

DEVELOPING THE ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Session 6

DEALING WITH THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

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I. BITTERNESS DEFINED

- A. Webster: having a sharp or disagreeable taste; causing or experiencing sorrow, pain, harshness.
- B. Biblical definition: an unwillingness to humble oneself by assuming a right we don't have; resulting in unforgiveness, strife, and hatred. The one who harbors bitterness eventually becomes like the very thing or person they despise (2 Corinthians 10:12; Isaiah 24:1-6).
- Sharp or disagreeable taste ---> Jeremiah 23:15; 9:15; Amos 5:7; 6:12; Deuteronomy 29:18; 32:29-32.
- C. Bitterness as characterized in the Word of God: Anguish of soul (Job 7:11); Unfaithfulness (Numbers 5:19, 23-24); Spiritual wandering (Isaiah 38:14-15); Desire for spiritual blessing without consecration (Acts 8:23); Stubbornness of heart (Deuteronomy 29:19); Irritability (1 Samuel 1:6); Jealousy and an uncontrolled tongue (James 3:14, 11; Psalm 64:3); Perverted judgment and discernment (Isaiah 5:20; Exodus 23:1-8); Trouble always springing up (Hebrews 12:15); Constant dryness (Amos 8:1-3, 10); A defiled heart (James 4:18); Poisonous lips (Psalm 140:1-3).

II. BITTERNESS AND UNFORGIVENESS (OPPOSITE OF MERCY):

- A. Woe to the one who does not forgive ---> Matthew 18:7,21-22; 6:12, 14-15.
- B. Overcoming an offense ---> Romans 12:21
- How? 1 Corinthians 4:12-13; Ephesians 4:32
 - What are we to do? Matthew 5:43-45; Colossians 3:13 (bearing with and forgiving); 1 Peter 3:9; Proverbs 25:21-22.
- C. Bitterness sins against God (God is truth) and glorifies the devil ---> James 3:14-15.
- D. Three sources of bitterness ---> James 3:15.
- E. Physical consequences of bitterness ---> Psalm 32:3; Proverbs 15:30; 17:22; 14:30; Ezekiel 32:26-28.
- F. An inability to love God ---> 1 John 4:20-21; Proverbs 15:17
- G. Doubts regarding our relationship with God ---> Matthew 6:12
- H. Multiplied consequences of bitterness ---> Deuteronomy 5:9
- I. The curse of the unmerciful ---> Psalm 109:6-9, 16-19

III. THE MERCIFUL MAN IS A BLESSED MAN ---> MATTHEW 5:7

- A. Able to see Jesus clearly ---> 2 Samuel 22:22-29
- B. Mercy is a melted heart before God, able to lay hold of the miseries and weaknesses of others ---> Psalm 22:14,19-21,24 (compare 2 Chronicles 21:19-20; Zechariah 7:8-13).
- C. They find mercy ---> 2 Timothy 1:16-18; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 2:10; Hebrews 9:5; Philippians 2:27; Jude 1, 21.

IV. A CHOICE OF MASTERS

- Bitterness has a taskmaster ---> Exodus 1:14
- Mercy also has a taskmaster ---> Colossians 3:12-13
- No man can serve two masters ---> Matthew 6:24
- Love and hate are (1) expressed by choice ---> Joshua 24:14-15, 20; (2) displayed by obedience or disobedience ---> Romans 6:16,12-14,17-18; John 14:21-23; Hebrews 5:9

EVIDENCES OF A ROOT OF BITTERNESS