

## The bite of bitterness

*Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;*

**Intro:** We all have a lot to be bitter about. Our lives are filled with failed expectations; battered relationships; dashed hopes; soured friendships and the list goes on and on! What does this tell us? More than we are probably willing to admit. When bitterness is permitted to rule one's life we're always on a collision course.

### A. What bitterness is

In this Hebrews 12:15 passage he is talking about an apostate or the possibility of running from potential in our Chr. walk. The things that happen in our lives which cause us to become hardened and hostile and therefore, hinder our conforming process and actually help our falling away potential.

So if bitterness is something that causes us to become hardened and hostile, lets look at what or where bitterness springs from

#### 1. It comes when we are criticized

How does criticism affect you? I must admit that I have not always handled it well and I have allowed it at times to make me bitter rather than better.

The problem here is, we take criticism to personally and, as we will see later, we miss potential benefits and instead we allow it to hinder our conforming process

#### 2. It comes when we are discouraged.

Do you have unfulfilled dreams and hopes? Do you have things that you wanted to see happen but they never did happen? This discouragement, if not met head on, can lead to bitterness. So tell God you are upset and mad. He's big enough to handle it.

#### 3. I believe it comes when we are neglected by our fellow man.

How many marriage partners or children do you know whose lives have been wracked with bitterness because a mate or a parent simply neglected their human needs for attention? But

#### 4. It comes ultimately, when we let it come in.

Richards word study: said, when we allow painful experiences to harden us and make us hostile then we become bitter. Some one wrote, life is like a grindstone it either wears you down or it polishes you up. Which is it doing with you?

## B. How bitterness develops or progresses

It starts with my attitudes and reactions. No one can make me bitter. If I become bitter it is because I have decided and then chosen to. I become bitter when I decide to nurse the hurts and hold grudges for the things that God has allowed people to bring into my life.

William H. Walton once said To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee. How about you, Have you been hurt by someone and are even now secretly nursing that hurt? Maybe it was a pastor, maybe a mate, maybe a fellow Christian, maybe your boss or whoever.

If you are nursing those grudges and hurts, you are feeding the biting power of bitterness and, it is adversely affecting your conforming to the image of Christ and to your own happiness and freedom.

Bitterness does not just affect us alone. Because my life touches other lives, if I am bitter, it touches someone else in its progressive development. Bitterness is a contagious disease.

## C. What it does

When it affects the individual, it will make them miserable. They will be miserable because, just like un-forgiveness, it allows the other person to continually control their lives. Their lives are continually controlled with the thoughts of how another person has hurt them instead of letting it go and going and enjoying their own life.

When it affects the family, that family will be tension filled. Broken relationships because communication is broken, since hardened, hostile people don't communicate in a constructive way.

When it affects the work place, production is hampered, work is not fun, it promotes workplace gossip and a host of other things. Do you dread going to work because of certain people?

When it comes to church, it is filled with relationship problems and God is hurt when we can't or won't get along with each other. Psalm 133:1 says *Behold, how good and how*

*pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!* People dwelling in bitterness do not dwell in unity.

D. Turning this hindrance into a positive, or how can we cure this or at least slow it down

Augustine said sin is energy in the wrong channel. If we are channeling our energy into nursing our bitterness over events and people in our lives, we are channeling that energy into a hindrance and sin.

Therefore, let's look at how we may be able to channel our energy away from the sin of bitterness into the blessing of conforming to the image of Christ and basking in the happiness and freedom it can bring. First

**1. We need to beware of its potential.** We may be here today and saying to ourselves this message really isn't for me, yet tomorrow we may find ourselves in the very dregs of bitterness over some little thing.

Hebrews 12:15 said, *looking diligently so that we don't come up short of God's grace in our lives and by doing that, allow a root of bitterness to take hold of us.*

Weeds are seemingly capable of jumping up overnight, so the first thing to help us in to be aware of its potential in our lives.

**2. We need to be willing to give it up** and then do it.

There are some people who seem to enjoy being bitter, hard and hostile, they seem to be born with a disposition to fight.

But for the Christian who wants to conform to the image of Christ, to enjoy freedom and happiness, this disposition has no place in your life. Ephesians 4:31 says, *let bitterness be put away from you along with several other bad things.* Those words (put away) means a simple one time future action.

So this means that the Scripture says get rid of bitterness once and for all not getting over it, letting it come back in and getting rid of it again.

**3. We need to learn to accept criticism.**

Because criticism is often at the root of our bitterness, the sooner we learn to let criticism make us better instead of bitter, the sooner our conforming process will be complete.

#### 4. We need to practice forgiveness. First..

Forgiving **our self** Proverbs 14:10a says *Each heart knows its own bitterness,*

We know our faults don't we? Sometimes we just need to give ourselves a break. This does not say we should excuse ourselves but sometimes we just need to forgive ourselves

Then forgiving **others** Ephesians 4:32 tells us to forgive. The person who practices forgiveness will be the person who wins over bitterness.

To help us do this we need to learn to practice Philipians 4:8. *It says Think on the things that are pure, true, just, and lovely etc.* If we would do that with each other, we would find this hindrance of bitterness being taken out by the roots.

Bitterness will give you the following if you nurse it. It will give you mental destruction, physical distress, it will restrain your spiritual growth and it will destroy your lives, your families, your church and relationships.

However, if we claim the victory, we will be free from the prison of our own mind and emotions. As we begin to wrap this up, we can review it in this way

#### I. Bitterness Devastates us Spiritually

Do the things and people God has in our lives conform us spiritually, and transform us joyfully, or do they deform us through bitterness.

#### II. Bitterness Destroys us Physically

Pastor Robert Perry once shared a story that illustrates how today's subject can have a great effect on us.

He tells the story of a man who came to his office and he was suffering from terrible headaches that couldn't be relieved with medication except for some slight easing for a while. As they discussed things they were able to uncover the fact that the cause for these headaches was.

The man was divorced from his wife. Then they discovered that she had been dead for some ten years. They also uncovered the fact that he still harbored bitterness towards this woman even though she was dead. But later when they were able to deal with this bitterness, and forgiveness was given on his part, the headaches were gone.

### III. Bitterness Discourages us Emotionally

If I am so emotionally involved in bitterness I will never have the energy, time, or desire to enjoy anything else will I?

### IV. Bitterness Defiles Your Relationships

How many here have a good relationship with someone you are bitter at? It just doesn't work does it?

Harry Emerson Fosdick noted and stated that

"Bitterness imprisons life; love releases it.

Bitterness paralyzes life; love empowers it.

Bitterness sours life; love sweetens it.

Bitterness sickens life; love heals it.

Bitterness blinds life; love anoints its eyes."

I trust that we are not letting this pitfall cause us to come up short in the joy and peace department of life.

Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping someone else dies

Bitterness is like cancer. It feeds upon the host, or person, in whom it resides

Bitterness imprisons life; love releases it

When the root is bitterness, imagine what the fruit might be

**A final thought:** Bitterness is a real issue and the fact is we need help to get victory and the only one who can help us is none other than Jesus. If you do not have Him in your life you can if you read a few more lines and follow the instructions. May you get victory over this joy stealer.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.  
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at [lapeerchurch@gmail.com](mailto:lapeerchurch@gmail.com) Subject line: (Salvation)