

Bitterness

The church, the born again, suffers many diseases. I believe the worst disease saved folk endure is bitterness. Many lives and testimonies have been ruined by bitterness. Talents that could have been used by God are useless and unavailable due to bitterness. Yes, one of the great cancers of the church today is bitterness.

Text verses

Ephesians 4:31 *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:”*

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;”*

Acts 8:23 *“For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”*

Israel's bitterness

Exodus 15:23-27 *“And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? 25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, 26 And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. 27 And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.*

Israel has been set free from the captivity of Pharaoh in Egypt in this passage in Exodus. Now, God, through Moses, is leading them through the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. About the third day of their journey, they got thirsty. Life's journey often makes a child of God thirsty. They arrived at a pool of water. They tasted the

water and it was bitter. Oh no! They cried to Moses “*what shall we drink?*” They were sorely troubled.

Troubles, a circumstance of life

Every person, saved and unsaved, will experience trouble in life. Job 14:1 says “*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*” If you haven’t yet experienced trouble, one day you will. It happens to good people, bad people, the rich and poor alike. Most of the time, problems and disappointment come as a circumstance of life. *You* never gave your loved one cancer. *You* never caused yourself to be fired from the job. *You* never made yourself poor and, perhaps, hungry. Problems are a circumstance of life. Maybe you are trying your best to walk upright and live true to God’s commands. This will not stop disappointment from coming your way. Life is filled with disappointment. Often I disappoint myself. Go into your house. Bolt the doors, lock the windows, and close the curtains. I predict trouble will find you. Leave home and flee, and I predict trouble will follow you.

Troubles, ordered of God

Sometimes in life God sends trouble, and it is for a purpose. Israel is doing as God commanded them in Exodus 15. They are following God’s appointed leader, Moses. They did not choose their route. The great cloud by day and pillar of fire by night led them. Yet, they encountered disappointment when the water was bitter. Imagine being thirsty and weary from wilderness travel; then reaching into the pool for that cooling drink, and the water was not drinkable. Was this Israel’s fault? No.

God could have made the water sweet before the people arrived to drink. That would be no problem for God. God has the ability to smooth every bump along my path of life such that I am never troubled. Why doesn’t He? Exodus 15:25 tells us “*there He proved them.*” It is clear in God’s Word that trials, which bring disappointment, come into the lives of God’s people as tests. I Peter 1:6-7 “*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*”

God was testing His people Israel with the bitter water at Marah.

His desire was that the test might make them stronger and reveal their heart. When a person is under fire, the heart of the person is revealed. God does not send trials just to hurt His people. He sends trials in hope of strengthening His people. Israel seemed to fail the test at Marah.

The beginning of bitterness

Are you disappointed? Are you troubled? What is troubling you? Are you discouraged? Perhaps you recently lost your job. Maybe you have been told you have disease. You may have just lost a battle in the home. You may have lost a loved one to death. Defeat, discouragement, and disappointment are the *beginning* of bitterness. Deal with these matters quickly! If you do not, they will likely become bitterness. A common cold can turn to pneumonia. Disappointment, defeat, and discouragement have a cure, but most often bitterness is deadly! Bitterness will kill you spiritually and maybe even physically. Unfortunately, bitter people sometimes commit suicide.

True story: Bill, an acquaintance of mine, is a nice person. He does not harm anyone. He lives in a nice home and has a good family. He is blessed of God. He has a good retirement. Bill has no life. He sits in a dark house sulking. He is bitter. He will not attend church. He has no use for God's family. He does not study his Bible. He was not this way a few years ago. He was friendly and active in his church. What happened? Bill told me he got *disappointed* in his church and its preachers. He never dealt with the disappointment. Disappointment turned into bitterness. A common cold became pneumonia! It does not seem Bill will ever recover. He is on life-support, spiritually speaking. Unfortunately, I know many people like Bill.

Why blame God?

Seems the first one a bitter person blames is God. Why? When will Christians realize God is not our enemy? When will Christians realize the church is not our enemy? Christians are not the enemies of one another. THE DEVIL IS OUR ENEMY. Stop blaming the church, the family of God, preachers, and God for problems in life that made you bitter! How can you blame the one, God, who can remove the bitterness from you?

The awfulness 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;”* God’s grace is amazing. It never runs out for there is *“grace for grace,”* John 1:16. Grace saved me. Grace meets my needs. Do you see the need for God’s grace in your life? I am sure you do if you are born again. Sinners need grace as well. However, look at this verse, Hebrews 12:15, closely. Do you see what I see? Bitterness can negate the grace of God in the bitter person’s life- *“lest any man fail of the grace of God.”* God’s grace will not flourish where bitterness dwells. Bitterness stifles grace. Do you need God’s grace? Do you desire grace in your life? Then, get rid of bitterness. *Grace cannot abound in the life of a bitter person.* Act today!

Bitterness is poison

Acts 8:23 *“For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”* Gall is bile. Bile is a greenish-brown acidic fluid made by the liver and stored by the gall bladder to digest food. Gall is poison and is bitter. If you have bitterness in you, you have poison in you. Poison kills. You would never take poison chemicals into your body. Yet, the poison of bitterness is inside you.

Who does bitterness hurt?

Who hurts from bitterness? Not your enemy. He rejoices that you are bitter. The most afflicted person is *you*, the bitter person! Admit it- bitterness makes you feel awful. Bitterness makes life dreary for you. You don’t look forward to the sun coming up tomorrow. You look forward to being bitter. How long has it been since you felt the pure, undefiled “joy of the Lord” in your soul? Is bitterness blocking God’s joy in your life? Admit it- you feel awful and empty inside due to bitterness. Yet, your enemy, who made you bitter, is having a good time. The company who laid you off is still operating just fine. Now, does bitterness make sense? The answer is NO.

Who hurts from bitterness? You AND others- *“and thereby many be defiled,”* Hebrews 12:15. No man is an island. Every person’s life affects at least one other person. Bitter people make life awful for those around them. Does your wife deserve to experience the awfulness of bitterness in her husband’s life? What has she done to deserve this? Do your children or grandchildren deserve this? What have they done to harm you? Your co-workers wish you were not

bitter. They are affected by your bitter approach to life. Bitterness has a negative impact on every facet of your life, including your sleep. Bitterness affects your health. It affects those around you. Quit making them miserable!

There is a cure

Unfortunately, bitterness has a root, as we are told in our text verse, Hebrews 12:15. Roots are deep. Some trees have a root beneath the surface twice as deep as the tree is tall. Wow. Roots are not easy to get out. Often, we see trees cut down and the stump and root remain, for they are too difficult to remove.

I predict you by yourself cannot get over your bitterness. It will take the help of God. Like an addict, a person with bitterness must reach the place of *wanting help*. When you get disgusted with the miserable life of bitterness you are living, you will look for help.

Instead of blaming God for trouble and the resulting bitterness, look unto Him for a cure. In Exodus 15:25 (read above), God instructed Moses to cast a tree into the bitter pool. When he did, the water became sweet. This tree cast into the water is a picture of the Cross of Calvary. For every trial in life, we have a place of refuge. We go to the blessed Cross. On the blessed Cross, Jesus bore our sins, disappointments, discouragements, hurt, and defeats. If we will only take our problems to Jesus, he can help us with them before they lead to bitterness.

Bow your head: *“Dear God, I have suffered long enough. I am at the end of my rope. I am finished with my miserable life as it presently is. Reach deep inside me and remove this root of bitterness. Forgive me for not turning to you for help when I first became disappointed and encountered trouble. I realize if I had, bitterness would never have developed inside me. Remind me next time during trouble to run quickly to the sweet Cross of Jesus. Amen”*