

WHY AM I BITTER? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS! (Part 2)

INTRODUCTION: Bitterness is a sin, isn't it? We know that because God tells us to **get rid of it**. Eph 4:31 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:"

How serious of a sin is it? **Heb 12:15** "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;"

Let's think about this verse for a minute. **First**, it is a root that **will bear fruit** that will **trouble you**.

--Is there any **benefit**—is there anything **good**—that comes out of **you** being bitter?

No—it's **all bad**, isn't it! **Absolutely nothing good** comes out of bitterness!

--What is the **bad** that comes out of it? **Sin**—and **more sin**!

Anger...a complaining spirit...harsh words...lack of joy...mean treatment...all come from us being bitter.

Second, not only will it trouble **you**—it will **defile others**—**many** others! What does it mean to "defile" others? It means to make them **filthy**. In other words, the sin of bitterness can "spill over" unto other people and **encourage** them to sin, too! It is a type of leaven that can leaven the whole lump!

So, what is bitterness? Let's review some of the things we've looked at so far:

--It is something we **can have**—but only if **we want to**! In other words, it is a **choice** we make! I can't **give you** bitterness—and you **can't give me** bitterness. It is something **we must take** for ourselves.

--It is against God—or another person.

--It involves an "activating event"—something that the other person (or God) **does to us**. The event can be **real**—someone **really** did something wrong against us; or **imaginary**—we **think** someone purposely did something to hurt us when in fact they did not!

--Sadly, it is also **common**. It is something that can happen to any one of us. All of us have had **events** in our lives where we have been **wronged by others**—or when we have **wrongly imagined** God has **wronged us**!

Naomi and Job both felt they were treated unfairly—**wrongly**—by God—and became bitter against Him. Both had suffered the loss of loved ones—and both felt forsaken by God. But we don't have to lose loved ones to feel **forsaken by God**, do we?

How do we **overcome** that? Confess bitterness as a sin—then forsake it! And don't focus on our feelings! Instead, **focus on the fact** that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).

Elijah was bitter against God because he wrongly thought God **forgets our service to Him**! "I, even I only, am left!" 'I'm the only one serving you—and what am I getting out of it? A bounty on my head issued by wicked queen Jezebel!' But God **does not forget** our service to Him! Heb 6:10 "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name..."

And Jonah wins the "Stupidest Reason to be Bitter" award because he was mad at God for being **merciful to sinners**! As crazy as it sounds, that is an attitude we can have, too! If we think it is **unfair** for God to bring a murderer to heaven—if they repent and trust Christ before leaving this world—we have some Jonah in us!

This morning, we are going to look at two more examples of bitterness in God's Word—but in these cases the bitterness is directed toward **other people** instead of God.

We are going to start with the bitterness of Saul, the 1st king of Israel. Please turn to I Samuel 17.

Here we see ... **1. Saul's bitterness against David**

A. The Reason—Why Saul was bitter.

Why was Saul bitter at David? In a word...**jealousy!** But why? **Why** would Saul—the **king of Israel**—be **jealous** of a man in his kingdom that came from a **poor family** and was young enough to be his son? Here's some of the background.

--I Sam 17:57 After killing Goliath, David is brought before Saul

--vs 58 Asked whose son he is

--I Sam 18:2 Saul took him that day...David became a member of Saul's army and "cabinet"

--Now v 5 "And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." Sounds like a **good thing**, right?

--Did what he was told

--Acted wisely

--Was promoted by Saul to be head over the men of war

--Was accepted by the common people—and those who served Saul!

So what's the problem? Where does the jealousy come in?

i. Singing in the streets

Nothing wrong with singing, but look what was being sung!

Vss 6-7. "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

ii. Slipping of the kingdom

Vs 8 (end) "and what can he have more but the kingdom?" Why did Saul say that? Because he felt he was **losing his grip** on the kingdom. **Was he** losing his grip? Truth be told, he **had already lost his grip** because God previously told him that He was **going to take the kingdom away from Saul** and give it to someone else!

Turn back a few pages to chapter 15. Saul had been commanded by God to destroy the Amalekites, but he disobeyed God's command.

--vs 23 (mid) "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also **rejected thee from being king.**" --v 26 (mid) "for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath **rejected thee from being king** over Israel."

--v 28 "And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath **rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day**, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou."

B. The Result—What Saul did because he was bitter.

Back to I Samuel 18:8 "Was very wroth..."

Vs 9 "Saul eyed David from that day and forward." He became **suspicious** of him

Sadly, the root of envy and bitterness in Saul **grew into more** than just anger and suspicion—it turned **into hatred intent on killing David**—the person he was jealous of—and the one who God declared would be **taking his place** as king!

Vs 11 "And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will **smite** David even to the wall with it." Not the only time; the end of the verse says, "David avoided out of his presence **twice.**"

There are other times Saul **personally tried** to kill David—and times that he tried to "set up" David in hopes that he would be killed! We have one of those instances here in this chapter.

In vs 20, Saul hears that his daughter loves David

In vs 21, Saul wants his daughter to marry David to **be a snare** to him! How?

--David was a poor man and couldn't afford the dowry for a king's daughter

--Saul knew this, so instead of **requiring money** for a dowry, he wanted David to go kill some Philistines. Why? So there would be less Philistines in the land? Not hardly!

--Look at the **end** of v 25 "But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines."

Let that sink in. Saul was **so bitter**—and **so hated David**—that he didn't care if his daughter loved David and wanted to marry him. Saul's hope was that David would **be killed** before David and Saul's daughter were even married! Talk about a loving father concerned about the feelings of his daughter!

C. The Resolution—How did it end?

What happened to **Saul**? Did he ever **change**? Did he ever **stop being jealous** of David? Did his bitterness end? We have **no record** that it did. In fact, the rest of Saul's life was spent hunting down David. He took a break once in a while, but for the most part he was **obsessed** with trying to kill David.

--Did he succeed? No; God had pronounced that David would be king—and that is what happened!

--What happened to Saul? He and his son Jonathon were killed by the Philistines in a battle.

What about **David**? What can we learn **from David** about bitterness?

One important lesson is that David did not let **Saul's bitterness toward him** turn into **bitterness against Saul**. That could have happened, right? David was always looking over his shoulder and was constantly on the run. He could have become bitter at Saul because of how Saul was treating him. We don't see that in David, though. In fact, while Saul was hunting down David to try to kill him, David had opportunities **to kill Saul!**

But he didn't! Why? Because he wasn't going to take things into his own hands! Instead, he chose to wait on God and God's timing to remove Saul! Let me say it again:

Don't let the bitterness of someone else toward you turn into you being bitter against them!

The second example I want us to look at is... **2. Esau's bitterness against Jacob**

I believe this is one that we can all relate to because the "activating event" is one where one person—Jacob—**unmistakably does wrong** to another person—in this case, his twin brother Esau.

Please turn to Gen 27. I'm going to use the 3 same points that I used for the situation between Saul & David.

A. The Reason—Why Esau was bitter

This account is probably familiar to most of you, but please follow along as I read verses 6-10. Quite a plan—and plot: **one parent** pitting **one son** against the **other parent** and the **other son!**

Sadly for Esau, the plot worked. Jacob **pretends to be Esau** and brings goat meat cooked just right to his father, Isaac. Jacob even wore Esau's clothes so he would **smell** like Esau—and put the **skins of the goats** on his hands and the back of his neck so he would **feel** like Esau! Esau was obviously a hairy man 😊!

--Jump over to v 30.

--Now notice vs 33-35. "Thy brother came with subtility, and hath taken away thy blessing."

B. The Result—What Esau did because he was bitter.

Look at v 41 "And Esau **hated Jacob** because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."

--Humanly speaking, Esau **had a right** to be angry at Jacob. Jacob had **deceived** their father...and **lied** to their father...and **cheated Esau** out of the blessing that belonged to him as the firstborn.

Verse 42 is rather interesting—"And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah" Why is that interesting? Because v 41 says that Esau's words were said **"in his heart."** Bitterness comes out, doesn't it?

No matter how much with think it is hidden, it comes out.

--It comes out in **what** we say—and **how** we say it

--It **shows in our facial expressions** when the person we are bitter against **says** something or **does** something.

--And it is seen in how we **comfort ourselves** when we are hurt.

End of v 42 "Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth **comfort himself**, purposing to kill thee. Esau wasn't comforted because he **forgave** Jacob—he was comforted because he had a **revenge plan!**

Lastly, let's consider.... C. The Resolution—How did it end?

Although we are talking about the bitterness of Esau, I think this account also serves as a good reminder that we **reap what we sow**. In v 43 we see **Rebekah** sending Jacob away—never to see her favorite son again!

What about **Jacob**? He left—and was gone at least 20 years! Laban, his uncle, **changed the agreement** he had made with him 10 times we read in Gen 31:41. In other words **the deceiver**—Jacob—**became the one who was deceived!** That was not the worst of his reaping, though. Just as he **had deceived his father** when his father was up in years, he himself was **deceived by his sons** when he was an old man!

Do you remember how? Gen 37:31-33 “And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; ³²And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. ³³And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.”

Was Joseph tore in pieces by an evil beast? No; **they lied**—he was still very much alive! Talk about reaping what you sow!

What about **Esau**? Did he “get over” his bitterness? Can't be dogmatic, but I believe **he did**. Here's why:

1) First, Esau didn't kill Jacob when they met again after at least 20 years! Look at Gen 33:4. Here we see Esau embracing Jacob...and kissing him...and weeping.

2) Second, Esau reluctantly took the gift Jacob gave to him. Look at v 11. If Esau was still bitter, he would have eagerly taken everything he could get with the thought, “You bet I'll take it. It should have been mine to begin with!”

3) And in verses 12-16, we see Esau willing to go before Jacob and his family to protect them. When Jacob said “No,” Esau offered to leave some men behind as protection.

One other very important lesson we can learn from Esau “putting away” his bitterness: it seems Esau **forgave Jacob** without Jacob **saying he was sorry** or **asking for forgiveness!** We have no evidence in the Bible of Jacob or Rebekah apologizing to Esau for what they had done. Why is that important? Because I believe it **serves as an example** of how we should deal with bitterness when people wrong us.

Too many people **hang onto** their bitterness, hoping the other person will **ask for forgiveness**. But what if they don't? Are you going to remain bitter the rest of your life? What **good** does that do **you**?

Listen carefully: Bitterness **does not automatically go away** when someone asks for forgiveness. Why? Because bitterness is **your** sin—not theirs! **You** are the one that is bitter—and God tells us to put it out of our life! There are **no exception clauses**. God does not say, ‘Get it out of your life—but **only** if the person who wronged you asks for your forgiveness!’

Jay Wilson, the counselor I quoted a couple of weeks ago, makes an interesting observation:

“In order to forgive this person **when he says he is sorry** you have to be ready **before he says he is sorry**. And if you **are ready** to forgive him **before** he says he is sorry, then it **doesn't depend on whether he says he is sorry or not**....It does not matter what the other person does.”

I believe I've shared with you before that my biological father left my Mom, me, and my two younger siblings when I was around 3. The **one and only time** I saw him was when I was 25. I didn't give him **a big hug** when I saw him because he was a stranger to me—but I **didn't punch him** in the nose either!

--If I remember right, I wrote to him—and he wrote back.

--I wrote to him a second time and said that I **had forgiven him**—even though he didn't ask for my forgiveness. **How** could I do that? Not because I'm a “super Christian” (whatever that is), but because I have been **forgiven much** by God. And because I have been granted mercy from God and have been forgiven much; I can do the same to a fellow sinner! **Eph 4:32** “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, even as God for Christ's sake **hath forgiven you.**”

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. Be honest—and humble—about whether or not there is bitterness in our hearts. If there is, get it out—don't let it remain and grow! Confess it as sin—and get rid of it because it will harm you and those around you!
2. Recognize the fact that if **you are saved**, you have been forgiven much—and that is why you can forgive others. But if you are **not saved**—if you have **not received forgiveness** and mercy from God—it is impossible for you to fully forgive others!

Why? Because it is **not natural for us** to forgive those who have deeply hurt us. We need God the Holy Spirit in us to produce that kind of forgiving spirit and God the Holy Spirit is only in those who are born again.