning peaceable relationships in pursuit of rigid separatism. Jesus embodied this balance: the friend of sinners (Luke 7:34) yet absolutely holy (Hebrews 7:26). The phrase 'without holiness no one will see the Lord' echoes Jesus' Beatitude: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5:8). This corrects two errors: antinomianism (claiming faith while living in sin) and legalism (pursuing external conformity while harboring hatred). True Christianity combines genuine holiness (transformed character) with genuine peace (reconciled relationships). For Jewish Christians tempted to return to ceremonial law, this verse redefines holiness: not ritual purity but heart transformation. For all believers, it warns that profession without sanctification is spurious (1 John 2:4).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does pursuing peace with all people relate to pursuing holiness before God?
2. What does it mean practically to 'follow' or pursue peace and holiness?

3. Why is holiness essential to seeing the Lord, and how does this relate to justification by faith?
4. In what areas of life are you most challenged to pursue peace with others?
5. How can believers balance uncompromising holiness with peaceful relationships with unbelievers?

Interlinear Text

Εἰρήνην διώκετε μετὰ πάντων καὶ τὸν ἀγιασμόν οὐ
 peace Follow with all men and G3588 holiness which
 G1515 G1377 G3326 G3956 G2532 G38 G3739

χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον
 without no man shall see G3588 the Lord
 G5565 G3762 G3700 G2962

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 7:1 (Holy): Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 (Holy): For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

1 Peter 3:11 (Peace): Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Romans 12:18 (Peace): If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Proverbs 16:7 (Peace): When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Romans 14:19 (Peace): Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Romans 6:22 (Holy): But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (Holy): To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

Psalms 34:14 (Peace): Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Ephesians 5:5 (Parallel theme): For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

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