



Wednesday's Walk With The Lord

July 12, 2023

The Poison of Bitterness

Bitterness is an evil root (Heb. 12:15). One said, "Bitterness in the original language means a malignant disposition. A longstanding resentment or a spirit that refuses to be reconciled." Another said, "Bitterness is the cocaine of the mind - addictive - continues to eat away at the heart and soul of a person."

Charles Swindoll said, "Bitterness seeps into the basement of our lives like runoff from a broken sewer pipe. Every form of ugliness begins to float to the surface of those murky waters in prejudice and profanity, suspicion and hate, cruelty, and cynicism. There is no torment like the torment of bitterness - which is the by-product of an unforgiving spirit. There is no prison more damaging than the bars of bitterness." Also, "It's like taking a burning hot coal and picking it up to throw at your enemy. In the process you are the only one who gets burned."

Bitterness is almost always people related. For example, Joseph's brothers were bitter toward him because of their father's favoritism. Cain was bitter toward God and Abel which led to murder. Envy and jealousy produce bitterness (Jas. 3:14,15). It can begin with a hurt, whether big, small, or petty. If I'm the one that's hurt, it's always big.

What people say to us can hurt and produce bitterness. "Reckless words pierce like a sword but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Prov. 12:18). What people think about us can hurt. One said, we are three different people: "We are what we think we are; we are what others think we are; and we are what we think others think we are." Whew! That is maddening! Hurt and bitterness also comes because of what people do to us. We might get mad at a stranger, but we become bitter with people we know.

Bitterness can be devastating. It can lead to violence. It can lead to strained relationships, misery, rebellion, and division in families or churches. Bitterness makes us want to get the upper hand. "Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple" (Job 5:2). It can also cause us to become spiritually blind (1 John 2:9-11).

Nothing good comes from bitterness. It can change our personality. It will destroy our health. It places us in a self-imposed prison. Peter will say to Simon the sorcerer, "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (Acts 8:23). Nothing should be allowed to imprison us or destroy us like bitterness can. Living with bitterness is the most miserable way to live. The person who holds the grudge is not happy and no one that is around that person is happy. In fact, no one wants to be a person who is bitter.

So, how can we root it out? Job said, "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 7:11). We first must be honest with ourselves and with God. The bitterness must be exposed. Why doesn't God hit Job with a bolt of lightning? God understood Job. Who could better understand backstabbing than God?

We can keep holding it in and let it poison us, or we can find a way to express it that's not harmful. Seeking revenge is not an option! We can put it in the hands of God.

Next, we can release the offender. Yes, I am hurt. Yes, wrong has been done. I shouldn't have

been treated that way. But I'll make a conscious effort to forgive, whether it means anything to the offender or not. I can't control what other people do, but I don't have to let anyone else's bad behavior control my every thought. Forgiveness does the forgiver good.

Finally, refocus. I must get my heart right. I must ask God to forgive me and help me walk like Christ. God is not unavailable to us. God is nearby. Job helps us. He said, "Prepare your heart - stretch out your hand - lift up your face" (Job 11:13-17).

"I'll never get close to people again ... I'll just keep them at arm's length." Job says that's a mistake. Those who are hurtful are a minority. We are to learn from the past - not live in the past.

It doesn't matter who or what has hurt you - God can take the rest of your life and make it the best of your life.

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