Ephesians 4:31 — Hebrew 12:14-15

It is one of the most destructive and dangerous of all human emotions and if not dealt with, will spiritually destroy the person who has it.

One of the great problems in the life of a Christian and in our churches is something that is hard to admit, though easy to recognize.

1. It can rob you of your peace and joy.

3. It can lead to the lost of good friends.

- 2. It is an open door for Satan to control you life.
- 4. It can hurt or destroy you relationship with your family, your wife and can even lead to the breakup of your home.
- 5. It make peace and harmony impossible.
- 6. There can be no true biblical love where it exists.
- 7. It destroys any true relationship with the Lord and will keep you from growing in the Lord.
- 8. It will defeat you and ruin your life and the lives of those around you.

What is it? It is the sin of bitterness.

Definition: "adjective" 1 having a sharp, pungent taste or smell; not sweet.

2 causing pain or unhappiness.

- 3 feeling anger, hurt, and resentment.
- 4 (of a conflict) harsh and acrimonious which means having ill feelings.
- 5 (of wind or weather) intensely cold.

It is the feeling of hurt, resentment, anger, and even hate that can build up in our hearts when we have been hurt by another person or by an experience in life. It can be directed towards other people and even towards God.

The Book of Hebrews was written last in the first century. Jerusalem had been destroyed, Jewish believers had been greatly persecuted. They had been harassed-mistreated. Because they believed in Christ their family and friends had turned against them.

There was a real danger that they would turn bitter, return to Judaism and give up on the Lord. They were prime candidates for bitterness.

Often in our lives people hurt us, take advantage of us, betray us, take credit for what we have done. Often people belittle us and elevate themselves and treat us badly.... often with there being no fault of our own. We did nothing to desire it and sometimes should have been praised or recognized for what we did, but were robbed of our reward.

1. The Root of Bitterness and Its Cause.

How does bitterness take root in your heart? Before there is a root there is a seed. The seed is planted and the plant begins to grow.

"Root" = It exists beneath the surface, invisible to the eye, but very real. <u>The seed is planted when someone does you wrong, or you perceive that you were wronged.</u>

<u>It could begin when you were disappointed or hurt. Sometimes the person who hurts us does it unintentionally being insensitive to what they did or said. Other times.</u>

<u>. .it is deliberate. In either case the seed sprouts unseen by others and it takes root.</u>

Problem: Don't deal with it properly — instead of returning love for hurt…we disregard the Grace of God which is God's unmerited favour. God forgives the sinner who does not deserve to be forgiven. Bitterness begins when instead of forgiving, we become resentful and bitterness grows towards them. We think the person should know what they did and should correct their behaviour, but they go on as if nothing has happened. But God's word teach us that forgiveness is not based on merit, but on grace….because we choose to forgive and not hold resentment.

In the model prayer Jesus in Matthew 6:12 said we ask for forgiveness as we are forgiving others, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." The word debt means what is owed to us or in this verse someone who has offended or sinned against us.

Jesus in Matthew 6:14-15 shows us the seriousness of the matter: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

In Matthew 18:22 Jesus gave us the standard saying that we were to forgive seventy times seventy the person who hurts us. *A BITTER PERSON IS USUALLY ONE WHO HAVE BEEN HURT.*

Usually there are three ways we are hurt.

- 1. By what is DONE to us.
- 2. By what is SAID about us.
- 3. By what is TAKEN from us.

<u>Bitterness in a believer's live represents a spiritual failure.</u> The Christian is to live by God's principles and one vital principle that is demonstrated in God's grace is that we are to forgive those that trespass against us.

will be times when we are wronged.

What is frustrating is that if we have truly been hurt and most times the person

It is impossible for us to go through life without being hurt by someone. There

What is frustrating is that if we have truly been hurt and most times the person who hurt us goes on as if it did not happen. Most times there is no apparent justice and the person who hurt us so deeply receives no punishment, does not apologize and suffers no ill consequences for their act.

- A neglected or abused child. I read an article recently about a young mother who was bitter about her father who had abused her as a child. She was now married with children, but she was very bitter. Her father was a pastor of a church! The mother stood by her father, as did the church members. He privately told her she had no right to destroy his "ministry." She was the victim and yet she was treated as if she had done wrong. She was fighting bitterness.
- A Christian man was fired because he was honest and refused to do unethical things in business. The company continued to prosper…he lost his job.
- A faithful hard working employee is passed over for a position and it was given to someone else who did not deserve it.
- One spouse was unfaithful and walked out on their spouse. A faithful spouse who loved their companion was betrayed.
- who loved their companion was betrayed.A person's close friend talked about them to others and betrayed them.
- A pastor is mistreated by the congregation that he faithfully and sacrificially served.
- Brothers and sisters become bitter when daddy or mamma's things are divided after their deaths. One daughter for years takes care of an ailing mother at great expense of money and time. The will is read and she gets no more than
- the others....with any recognition for her service and love to her mother.

 One child is praised in the family and another's achievements are ignored or
- A tragedy happens in life....child is killed, wife or husband dies leaving the spouse alone and in debt.
- A manager hates the existence of an employee, and seeks to destroy the life of a hard working employee.
- All these things and many, many more can cause bitterness to take root in a
 - 1. The Fruit of Bitterness It Results.

made little of.

person's heart.

- 2. What is the result of bitterness?
- 3. Bitterness causes the person who holds it harm. It will rob you of your peace of mind, of joy in your life or satisfaction. Most of all it will deeply hurt your pride.
- 4. Saturate your mind. The root of bitterness can take hold our your mind. You find yourself thinking about the person who harmed your all the time. You cannot get over it or get it out of your mind.

I want to quote a co-worker, whose words inspired me greatly and she said: "The moment I start hating a person I become that person's slave. I can't enjoy life...he controls my thoughts...I can't escape his/her grasp on my mind. He or she may be many miles away, always in my mind."

I laughed at this other story and then I was saddened as to what if. The story is told of a very bitter woman who was bitten by a rabid raccoon. Tests are run and the doctor tells her she has rabies. She then got out a notebook and began to write down names. The doctor asked if she was making a will. She replied, NO! I am making a list of all the people I am going to bite!

2. Bitterness will sadden your spirit. Bitterness is a depressant. There are no happy bitter people. It will make you critical, pessimistic, and negative. It will blow out the candle of joy in your heart. It will rob you of getting any enjoyment out of life. It is like the character in the "Little Abner" cartoons who went around everywhere with a dark cloud over his head.

You get the "Woe is me syndrome and everything you will be seen through the coloured lens of bitterness.

- 3. It can sicken your body. God did not create our bodies to nurse bitter feelings towards others. It has been said that "Not every sick person is bitter, but every bitter person will eventually get sick."
- 4. It causes stress and we all know that what the doctors tell us about stress it true. It will ruin our health and can kill us. Yet, is a sickness that can be 100% prevented and completely cured. I just love to read and fix my problems one by one. Oh, what a relieve it is when you know your problems and can fix them.
- can fix them.
 5. Bitterness will defile others around you if not overcome.

— It will ruin your children if you are bitter against another Christian, your church, preacher, and yes….even God. — It will seriously affect your relationship with others and your ability to show love to your husband (wife), children, family and friends. Marriages have been destroyed by bitterness, often when it is even directed towards others. You hurt the people you love the most and who count on you. — It will rob you of your testimony. 1 John 5:1-2 says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." — <u>It will rob you of your service and reward for the Lord. Often bitterness grows and a person become so</u>

dishearten that they give up on the Lord. There is no satisfaction in serving the Lord. You see, bitterness affects our relationship with the Lord and God cannot *bless us in this sinful state.* — It will rob you of the blessings of the Lord. God cannot bless a person who is not living filled and guided by the Holy Spirit. In 1

Thessalonians 5 Paul exhorted us to:

- be at peace with all men.
- not render evil for evil. support the weak and be patient towards all men.
- pray without ceasing
- in everything give thanks
- quench not the Spirit.
- abstain from all appearance of evil. 1. You see....bitterness is sin. Sin breaks our fellowship with God and we then do

Often people because of pressure will keep on doing their job. They will keep coming to church. Outwardly the will make a semblance at serving the Lord, but their heart is not in it. There service is not done in faith trusting the Lord, but

done resentfully. Bitterness is a personal sin and God clearly tells us that the wages of sin is death.... Sin is always destructive and this sin is one of the very worse.

III. Overcoming Bitterness - How?

1. Like any sin, we must first admit it.

not have His blessing or guidance.

2. 1 John 1:8-10 says, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Yet there is a particular problem admitting bitterness. It is so very hard to admit. Why?

"Because it was not you, but the other person who did the wrong, who hurt you, who said what they did, who abused your, who belittled you, who robbed you of your recognition."

We feel that we are justified in feeling the way we do because we were the person who was wronged. What makes it worse....the person who hurt us often goes on about life with no apparent ill effect. They got away with hurting us and feel no remorse and make no apology.

2. You must confess your bitterness as sin. Eph. 4:29-32

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

James 3:14 says, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth."

3. You must forgive the person who has wronged you. Eph. 4:32.

Husband, wife, church, pastor, church member, family member or friend, parent....no matter what they did to you or how grievously they harmed you.

Our natural nature…the old carnal nature says this person has hurt me so bad I can never forgive them. Maybe they continue to hurt you and seem to take pleasure it. You see we feel justified in our resentment towards them.

Yet, as a believer we have been shown the love and forgiveness of Christ. He died for us when we were in rebellion against Him. Yes, we were guilty, but He loved us and showed that love by paying our sin debt…that we owed. We who have been shown such as wonderful love....can we do less.

1. And let us further admit that even after God saved us we continue at times to sin...don't we? Is not being bitter a sin...and all sin are against God isn't it. He deeply hurt Him when we deny Him our love and obedience. It hurts Him to see us giving into sin and destroying ourselves. It also makes little of His sacrifice for us doesn't it?

You know the sin of bitterness you harbour...it helped drive the nails into his hands and feet. It helped shove Him down on that old rugged cross, it helped beat Him until His body and face were amass of sores and torn flesh. WE HAD A REAL PART IN HIS SUFFERING AND DEATHDO WE DESERVE TO BE FORGIVEN? Truly we do not, yet He forgave us when we believed.

Can't you, for the love of Christ…forgive someone who hurt you? Can't you for the love of Christ....give the matter over to the Lord? Even someone who continues to hurt or offend you and who is not deserving of forgiveness...?

Bitterness is bondage and what a joy to be set free from it. You must release them from the debt you feel they owe you.

Conclusion:

The invitation is simple: As Christ loved you....so love your neighbour, no matter what the sin against you....forgive them and put it aside. Turn the matter over to the Lord, ask Him to forgive you for your bitter feelings and then forgive that person.

Your brother, Sir Godfrey Gregg D.Div Co-Founder of The Mystical Order

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