

The Destructive Power Of Bitterness

TEXT: Ephesians 4:31-32

INTRODUCTION

During World War II, the U.S. submarine Tang surfaced under the cover of darkness to fire upon a large Japanese convoy off the coast of China.

Since previous raids had left the American vessel with only eight torpedoes, the accuracy of every shot was essential.

The first seven missiles were right on target, but when the eighth was launched, it suddenly deviated and headed right back at their own ship.

The emergency alarm to submerge rang out, but it was too late. Within a matter of seconds, the U.S. sub received a direct hit and sank almost instantly. In effect, an attack meant for the enemy destroyed the Americans themselves.

This is just an illustration of what we want to look at today – **THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF BITTERNESS.**

Like the Americans, Christians launch attacks in the form of enmity and hostility directed toward others. What we don't know is that these attacks will not destroy these so-called enemies.

These attacks will destroy us. Brothers and sisters, BITTERNESS is a torpedo that will return to your ship.

Bitterness is a disease of the heart. Many of us today are roaming about with heart problems unknown to us.

We look so active, vibrant, and cheerful, but we have cardiac issues.

Just like the human body, outward activeness is not a sure bet for healthiness. Only a thorough diagnosis will expose how healthy we are.

WHAT IS BITTERNESS?

Bitterness is defined as resentful anger and disappointment at being treated unfairly.

It is the feeling of pain, distress, and resentment due to something hurtful that happened.

Bitterness is our reaction to someone else's wrong, or our perception that someone else has wronged us.

Bitterness reflects a grudge-filled attitude and an unwillingness to forgive. It is the opposite of sweetness and kindness.

The bitter person harbors resentment and even **"keeps score"** of wrongs. Love doesn't keep score because love has a bad memory.

The emotion of bitterness often makes the person who is bitter a miserable person to be around.

Unmanaged bitterness can and will cause conflicts and then grow into chaos, confusion, and calamity.

HOW BITTERNESS GROWS

- 1. Unforgiveness:** Unforgiveness cumulatively produces a deep-seated

bitterness. It is an infectious cancer in the heart.

- Wherever that first offense was, it begins to grow, expand, and take over more and more of your life, and bitterness becomes evident.
- Unforgiveness makes you entertain thoughts of revenge.
- You become desperate about the fact that you wish the worst on the person whom you will not forgive.
- Every conversation becomes another forum for criticism, defamation, and slander.
- You have passed on your own life a death sentence of bitterness and anger that will follow you to the grave.

2. Culture and societal background:
You can hate something so bad and not have the wisdom to avoid it.

- Culture and background matter a lot.
- Some people grew up in homes where bitterness was the norm. Father was bitter toward Mother. Mother always curses Father. Dad was never providing, so Mom was always hating on Dad.
- They eventually grow up to become bitter people. They hate the version of their father they grew up knowing. Some hate the version of their mother they grew up knowing. Because bitterness was evident in their homes.
- Unfortunately, we live in a culture that is prone to unforgiveness.

- Our society itself preaches vengeance and retaliation over forgiveness.
- Social media is the new societal standard. Watch out, lest you be rigged through and through by what is perceived as “normal”.
- Society makes statements like *Give them the same energy they gave you, If you don't talk to me, I won't talk to you, I am good at keeping malice, don't test me, I am not as good as you think.*

3. Jealousy – Jealousy can cause bitterness as well. This was the case of Saul against David.
1 Samuel 18:6-12

- A quick lesson here is to mind the way we praise other people when they do good things.
- You can praise someone to joy and another to bitterness at the same time. Praise and encouragement should be done with maturity and glory to God.
- Jealousy that goes unchecked will lead to bitterness.

4. Unresolved past: Some of us think that leaving the past behind is a solution to all our problems.

- You hear people saying *“It's in the past now”, “It doesn't bother me anymore”, “I have moved on”, “I don't let things drag me back”.*
- Meanwhile, the reality is that we often leave problems unresolved and feel like they will naturally go away.

- Some pain will not naturally go away.
- Some have pasts they have not dealt with.
- No wonder many encounter new problems from old wounds in their marriages.
- Some are still bitter because of what happened 20 years ago. Your past can cause a deep bitterness in your life.

5. Avoiding confrontation: Some people parade themselves like *Mr. Quiet, Mr. Humble, Mrs. I don't like talk.*

- Issues arise, and you don't confront them.
- Somebody dupes you, and you say, *"I don't like trouble".*
- Someone lies against you, and you say, *"I leave him to God."*
- Avoiding these *"big talks"* has made some nurse bitterness in their hearts unknowingly.

THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF BITTERNESS

1. Physical sickness

- Bitterness has been medically linked to all kinds of physical sicknesses.
- Not all sickness is caused by bitterness, but it's impossible to be bitter, and it does not affect your body.
- A friend once told me that she got angry on a certain day to the point she began to feel pains in her physical heart. Like real physical pain!

- Do not joke with the synergy of the mind and the body.
- The health of a man is largely determinant on his psychology.
- Many have grown older than their ages because of bitterness. A bitter person can never be sweet. You'll become old and bitter.
- Check yourself. Check your heart!
- You may have a heart problem. And that sickness may not necessarily need physical surgery, but spiritual surgery.

2. Murder and rebellion

- People can kill because of bitterness.
- When bitterness overtakes you, what was once abominable will become permissible.
- Take a case study of David, Ahithophel, and Absalom. **2 Samuel 11, 2 Samuel 16:23, 17:23, 2 Samuel 13**
- Absalom killed his own brother Amnon because he raped his sister Tamar. He said nothing and nursed this bitterness in his heart for 2 full years.
- Be careful of people who are grieved and are still quiet.
- Ahithophel, on the other hand, was David's best counsellor.
- The Bible said Ahithophel's counsel was as though he inquired of the Oracle of God. This man was that good.
- And remember, David had slept with Bathsheba and killed her husband, Uriah.

- **2 Samuel 11:3 and 23:34** reveal that Bathsheba was Ahithophel's granddaughter.
- Yet, Ahithophel too said nothing to David.
- His own bitterness led him to team up with Absalom for rebellion against David.
- There cannot be lasting peace when there is no justice. **Ecclesiastes 8:11**
- David was a man after God's own heart, but he failed in other ways. His leadership was at times poor as a king and as a Father. He never confronted the rape of his own daughter.
- When matters go untreated in the church, it can push the victims to bitterness, and bitterness to rebellion.

3. Bitterness upsets our church life *Hebrews 12:15*

- Bitterness can kill fellowship and otherwise destroy Church ministries. **Galatians 5:9**
- Bitterness makes leadership difficult. Have you ever had to lead someone who hates you? It's very tough.
- Have you been in the same committee with someone you don't like? It is hell on earth!
- Where bitterness exists, division is certain. Unity is impossible!
- Bitterness doesn't end with you; it spills over to defile other brethren.
- Bitterness leads to clicks amongst brethren. I am of Paul, I am of Apollos...

4. Bitterness can upset our other relationships

- Many marriages are suffering today because of bitterness.
- In fact, one doesn't have to be bitter toward their spouse for bitterness to ruin their marriage.
- One can become bitter toward one or both of their own parents or even one or both of their in-laws, and ruin their marriage.
- One careless gossip from the wife to her mother can nurse bitterness in the heart of the mother towards the son-in-law.
- Bitterness in one's life can destroy their ability to be a good employee or employer.
- Bitterness in one's life can make them a terrible neighbor to have to live by and deal with.

5. Bitterness upsets our spiritual life

- Bitterness separates you from God.
- It halts your communication with God.
- It can cause one to reject the truth of the word of God.

HOW TO OVERCOME BITTERNESS

- Identify the people you dislike intensely and examine the root causes of your dislike for these people. Deal with the root causes.
- Make peace with the past. Stop running from it. Face your fears and live in peace.
- Learn to be vocal and confrontational. Healthy

confrontation is a very good medicine. Speak up!

- Learn to forgive: **Three things** can help us truly forgive.
- Realize that their actions are not worth damaging your relationship with God.
- Realize that God is the ultimate judge
- Realize that you are not sinless.
- Forgiveness can be done when the guilty party repents. **Luke 17:3-4**
- Forgiveness should also be rendered even when the person does not appeal or even repent. **Matthew 5:23-24, Mark 11:25**
- This is because it is for your own good. It keeps your heart away from bitterness. And you do not deny your brother the grace of God. **Hebrews 12:15, Matthew 18:23-35**
- Learn to be kind and tenderhearted **Ephesians 4:32**

CONCLUSION

When we think someone has sinned against us, if we are not careful, it can turn into bitterness.

We can expect and even wait for an apology, but if it doesn't come, we begin to harbor resentment against that person.

The same thing happens when we run from our past problems, avoiding confrontations, and becoming jealous over the success of others.

- ❖ Is there someone to whom you should go ask forgiveness?

- ❖ Has someone asked you for forgiveness that you withheld from them?
- ❖ Is there someone whom you have never confronted about a matter that has brought about an unreconciled relationship?

Bitterness is destructive. It imprisons you. It takes over your life. We must get rid of this evil.

We must deal with bitterness like any other sin in our lives.

We need God's help to do that! Why not let the lord free you today and release you from those bonds?

Talk to Jesus today and let Him fix your heart.

May God help us to put away bitterness from our lives in Jesus Name. Amen!