



## God's Answer for Bitterness

*From Hurting to Healing*

*"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that **no bitter root grows up** to cause trouble and defile many."  
(Hebrews 12:15)*

*Wouldn't our enemies rub their hands with glee if they knew that our hate for them was exhausting us, making us tired and nervous, ruining our looks, giving us heart trouble, and probably shortening our lives?*  
— Dale Carnegie<sup>1</sup>

***Bitterness is drinking  
poison and hoping it  
hurts someone else!***

Despite his great insights into the human mind, Sigmund Freud died at the age of eighty-three, a bitter and disillusioned old man who proved unable to sustain his friendships. He wrote in 1918, "I have found little that is good about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash...."

They may hide their bitterness behind a mask. *A preacher and a deacon went golfing one day. And, the deacon said to the preacher, "Preacher you're the most even handed person I've ever seen. You always smile. When I hit my ball in the water hazard, in the golf, in the sand, in the rough, or when I make a bad shot, hook it, slice it, boy it just shows all over me. But, you do the same thing but you just keep on smiling." The preacher says, "Yeah I know it." But, he says, "Everywhere I spit the grass dies."*

What bitterness does: "Bitterness or resentment damages relationships. It grows, causes trouble, defiles, deteriorates the personality, damages spiritual vitality and destroys."<sup>2</sup>

"When a bitter person is hurt, he does not pause to grapple with his hurt but allows it to fester. He dwells on it and mulls it over in his mind. In order to justify this nasty emotion, he tries to look at the problems of others. If another person hurts him, even if that person did it unknowingly, the bitter one looks for faults in him. They accentuate the negative. He is seldom capable of being positive. He is mentally comforted by others failing. Of course, he will find lots of them because except for Jesus, all of us have flaws. The more faults he finds, the more he feels confirmed in his state of bitterness. Oddly, bitter people are usually intelligent people."<sup>3</sup>

***No matter how long  
you nurse a grudge, it  
won't get better.***

### How bitterness will hurt you:

- 1) It will "trouble you" (**Heb. 12:15 "...trouble you..."**)
- 2) It will enslave you. Dr. McMillan said, "The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom, but more cruel than any slave-driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my inner spring mattress becomes a

<sup>1</sup> Dale Carnegie, *How To Stop Worrying and Start Living* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Speas, *How to Deal with How You Feel* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 40-43.

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Rogers, *Mastering Your Emotions* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1988), 157.

torture. The lowliest surfs can sleep, but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man upon whom I pour the vial of my wrath."<sup>4</sup>

"An ancient Roman story goes: the soldiers of Caesar became dissatisfied with their regimen and rations. They could not complain to Caesar, so they became angry with the gods. So, many of them shot their arrows toward the heavens, hoping to hit the gods. Several of the soldiers were wounded or killed as their own arrows, with high velocity, fell back upon their heads. What an apt illustration of what bitterness does to a person."<sup>5</sup>

### The Progression of Bitterness

Ephesians 4:31 - Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

I am **HURTING** ("bitterness")

I am **HEATING** ("wrath" - slow burn inside)

I am **HUFFING** ("anger" - outburst outside)

I am **HOLLERING** ("clamor" - quarrel)

I am **HATING** ("evil speaking")

I am **HURTING** ("malice")

Gandhi said the rule of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth cannot sustain itself forever; ultimately both parties end up blind and toothless." [see Matthew 5:38-39]

**Bitterness** - you are wounded.

**Wrath** - the Greek word means to get hot. You are doing a slow burn on the inside. Like oily rags in a closet.

**Anger** - the Greek word speaks of that which is active and outward. The smoldering rags have burst into flames.

**Clamor** - now you have become vocal and may enter into a verbal contest - arguing, shouting or crying.

**Evil speaking** - we begin to slander and to say things that are not so. We get into character assassination. "I hate you." "I wish you were dead." "You are just no good."

**Malice** - now there comes a desire to injury the other person.

### The Power of Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32 - And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

**Letting go of a rattlesnake might help the snake, but it benefits you as well. One of the best reasons to forgive is not what it does for them, but what it does for us.**

Don Colbert, MD, said, "If you choose not to forgive someone, I guarantee that your toxic, deadly emotions of resentment and hatred will continue to poison your system in ways that are just as dangerous as your taking in a literal poison."<sup>6</sup>

### WHAT IS NOT FORGIVENESS:

- 1) Forgiveness is not based on finding some redeeming quality that makes a person worth forgiving.
- 2) To forgive does not mean that a person is saying, "This didn't matter" or "This wasn't a huge wrong committed against me." Rather, it is saying, "**I choose no longer to hold this feeling of unforgiveness toward the person who hurt me.**"
- 3) Forgiveness does not mean letting a person off the hook so that no justice is required. A forgiving person can still require a person to appear in court or face legal penalties for a crime committed against him.
- 4) Forgiveness is not reconciliation. It takes only one person to forgive. It takes two to reconcile.

### THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS

- 1) Admit you have been wounded (Matthew 18:15).
- 2) Accept God's forgiveness in your life (Matthew 18:21-35).
- 3) Openly release the offender to God's hands (Romans 12:19).
- 4) Ask God to help you (Matthew 6:12).
- 5) Voice your forgiveness to the offending person, if necessary.
- 6) Express kindness to the one who offended you (Romans 12:20).

Matthew 6:14-15 - "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

<sup>4</sup> S. I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), 35.

<sup>5</sup> Rogers, 160.

<sup>6</sup> Don Colbert, *Deadly Emotions* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2003), 170.