



## **BITTERNESS**

*DEALING WITH A DEFILING SIN*

*Growing Christians Study #2*

*“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;” Hebrews 12:15*

Everyone has been hurt by someone. Everyone has been done wrong. Some people have been deeply hurt and have been done wrong extensively. Some of you may have:

- \* Had an unfaithful spouse
- \* Been humiliated as a child
- \* Experienced being used
- \* Endured physical abuse
- \* Devastated by sexual abuse
- \* Missed love and security

The bottom line is everybody has been hurt. Some more than others, but all hurts hurt!

### *Lesson Overview*

- I. Root Of Bitterness
  - A. Covered Root
  - B. Corrosive Root
  - C. Coming Up Root
- II. Result Of Bitterness
  - A. Difficulty for You
  - B. Difficulty for Others
  - C. Difficulty for Cause of Christ
- III. Response To Bitterness
  - \* Only Through Grace Comes..
  - A. Forgiving Others
  - B. Trusting Christ

The danger with being hurt is that hurt can turn into bitterness. Our hurts don not have to turn into bitterness, but every hurt can become bitterness if we allow it.

Bitterness is a Bible word. The word “bitterness” is found in 21 different verses. The word “Bitter” is found in 36 different verses.

The root word in bitterness or bitter is “pikrus” which means:

1. Piercing with sharpness
2. Poison, acidic, capable of burning away.

When using the word “bitterness” to describe an emotion or an attitude it is then defined as: “a piercing of the heart with an acidic poison capable of burning away concern or love.”

Simply put, bitterness is a corrosive emotion or attitude. Bitterness removes the Fruit of the Spirit that is found in Galatians 5:22-23

- ◆ Love
- ◆ Joy
- ◆ Peace
- ◆ Longsuffering
- ◆ Gentleness
- ◆ Faith
- ◆ Meekness
- ◆ Temperance

Bitterness then fills our heart with the works of the flesh as also described in Galatians chapter five.

- ◆ Hatred
- ◆ Wrath
- ◆ Strife
- ◆ Envy

Because of its nature, bitterness is one of the most defiling sins! Bitterness can destroy any Christian. It is a topic that every growing Christian should understand. This lesson contains three things to know about bitterness.

## **I. Root Of Bitterness**

*Hebrews 12:15 “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”*

Every blossom of bitterness begins with a root of bitterness. I have heard many people say, “You have to dig up the root of bitterness.” Others say, “You have to remove the source of your bitterness.” That is not what Hebrews 12:15 says. In the context of Hebrews 15:14-17, the Word is teaching us to deal quickly with the root of bitterness WHEN it springs up by applying God’s grace.

Notice the root is already present and God does not address the removing of the root but the springing up of the root. Why? Because the root will never go away so long as we are in a fleshly body.

Let me explain. The FACT that...

- ◆ Your spouse was unfaithful
- ◆ You were mistreated as a child
- ◆ Your reputation was smeared
- ◆ You were being used then disregarded

will always be there. That event or memory is a root that will always be a potential for bitterness to blossom.

Dealing with bitterness is not digging up the root but rather keeping it from ever growing.

Ephesians 4:31 says in part, “...put away...bitterness”

Everyone has a root of bitterness. We must keep it from ever, “*springing up.*” That is in part what Hebrews 12:14-17 is teaching.

This root of bitterness has a few characteristics.

### **A. It is covered**

This root lies just beneath the surface. It is lying dormant waiting to spring up at any moment. Never think to highly of yourself by believing that you are not capable of bitterness or that you do not have a root of bitterness that could spring up.

Romans 12:3 “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly...”

### **B. It is corrosive**

There is no such thing as a harmless root of bitterness. Bitterness is like an acid ready to destroy. We can not play with bitterness.

### **C. It is ready to Come Up**

All that a root of bitterness needs to bloom is a moment when we are living in the flesh. Our flesh is fertile soil for the “*springing up*” of bitterness.

*Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...”*

*Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*

We must be vigilant in our watch for the springing up of bitterness for it is ready to come up with a little fertilizer from our fleshly nature. We must know that when this covered, corrosive root comes springing up it has miserable results.

## II. The Results Of Bitterness

If bitterness always has a root waiting to spring up, what are the results when it does spring up?

### A. Difficulty for You

Notice the phrase “*trouble you*” that is found in Hebrews 12:15. We often mistakenly believe that our bitterness towards others will ONLY bring trouble to them. This is simply not true. Bitterness always brings trouble to you first!

Remember bitterness is a corrosive poison. No man can hold this poison without damaging or troubling himself first. Your bitterness towards another will turn you into a miserable, negative Christian while doing far less damage to the one you are bitter towards.

Imagine if you would that bitterness is cyanide poisoning and in order to apply it to another person you would have to first get a mouth full of it then spew it onto your victim. Who would be the greater victim? Who would suffer the most harm? That is like bitterness. You must first ingest it before you can spew it, and it will always hurt you more than anyone else.

Some have said that bitterness damages ONLY the vessel that it is stored in. That is not true. Bitterness does destroy the vessel that it is stored in, but it can bring great damage to others also.

### B. Difficulty for Others

Notice Hebrews 12:15 when it says, “...*many are defiled...*”

The word defiled means “tainted, corrupted, or contaminated.” In other words, our bitterness corrupts or contaminates others. Bitterness is an infectious disease. If you have it, you will spread it. You may say, “Good I want to corrupt the person that I am bitter towards.” The truth is, the person that you are bitter toward will probably be the least infected by your bitterness.

Who then will be defiled by our bitterness? The ones closest to the bitter heart are the most defiled or infected with bitterness. It is not just a few people that are close to use either. Remember “*many are defiled.*” One persons bitterness will defile many of his loved ones that are the closest to him.

Your bitterness will defile your:

- ◆ Marriage
- ◆ Children
- ◆ Parents
- ◆ Closest Friends

Remember back to the illustration of the spewing of the poison of bitterness. Not only must you ingest it to spew it, thereby hurting you, but those who are closest to you will be caught in the “line of fire” and receive more of the poison than your target because they are closer to you.

Do you really want to poison your loved ones with your bitterness? When your bitterness has defiled those closest to you, you will be left knowing that you are responsible for spreading the corrosive sin of bitterness.

I have seen a young husband and father become bitter toward his parents. That spirit of bitterness defiled his wife and children. Their attitudes were deeply affected. Eventually they also were filled with bitterness not only to their grandparents

but eventually to their own parents. Bitterness destroyed the home. The father was left to bear the burden of being the one who spread the disease of bitterness. It wasn't worth it. It is never worth it.

### C. Difficulty for the Cause of Christ

The "Big Idea" or main theme of Hebrews 12:14-15 is found at the end of verse 14, "...*man shall see the Lord...*"

The Lord is using this passage to teach us that one main thing in life for Christians is for people to see the Lord through us. The beginning of verse 14 lists things that we must do for people to see the Lord through us:

- ◆ *Follow peace with all men*
- ◆ *Holiness*

The Lord then uses verse 15 to spell out what will keep these two things from coming to pass and thereby keeping people from seeing the Lord. That thing that will prohibit men from seeing Christ is "... *lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*"

Do you see it? Bitterness destroys our peace with men and destroys our holiness and causes others not to be able to Christ in us but rather a mean spirit of bitterness. When men can not see Christ in us we have greatly hindered the cause of Christ!

Simply put, bitterness makes the cause of Christ difficult. Do you really want to hinder the Gospel by allowing bitterness to "*spring up*" in your life?

Having learned the root of bitterness and the results of bitterness, let's see the response to bitterness.

### III. The Response to Bitterness

There is only one way to effectively respond to the root of bitterness. There is only one way to effectively respond to the blooming of bitterness. GOD'S GRACE!

God's grace is the only response to bitterness that can neutralize and defeat it. Man can not, in and of himself, combat bitterness. We have no weapon that can defeat such a sinful act. Furthermore, when bitterness does spring up it is because we have failed to live in God's grace.

Hebrews 12:15 "*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*"

You see, grace is more than giving good to someone. Some people have defined grace as:

**G**od's  
**R**iches  
**A**t  
**C**hrist  
**E**xpense

That is true. God's grace does give us wonderful riches. But it is more than that. Grace is giving good when bad is deserved. Grace is giving blessings when a curse is deserved.

II Timothy 1:9 "*who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*"

Christ gave us eternal life through his shed blood when we deserved to go straight to Hell for our wicked sins!

Romans 3:10 "*As it is written, There is none righteous...*"

We deserved the greatest curse ever known, hell; but we received the greatest blessing ever known: His righteousness, Eternal life, and Sanctification while being joint heirs with Christ.

Now that is grace! Giving a blessing when a curse is deserved!

That is what is required for us to overcome bitterness from springing up in our lives. If you have been done wrong or hurt, the person that hurt you or did you wrong deserves a curse from you not a blessing. However, that would bring bitterness. Grace allows you to bless those who have wronged you rather than cursing them and allowing bitterness to spring up and defile many.

Only God's grace can allow us to bless those who we want to curse. It can not be done in the power of the flesh. It is not natural. It is supernatural. Therefore, God must give us His grace to avoid bitterness.

When we allow bitterness to "*spring up*" we have failed to live in God's grace.

*"...lest any man fail the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up..."*

Demonstrating God's grace will cut down the blossoms of bitterness. How then do we obtain grace from God to give a blessing when a curse is deserved?

James 4:5 tells us that our spirit, "*...dwelleth in us to lust and envy...*"

Our spirit wants bitterness, but the next verse says,

*"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."*

God will give us the grace to avoid bitterness and give a blessing rather than a curse when we humble ourselves!

Humility before God is a mindset that says:

- ◆ It is not all about me. It is about Christ.
- ◆ I am as sinful as anyone, and God forgave me
- ◆ If I am taken advantage of, I will love anyway
- ◆ If I am unappreciated, I will give anyway
- ◆ I have been forgiven much, I will forgive much

Pride before God is a mindset that says:

- ◆ It is all about me
- ◆ I am too good to put up with that
- ◆ I deserve better than this
- ◆ If you use me, I am done with you
- ◆ You owe me more than you are giving me

A proud heart will NEVER have the grace to overcome the springing up of bitterness.

Pride is the fertilizer of bitterness.

Grace is the pesticide of bitterness.

To get grace we must confess and remove pride. When we get access to God's grace, we then have access to overcome bitterness by:

- ◆ Forgiving others
- ◆ Trusting God

Lord, give us your grace to overcome our root of bitterness!

Here is a story of someone who chose grace over bitterness.

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Louisa Stead was born in England in 1850. Louisa trusted Christ as her Saviour when she was only 9 years old. She came to America in 1871 and at the age of 25 she married Mr. Stead. Together they had a daughter named Lily. When Lily was 4 yrs old the family went on vacation to Long Island Sound, New York. While there, relaxing and enjoying their vacation along the beach, they saw a young boy drowning in the ocean. Mr. Stead swam out and tried to rescue him, only he was pulled under by the boy and both Mr. Stead and the boy drowned as Louisa and her daughter watched from shore. With little help, Louisa Stead raised Lily. Times were very tough and great financial burdens plagued the two. Through all of this Louisa refused to allow bitterness to spring up in her heart toward the drowning boy, his family, or her Lord. Her needs were supplied by her prayers and her faith. One day when there was no food in the house and no money to purchase any. Lily was also in need of a new pair of shoes. Louisa and Lily knelt down together as they had done so many times before and began to ask the Lord to supply their needs. After their prayers they went to bed. The next morning Louisa opened the front door to find a large box of groceries and enough money to buy shoes for Lily. As she and Lily began to weep, she picked up the box and brought it into the house. She then sat down at a table and wrote thee words:

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
And to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
And to know, "Thus says the Lord!"

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust Him more!

O how sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to trust His cleansing blood;  
And in simple faith to plunge me  
'Neath the healing, cleansing flood!

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
O for grace to trust Him more!

I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,  
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;  
And I know that Thou art with me,  
Wilt be with me to the end.

Louisa chose Grace over bitterness and she was so glad that she did. Through watching her mother, Lily learned the same lesson. She later married and became a missionary to Zimbabwe.

Will you choose God's grace to follow and forgive or will you all the defiling sin of Bitterness to spring up in you?