

THEME: SEVEN DEADLY PASSIONS – BITTERNESS

TOPIC: BREAKING FREE FROM BITTERNESS.

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:31-32; HEBREWS 12:14-15; JAMES 1:19-20; ROMANS 12:17-21; 1 JOHN 4:20; COLOSSIANS 3:13; ECCL. 7:9; MARK 11:25

INTRODUCTION

“I’ve heard it said that harbouring bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. The more we feed bitterness in our heart, the more it brings death to us.”

Bitterness is poison dipped in honey. It tastes sweet going down, then it kills us from the inside out. In this way, bitterness is the poster child for the deceitfulness of sin. Whenever we love something that brings death to us, the devil has us right where he wants us.

If we do not actively starve bitterness, it will bring death to us. So how do we starve it?

CONSEQUENCES OF BITTERNESS

- a. You cannot be bitter and not walk in unforgiveness. Once you walk in unforgiveness you cause your prayers not to be answered. *Ephesians 4:26*
- b. Walking in bitterness releases toxins into your body system and causes sickness and disease to come upon you.
- c. Releasing the one who offended you will speedily cause healing to come.
- d. Bitterness results in hurts and possible fits of rage, epilepsy and other psychological problems.
- e. Bitterness limits your vision, your scope and ability to reason. *Isaiah 1:18*

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BREAK FREE FROM BITTERNESS?

1. Choose blessing, not bitterness

Some people’s reaction to life is that bitterness is almost incurable and as if you could not react differently to situations. Some of the people who have chosen to bless and not be bitter in scripture had the toughest of experiences.

- a. **Imagine the case of Esau** whose birth right was taken by Jacob and the blessing passed to Jacob and not to Esau.

Jacob took Esau’s birth right, he took his right to be the one to produce the Messiah, the right to get the blessing of the father.

What would you do if someone keeps on sabotaging what belongs to you? The interesting thing was that when the day of reckoning came, Jacob was travelling with his whole family and was confronted by Esau. Jacob had expected blood shedding and destruction. Rather, Esau was not bitter but blessed Jacob and accepted his brother with love. *Genesis 33:1-9*.

- b. **Imagine Job** who chose to honour God knowing that it is the only way to gain access into the favour of the Lord. Did Job have a reason to be bitter? I think so. Having served God all his life, walking in righteousness. Yet one day all his children died, his house was destroyed, his business went bankrupt, his friends were on his back condemning him and his wife was encouraging him to curse God and die.

Yet in all this, Job’s longing was for the purpose of God, for resurrection, it was for the future. Job preferred to bless the Lord than to curse the name of the Lord. *Job 14:7-14*

- c. **Consider the Syrophenician woman.** The woman who Jesus compared to a dog when she requested healing for her daughter. Some would have called it prejudice and reacted angrily.

Yet, she was willing to remain sweet in order to experience the favour of the Lord. No wonder her prayer was answered. *Mark 7:28-30*

- d. **Let's remember Peter.** His reaction was totally different to that of Judas. Judas did not repent but hanged himself. But Peter on the other hand immediately took advantage of Jesus' forgiveness and calling of Jesus as shown in *'John 21:15-19'*.

The difference between Peter and Judas was their attitude when they made mistakes.

2. Survey your losses

We refer back to Esau again who, when he heard that his blessing had been taken by his brother though he cried bitterly, yet he sought for whatever blessing was left over.

Esau probably did not know the magnitude of what he lost by the selling of his birth right. He did not realise that he was losing the right to be the one who would be the patriarch.

Esau cried with excessive bitterness, remorse and a broken heart however he was not bitter at his brother to the point of rejecting him. ***He turned his pain and asked for whatever reserved blessing there was. Genesis 27:36.*** What would we have done if we were in his shoes?

- a. Exhale all the bitterness, let it go because once you let it gain grounds it will bear roots and roots will crack the foundation of your character, calling, business, relationships etc.
- b. Know that he who fails to give forgiveness has burnt the bridge upon which he must travel one day.
- c. Develop a positive attitude. Esau did not deny the fact that the birth right was gone however he knew the blessing cannot be recaptured but his attitude secured him a blessing and delivered him from his disgrace.
- d. Refuse to walk in bitterness. Joseph was a teenager when his brothers planned his death. Having changed their mind, they sold him off to slavery and went on and lied to his father.
- e. Did he have a reason to be bitter at what they had done to him? Of course he did. However, Joseph recognised in the act of his brother an unusual twist by which God takes the workings of satan and turns it around to our blessing. ***Genesis 50:20***

CONCLUSION

It is noted that Self-righteous people refuse to acknowledge when they miss it, forgive those who have offended them and receive forgiveness themselves from the Lord.

In reference to Ephesians 4:31–32, “Let all bitterness . . . be put away from you. . . . Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

In order to starve our souls of one thing, we must feed our souls with something else. We “put away” bitterness in part by preoccupying ourselves with God's love and forgiveness toward us.