

# THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

## "Dealing With The Root of Bitterness"

### HEBREWS 12:15

Is there any root of bitterness that is lingering in your life over some event of the past? The sobering truth of our lives, is that we not only get hurt, but sadly, through the years, it is totally possible for that hurt to fester into full blown "bitterness" through the passing of time. When the Lord God penned His Word through the Hebrew writer, He made it abundantly clear that He yearns for our live abundance, therefore, to experience His abundance, joy, and tranquility, there must be ownership of bitterness in our heart. When you examine the word "bitterness", it comes from a Greek word which means "to cut". It also implies "bitter taste". Bitterness often times begin with one seeming "cutting" event that left a "bitter taste" in our lives and hearts. Why should we be concerned with dealing with bitterness? Because bitterness always has a negative effect on our lives! Bitterness is never constructive, but always destructive. Bitterness can turn a seemingly mild, meek mannered person into a person that lives in anger, slander and malice. The sobering truth is, it doesn't matter who we are or where our station is in life, if we refuse to deal with bitterness, it will slowly but surely work its way through our whole life to the point that we are destroyed. Not because God wanted it, but because bitterness has such a devastating effect to our human body. The call of God is to "see to it". In other words, it is of utmost importance that you make it your business to deal with bitterness, and throughout this message, the Lord will give us greatest insight as to "why"?

1. **DEAL WITH BITTERNESS...NO EXCEPTIONS.** The moment we received Christ as our Lord and Savior, was the day that we "gave up the rights to "hold" any degree or manner of bitterness. The very word of God to us is a directive...a command. However, the reality in our lives is that we often feel that we have a "right" to "harbor bitterness". Someone smears our name! A spouse walks out of a marriage after a number of years of marriage! Another person gets the job that we were promised! We are overlooked for a raise that was given to a person of lesser qualifications than ours. The sobering truth is, we can easily "rationalize" and "justify" bitterness in our soul. Often times people who are bitter say things like this, "Well I have the right to be bitter, after the way I was treated!" or "I have the right to be bitter, especially after all the years I have given to this company!" However, the very nature of bitterness is that it grows through misconceived notions, a refusal to forgive, and a sensing that a person is entitled to feel bitter. Sadly, many believers live their lives, wondering why

life is the way that it is, when in truth, they are allowing bitterness to fester in their soul and lives. One prime example is King Saul. King Saul in the Old Testament defied the Lord, and had the kingdom ripped from him. No doubt he was bitter over that, but he never made peace with God. He chose to become more and more bitter and angry. With each passing day of his life, bitterness gained more of his mind, heart and soul. He was miserable and made everyone around him miserable. He attempted to kill David, Jonathan, and in the end took his own life. All because of the roots of bitterness! Make no mistake about it, bitterness, will consume you, if you refuse to deal with it. Bitterness has never been a part of a happy home. It has never given a person one day of joy! But rather it eats away at relationships, and drives two people who loved each other, apart. Because bitterness destroys, devastates lives, is the very reason our Loving Father has commanded us to deal with it...without any exceptions! Consider the effects of bitterness.

2. **THE EFFECTS OF BITTERNESS.** Scripture makes it clear that "bitterness causes trouble". But what is most sobering about "bitterness" is that it operates even when we are not even conscious of it. You are sitting in this sanctuary at this moment...but some event in the past has haunted you, and bothered you...and you may not even be aware of all that it is doing to you...subconsciously and spiritually.

*First, it brings physical illnesses.* Because we are connected body, soul and spirit, bitterness has devastating effects on us inwardly, though we may not be aware of it. Bitterness works like a continual engine that is running, using our bodies energies when we are not even conscious of it. It runs while we are asleep, on the job, or even talking to friends. In the life of King Saul, it ran, while he was least conscious of it. He found himself responding in ways that he probably never thought possible while he was serving and walking with the Lord. The reality is, bitterness never shuts down. Conscious or unconscious, it keeps running, and we find ourselves drained of energy, and vitality. Medical science has discovered a link between bitterness, anger, negative emotions and glandular problems, high blood pressure, ulcers, and even heart problems. Yet, God knew this long before we developed the first root of bitterness.

*Second, bitterness results in stained relationships.* Bitterness never lives in isolation. It troubles one person, and defiles another person. The word "defile" found in Hebrews 12:15 literally means "to stain". When we hold bitterness within us, we stain our relationships.

One examples speaks volumes of the impact of bitterness. One young couple was expecting their second child, after having their first child (a boy), the mother was so wanting a girl. Yet in the course of time, the mother didn't have a daughter but rather had another boy. While the mother

loved the first child, she was embittered to the fact that the second child was also a boy. The first child could do no wrong, but the youngest boy could do no right. Why? Because the mother was bitter, and resentful, of the fact that her second child was not the sex she desired. Bitterness walled her away from a fellowship with husband, and her children. The end result, tragically was a marriage that ended in divorce. Why? Because this mother would not allow herself to deal with the root of bitterness! The root of bitterness welled up so deep in this one mother that she refused to deal with it...and in the end lost her entire family. Bitterness paralyzed her life, her relationships and finally ate away at the best things she had in life...her God given family. Bitterness always has sprouts of distrust, insecurity, lack of ability to love that we want to love the most. God doesn't say "see to it that no root of bitterness spring up..." by accident. God knows that bitterness carries consequences that are horrendous and ongoing.

*Third, bitterness results in spiritual stumbling blocks.* The truth is, we know that ought not "be bitter". We find ourselves living in guilt, and the truth is we find a civil war going on deep within our lives. Because we are bitter, we are hindered in reading the Bible, praying, listening to God's Word preached. Not only are we hindered in these ways, but also our personal witness is hindered. The sobering reality is this, we cannot speak for Christ, when in truth, there is a well of bitterness against another person, deep within our spirit. When we refuse to check our spirit for bitterness, that bitterness boils over into every other relationship we have in life. We affect and infect our spouse, church family, family, and all we live and work with. When King Saul became bitter, no doubt his bitterness was evident to others around him. David noticed Saul's bitterness. Jonathan noticed Saul's bitterness. And the reality is, if we refuse to deal with any "root" of bitterness in our lives, all around us will see it, know it, and soon begin to dodge our lives.

In the life of Saul, his bitterness developed into scheming, plotting and manipulating events that are harmful to others. He even hurled bitter, verbal javelins at his children, affecting their esteem, and well being, and the truth is, we do the same to our children, when we refuse to deal with our bitterness. Sadly, many parents destroy their children, with bitter words, attitudes, and feel "justified". However, in the end bitterness always destroys the person who refuses to deal with it. Saul's bitterness began with anger, then suspicion, fear separation, insecurity, and finally vengeance. Saul's bitterness took complete control over his life, and we are no different when we allow bitterness it's way in our lives.

3. **EXPERIENCING FREEDOM FROM BITTERNESS.** Since we are human beings living in a tainted, flawed, fallen human body, the reality of facing times and seasons of bitterness are a reality. However, if we have

been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord yearns for us to know, and practice truth...truth that sets us free. Jesus is fully aware that we are going to have this human body until the day of death, but through His power, He has give to us "the complete ability" to forgive. "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20 NIV).

First, we have the capacity to forgive anyone of anything they have done, because we have been given the nature of Jesus Christ. Christ lives within every believer, and since Christ lives in us, He can release forgiveness to all..without exception. Jesus forgave all who crucified him, and He lives in us (if we are saved) enabling and empowering us to forgive and release anyone of what they have done.

Second, because we are children of God, it is out of character for us to have unforgiveness and allow roots of bitterness to grab hold of our lives. Jesus never under any circumstance withheld forgiveness...and that life is in all who are saved! That is the biblical facts.

Third, forgiving others and releasing ourselves of bitterness, is a willful act, that doesn't happen by chance, neither is it based on emotion. It comes through a willful deliberate act of obedience to our Lord and Saviour.

Fifth, dealing with bitterness involves "dealing with the root". God makes it clear that the only way to really deal with bitterness is to deal with the root. The root of bitterness may have been: a person 50 years ago who hurt you, a circumstance 30 years ago that devastated your life. In the life of King Saul, sadly, he failed to deal with "the root" of his bitterness. While there may be many manifestations, there is usually a single root event that has led to anger, then bitterness. It is "owning" the event in our heart, and choosing to forgive, that brings step by step liberation.

Sixth, ask the Father to forgive you of the bitterness that has been held in your spirit toward the other person. Refuse to sidestep any "justification" on your part. For all bitterness and unforgiveness is sin before the Father.

Seventh, accept total responsibility and accountability for your bitterness. When we do, victory is just around the corner, that is the Father's promise to our lives. Owning our responsibility and personal confession are key and vital to joy, tranquility, and spiritual fulfillment.

Eighth, choose to consider what Satan meant for harm, for your profit, and good. While Satan loves for a person to become bitter, resentful, and die prematurely, our Loving Heavenly Father has higher, greater purposes...to use our moments of potential defeat to be tools that lead us to deeper trust, and greater confidence in Him.