

Bitterness

While studying marriage in preparation for the marriage conference, the subject of bitterness came up. Many of the marital problems I have seen as a counselor are related to bitterness. In fact, relationship problems in general are often related to bitterness that has built up between people. The bible addresses the subject and gives warning about its destructive power. Let us prepare and guard ourselves from it.

(COL 3:19) HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, AND DO NOT BE BITTER AGAINST THEM.

1. DEFINITION & DESCRIPTION

Hebrew (marah) [sour, bitter taste]

- (Ex 12:8) Passover meal eaten with bitter herbs;
- (Ex 15:23) Bitter water;
- (Prov 5:4) Wormwood – poisonous shrub used to make an alcoholic drink (absinthe) [bitter taste]
- (Lam 3:15) Drunk on wormwood

Figuratively: angry, harsh, grief, painful, hurtful, temper, discontented; **response to loss**

- (Gen 27:34) Esau wept bitterly over the loss of Isaac's blessing;
- (2Sam 2:26) Animosity that results from war;
- (Jer 31:15) Bitter weeping Rachel weeping / children
- (Ezek 21:6) Broken heart and bitter grief

Greek (pikros) [sharp, pointed, bitter taste;

- (Jam 3:11) Unfit water

Figuratively: Resentful attitude, harsh, angry, cruel, malignant, hateful

- (Jam 3:14) Bitter envy or rivalry;
- (Heb 12:15) Root of bitterness

A. Bitterness is often associated with grief and weeping.

(Gen 27:34) [Esau]; (Mt 26:75) [Peter]

- Loss of something desired and despair over the loss causes bitter weeping
- Our agenda is frustrated and we lose hope leads to bitter weeping

B. Bitterness is also associated with envy and jealousy

(Jam 3:14) Bitter envy and selfish ambition

- Imagined the loss of something or jealousy over what someone else has
- (Col 3:19) husband resents lack (loss) of respect when wife won't submit

2. BITTERNESS RESULTS FROM REJECTING GOD'S PLAN OF GROWTH THROUGH ADVERSITY

(Heb 12:1-15) God's training program for developing mature believers
(Heb.10:32-34) Jewish believers under persecution – arrest, public reproach, loss of property

Hebrews Ch.12:

Vs 1-4 Run the race with endurance looking to Jesus as our example
Vs 5-11 Divine discipline program to produce peaceful fruit of +R

- God allows adversity to prove out or faith in His promises – growth (Jam 1:2-4)

Vs 12-15 Stand up, encourage one another, live in peace with all men
Vs 15 Series of metaphors to encourage right spiritual thinking under pressure

- Don't miss the grace of God – God's training through adversity is grace - opportunity
- Root of bitterness – bitter reaction to God's training because of loss of normal life
- Root – unseen beliefs that rebel against God's plan – 3:7-18 evil, unbelieving heart
- Springing up – adverse reaction among relationships
- Defile – motivate MAS – anger, hostility, self pity, sins-tongue

- A. Bitterness resulted from their sinful viewpoint about their personal losses
- B. Bitterness built up as the losses - events of persecution progressed
- C. God's grace had provided the means to avoid sinful reactions to adversity.

3. BITTERNESS RESULTS FROM THE FRUSTRATION & LOSS OF SELFISH AGENDAS & GOALS

(Jam 3:13-4:3) Wise man with humility cp selfish ambition & strife
Vs 1-8 Use of the tongue – demonstration of maturity or immaturity
Vs 9-10 Same mouth comes blessing & cursing – should not be
Vs 11-12 Metaphors – fountain – sweet/fresh water cp bitter/salt water
Vs 13-18 Wisdom / viewpoint that is evil / earthly cp wisdom from above
Ch.4:1-3 Quarrels & fights – frustrated desires from earthly agendas & goals

Godly wisdom & mindset demonstrated

Vs 13 Wise & understanding – demonstration: good conduct / works; wise humility
Vs 17 Wisdom / above – holy, peaceful, considerate, positive to instruction, full of mercy & good fruit, w/out prejudice & w/out hypocrisy.
Vs 18 Fruit of +R is sown in peacefully by those who make peace

Human earthly agenda & mindset demonstrated

Vs 14 ICC bitter envy & rivalry in your heart; do not be boastful & lie against the truth
• Personal & sinful competition causing boasting and lies that put down the truth
Vs 15 Not wisdom from above; earthly, unspiritual & demonic
Vs 16 Where jealousy & strife – insurrection and every worthless practice

1. Earthly wisdom is based on human agendas & motives influenced by the world
2. Envy & competitive ambition produce worldly oriented desires in even believers
 - Anger results when desire is frustrated – Jam 4:2-3
3. Bitterness is a reaction to loss of some kind either real or imagined.
 - Frustrated goals causes the imagining of losing what you want – imagined loss
4. Bitterness builds over time through ongoing & repeated unresolved conflicts.
5. Bitterness results from refusing to abandon worldly wisdom & its practices
6. Bitterness can result from failing or refusing to forgive the offenses of others.

(Act 8:9-24) Simon the Sorcerer

Vs 9-11	Simon very prominent because of his magic – enjoyed his prominence
Vs 12-13	Many believe including Simon – follows Phillip to see miracles
Vs 14-17	Peter & John pray for Samaritan believers to receive GHS – they did
Vs 18-19	Simon offered Peter/John money to be able to give GHS
Vs 20-23	Peter – heart not right – full of bitterness & a slave to –R

- Simon lost his prominence when better magic came to town – jealous
- He wants to regain his prominence by gaining this new magic
- Peter discerns that he is bitter over the loss of his prominence

4. LEADERS CAN BE TEMPTED TO BE BITTER WHEN THEIR PEOPLE REBELL.

(COL 3:18-19) When wives refuse to submit, husbands are tempted to become bitter

- Husbands experience a loss of respect & admiration he desires from his wife
- Ongoing & repeated rejection of his leadership w/out resolution builds bitterness

(Num 20:7-12) Moses became bitter at the exodus generation for their rebellion

- Lord told him to speak to the rock and water would come out for the people
- Moses in his bitter anger struck the rock twice – couldn't go into the land

(ACT 15:36-39) Paul & Barnabas argue over the worth of John Mark who had left them

- Paul was bitter over John Mark's having abandoning them on the field
- Sharp disagreement with Barnabas – caused them to split up.