

*Keep Your Soul
from Bitterness*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5).

The Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in the heart of a Christian. It is shed abroad through the heart into the five parts of the soul. Then, as he is filled with the Holy Spirit, the love of God controls the believer's life. Having the soul filled with the love of God is one of the most precious things that can happen in the life of the believer.

This love, however, is only shed abroad if it is not hindered by wrong choices. If we don't apply God's love in a relationship, we grieve the Holy Spirit. We may be justified in our differences with another person, yet we must love them with God's love. If we begin to criticize, judge, and sow discord against them, we will grieve the Holy Spirit in us. And when the Holy

Spirit is grieved, He does not shed the love of God abroad in our hearts.

When a root of bitterness against another person is allowed to enter in, a believer may begin to grieve the Holy Spirit by mentally and then verbally attacking someone. He may deny the bitterness and cover it up with self-righteousness, justifying himself; but then bitterness will begin to control that believer. This booklet will reveal the dangers of harboring bitterness and grieving the Spirit. But it will also show how the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, brings in a deep healing and deliverance from bitterness and its root.

Chapter One

FUELING THE PRIDE COMPLEX AND CARNALITY

Bitterness is a tremendous problem. The top secular psychiatrists today have examined this subject thoroughly and have identified bitterness as the number one emotional problem for both men and women. Bitterness may be suppressed; its presence may be disguised, denied, and go unrecognized when a person is doing well in other areas of the five parts of his soul.

When bitterness comes into the soul, sublimation of some kind is necessary to fill up the empty places in the soul. Sublimation is any attempt to stimulate a pleasurable experience relevant to our lives, apart from the filling of the Spirit. It comes in many forms, and it may mean hours of gossip and railing, watching the wrong television shows, playing with suggestive or violent computer programs, and even drug addictions—all in an effort to fill the emptiness caused

by bitterness.

While some people tend to react more in their emotions, others try to hide bitterness or cover it up. Women's emotional problems are primarily caused by seeds of bitterness that were never dealt with. Men also experience the effects of bitterness when their needs are unfulfilled, yet they often try to deny it because of a self-righteous complex. Bitterness can turn love into hate, blessings into curses. It turns happiness into malice, where a wounded person wants to hurt someone on purpose by wrongly accusing them. Bitterness fuels the pride complex to bring in self-righteousness. It damages the emotions, hindering the believer's life and making him carnal.

Stop the Blame Game

A bitter person will blame God and others for his own wrong decisions. But we must never forget this: No matter what happens, we are always responsible for our decisions, though God determines the consequences. The three Hebrew boys were thrown into the fiery furnace because of a decision they made in a time of great difficulty (see Daniel 3). Of course, it was the right decision, and God honored them in it

with a miraculous deliverance.

Job had to make a decision to either wallow in self-pity or trust God with his life. Job's answer was this: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15a).

No one can hurt any believer beyond what God permits. If God does allow us to suffer, then God's love shed abroad in our hearts becomes our provision. That love becomes a wall of fire that protects and insulates the soul so it does not become distorted (Zechariah 2:5).

We must never blame people, even though we may have to go to them alone for the sake of oneness if they are also believers. We are accountable for our own responses, and we live in the consequences of how we have kept our souls. If the soul is kept right, then no one can get through that wall of fire. What's more, we will not see the heat of the battle when it comes (Jeremiah 17:8).

Jeremiah confessed that his soul had grown bitter (Lamentations 3:15). His soul had stopped prospering until he discovered through right thinking that God's mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:17-23). So he understood how to recover and rebound.

Job confessed his bitterness (Job 7:11) after

his three “friends” blamed him for his troubles (which were, in fact, tests from Satan and ultimately would glorify God). When Job changed his confession, God prospered his soul as well as his substance.

Hannah had no children. In those times, that meant rejection from the community and a sense of being incomplete as a woman. She became bitter because she was taunted by her family and talked about everywhere she went. “There goes poor Hannah,” they would say. In 1 Samuel 1:10, she poured out her bitterness before the Lord, and God gave her a child—Samuel—whom she gave back to the Lord. She was a great parent and eventually gave birth to five more children. The Spirit shed God’s love abroad in Hannah’s heart, and her victory is recorded for all to read.

On the other hand, when parents have a child, invest in his life, and the child refuses to walk with God, Proverbs 17:25 says those parents may become bitter toward the child.

When a person is bitter, even strangers don’t want to be around him lest they lose their joy (Proverbs 14:10). A bitter person infects others with his words. Unless we identify that his problem is bitterness, we will be infected with its ef-

fects: resentment, implacability, negative reaction, and the blame game. It is so important to set a watch upon our lips, to be slow to speak and very careful how we hear.

*Satan's Seven-Fold Attack against the
Body of Christ*

Satan has demon armies organized for strategic, tactical warfare against believers.* Although the attacks come against anyone who would be used by God, one of Satan's ultimate goals is to knock any effectiveness out of God's second institution: marriage. His strategy to destroy marriages is to undermine every other institution—the family, the Body of Christ, and national entity. These have their foundation in the strength of the three-fold marital union, which includes the presence of God (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

The first army, *Rhadiourgia* (translated as “mischief” in Acts 13:10), comes in to make a person overrelaxed so that he lets down his guard and loses his commitment. Along with this army come demons that want you to do well and to “bless” you without Christ. Then once they have “blessed” you, Satan sends in demons to harm you, making you pay for violating your own convictions.

Next is the army of demons called *Tsiyiy* (Lamentations 3:52, translated “desert-dwellers” in Psalm 74:14). They are hunters that search out your weakness. They see what causes your countenance to testify against you (Isaiah 3:9) and bring their report to *Baal Peor*.

Baal Peor (Numbers 25:3, Deuteronomy 4:3; Hosea 9:10) is an army that investigates how to knock you out of the race. Marriages are primary targets of this army. They spy out what could make each party unhappy. Then, they use their influence to promote that unhappiness so that there is never any fulfillment. The husband and wife become bitter and cannot complement one another. These particular demons hate women, and they try to make men bitter to the point of lasciviousness. Tremendous sensual impulses come in to supernaturally influence men, and their souls become distorted by libido waves of bitter sensuality and perversion.

In the end, these demons can incapacitate a man toward the woman God gave him for his wife. They watch for bitterness and are ready to attack when they perceive it. These forces of hell can then hypnotize people through the power of the air and plague them with bitterness.

Another army is called *Yanshuph* (Isaiah

34:11), the demons of confusion. These demons set up a person to be attacked by *Belial* (Psalm 101:3), demons of lies and infections that come in through impulses and vibrations.

Then come the wasters, *Lumainomenos* (Proverbs 18:9; Acts 8:3). These demons cause havoc as they waste a Christian's capacity to get right with God. If things are not made right in the soul, *Eggastrimuthos* (Isaiah 8:19; 29:4, 1 Samuel 28:7) brings in a subtle attack of familiarity.

This seven-fold onslaught often seals the destruction of marriages in the finality of divorce. These people may carry on for a long time with a superficial relationship, but it is merely game-playing.

In addition to these seven armies that conspire against oneness among believers, Satan uses *Panourgia*. They are described in Ephesians 4:14, 1 Corinthians 3:19, and 2 Corinthians 4:2 as the demons of manipulation and control with cunning craftiness, very skillful in trickery and deceit. For example, these demons try to make believers deny Satanic activity in a relationship by having them confess "that is just his personality." According to Ephesians 4:14, these demons lie in wait, ready to deceive.

With all the definition God has given us, we

must not be lulled into complacency on the subject of angelic warfare. As never before, we must understand what it means to pray without ceasing and to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

**For more about spiritual warfare, read Dealing Precisely with Demons and Exposing Satan's Armies by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

DEFILEMENT AND CONTAMINATION

“Looking diligently lest any man fail the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

“Defile” is a very interesting word—*miaino*—in the Greek text. The word pictures contamination (sewage) coming from what were known as “chamber pots” kept in every home and emptied into the gutters of the dirt roads used at that time. It describes people who were clean until they were splattered by the filthy contents of a chamber pot when it was carelessly tossed from an upper window as they innocently walked by. That is the picture of defilement and its effect as it proceeds from a person filled with bitterness.

James 3:14 and 16 say: “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie

not against the truth....For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” A bitter person will carelessly spill out verbal waste, uttering slander, because he has exalted himself above another. Romans 3:14 says that his mouth is filled with cursing, his heart is full of bitterness.

Bitterness turns love into hate, happiness into malice, blessing into cursing. The bitter person blames God and others for his own flaws, failures, and wrong decisions. Bitterness feeds the pride complex and self-righteousness. These bad emotions perpetuate carnality and destroy the spiritual life.

If a wife is not happy and cannot relax to love her husband and respond to him through the love of the Holy Spirit controlling her soul, a root of bitterness has sprung up. Likewise, a husband who cannot love his wife with God’s love is bitter. They may be able to control their bitterness outwardly. But remember what bitterness is: It is a root that troubles a person’s soul and has never been dealt with. Ultimately, a bitter person will contaminate others through his tongue (James 3:5-10).

The Root of Conspiracies

Some people are able to control the expression of bitterness, but they must deal with the root. In conspiracies, people who never gave each other the time of day, suddenly start having “coffee” together. They begin to “air” their differences, but in reality they are just spreading the infection of bitterness. Bitterness goes from one person to the next as they transfer all the blame onto the person they are talking about. Instead of builders, they are destroyers.

When you hear any negativity about anyone who is not present to hear the conversation—about your church, your work, family members, friends—stop the conversation immediately. You can even approach the situation in kindness by saying, “Excuse me, but I would like to let that person have a chance to hear what you are about to say. Do you mind if we call him?” That will nip most conversations in the bud.

A conspiracy begins when someone receives an accusation against a person who is not present. If the report is not true, any discussion about the matter is maligning. If the accusation is true, to discuss the matter is gossip. And whether it is gossip or maligning, the person

who listens to an evil report is just as guilty as the one who says it.

An evil report comes from bitterness, and the effects are so destructive. Some people feel justified in talking about someone just because the report is true. God, however, is in the business of redemption, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. The Lord doesn't repeat a matter, and we won't either if we have love in our souls.

Judgment Tables Turned

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:1-2).

God has established a table of organization to deal with problems between individuals in the Church. Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15 tell us that we are to go *alone* to the one who has sinned, and we are to go with love in our souls to restore him. If that person refuses to get right, Matthew 18:16-17 provides the scriptural procedure for the church leaders to follow to prevent infection from spreading to others.

A pastor dealing with people in the table of organization must keep quiet about all matters.

If he even tells his wife, he is violating thirty-four Bible doctrines.

When we talk about someone, the discipline God intended for that person is taken off him and placed upon us. If we never committed adultery, but maligned someone who did, we would receive his chastisement. That person becomes clean because of our tongue. God says we are to go to the person *alone*. If we don't do this, we take on his penalty because his sin was paid for by Christ. In talking about him behind his back, we have maligned him outside of the Cross. The Cross, which is the highest expression of love, covers the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). It doesn't spread bitterness. It doesn't separate friends (Proverbs 17:9). But it does motivate us to go alone.

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1).

Our job is to restore the one who has failed. God's goal is reconciliation without hurting him. We are to help and give him opportunities to be restored. We must honor the Word of God and go to him alone. This is a doctrine so many just

do not practice. People involved in conspiracies have never understood it. Yet, this doctrine has been taught in the whole counsel of God.

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand” (Romans 14:4).

This verse shouldn’t keep us from going to a person alone. We must go (and follow-up, if necessary) through the table of organization to protect the Body of Christ and to love the person who has fallen. What God is saying in Romans 14 is this: “I am his Master, and you are not. You are My servant, so you are not to judge My servant. You should deal with My servant the same way I do as his Master.”

Remember this, too: When God forgives, He forgets. He doesn’t bring up a matter five days later, and He doesn’t enter into presumption three months later. Forgiveness includes forgetfulness with God’s omnipotence, despite His omniscience and omnipresence.

Chapter Three

GOD'S ANSWER FOR BITTERNESS

Bitterness can get into a soul to spoil and hinder it, leaving the soul flawed because of ignorance. In this state, a person usually defends his ignorance. In these cases, certain demons go to work, causing people to become “do-gooders” without the Cross. Because their good works are done in the energy of the flesh, they will eventually burn out.

Then come the demons that spread evil infections, using projections to incapacitate those who need love from being able to receive love. These demons will also hinder a person from receiving grace because of overwhelming failures. If another believer were to go to him with love, he could not receive it. He is so occupied with his lack of capacity and his damaged self-image in Christ, he feels unworthy. Either that, or he becomes arrogant and proud through rebellion and negative reactions.

In Isaiah 38:15, Hezekiah was extremely bitter. He said of the Lord, "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all of my years in the bitterness of my soul." Then in verse 17 he said, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: *but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*"

Hezekiah had gone through a terrible time of bitterness, then he discovered that God had cast all the sins of the past behind His back. He learned that God wanted him to simply agree and go forward with Him. That is when the bitterness left Hezekiah.

Medicine for the Sick Soul

Deliverance from bitterness comes when we have the love of God, given by the Holy Spirit, shed abroad in our souls. Jesus Christ declared that the great commandment is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). When a Christian is walking in love, that love is located in the soul (see Ephesians 5:2). The soul includes the mind, self-consciousness, conscience, emotions, and volition. Also located in the soul

is the old sin nature. We are to deal with it in our experience by reckoning on its death and burial with Christ.

A great misunderstanding concerns the location of God's love in a believer. The Psalmist wrote: "Heal my soul: for I have sinned against thee" (Psalm 41:4). Soul love, when it is brought by the Holy Spirit, is among the most precious things that can happen to a believer's spirit, soul, and body. The love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit through the heart, into the human spirit, and into five parts of the soul. This believer is walking in the light of God's life, confessed up-to-date, and not living in any known sin, but using rebound as necessary.

The Spirit, however, cannot shed God's love abroad in the heart when there are hindrances from negative volition. If I violate the Word of God and contend that my soul is all right, I am lying. My soul is sick. It may be in the early stages of illness, but it is sick and needs healing through rebound and the process of rehabilitation from the precise light of the Word of God (Ephesians 4:23).

Perhaps you have had trouble getting along with another believer. Your soul doesn't have God's love shed abroad into every part. In an

attempt to justify yourself, you can provide various reasons for your differences and for the problems in your relationship. Still, the real issue is that something has affected your soul and grieved the Holy Spirit that dwells in you. When the Spirit is grieved, He cannot shed love abroad in your soul.

The Key to Soul Prosperity

Jonathan and David loved each other as their own souls. Their love was in every part of their souls. When the Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our souls, it is then that we begin to prosper. “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

Having God’s love in the soul maintains our relationship to Him, as well as to people. We become healthy because we walk in love in every part of our souls. Differences may come, but we keep them to ourselves and only deal with those differences in love when fellowship is threatened because of sin. We have no criticism, no judgmental attitude, no sowing of discord. We edify—even people who have become our enemies—because of the love of God that is resident in each part of our souls. We let God remove

every obstacle that could lead to bitterness, and we walk in our victory.

CONCLUSION

No one can really hurt us if the Holy Spirit has shed God's love abroad in our hearts. His love brings protection, provision, and insulation. It sets up a wall of fire so that the soul does not become distorted.

With God's Word and God's love, the soul has all it really needs. We have no need to sublimate, we avoid defilement, and infection is checked. Roots of bitterness cannot spring up when the love and grace of God are allowed to fill the soul to overflowing. Instead of infecting others, we will see curses turned into blessings.

The healing power of the Holy Spirit inspires tremendous edification. Ultimately, God's Kingdom is furthered as others draw near to receive redemption, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconciliation.

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are interested in the secret places of our hearts and that nothing is hidden from Your eyes. We are so grateful for

Your character of lovingkindness and longsuffering toward us. We trust You to tend to the roots as well as the fruit of our lives, to remove every trace of bitterness. In Jesus' name, Amen.