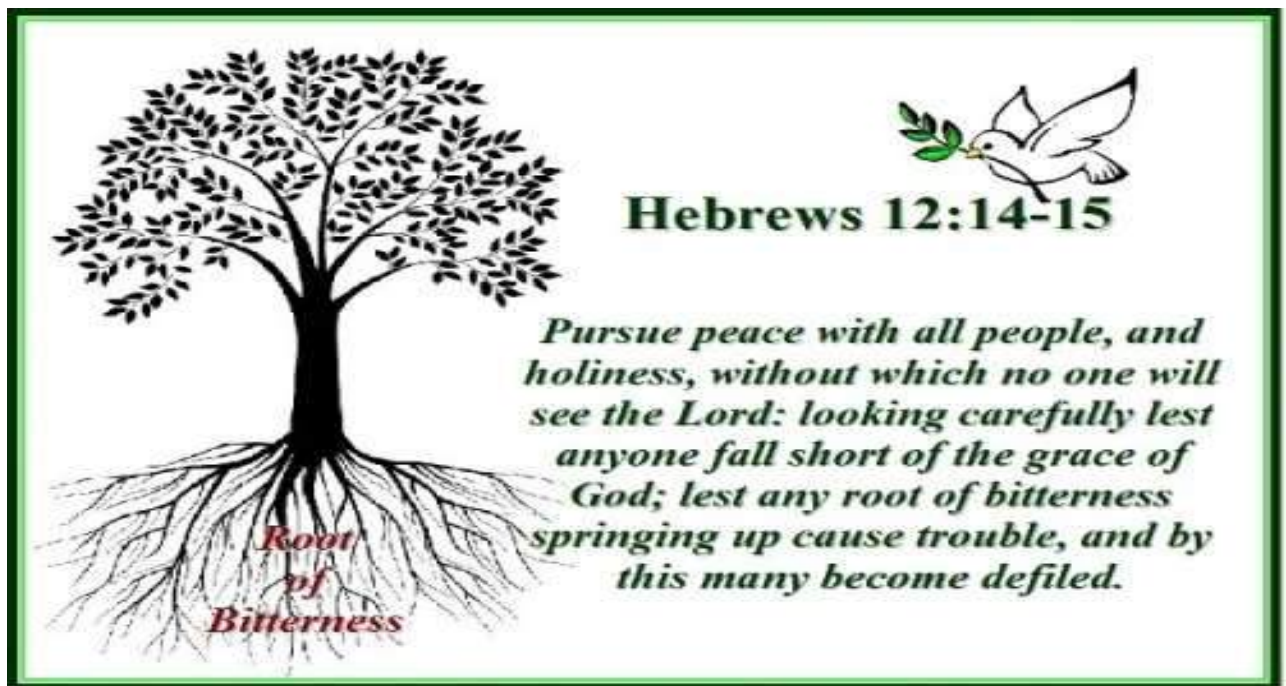

LETTING GO OF BITTERNESS

Hebrew 12:14-15

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The “bitter root” in Hebrews 12:15 is first described in Deuteronomy 29:18:

Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root-bearing poisonous and bitter fruit.

Introduction:

Every skilled gardener understands that simply chopping weeds won't do the trick. Roots must be uprooted completely, if not they will completely return, often bringing more of their weedy companions along with them. It's no coincidence that God uses the image of a weed to describe a particular sin that has a way of creeping into our hearts.

Bitterness grows over time.

The Hebrew writer describes bitterness as a dangerous root: **Hebrews 12:15, See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.** Often you can't see roots; they're buried deep under the ground. But bitter roots bear bitter fruit. How does bitterness take root in your life?

It usually begins with disappointment/pain/sorrow from the loss of a loved one, a job, a social position, etc. This disappointment gradually hardens into resentment if it's not dealt with properly. Disappointment accrues interest and the result is that resentment works its way deep into our hearts and turns into bitterness.

Bitterness has a dangerous root. It produces a poisonous fruit. One bitter person can divide or destroy a family and workplace. The Word of God tells us that if we allow bitterness to creep into our hearts and if we become bound up in resentment, discontent, acrimony, and grudges against others, we come short of the grace of God and have allowed the ungodly characteristic of bitterness to sink its deadly root into our heart. This bitterness defiles us before the Lord and causes no end of trouble in our own lives and in the lives of others too.

The Oxford Dictionary defines bitterness as “anger and disappointment at being mistreated; resentment.” We resent those we perceive to be at fault and those who do nothing to correct our problems.

It is all too easy to allow anger to turn into bitterness and pollute our spirits. Bitterness seems not content to stay within the individual. Instead, it is like a poison that spreads and infects others who come into contact with the one who is bitter.

Bitterness has been described as a slow poison that grieves the Spirit of God, gives place to the enemy of our soul, and causes us to come short of God's grace and His will for our lives. Like all weeds, bitterness has a way of spreading. This passage describes one possible progression. A man infects his wife. She infects her children. The bitterness spreads, and soon the whole tribe is infected.

- Is your marriage marked by bitterness?

- Are your children bitter?
- Does your group of friends tend to sit around and gripe?
- Is your church filled with harsh and angry people?
- Is your community prone to placing blame?

The Pack That Bitterness Travels In:

It describes these emotions as a progression.

Ephesians 4:31 says, *“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”*

- If we don't deal with bitterness, that bitterness *will* progress toward extreme anger (that's wrath).
- If we don't deal with the anger, we *will* start to clamor or demand what we want.
- If that doesn't work, we *will* start to talk bad about the object of our bitterness in the hopes of recruiting others to agree with and justify our feelings (that's slander).
- If that goes unchecked, we *will* eventually have a desire to cause harm to the person we are bitter toward.

We are going to talk about bitterness, bitterness can destroy us and many times we live a life of bitterness.

TWO-CASE-STUDY

Two case studies in the bible about two individuals who became bitter and we're going to look at the impact of their bitterness and then I'm going to talk to you about how to deal with Bitterness.

THE FIRST CASE STUDY: All of the two will be from 2 Samuel but we'll be looking at two different people **2 Samuel 13** that's our first study of how bitterness grows and how it functions and this is bitterness within a family because most of the time a lot of the bitterness we have in life they are within close quarters close either with family members, friends, colleagues but they're always against people who are close to us or who used to be close to us there's a lot of bitterness in families sometimes family gatherings are not moments of happiness, but moments of bitterness little things springs up quarrels and you find people who are brought forth by the same parents fighting and killing one another and destroying one another and getting their own children involved and then it moves from one generation to the nephews and from nephews it goes to grandchildren and on and on and on to the root of bitterness.

STORY OF AMNON, ABSALOM AND TAMAR

2 Samuel 13:1-22. it says after this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister whose name was Tamar and Amnon the son of David loved her. Amnon was so distressed over

his sister Tamar that he became sick for she was a virgin and it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her, now what happened was as you know David created a lot of problems he had too many wives and **that's what happens when you have a polygamous situation you create unnecessary problems for your children** for all of you men who are having children in different places you may be having fun for yourself but the story after you may be very bitter because you are planting seeds that can become roots of bitterness.

Now David had these women and had children with them and he had one child called Tamar and Absalom that is another of David's sons came from the same woman but then they had a half-brother called Amnon, and Amnon saw his half-sister Tamar and had a lot of lust for her half-sister he wanted to sleep with the girl and he was pained in his heart for Tamar for so long that the bible says he became sick for his half-sister so Amnon talked to one of his best friends to say to discuss his problem and his best friend gave him very bad advice as to how to get Tamar well eventually through several processes you can read the rest of the story, eventually Amnon rapes Tamar and throws her away from the house in disgrace kicks her out of the house the bible says **after he had raped her hatred entered his heart for the girl he thought he loved and that's one thing about lust because lust is not love it is not enduring after it is satisfied it is replaced by hatred.** So Tamar leaves the house and in those days when you were virgin you put on especially if you're the child of the king and you were virgin you had clothes you wear and so Tamar leaves the house and she changed her clothes she's wearing sackcloth now and look at verse **2 Samuel 13:19**, then it says then Tamar put ashes on her head tore her robe of many colors that was on her and lay her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly and Absalom her brother said to her has Amnon your brother been with you but now hold your peace my sister he is your brother do not take this thing to heart so Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house but when king David heard of all these things he was very angry and **Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad for Absalom hated Amnon** because he had forced his sister Tamar now what happened was immediately after this situation Absalom sees Tamar and he inquires what's happening has Amnon finally gotten you the sisters crying says yes and **Absalom says don't worry it's okay no problem take it easy now you would think that because he says take it easy, he himself is taking it and he says it's okay it's all right he's your brother it's okay** he says all the nice things his father **David hears of the thing he gets angry but does not do anything about it.**

So the bible says Absalom from that day onwards does not speak either good nor bad to his brother who has raped his sister in other words he doesn't talk to him he keeps silent now if you saw all this that is happening you think nothing has happened Absalom is okay he doesn't just talk to his brother he's already encouraged his sister take it easy everything will be all right you know the kind of things that sometimes people talk

about they say oh **it doesn't matter but there's a lot of hatred behind** it doesn't matter so the bible says that Absalom hated Amnon okay now what happened **verse 23-25** **and it came to pass after two full years** I As you know the bible has a way of emphasizing two full years he didn't say just two years two full years when this situation happened that Absalom had sheep's sheriffs in baalhazza which is near Eframe so Absalom invited all the king's sons then Absalom came to the king and said kindly note your servants has sheep sheriffs please let the king and his sevens go with your seven **verse 28- 29**. now Absalom had commanded his servants saying watch now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine and when I say to you strike Amnon then kill him do not be afraid have I not commanded you to be courageous and valiant so the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded then all the king's sons arose and each one got on his mule and fled so **for two years Absalom has been holding this thing and he's planning** so after two years when he's having a party in his house he goes to tell his father the king and says come with all your servants and the brothers I'm having a party and let them come and rejoice and the king says oh no I can't come he says well if you don't come then let my brothers come and eat food you know have fun in my house the king says why do you want to do that he says well you know I just want to share with my brothers so, the king says okay let your brothers come so all the king's brothers go for the party in Absalom's house **this is two years after the incident** and whilst they were there Absalom had already told his servants when you see that Amnon is happy give him a lot of drink let him get drunk let him get booze and when he is boozed rise up and kill him so exactly they do that they killed the man this is two full years after the incident bitterness had come **how did the bitterness come his sister was defiled he was hurt the king his father did nothing about it and he kept it for two years planned it deliberately and executed his brother in cold blood** you would think that would be the end of the story but it wasn't the end of the story after that the king David was angry and he banished Absalom but **Absalom had a lot of bitterness not only against Amnon but also against his father for doing nothing about the case when it happened** so he started scheming to take over the kingdom from David and eventually he succeeds and takes over the kingdom from David the great warrior is now sent out of Jerusalem because of a bitter son.

SECOND CASE STUDY

Now let's look at the second case study 2 Samuel 15 now what is happening now is Absalom after he had organized his coup d'état against David is now building his team his group and he's selecting whom he can use and let's see how bitterness works so in **2 Samuel 15:12** it says **then Absalom sent for Ahithophel (The enemy of my enemy is my friend)**, note that name very carefully Ahithophel the Gilonite David's counselor from the city from Gilo while he offered sacrifices and the conspiracy grew strong for the people with Absalom continually increased in number now look at how the bible describes Absalom one he's a **trusted official of David he's David counselor trusted official he**

works with David he's the man when David listens to secondly the bible says when they found him he was offering sacrifices so he's a devout worshiper he's not a counter man he's a spiritual person and he's a godly person in the sense that his advice the bible says you find later was almost like the oracles of God (*2 Samuel 16:23, NLT*). so, he's a worshipper he's a trusted official he's very influential because the moment he joins Absalom the bible says the conspiracy grew stronger just one month's addition made the conspiracy strong.

2 Samuel 16 20:23. Follow this closely this is very important then Absalom remembers Absalom is bitter he's now gathering people so he gathers for a hit. Then Absalom said to Ahithophel remember Ahithophel is an official of David he is highly respected **he's very influential and he's a devout worshiper he goes to church because when they got him he was making sacrifice it's almost as if they went to church to recruit him so going to church it doesn't stop you from being bitter.**

Then Absalom said to Ahithophel **give advice as to what we should do (2 Samuel 16:21-23)** Ahithophel said to Absalom go into your father's concubines whom he has left to keep the house and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father then the hands of all who are with you will be strong so they pitch a tenth for Absalom on the top of the house and Absalom went into **verse 23.** now the up the advice of **Ahithophel which he gave in those days was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God** so all the advice of his soul was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom they **said his advice was as if you've enquired from God** the question that we have to ask is how could a spiritual man a man who offers sacrifices a man who is trusted in the society wise influential gives such a diabolic and dirty advice do you see the advice he gave to Absalom he says (*2 Samuel 12:11-12*). if you want to win go and collect all your father's wives and sleep with them this man is supposed to be godly he was found making sacrifices he was recruited from church now you would think that such an elderly man with a lot of wisdom would come and his advice will cool tempers probably you tell Absalom oh take it easy don't worry it's okay you know **no he's raising the tension to higher levels he's aggravating the situation he's giving devilish advice** there are times when people you think should give good advice that some of the things that come out of their mouth you wonder where did they come from and **so the question is why did Ahithophel gives such an advice** why did he say that why did he tell Absalom to go and sleep with your father's wives what motivated him to come with such an advice you'll find out.

Why did Ahithophel Betray David?

Okay now go to **2 Samuel 23:34** we would do a little bit of his genealogy, there is a genealogical record there that says that Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, note that carefully Eliam the son of

Ahithophel the Gilonite, so, in other words, Ahithophel had a son called Eliam all right okay now go to **2 Samuel 11:3-4**. are you there all right you remember when David on top of his house he saw a young girl called Bathsheba and he was interested ³*And David sent and enquired after the woman? And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?*⁴ *“And David sent messengers and took her, and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness and she returned unto her house.”*

Did you see the answer? **Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam, who was Ahithophel's son. So, when David murdered Uriah, he was murdering Ahithophel's son-in-law. When he had an affair with Bathsheba, he was having an affair with Ahithophel's granddaughter.**

So what happened was Ahithophel had a son called Eliam, and Eliam had a daughter called Bathsheba so Bathsheba was a granddaughter of Ahithophel do you get that what happened to Bathsheba David took Bathsheba from Uriah their rightful husband and lay with her took her as the wife and all the time Ahithophel was an advisor to David so Ahithophel the grandfather of this girl **saw what happened he didn't resign his job he still worked for David giving him advice so to all intents and purposes David feels Ahithophel was his man** but something had happened to **Ahithophel, he was hurt he was angry and he didn't do anything about the anger so the anger became sharp it became bitter** the two things you find between **Absalom and Ahithophel is that both of them became angry about something they didn't respond they kept quiet for a hit offer. Eph 4:26**

So, when he is now recruited by Absalom and he is giving advice the advice he is giving is a playback of what David did to his granddaughter. These are **two men poisoned by events responding years later** and here Ahithophel is described as a man of God but look at his advice he is playing back his bitterness, something happened to him and now he's playing it back **bitterness has a way of poisoning you so much so that you lose your wisdom you lose your objectivity you lose integrity you forget about everything that you know to be right** when you hear bitter people talking you can't even believe they have gone to school, bitter people advising a person you wouldn't think that this person has sat in a classroom by the advice they are giving and they are giving it based on something that happened and I'm sure to all intents and purposes David felt Ahithophel was okay but he wasn't okay now let's look at how he ended in a process of time Ahithophel's you know he's giving advice and so on but one time he gives an advice and a servant of David outsmarted him called Hushai

So, look at **2 Samuel 17:14. 14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the Lord had appointed to**

defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

2 Samuel 17:23 - Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed he saddled the donkey arose went home to his house to his city then he put his household in order and **hanged himself and died** and he was buried in his father's house father's tomb he killed himself because he had given advice and the advice he had given would have destroyed David totally but that advice didn't work and because David couldn't be destroyed he kills himself Ahithophel saying for David to live I would die bitter people talk like that for that man to live I would die they rather die to see somebody prosper, they would rather die than to see somebody happy, they rather die than to see somebody go ahead there are some people whenever they see somebody successful they die they see somebody riding a car they die they see somebody getting promoted they die and **you die because people you are bitter against seem to be going on well and that's what happened to Ahithophel he said instead of me being alive let me kill myself** because I cannot stand David any longer in spite of all the bad advice I'm just here to talk to you about bitterness we see it in two people's lives **Absalom and David the question I asked myself is why did Absalom choose Ahithophel to recruit because bitter people identify bitter people** oh yeah you'll be bitter in your office you will have your bitterness coalition very soon because bitter people identify other bitter people they have kindred spirits when they see another bitter person they can know this one is bitter so they will recruit him it happens in offices where people begin to poison people not everybody gets infected but other people who have also been hurt those who are bitter maybe five years ago your promotion did not come two years ago the boss says something three years ago you were disgraced publicly four years ago something happened and then a bitter person comes and absolutely comes and he goes recruiting and he's able to isolate all the bitter people **if you become a bitter person and you don't deal with your bitterness somebody will recruit you into his conspiracy and if you don't deal with bitterness you may end up like Ahithophel killing yourself** you may not physically go and hang yourself but you will kill everything within you your good advice can you imagine a man with such pedigree spiritual anointed wise he could have done so much with his life but he ends up hanging himself simply because he couldn't jump over something that someone has done, a lot of us get bitter with good reason maybe like Absalom somebody has hurt somebody you know or like Ahithophel somebody has violated something you know somebody has done something against you and you've kept quiet over it all these years everybody thinks you've solved it but you are the only one who knows the plans you are hatching and you spend time working and working and planning and recruiting and building yourself to launch your attack if you read the end of Absalom he ended the same way as Ahithophel. Absalom also hung himself not by himself he was riding under a tree and the tree caught his neck he hung. Ahithophel also hung himself which simply means **bitter people end up hanging themselves do they have a case yes did somebody do wrong against**

them yes they have a case did they handle it well no because although your case is good from the beginning if you don't handle it well that case which should have brought you sympathy will destroy you, bitterness is a great destroyer. So if you find yourself bitter I'm sure if I ask how many of you are bitter nobody will raise his hand because I'm not bitter I'm just speaking my mind I'm not bitter they say I've forgotten about it I'm not bitter, you lie bad you are bitter how do you know you can't stand somebody you may even be working for him but you can't stand him that's what happened I'm sure every time Ahithophel will send a file to David's office he can't stand him he's smiling and giving advice but at the back of his head he's planning mischief but David thought he was a loyal person.

How Do You Deal with Bitterness

1. **First you have to identify people you intensely dislike.** Just give it some thought perhaps it's your child's husband or wife you can't stand, you are waiting for the bad report to show up one day, that's bitterness. Some of you can't stand your parents. You may say, "But he did that to me. Yes, somebody did something against Ahithophel too. Yeah, but he hurt me yes, he hurt you yes, he didn't treat my mother well yes but what is happening to you is that you are developing a root of bitterness that will poison every good thing that God has put within you. So, identify the people you dislike, you can write down their names, if your list is too long you may need serious psychiatric help because some people have a list of 20 or 30 people from secondary school, university family members friends some people haven't forgiven someone who teased them or beat them when they were eight years old. They are holding onto bitterness to the highest degree. This advanced bitterness will destroy you. Unfortunately, people in high office such as the president, chief executive, pastors, and other influential figures, can be ruled by bitterness.

Were they mistreated yes but now; they are being driven by the fuel of bitterness? They infect others be careful because bitter people can infect you. Be careful because bitter people when they start talking, will recruit you. So, you must be very careful. So, identify the people you hate intensely, are there people you hate or strongly dislike, it could be hidden dislike or open dislike, dislike is dislike.

2. **The second thing is to examine the root causes of your dislike for people.** Why do you dislike them? What did they do or say? What did they take from you? Like your wife, husband or money. Did they disgrace, insult, humiliate, or betray you? If their name raises your heartbeat instantly, it means you have serious issues to deal with. Most of the time, if Ahithophel was asked, he would find out why he hated David. Absalom knew why he hated David and Amnon. He could pinpoint the exact time when the seed of bitterness was sown. If you think a little, you will likely discover the root causes of your dislike.

3. Consider how that bitterness has influenced you over the years and your decisions. You may be a child of God, born again, spirit-filled, with gifts of the spirit. God may even have a greater plan for your life, but bitterness can destroy every good thing in your life. **Of David's children, the most honorable was Absalom, a handsome well-spoken king in the making but bitterness destroyed him. Of David's advisors, the wisest was Ahithophel, a godly man devout, but bitterness destroyed him.** Bitterness can destroy good people who otherwise would have lived up to their potential. Ask yourself I 'm ready to deal with the root causes of bitterness.

For those of you who find yourself around bitter people, you will know when someone is bitter. Their name mentioned might lead to spewing insults or profanity. If someone starts talking and everything, they say is filthy about that person is bitter. So, what do you do around bitter people? *Psalm 64:2-7* gives us some clue *"Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the scheming of evildoers,³ who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows, ⁴ shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear. ⁵ They hold fast to their evil purpose; they talk of laying snares secretly, thinking, "Who can see us? ⁶ Who can search out our crimes? We have thought out a cunningly conceived plot." For the inward mind and heart of a man are deep! ⁷ But God will shoot his arrow at them; they will be wounded suddenly."*

The end of the bitter person the bible says, is that God will shoot at them. If you carry this bitterness for a long time, I'm going to shoot you I'm going to get you because you are poisoning my creation but check out the spirit of the people you hang around sometimes it can even be your parents. Many good mothers are also extremely bitter because of how their husbands or children treat them. when you're praying you see images when you're praying instead of seeing a vision of goodness, you see hatching plans how to destroy them.

4. **Let God Reveal It:**
 a. **Reference:** *Psalm 139:23-24*
 b. **Self-Reflection:** Ask yourself, "Am I bitter?" Bitterness is often a hidden sin that isn't always obvious. **(Bitterness is a sleeper sin)** Don't harbour hostilities.
5. **Let Grace Remove It:**
 a. **Action:** Weed out bitterness through God's grace (*Hebrews 12:15*).
 b. **Concept:** No matter what somebody has done to you your reaction is wrong.
 c. Grace involves God giving us what we don't deserve. Justice is giving us what we deserve. Mercy is when God, out of His lovingkindness, withholds punishment that

- we rightfully deserve because of our sin. Grace teaches us to let go of the right to hold others' mistakes over them. **Psalms 130:3-4**
- d. **Forgiveness:** Forgive as the Lord forgave you (**Colossians 3:13**). **Ephesians 4:32**, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **Colossians 3:19** Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
 - e. **Scripture Guidance:** Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice. Be kind and compassionate, forgiving as Christ forgave you (**Ephesians 4:30-32**).
 - f. **Reminder:** Be quick to forgive. If you struggle with this, ask the Lord for help, and He will respond.
6. **Let God Replace It:**
- a. **Reference: Hebrews 12:14**
 - b. **Principle:** Peace and holiness are intertwined. Hatred and Hellishness are linked together. Forgiveness frees both you and the other person.
 - c. **Impact:** Their actions are not worth damaging your relationship with God.
7. **Realize God is the Ultimate Judge:**
- a. **Reference: Romans 12:19**
 - b. **Perspective:** When offended, understand that it's God's command they've violated, not yours.
 - c. **Self-Reflection:** Bitterness often stems from feeling that I have the right to hold on to something from the past, and maintain a grudge over a past offense.
8. **Realize You Are Not Sinless:**
- a. **Awareness:** Recognize that you are not perfect and have offended others too.
9. **Pain Promotes You:**
- a. **Example:** Joseph was hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, lied about by Potiphar's wife, and forgotten in jail, but all that got him to where God wanted him to be.

Finally, Bitterness has been called "*emotional suicide*". It's drinking poison while wishing someone else would die.

But we should deal with our bitterness not only for the physical health benefits it could bring us — but spiritually speaking, holding on to bitterness can lead us into sin. Scientists have concluded that bitterness if left unchecked, interferes with the body's hormonal and immune systems. Bitter people tend to have higher blood pressure and heart rate and are much more likely to die of heart disease and other illnesses.

Of course, the apostle Paul didn't have access to this scientific data when he wrote much of the New Testament, but that didn't keep him from connecting the dots between bitterness and our bodies. In **Acts 8:23**, Paul describes the "*gall of bitterness*." It's a bile, a bitter substance that can make us sick.