

Title: Sweetening the Cup of Bitterness

Text: Hebrews 12: 14-17

A teen-aged young man from a fine Christian family became withdrawn and silent without warning. There is no communication between the boy and his parents. His friends suddenly stopped coming around; and his world became very lonely. In a moment of need, he shared some intimate thought with a trusted friend, and then to his amazement his confidence was violated; the story was all over the school and his friends laughed at him. And the young teen-ager speaks with bitterness about how he was betrayed.

An unexpected illness hits a family of four. The father has a rare disease in an acute stage and the family is numbed by the shock. The wife and mother seems to lose interest in life. She ignores her church and speaks cynically about her faith in God. And people criticize her because she stopped coming.

Now, dear friends, these are but two examples of the impact that the emotion of bitterness can have upon a person's life. Bitterness can paralyze, cripple, and blind a healthy person without warning.

The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:31 "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you." Why? Because a root of bitterness can destroy a personality. And it can stop the power of the Holy Spirit in a person's life.

So, this morning I would like to look at what the Bible says we ought to do in SWEETENING THE CUP OF BITTERNESS when it finds a place in our life. And the scripture that I would like to study is found in the book of Hebrews. So, take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Hebrews chapter 12... Hebrews chapter 12 beginning with verse 14...HOW CAN A PERSON OVERCOME A ROOT OF BITTERNESS? Or, HOW CAN WE SWEETEN THE CUP OF BITTERNESS

Hebrews chapter 12: verse 14...(READ THRU VERSE 17.)

when we find it in our life?

Prayer

Hebrews chapter 12 is one of those great chapters in the Bible. It deals with the matter of discipline and testing that comes to the life of a believer. In verse 2 we are told to "fix our eyes on Jesus." And in Vs 3 we are told to "consider Jesus". You see, Jesus is our example in *overcoming a root of bitterness* living the christian life. He is our example and inspiration, ~~in overcoming a root of bitterness.~~

(IA) Now, verses 14 thru 15 give to us some specific things that all of us need to do when we find bitterness in our hearts. How should we respond when someone speaks evil against us? WHAT IS OUR PROPER RESPONSES?

and (2D) Well, Vs 14 tells us how we should respond as it relates to the nature of what we are to pursue. WHAT IS IT THAT GOD WANTS US TO PURSUE? Vs 14 says:
 "Pursue after peace with all men, and after the sancitification without which on one will see the Lord."

The word "pursue" is in the present tense in Greek. This means that it is a continuous habit of life. Paul is saying that this ought to be a priority in our life. I am to constantly pursue, according to vs 14, two things: PEACE AND SANCTIFICATION.

(1B) I am to constantly, abave all else in my life, pursue PEACE WITH ALL MEN.
 That is my responsibility as a Christian...WHY?...Because the one thing that all of us need from one another, knowing that we all have problems and pressures, is ENCOURAGEMENT. We don't need critism or division, or gossip. We should be building one another up in the Lord.

The word "peace" means "binding together." It is a beautiful word. PEACE IS THAT WHICH BINDS TOGETHER.

What does critizm do? It separates people. Peace brings people together. Pursue peace with all believers. The Bible, over and over again, tells us to do this. That we need the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace says Paul in Ephesians 4:3. And we are to endeavor to keep that unity of peace in the body. Not to criticize...not to put others down...not to gossip ~~abou~~ one another. But, to build up and to encourage.

(2^B) And the second thing we are to pursue is sancitification. And this is a very serious matter because according to Vs 14 , if we do not we shall not see the Lord.

The word "santification" means "to set apart." And the work of sancitification is done by God. ^{God} ~~He~~ set us apart from sin. And ^{God} ~~he~~ set us apart for His service.

The principle that you ^{and I need to} ~~should~~ remember is that every Christian has already been sancitized and is continuing to be sancitized. The moment you received Jesus into your life, you were set apart from the penalty and consequence of sin. And you are now being set apart for service to God. ~~and~~ You a new creature in Christ Jesus. ^{And} God now wants to use you. SO, you have been santified. And you are continuing to be santified.

How is God santifying us in daily Life? He does ^{that} ~~so~~ through His Word. The Bible says "if we hide the Word of God in our hearts it will be a means of preventing sin. "Thy word have I hide in my heart that I might not sin against thee." "How shall a young man cleanse his way?" Ask Psalms 119:9 Answer: "By taking heed according to thy word."

So, how can we get victory over the sin of bitterness in our life? Is there some piritual hypodermic needle that I can offer this morning and everyone who comes forward I just give you a shoot? And bang...instant cure....NO MORE BITTERNESS...NO,WAY...That is not how it happens. It happens when I pursue PEACE and SANTIFICATION...The practical obedience to the Know prianciples of God's word over a period of time *in my life*

And yet, Jesus told us that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak..You say, "I am not able to solve my sin problem."

There is a sense in which that is true and there is a sense in which that is not true. It is true, if you mean, yourself apart from your new nataure in Christ. If you mean that, then it is true.

But it is not true in the sense that the moment you become a christian God puts the HOLY Spirit in you. And the ~~Bible~~ Bible says the H.S. does the sanctifying. He is in your life, And He give you the ability and the power to obey God rathan than obedience to sin

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So, if you are obeying sin..WHAT SHOULD YOU CONCLUDE?..Well, you should remember that you are doing what comes natural. It is very easy to sin. Just egnore the Word of God. Just egnore the power of the Spirit in your life. And it is just easy to sin, isn't it? It is the simplest thing in the whole world. WHY? Because you are just doing what comes naturally.

HOW DO YOU CHECK THAT? By realizing that God gave you the Holy Spirit. And as you apply the Word of God to your Life, the H.S. will guide you into all the truth. If I renew my mind in the Word of God, I will be constanly transformed by the Holy Spirit, says the Bible. You are trnasformed by the renewing of your mind through the Word of God.

In other words, the Holy Spirit isn't going to bring to my attention any verse that I have not put into my brain. It just doesn't come out of the think air in the hour when you need it. That is why we need to be disciplined in the menORIZATION of the Word of God. Paul wrote to Timothy and said, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling correctly the word of truth."(2Tim 2:15

One who does not handly correctly the word of truth is one who is sinning And the Bible teaches that the way to have victory over sin in your life is through the Word of God. Jesus said, "Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you."

Then I read Vs 14 of Hebrews 12 and it remainds me that I must be santified in God's sight in order to be in heaven. I have to be, at some point, set apart by God. And that happened when I got saved. I was set apar by God the moment I received Christ as my saviour. But now, as a christian I am told to follow this continueously in my life. To pursue santification continuelly. Or else, I will not see the Lord.

And by the way, this is a commandment. Jesus said, "If you love me you will obey me." This is God's word. We are to pursue constantly peace with one another; and sancitification. The application of God's word to our life.

in order to overcome bitterness

(2) Now, not only should we pursue peace and sanctification, but, secondly, we need to see to it that we do not come short of God's grace.

Vs 15 says, "see to it" that no one comes short of the grace of God." The little word "of" is really the word "from." It should read, "see to it, that no one comes short from (by way source) the grace of God."

The sin of bitterness

Now, what does that mean? The content is dealing with ~~sin~~ in a believers life. The point is that the grace of God, that which God gives to us that we don't deserve is the very thing that sustains us in the midst of pressures and testings and trails. And if there is a wrong spirit, a root of bitterness in your heart toward someone or something, do you know what happens? We fail..or, we come short of the very thing we need to sustain us. And that is the grace of God. Again dear friends, what stops God from giving to us what we really need? What stops the power of the H.S. operating in our lives? What is it? It is sin in our heart. And here in Vs 15, sin is being discribed as a "root of bitterness."

O.K. what is a root of bitterness? This is a quotation from the O.T. Please turn to Deut. chapter 29. Let's find out what that root of bitterness really was. What is Paul talking about. Deut. chapter 29 verse 16-20(Read)

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You know, when I read that passage and then I read Hebrews 12:15, it makes me a little nervous. Do you know what I mean? Paul took an example out of the O.T. concerning the apostacy of Israel. People who decided to go after other Gods and would not follow the true God. He took that illustration and said: "That is the trouble with most of us."

So, you see, in Hebrews 12 God is warning us that if there is any kind of a root of bitterness, that the same kind of thing that is in the heart of a person who rejects God and goes his own way can happen to a christian. You see, Paul is warning believers least anyone of us have that kind of attitude in our heart. I don't believe a christian can loss his/her salvation

you see,

But I do believe the whole content is dealing with pursuing peace and santification with one another. And I need to continue to see that this happens least I come short of receiving God's grace because of wrong attitudes or motives...

develops,

and

Least a root of bitterness *like that in the O.T. when they rejected* God's authority and went after their own gods. Least that kind of attitude characterizes me as a believer.

So, here is a great warning. "See to it that no one comes short of the wonderful grace of God. This grace that ministers to you..that strengthens you...that gives to you what you really do not deserve...

Now, what will happen if we do not pursue peace and santification? What will happen if we come short of God's grace and let a root of bitterness take over our lives? What will happen?

(2) We will experience the results of a root of bitterness. And according to Vs 15, there are two results.

(1β) Number one, it says "springing up cause trouble." It is like a plant that grows slowly. But it keeps growing and slowly it matures into a full grown plant. The point is that a root of bitterness doesn't come over night. It has been going on for a long time in your life. And the thing that happens is that it causes trouble.

The word "trouble" comes from a root word meaning "in a crowd." And Paul is simply saying that when a root of bitterness springs up in your life, it causes trouble in the midst of a crowd, or in the midst of others. You see, no one is isolated ~~to~~ when a root of betterness takes over. This sin not only effects us, but it effects our relationship with others. We express wrong attitudes. And these wrong attitudes effect our relationship with one another. No one's root of bitterness is in and of himself. It is in a crowd; and it begins to effect others. It effects wife, husband, children, members of the church. It effects people you meet. And the root becomes very, very deep....

That is the first result, if we continue to let this happen.

(2D) And the second result of a root of bitterness is "by it many will be defiled." Literally, "through it"...through your root of bitterness many other people will become defiled.

The word "defiled" means "to die with another color." And the point is that there is a change in their life. Maybe they were on the right track having victory in their life. And here comes a christian with a root of bitterness, something is wrong in his/her life, sin that is not dealt with, and as a result attitudes are being expressed towards others, as as a result they, also, are being defiled. And the color of their life, spiritually, so to speak, is changing because of this particular person's root of bitterness. Dear friends, we ought to begin to understand that our root of bitterness does effect others. This is a reall warning to all of us.

(4) Now, to show us how serious a root of bitterness can be in a person's life, Paul uses a tremendous illustration. The Illustration of Esau.
 Look at Vs 16 and 17.....(READ)

Now, I want to share three things with you concerning this illustration.
 (1) Number one, the pattern of life that Esua developed. The Bible says "that there ^{be} ~~B~~ no immoral(which is the word for sexual immorality) or godless person like Esua."

Now, what was that sin in Esua's life that caused a root of bitterness? According to Genesis 26, Esua married two Hittite woman. And when he did that he committed two sins against God. ONE, he married two women. As far as I am concerned he must be nuts doing that ^{anyway} ~~way~~...RIGHT?....I mean talk about problems..WOW! But, anyway, it was defintedly against the will of God. ~~That~~ was the first thing he did wrong.

His second sin was that God told him not to marry anyone from the Hittite nation. So, Esua deliberately disobeyed God's will and God's word. Thus, he was living in sin by marrying those two ~~women~~.

But, this sin just revealed a pattern of life that had been going on for sometime. A root of disobedience and rejection of God's authority was springing up in his life. RESULT...it led to some specific problems...He committed immorality.

The word "godless" means "to treat as common the things of God."

Now, I learn something from Esua for my life. I learn that he didn't really care about spiritual things at all. As a matter of fact what he really cared about was his own desires. The satisfactions of his own desires and physical appetities.

(2) Which leads us to the second thing. Not only was the pattern of his life developing so that God says "there is no immoral or godless person like Esau, but I learn something about the priorities of his life. And you find this in the last phrase of Vs 16. You know, you can tell a lot about a person when you know what his priorities are. Last part of Vs 16 says... "who sold his birthright for a single meal."

Why did Esua do that? Why did he destroy his whole life? Why did he make that decision? How could he do that in that moment of time?

You know, I believe that the reason he did it was because his pattern of life had been going in the wrong direction for a long time...THAT IS RIGHT And in that moment when he needed to make a right decision, he was spirituallly unable to make the right decision. He was concerned for the immediate satisfaction of his physical appetities..All he wanted was food.

Can you imagine for a meal, selling your whole future? He sold all of God's blessings for his life *for a meal.*

And the Bible is warning Christians whose hands are doing nothing, whose walk is not going in the direction God wants, He is warning us about this complicitcy...about letting sin continue in our hearts...whether it is the sin of neglect...Like him who knows good and does it not..OR...those specific acts we do which violate God's word. You see, when sin stays in our hearts it just proves that our bitterness is really against the Lord. We are rejecting what God wants in our life..his purpose..his sanctification which sets us apart from sin and set us apart for Him to us. So, we reject that and say I am going my own way...

Then one day, a decision will come. A decision that will be of utmost importance to our future. But we are unable, like Esua, to make the right one because a pattern of rejecting has been established in our life...

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(3) The third thing I want you to see from Vs 17 is the problem Esua had in trying to solve the situation. He had sinned. He had done wrong, and now he is going to try and solve it.

Vs 17 says: "For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentence." Repentence, dear friends, is a change of mind, heart, and life..."Though he sought it with tears."

Now, I think we all need to learn something at this point. It is easy for us to be sorry for what we have done because we either got caught or we have experienced the consequences of it..And it is easy even to break down to the point of tears and emotional declare how sorry we are..

Yet, without a change of mind, heart, and life, we are no different than Judas. The Bible says that Judas repented with tears. But the Greek word used in reference to Judas was not a change of mind. It was a word meaning "tearful sorrow." He was sorry unto tears, but not unto a change of mind, heart, and life.

Repentence that is real, dear friends, changes mind, heart and life. And this passage is warning us about the need to repent. When God disciplines our lives, it is for a purpose. A purpose of not letting a root of bitterness grow in our heart. A root of bitterness which leads to indifference

WHY AM I INDIFFERENT? Why am I not doing what God really wants me to do? Is it unclear to me what the Bible says is my responsibility? It seems clear to me *in these cases*

WHY AM I NOT INVOLVED? Why do I feel the way I do? Why do I feel like a spiritual blob? Just doing nothing. What is the matter? The Bible teaches that the root of bitterness is sin in some areas. Either not doing what God wants us to do, or, a sin that we know is violating God's Word.

Like Repentance

And a pattern develops so that we are unable to make the right decision. And this whole passage warns us...DON'T LET IT KEEP GOING ON. *SOFTLY* Strighten it out right now. Change your mind first. Which has to be done before the pattern of life can be changed.

You ask: How do you do that? By agreeing with what the Bible says and then determining to change according to what the Word of God commands. By letting the Bible dictate your life and practice. Begin to do what God really wants you to do. This could be the turning point of your life, right now. Maybe you have felt a little bit ~~frustrated~~ frustrated. You are a christian and you have known the lord for a long time, perhaps. But you feel a little bit frustrated. What does God rally want in my life and why am I not doing it. Well, apply God's Word to your life. ~~Seek first the kingdom of God and let all other things take second place.~~

Let us close in prayer

Pursue peace with all, and sanctification.
And see to it that you do not come short of
God's grace; and see to it that ~~not~~ root of
bitterness springing, faith causes trouble, so that
many are defiled.

Let Close in Prayer