

# Bitterness

by Harold E. Schmul

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*The sermon explores the destructive nature of bitterness and its impact on spiritual and emotional well-being.*

**Duration:** 57:42

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 29:18, Deuteronomy 32:32, Matthew 18:15, Acts 8:23, Romans 12:18, Ephesians 4:31, Hebrews 12:14

**Topics:** "Bitterness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing his dissatisfaction with a fellow believer whom he considers a compromiser and a danger to their movement. He then discusses the destructive consequences of bitterness in a person's soul, leading to foolish decisions and ultimately backsliding. The preacher emphasizes that bitterness can manifest in various areas of life, causing rivalries and conflicts at every level of society. He concludes by recounting the story of Saul's jealousy towards David, highlighting the negative consequences of envy and rage.

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## Transcript

For, and verse thirty-one, let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be kind one to another, and do hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." Two unhappy sisters running around the church world, they've been running around together for a long time. One sister's name is unforgiveness, the other girl's name is bitterness. And I'd like to talk about perhaps the younger of the two girls.

I'd like to talk about bitterness tonight. I've never heard anybody preach about bitterness. I've never done a lot of it myself, but I, in the course of my ministry, I've met a lot of them.

I've faced a lot of them. You know, it's probably one of the last things that we would want to admit that we could be guilty of, having a bitter spirit. Unforgiveness and bitterness are two things that people just believe only happen to the other fellow, they never happen to me.

Yet there isn't a one of us here tonight but what have been tempted to be bitter. And probably there are none of us here, but what at some time in our life we have yielded and have been bitter in our spirit or in our attitude and disposition. Now, I don't expect a lot of amen, and I haven't even brought very many of my own.

But I know you're going to listen, because you'll want to know what I have to say about the other fellow. And so, if I say something that fits him, say amen. I just may do it.

You know, the section in Hebrews 12, 14, follow peace of all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and many be defiled. In running the references on bitterness, I find that invariably they are always drawn or in relationship or in close association with peace or the peace of God.

And that when we look at bitterness, thou art in the gall of bitterness, is what Peter told Simon. You're in the gall of bitterness. Whenever you find this term, bitterness, or the gall of bitterness, you'll find as we do in looking at Deuteronomy chapter 29 and chapter 32 and 32, that invariably it is associated with the venom of serpents or dragons.

Notice he says, their wine, the stuff these people feed on, is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of ass. An ass is a serpent. It is a snake, peculiar to the Middle East.

And when people are bitten by the ass, that poison enters the system, as all poisons do, attacking the nerve system until the individual so attacked and so bitten rise and twist and screams and cries in horrible agony until they're dead. He is saying here that the gall of bitterness is such that it causes the individual's entire system to rise in agony of bitterness and resentment and unforgiveness until all high and holy aspirations of the soul are dead, as surely dead as the man or the woman who is bitten by that kind of a serpent. Bitterness is one of the most fatal of all spiritual ills that you can have.

Now I'm sure you don't have it. I'm satisfied you wouldn't have it, because you've been saved and sanctified too long to have it. But I have met people that thought they were saved and sanctified that had it.

And when they opened their mouth, the poison in their system was injected in someone else. And that's what the writer in Hebrews is saying, lest a rouge of bitterness springing up trouble you and many. Be defiled.

It wouldn't be too bad if the fellow who was bitter would pass off the scene. It'd only be one that would go to hell. But when you have a fellow who is passing his venom on, he is sending everyone else to hell, regardless of how he may justify the transmission of that poison from one to another.

And bitterness is a god. It is a poison. It is the essence of unloveliness and of ugliness.

It is fatal that spiritual peace and tranquility, and bitterness and peace, and the God of peace, and the peace of God, or follow peace of all men, invariably is always associated in contrast one to the other. Show me a bitter man, I'll show you a man who has little of the peace of God. I'll show you a restless fellow who, like the serpent, is slithering his way among the people of God, and he is fastening his fangs in whoever he can lay his fangs upon, and transmitting his poison of restlessness, and bitterness, and unforgiveness, and uncharitableness to anybody who will give him an ear.

That's right, the gall of bitterness. When a gall is broken, and those kind of fowls or creatures that have a gall, it pollutes the whole thing, it is of no value whatsoever. And when individuals, in the fellowship of God's people, are filled with bitterness, resentment, revenge, unforgiveness, call it anything you want to, it all stems from bitterness, for bitterness is a root sin.

Lest any root of bitterness bringing up trouble you, you just name any number of sins you want, you can trace it back to the root. And the root is a bitter root. It is the essence of all rebellion, and ugliness, and unloveliness in the entire anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Christian circle.

Bitterness! Now it's hard to get people to acknowledge that they're bitter. Hard to get people to recognize bitterness for what it really is. I don't expect to have an altar service here tonight, really don't.

I don't think people are going to run out and say, hey I'm bitter. Folks will get up quicker and say, hey I'm worldly, than they will say, I am bitter. But there are a lot of plain people who are bitter, as well as a lot of worldly people who are bitter.

I like the attitude of this Ricky back here because, you know, a man can take the kind of accident that happened to him and become very bitter over it. You can be land in a wheelchair like our brother over here and live your days in bitterness. I've seen people who because of problems in life, and difficulties in life, and the providences of life, becomes sour, and rabid, and crabbed, and rancid, and bitter.

Sometimes they commit suicide in their bitterness trying to flee from it, but it's still bitterness that has driven them to such extremes. There are many people who are bitter today. They've lost everything.

They lost their house. They lost their car. They lost their furniture.

They've been set out in the cold, and they're bitter, and they feel they have a right to be bitter. They don't, but they feel they have, and they feel justified. And I've met a few people who would stand up, and while they wouldn't call it bitterness, they'd call it something else, and they'd defend the kind of an attitude they have.

My friend, bitterness is a deadly poison. It's a venom. It's a poison in the system, and it means spiritual death to whoever has it.

The amazing thing is you find bitterness where you least expect it. And I wonder tonight if for a while you'd be honest enough to just wonder if maybe something that you've been sensing, something you had been harboring, something you had been thinking about, something your mind has been fastened upon, some unfairness, some injustice, some cruelty, something that was unnecessary, someone took advantage of you. I wonder tonight if you'd be willing to take a look at this thing that's made you restless, that's made you unhappy, that's robbed you of the peace of your soul.

Would you take a good long look at it and see if perhaps it could not be bitterness? Maybe you were running for an office and didn't get elected. Maybe you were looking for an inheritance and you didn't receive it. Maybe you were pushed out of a lucrative spot or in a promotion at a job, and someone else who really didn't deserve it, at least according to your notion, they got it and you were left out.

And you become bitter, and you become resentful, and you put a good distance between yourself and the other fellow. And you have words, and when their name is brought up in a conversation, you are very careful not to give a very hearty endorsement. Matter of fact, oftentimes bitter people are very careful to say something that makes sure that they're not endorsed and they're not approved.

You know, there was a fellow young man on one occasion, a number of years ago, he came to his father and said, you know, Dad, I'd like to have just a good advance on what's coming to me, and I'd just like to go out and live it up for a while. His father really wasn't happy about giving him that kind of money, but he

did, he gave him what he wanted, and he left and went away, and he's gone quite a long while, went to California, I guess, and he just lived it up and had a big time, and he ran through the whole thing. He did have another brother.

His brother stayed home, stayed on the farm, tended the fields, took care of the cattle, helped his dad. He wasn't a very happy soul, but he did it anyhow, and he went to the church every Sunday and behaved himself while this other guy was living it up in California. And one day while he was in California, he came to himself and he said, well, nut I am.

Here I am, I'm making a fool of myself. I'm broke. I'm down here on the harbor.

I don't have anything. I'm in bad shape. What in the world am I doing here? My dad's got hard hands that are better off than this.

I'll just go back and I'll tell the old boy, he said, Pop, I missed it and I made a fool, but I've burned up what you gave me, but I'd like to, could I just get a job around here? And so he jumped a freight or a jet, and he just came back home, you know, and when his father saw him hooping it down the boulevard, you know, he said, why there, son, hey boy, over here, jump in this Cadillac. Why, dad, oh, come on, son, I'm not worthy. I shouldn't ride in this car.

I shouldn't be here. You come back home. It's all forgiven.

I'll just be a servant. Let me work in the field. Oh, come on home.

He pulled in the big gate and he sent the word out and said, we're going to have a banquet and let's put on a big spread. It was rather late in the evening, but the other fellow was just coming in from the field. He's a very dutiful fellow.

He came in from the field and he heard the music and he heard the Cooley band out there just really revving things up and what in the world is going on? They said, well, the Cooleys are here and your brothers come home and they're having a banquet tonight. And he said, of all things, you mean to tell me that lousy good for nothing there do well, that fellow, that good for nothing kid brother of mine that's been living with harlots and prostitutes and just, you mean, well, I'm going to see my old man. Hey, dad, what do you mean by this? Why this? My son, thy son has wasted his substance in riotous living.

You never gave me a fatted calf. You never made Mary with me and my friends. We never had a good time.

We stayed here in sunshine and rain and this good for nothing. Well, brat of yours has lived it up in Hollywood and, and hate Asbury and they've been having a ball. Now he comes home and you kill the best deer we've got and you put everything on the table and you get the Cooleys in here to play.

You see, he was bitter. There's a lot of elder brothers sitting around that never do anything bad, but they don't have a good disposition either. And they're bitter, bitter, bitter.

Well, I'm in the introduction here. I may, I'll never finish this message tonight, but I'm going to give you the introductory point. I'm going to try to define bitterness for you.

Bitterness is the fruit of unrealized ambition. It's frustrated ambition in people's lives that makes them bitter. Turn to Psalm 73 and take a look.

If you think I'm missing the boat, here's a fellow in Psalm 73 that had a real problem. The Psalmist in the 73rd Psalm confesses that he just about lost his soul. He said, God is good to Israel and to such as are of a clean heart.

Verse one, but it's for me. My feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped.

What had happened? He just about went over the hill. He almost lost his soul. Well, what was wrong? The three things.

He became sour. He said, I was envious. He got sour by what he saw.

He saw the prosperity of the wicked. Not only that, he was soured by what he couldn't understand. Verse 13 and 14, I've got religion in vain.

I've washed my hands in innocence. All day long I'm plagued and chastised. And I'm chastised every morning.

But he said, these people over here that profess religion, their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than a heart could wish. But as for me, God takes me to the woodshed every morning.

God gives me a hard row to hoe. And he became sour and crabbed and bitter by what he saw in prosperity in somebody else's life. I could give you a long lengthy exhortation in that field.

Read it for yourself. He became sour and sore and crabbed by what he couldn't understand. I'm chastised every morning.

Understand one thing, Saint of God, God is more concerned about your holiness than he is your happiness. And if you take this way with God, he's under no obligation to give you an all-day succor every morning and rock you to sleep every evening to holy lullabies. Your tree is going to be shook by the same storms and the same winds.

He's going to give special attention to you. Adversity will come your way. You'll enter the kingdom of heaven under tribulation and under persecution and under trouble.

And it's all designed to make you a better man and a better woman and to bring you into conformity to the life of Christ. Amen. And you people that get sour and crabbed and unhappy over somebody else's ranch-type home or Cadillac four blocks long or their trips to Florida or their fishing trips to Canada or their excursions to Hawaii and you have to sit around on the same five acres all year long, you better take a second look and find out what God is trying to tell you and what God is trying to do for you.

I was envious at the wicked. I saw the prosperity of the ungodly. Their eyes stand out with fatness.

That simply means they live on t-bones and pork shoulder and sirloin steak and all the goodies and it's for me. It's shredded wheat and cornflakes and occasional trips to the Golden Arches. That's about it as far as we get to go.

If we go to Harrisburg to shop all day, that's as good as a trip to Honolulu as far as I'm concerned. And they have ambitions to travel. They have ambitions to see Anchorage, Alaska.

They have ambitions to go to the Holy Land. They have a lot of ambitions but they're frustrated and they never realize them and they get sour and crabbed and bitter and resentful about it. I'm saying that bitterness is the fruit of unrealized ambitions.

There's a lot of people that are bitter at God. They're sour at God. Oh yeah, they say, well I'm just sour at life.

No, you're sour at God. God is the author of life and the providences and those things that come into our life are designed for our good and designed for God's glory and their purposes to bring us to conformity to Christ and to generate and to make us holy and develop holy character and holy stamina. God never promises us a rose garden.

God never promises skies always blue. Never promised us a super highway from here to the city of God. He promised us grace for each step of the way.

Amen. He promised us comfort. He promised us himself but he never promises all the rest.

But there are people sitting here tonight that have failed in business and a lot of it probably is your own trouble, your own fault. You didn't exercise good business principles. You didn't use your head.

You just used your credit card and you ran around hollering charge, charge, charge like you were some kind of an artillery officer. Bitterness is the first cause of backsliding. At Hebrews 12, 14, go back and take a look again.

He makes it very clear, lest there be any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and many be defiled. And here's Esau who became bitter. He was bitter toward his brother.

Well, why in the world should he be bitter? Well, I'll tell you, it's a strange thing as to why people become bitter. After all, he was number one with his dad. He was an athletic fellow.

He had a beautiful figure. He had a wonderful and powerful body. He had what men admire, strength and power, and what women admire, tall, husky, robust fellow.

He was a hunter. He was an athlete. He didn't hang around his mother's apron strings like Jacob did.

He was a man. He was a man's man. He was a hunter.

He was number one with his dad. But you know, no matter how much some people have, they still get bitter. They're never satisfied.

Bitter people are never satisfied. Always somebody else always has a little bit more. Somebody always has something they want, something they haven't got.

Or if they've got something like it, it isn't quite as good as what the other fellow has, and they want that or want something just like it. That's right. Amen.

Here's Esau. He's number one. What more can you want than to be number one? He's number one with his dad.

He's in line for all the goodies that are to come to the firstborn. But one day he went out, and he just didn't catch anything. He didn't shoot anything.

Like George Straub over here, he went out more years and missed than he got. But anyhow, you keep on going. He just went out, you know, and he saw the big ones, and they all got away.

And this day he went out, and he hunted, and he hunted, and he came in, and his belly was empty. And there's some people that just can't take an empty belly. And he was bitter at the faith, and bitter at God, and bitter at the animals, bitter at the venison that didn't appear.

And he came and he said, what good is this going to do me? And when people are bitter in their soul and spirit, they make sad and tragic decisions. That's what he did. He made a fool of himself.

But I said, it doesn't do me any good. And so he told out. And back of backsliding, you'll find invariably there's some kind of soul bitterness.

People are bitter about something. They wanted to play the piano, or they wanted on the official board, or they wanted George Straub's job, or they wanted somebody else's position. They wanted a VISTA.

They wanted the other thing. And it doesn't have to be a man. It can be a boy or a girl.

It can be a young person in school. The rivalries and the bitteresses that I'm talking about are shot through every level of our society, whether they are 10, or whether they are 20, or whether they are 60. The same problem is everywhere.

Bitterness is a curse. It's a venom that passes on the soul and curses us to hell. Bitterness is a fiery poison of unforgiveness.

I said it's a fiery poison. Bitterness focuses attention on unresolved difficulty. You know how true that is? When people are bitter, they focus on the thing that is not resolved.

And yet they are unwilling to resolve it themselves. A fellow came to Jesus and said, Master, speak to my brother. Did he divide the inheritance with me? He's bitter because he got left out when they read his father's will.

If you want to find out how much religion people have, just start talking about money. I'm not talking about taking an offering. I'm talking about how they behave.

I'm talking about how they behave when you have a transaction, when you loan them money, or you borrow money from them, or you sell them something. Now, it's as quiet here as it will be in the morgue, I suppose. You can almost hear the hardening of arteries here in places.

That's rather quiet. Hey, man, you want to know a man, start dealing with him in money, about money. Build something for him, or sell him an automobile, or sell him a cocaine dog, or a shotgun, or a used washing machine, or something or other.

Tell him something. Loan him something. Are you listening? I heard something rattling, but I wasn't sure what it was.

Bitterness. I'm talking about bitterness. I'm talking about focusing attention upon the unresolved difficulties, unwilling to be reconciled.

A few weeks ago, a fellow got up in a public service and attacked me publicly. I don't blame him. He got up in a large church, large congregation, and he started down the river with me.

Of course, I wasn't there to enjoy the ride. He got about six minutes into his discourse, but he did have the courtesy and the honesty to say before he started off, he said, I want to say this. He said, the man I'm about to talk about has never treated me unkindly or unchrist-like.

But he said, he's a dangerous fellow. He is a great danger to our movement because he's a compromiser, and he's doing more to destroy us than anybody else. After he got about pretty well revved up in the six minutes, why, the pastor stood up and two of the other people stood and said, brother, you can't talk about that man that way.

He's not even here to defend himself. You've called him by name. You're scandalizing his name.

So he came to the camp meeting where I was at the other day, and I didn't know a thing about this till I got to camp meeting. So I got to the camp meeting, a fellow came to me and said, did you know this? I said, no. Well, of course, I made it my business to go to my brother.

That's what the Bible says. So I made it my business to go to my brother. I'm telling you, you can still light firecrackers from just the glint that splashed from his eyes.

He said, I told them, brother Small, I told them that you had a good attitude. You've always been kind to me. You've never mistreated me.

But I said, I told them that you're the most dangerous thing in the conservative movement. If you talk out of both sides of your mouth at the same time, you're a chameleon. He said, do you know what a chameleon is? I said, I think I do.

That's one of those little creatures that can just change color anywhere they go. I tell you, I said, I came to be reconciled. What's there to be reconciled about? I did not waste my time because they say, might as well take, try to be reconciled to a fool or take a dog by the ears.

So I, I, I didn't want, I wanted to let go of his ear as quick as I could. And I did and got out of there, but you couldn't, you couldn't resolve anything. You couldn't see anything unethical in getting up and charge.

He wanted an entire service. The pastor took a vote. How many? He got up and said, God has got his thumb in my back.

God wants me to, to preach you a message. God has given me a sermon. He didn't tell him what the sermon was.

He just, he couldn't find a text in here as big as this book is. So he took me, little old, little old, little old me. Just a pretty small text.

I have to have usually several chapters, but that guy's good. He can do it without. And he stood up and he took off without getting recognition or without being approved.

And, and, uh, he passed, he stopped and he said, how many are in favor of hearing brother so-and-so? Well, no one is in favor of hearing him except his wife, who has to live with him and one woman who isn't all there. Well, anyhow, you see, when you're full of bitterness. Now, friends, if a man does believe that I'm

a big compromiser, if he does believe I'm a chameleon, if he doesn't believe I'm that kind of a danger, you know, the ethical thing to do is to go to your brother.

The Bible has a way for that. Jesus knew that there would be problems in the fellowship and he told us how to handle them. He told us what to do about them.

Go to your brother and be reconciled. Then come, offer your gifts. When you have a bitter spirit and you're bitter towards them, there is no reconciliation.

Sometimes this happens in homes. You'll notice it in Colossians 3:19. Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them.

And that only boils over in the church, but this bitterness and this need for reconciliation and the need for being purged of bitterness, it's important in the home as well. Sometimes husbands and wives have to face up that there's a growing resentment and bitterness between them, whether it's over money, whether it's over sex, whether it's over discipline, or whether it's over some other aspect of home management. Let me tell you, it's very possible for them to be brave.

He pools reservoirs of bitterness between a husband and a wife. That's why the book says, don't let the sun go down on your lap. If there are those kind of differences, get the thing taken care of before the end of the day.

Don't pull the shades and snap out the light and turn your back one to another and heave and roll in restlessness during the night and wake up in the morning. If you are able to go to sleep with the same kind of tension as your sword drawn, be reconciled. Bitterness is the final nail in the coffin of self-centeredness and self-pity, which is really the seat of the whole affair.

It's the final nail. If anything will put you in hell, if anything will destroy your soul, if anything will destroy the church, if anything will destroy a marriage, if anything will destroy a family and your children, it's bitterness. I don't know.

I found out I'm an orphan, so I can talk about a family without worrying about the problem. But I know enough about families to know this, that almost every family, without exception, there can be, and I'm sure there are exceptions. I want you to understand, I'm sure there are exceptions, but they are few and far between.

But most families at either at a Christmas time or a Thanksgiving time or a wedding or a funeral, there have been misunderstandings. There have been words that were hastily spoken. There have been things that were done.

Somebody's taken charge when they weren't in charge. Somebody decided to do something about grandpa's gold watch or grandma's big old clock over here or some special antique, and resentment and bitterness has sprung up until almost every time the family gets together, everybody has to walk on eggs because so-and-so has a knack for turning the bitter cup over whenever needed. And when you think about going to somebody's home to celebrate Christmas or your family gathering or whatever you call it, you know that you and your wife go, boy, I sure hope so-and-so doesn't do what they did the last time.

I wonder how we're going to get through that. Well, I'd rather take a beating, but if we don't go, mother won't understand, her mother will feel bad. I don't want mom to feel bad until you go holding your breath,

and I hope you held your tongue as well.

But bitterness is the final nail in the coffin of self-centeredness. After all, at the heart of bitterness is selfish. The person who is bitter wants everything for themselves.

After all, this fellow in the New Testament, he says, what would it cost me to get this gift of the Holy Ghost where whoever I'd lay my hands on, they would receive the Holy Ghost? Peter says, you are in the gall of bitterness. You don't have lot nor heart, but pray that God will forgive this wickedness of your heart. He thought he was converted.

He had apparently had baptism and accepted into the society, but he was not a child of God. He had bitter resentment in his heart. He was filled with the gall of bitterness.

He was power-hungry and didn't have it. Bitterness fires the passions of envy and jealousy, often leading to war, or church parcels, or murder, or just plain gossip. What do you think is behind the average gossip barrage? And for anybody here that hasn't heard of Gideon yet today, don't stand up, or it wouldn't be the truth.

Bitterness fires the passions of envy and jealousy. You know, in the Old Testament, we have the story of Saul and David. And if you remember that story properly, remember David put his neck on the line for Saul.

He went out and killed a rather good-sized kid by the name of Goliath, and put him away with his little swing shot. And he gave God all the glory. Well, Saul was so pleased by the thing that had transpired that he called him in.

And he just gave him about everything that he really wanted to know. And things went along real well. David was winning battles and doing exploits for God.

And Saul was staying home, drinking mint tea, and sitting under the old palm tree, and fanning himself, and dreaming about hunting and fishing expeditions. While he was having such a delightful time on one occasion, he heard a group of singers going to him. The girls were singing a beautiful melody.

As a matter of fact, he liked the first line of the song. The first line was, Saul has slain his thousands. And he turned to his wife and said, Isn't that a lovely ballad the girls are singing today? Not really.

I think I sort of like that chant. I think I can get that. Saul has slain his thousands.

Oh, but there was another verse. It's that second verse that got him in trouble. The girls were singing, But David has slain his tens of thousands.

And something happened. His face became red, livid with rage. His soul boiled over in anger at what more could he cause in the future.

And from that day forward, he heard of Saul. He heard his fears. He heard intentional destruction.

Just for David. Not that David would have it handy in case something would come up, but so that he would have it for David, and David stole that. On several occasions, he stalked the thin David to the wall.

Now, I don't mean he was going to pin him up so folks could look at him. He was going to pin him to that wall with that spear so nobody would ever want to see him again. You want to just shut up.

You know, bitterness will drive you and turn you against your parish friends. It'll turn you against your father. It'll turn you against the pastor that told you the truth.

It'll turn you against the evangelist that there's the whole council of God. Paul said, Am I become your enemy because I told you the truth? Well, enemies are bitter people. If you have an enemy, he's bitter.

Paul said, You're bitter against me only because I told you the truth. Don't you want the truth? Amazing how we say we do, but we don't. But it's bitterness that fires the passion to torture.

You know, there are those who persecute. There are those who malign. There are those who oppose and fight just like that man I mentioned a while ago.

I'm satisfied that man who sought to scandalize my name publicly in the face of that large congregation, I'm satisfied he's sincere. I believe he really believes that I'm as wicked and as diabolical and as deadly as he was telling me. I don't think he hates me personally.

I think that he really believes that I'm a destructive person. He feels he's doing God's service. He has to get up and tell everybody what a rascal I am.

He said he made it clear that I wasn't un-Christlike and I wasn't ungodly, but other than that, I was a devil. So it's rather difficult to be Christlike and godly and a devil at the same time. But he thinks he's doing God a service.

I'm satisfied he is. And I want you to know that I have no resentment or ill will in my heart. I could put my arms around him if he'd let me.

Bitterness fixes attention on revenge. Bitterness finds justification and satisfaction in seeing or causing suffering and misery. Bitterness flows from an unregenerate heart.

If you're bitter, you're unconverted. If you're bitter, you're not saved. If you're bitter, you don't know the forgiving love of Jesus Christ.

If you're bitter, you don't know the peace of God. If you're bitter, you're a stranger to the forgiving love of Christ. You can be suave and kind to everybody, including your mother-in-law, but if you're bitter toward your father-in-law or toward someone else, you are unconverted.

There are fathers who are bitter against their eldest son. Oftentimes we find this bitterness in families where when the first son comes along, the mother showers a lot of attention on that little fellow. And even while he grows up, he's his mother's darling.

And dad sort of feels he's in the shadows and he's not getting the attention. I see fathers who he's almost hated. And I know a case or two where a father killed either a son or a daughter because they were so bitter that that child was getting the affection from the female, the mother in the family that they felt belonged to them, that they crushed it.

They battered the child. Get the child out of the way so they could have their share of affection. They have their share of affection.

Oh, bitterness flows from an unregenerated heart. What are you thinking about? Bitterness? Bitterness flies in the face of forgiving love. You notice the emphasis in all of this lesson tonight was on forbearing one another, forgiving one another.

If any men have a quarrel against any, even if Christ forgave you, so also do you. Forgiveness. Forgiveness.

Bitterness flies in the face of forgiving love. It reproaches and it shoots and flies. Well, I'd get reconciled, but after all, I'd ask their forgiveness, but what's the use? I'm sorry.

I've done my part. I don't have anything against them. I don't know about the rest, but I don't have anything against them.

I want you to know that. You know, when I was courting my wife, I'm glad my wife is here for this chance, and I was courting her before I was doing a little event, music work, and I'd leave her, you know, and I'd go and pay her a visit. Just before I would leave, I'd say, you know, I want you to know that I don't have anything against them.

Wouldn't that be a nice way to part? What do you think people are thinking about Paul Westworth? I don't know what he meant. I don't have anything against you. I'm sure that would put him to sleep at night, wouldn't it? He can really, he can really lay down and have pleasant dreams.

I don't have anything against you. Find that on the woman you love sometime and see how she treats you. You'll get a long, bitter busted.

You just have a five-pound box of marshmallow cherries or creams or something or else, and say, you know, I thought I'd just leave this with you before I go, and each one is just a little token of how I feel about you. That's much better. As a matter of fact, that's the proof of love and affection.

And so when a person comes to me and then says, I've got this move I want, you know, I don't have anything against you. I really want to know what do you have for me? If you love me, you're going to have something for me. I don't really have too much time for these people to say they have nothing against me and never produce anything for me.

If you really love me, know it. I Jesus, I love thee, the old Methodist writer said, and this thou dost know best, how much I love thee, my actions will show it. If you really love me, show me by your actions.

If you really love me, don't say I don't have anything against you, show me what you have for me. I mentioned a while ago that bitterness pleads the counsels of reconciliation, and I want to illustrate that before we close. Bitterness does not wish reconciliation.

It does frequent that there are, and it's a kind of a church problem that we often have, there are people who counsel against reconciliation. First of all, because they don't want to lose one of their Indians to the other side. As a matter of fact, reconciliation obliterates all these marks and all these walls.

Reconciliation brings us together. We are reconciled. Whether it's reconciled to God or reconciled to one another, it's by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and it breaks down the wall.

It breaks down the partition. So there are folks who feel like if we have a reconciliation around here, I won't be a chief any longer. I'll be only an Indian.

The way it is now, I'm a chief. Don't do that. Don't talk to them.

They're suave. They're smooth. They'll talk you into something.

Are you listening out there? I don't want to miss it. I want to make sure you're listening. You know, that happened in the Old Testament a number of times.

I was frankly made to think today about David and Abner. Remember when David was king in Hebron? Saul was dead, and the house of David and the house of Saul were poles apart, and David reigned in Hebron. And Abner became the leader of the house of Saul, and for a long while there was a bitter war, and the scripture says the house of David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

If you'll turn back to that Samuel section there, let's just take a quick look and just read it. In 2 Samuel chapter 3, it's a very interesting story. It goes to verse 17.

It says, And Abner had a communication with the elders of Israel, saying, You and time's past. You tried to make David king. He said, Now let's do it.

And so he said, By the hand of my servant David, I will save my people Israel. And Abner, verse 19, spake in the ears of Benjamin. And Abner went to speak in the ears of David in Hebron, all that seemed good to Israel, and all that seemed good to the house of Benjamin, those people he was leading.

Notice verse 20, So Abner came to David in Hebron, and there were 20 men with him. And they came in, and Abner said to him, David, we'll be here on a mission of peace. And David made them a great feast, sea bones, sirloins, roasted ox, what have you, you know, flagons of wine and cake.

And during the feast, Abner said to David, He said, I will arise and will gather all Israel to my Lord the king, and I'll make a league with thee that thou mayest rule over all of us. And David sent Abner away in peace, not in pieces, but in peace. Our folks are good at sending you away in pieces, but he was sent away in peace.

And the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a truth, and they brought in a great foil. In other words, in verse 22, David's men and Joab, who was his general, they'd been out hunting and fighting, and they'd overcome someone, and they brought them in. Abner had already left.

He'd had his feast and his banquet, and he left, and he'd gone in peace. Now I want you to read carefully here. Now when Joab and all his crowd came with him, somebody, they told Joab, saying, notice that, Abner, the son of Nahir, came to the king while you were away, and David had sent him away in peace.

Did you know that, Abner? Did you know what happened while you were out fighting for David and out there fighting? Do you know what happened? Abner came in, and David threw a big banquet for him. They ate together, and they drank together, and they laughed, and they had a big time, and David sent him away in peace, and Joab had a fit. He had a fit.

What happened? Joab came to the king. Sometimes in reading the Old Testament, you wonder who the king is. Especially when it comes to Joab.

He takes over on several occasions and tells David what he's going to do and what he's not going to do. This is one of the occasions here. He said, what have you done? Isn't it something? When people down in

the ranks ask George Straub what he's been doing.

Oh, I'm sorry, ask David what he was doing. There are people that have no sense of propriety and have never learned their place, and Joab was one of them. He was a general, but he wasn't the king.

He said, what have you been doing? Give an account of yourself. Tell me. I suppose David said, well, I didn't really mean any harm.

I'm sorry I did anything wrong, but let's read it. He said, Abner, the son of Nir, came, and you sent him away in peace, and he's gone away in peace. Why have you done this, and why have you sent him away? You know that Abner, the son of Nir, he came to deceive me, and to know thy going in and thy coming out, and to know all that thou doest.

And when Joab had come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner. Now, friend, here's a man by the name of Abner that came in on an honest mission to bring the entire kingdom without blood under David. Here's a fellow who had a mission of peace, and who was flying the white flag of truth.

And he came and was received. He was welcomed. He was banished with him.

He was assured a patience. He was assured he didn't need his sword or his spear, and he went away in peace. He was going down the highway with his men, feeling, well, that was a wonderful thing.

David's church did rejoice. He gave us a real welcome. I tell you, he's a magnanimous man.

He'll make a great king for all of Israel, and I'm glad I'm on this mission. I'm glad I set out to do this kind of thing. I tell you, fellows, that was a good move we made.

That's a fine thing we've done, and I'm satisfied to be nothing under King David if we can just get all of Israel back together again. Fellas, I feel good about this. About that time, you heard footsteps behind him, and a runner was coming.

He said, well, who's this? He said, come on back, come on back. Here's the story, just as it happened. What a sad and tragic tale it is in 2 Kings.

And when Abner was returned to Heber and Joab, they took him aside quietly. You know, bitter people can do things quietly, especially dirty, bitter saints. They took him aside quietly and spoke to him quietly.

Let me tell you, friends, bitterness doesn't always make a public speech or a public presentation. People who are bitter don't always jump up on a soapbox like that fellow did. A lot of folks are like Joab here.

He takes him aside quietly. But you know, my friend, you're dead, whether it's with flashing symbols and lightning and flashing and thunder, or whether it's just like Joab here. Either way, you're dead.

Is this time that when there are those who would seek peace and reconciliation, whether it's a husband and wife, whether it's a father and son, whether it's a mother and daughter, whether it's in-laws or outlaws, mother-in-laws or mother-in-laws, whatever it may be, is it sad that when peace is actually established, there are people who are unhappy about the calm that results? I do not know what the entire range of what. I wouldn't doubt that Joab was afraid that Abner might get a job. Invariably, when people are bitter and slagged and cut and murdered, it's because they feel they're losing something, or they're going to lose something, or somebody's going to get something ahead of them.

I told you there wouldn't be any aisle running or shouting, and I told you there wouldn't be any speakers at the altar, but there ought to be. I'm closing. It's 25 after nine.

I could talk about the cause of bitterness and the curse of bitterness and cure for bitterness. I'm just going to leave that bitter pill with you all night long. You're a good snake.

Stay kind. Be friendly. Don't be worldly.

And I don't know. I may do a little bit more. There's some other time, either here or somewhere else.

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