

1. Verses 12-13 form a transition between verses 1–11 and 14–29.
2. The basic theme of Hebrews 12:12-17 is exhortation.
3. The purpose here is not just to teach truth - but to encourage living up to the truth. (Hebrews 13:22)
4. The first exhortation can be simply stated: 'Be strong and go straight. Cast away despondency and press on.'
5. The reference to *drooping hands* and *weak knees* is familiar imagery in Jewish literature, often used to describe attitudes of discouragement and despair.
6. The writer sensed the tendency to spiritual weakness in his readers, and in light of the truths he had expounded he encouraged them to renew their strength.
7. The telltale signs of losing steam are drooping arms, flopping hands, and wobbling knees that reduce the runner's stride to awkward pace.
8. These signs were proverbial in Biblical culture for mental and spiritual slowdown.
9. Isaiah encouraged his struggling people by saying, "Strengthen you the weak hands, confirm/steady the feeble knees; say to those that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not; your God will come" (35:3, 4).
10. The command to "strengthen" comes from the word from which we derive our English word *orthopedic*. The sense is, "make upright or straight."
11. Life for the believer is full of repeated hardships that can even come as divine discipline. In fact, these times are signs that we are authentic sons and daughters. (v. 7- 8)
12. Toughing it out is essential, but there is still more to the idea because this toughness is not meant to be a solo venture.
13. We should make every consideration to help each other finish the race. Hebrews is full of this idea of helping each other make it: 3:13; 4:1; 4:11; 6:11; 10:25.
14. Teaching and exhortation is inseparable.
15. It is one thing to believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture - it is another to live under the authority of Scripture.
16. It is one thing to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord - it is another to surrender to His lordship.
17. Verse 14 can be difficult to interpret. It appears that the writer is speaking of practical peace and holiness.
18. Positionally - in Christ - a believer is already at peace with God and already made righteous - but we must work at living that way each day.
19. Because we are at peace with God - we should be peacemakers and because we are made righteous we should live righteously and holy. (1 John 2:3-6)

20. We should be on guard to prevent two developments. Both appeals reflect a concern that we care for each other.
21. First, we should be careful that no one misses out on sharing fully in God's grace. Believers must be willing and ready to assist those who have stumbled in weakness. We must bear one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
22. Second, we must guard against and prevent the growth of any bitter root. (Deuteronomy 29:18)
23. Bitterness is like a poisonous weed or cancer and can utterly destroy believers around them. Concerned Christians must take action to prevent this.
24. The writer then shows the need for a holy life with the reference to Esau - Jacob's twin brother. Esau was brought up in the patriarchal family.
25. Notice in verse 16 he is called a fornicator - although his offence was not moral but spiritual. He was also "profane" - his life had no sacred room for God.
26. He proved this lack of spiritual interest by selling his birthright for an immediate satisfying of physical hunger. Sold his birthright for a measly bowl of stew.
27. Next - in verse 17a - the writer reminds the Hebrews of what Esau did. He later sought the blessing of his father Isaac - desiring a double portion of the property.
28. Then in verse 17b - we see what Esau discovered. The repentance spoken of here was not on Esau's part. It was repentance or change of mind on the part of Isaac.
29. The pleading by Esau for a reversal was in vain. Esau was forever the loser - because he placed no importance on spiritual things and chose to satisfy a brief moment of physical comfort instead.