

Root of Bitterness

by Duane Troyer

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of bitterness and the importance of seeking God's healing and grace to maintain peace and holiness in our lives.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 29:2, Isaiah 61:1, Ephesians 4:30, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Healing"

Description

Duane Troyer preaches about the importance of addressing and uprooting bitterness in our hearts, drawing from the story of Moses reminding the Israelites of God's faithfulness and warning against harboring bitterness. He emphasizes the need to pursue peace, holiness, and forgiveness, as bitterness can defile many and hinder our relationship with God. Troyer highlights the destructive nature of bitterness through biblical examples like Cain, Saul, Job's wife, and Esau, showing how unresolved conflicts can lead to deeper wounds and separation. He encourages the congregation to seek healing from God, who came to heal the brokenhearted and set the captives free, ultimately pointing to the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Transcript

Just want to greet everybody in Jesus' name. Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for this day that you've given us and the opportunity to be here. We thank you Lord for everybody that gathered here today and we pray that you would be in our midst here, that you would speak to us Lord. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear, a heart that can understand, Lord. I just pray for your blessing on the rest of this day and help us to be faithful in everything we do and say.

In Jesus' name, Amen. I've been blessed by the thoughts we've heard this morning already about endurance. I had to think of what Paul wrote, where he said "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course and I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. And then he said, Not just for me but for all of you who are loving the Lord and waiting on his appearance—something like that. I'm going to be reading here in Deuteronomy 29, starting in verse 1.

This is toward the end of their journey through the wilderness and Moses is giving some final admonition here, Now Moses called all the children of Israel and said to them, You saw all the Lord did before you in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants, and to all his lands, the great trials, your eyes saw the signs and those great wonders, yet the Lord your God has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear to this very day. He also led you forty years in the desert.

Your clothes did not grow old on you and your sandals did not wear out on your feet. You did not eat bread or drink wine or strong drink that you may know he is the Lord your God. Then you came to the place of Sihon, the king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan and came out against us in war, and we struck them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to Ruben, to Gad and to the half tribe of Manasseh. Therefore heed all the words of this covenant, that you may understand all these things you are doing.

All of you stand this day before the Lord your God, your chiefs, your elders, your judges and your teachers, all the men of Israel. Your wives, your offspring and the resident alien in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant of the Lord your God and into his oath, the Lord your God makes with you today. That he may establish you as his people for himself and be God to you in the manner he told you, and in the manner he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, but with those with us today, before the Lord your God, as well as those not with us here today, for you know we dwelt in the land of Egypt and came through the nations you passed by, and you saw their abominations, and idols among them: wood, stone, silver and gold. I'm going to stop there for a minute. Moses gathers the whole congregation together and he reminds them of what they've gone through, how God has been faithful through all of this, how he dealt with the Egyptians, how he dealt with the kings whose land they passed through, how their sandals didn't wear out and their clothes didn't wear out, and they were fed during all this time, without raising wheat or making bread.

And I'd just like for all of us to think for just a little bit about what all God has brought us through. Think back over your life just a little bit, about how God delivered you from whatever it was that you were in, and how he sustained you through all these years, for some of us years, for some of us not. But he's been faithful. In the times when everything looked bleak, and dark, he made a way for us. He's helped us to overcome personal sins. He's helped us fight through false systems, against deceivers in some cases, and he's been faithful all along.

With that in mind, I want you to think about what Moses says next here. He says, surely there is not among you a man, a woman, a family, or a tribe whose mind turns away today from the Lord our God and goes and serves gods of these nations. And surely there is not among you a root bearing gall and bitterness. So it shall be if one hear

the words of this curse and flatter himself in his heart, saying, May holy things happen to me, even though I go into the wanderings of my heart, lest the sinner destroy the sinless with him, God will not be merciful to him, for the the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will burn against that man and every curse written in this book will cling to him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven. I think Moses is just saying, Look! Look at what the Lord has done! Surely there is no evil among us here.

Surely there is not a root of gall and bitterness somewhere. If it is, all the curses in this book will come upon him, regardless of how safe he thinks he might be, because of what has happened in the past. This word gall in this verse here, verse 17, means a poison, a poisonous plant, or venom. And that's what bitterness is. That's what the root of bitterness is. It's poisonous. Let's look at what it says in Hebrews in chapter 12, verse 14 says, Pursue peace with all men and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness, springing up, causes trouble and by it many be defiled. Let there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal, for you know, afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected for he found no place of repentance, though he sought for it with tears. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God. The grace of God, it tells us in the book of Titus, teaches us to deny ungodliness and live righteously and holy now.

That's what the grace of God does, and God says in the book of James, it says that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. And when we see this and we look at verse 14 where it says, Pursue peace with all men, and sanctification, without which no man can see the Lord, I think some translations say fellowship. Maybe I got that wrong, but anyway, pursue peace with all men and holiness - that's what some translations say, without which no man will see the Lord, without these things, you will not see the Lord.

And if we fall short of that grace that teaches us holiness, if we don't pursue holiness, we will fall short of that grace, and if we don't pursue peace with all men, we will fall short of that grace. Verse 15 says that, see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled. Hate and holiness cannot dwell in the same vessel, and like Moses was saying there in Deuteronomy, regardless of what all we've gone through, how the Lord has carried us on eagle's wings, how he has kept our clothes from growing old and the shoes with which we are shod to make this journey have not worn out, because he's been faithful, and yet if we allow this to happen, then all the curses of this book are still going to happen to us.

If we don't endure to the end like Walter shared. I heard a saying recently, it said a wounded spirit is fertile ground for a root of bitterness. A wounded spirit is fertile ground for a root of bitterness. And it's probably something that will happen or has happened to all of us in our life, and it's bound to happen. This world is not an easy place, and our spirits are bound to get wounded, and if we don't come to the Lord for healing, it's very possible that a root of bitterness will start.

Just like when you have an open scab, it's a prime place for bacteria to start, and an infection to grow. And just like when you wound the soil, when you take something and you scrape sod back and wound the soil, you've just made it real fertile for weeds to grow. The problem is not necessarily always the wound, maybe never, the problem is that we've not come to the Lord for healing. In fact, sometimes, those wounds are nothing else but the chastisement of the Lord. And just like when you wound the soil, you seldom see what happens, but all of a sudden there's weeds growing.

You probably didn't notice there were seeds floating around in the wind, and they dropped into that soil, neither did you see when the root started pushing down, but all of a sudden there's the effects of it coming through, and that's how it often is I think with the root of bitterness. Hardly anybody admits that they have it, and many people may not even know that they have it. A deceitful heart is what we have, and it cannot always discern that, whether it's there or not, but the evidences will be there. It's only with understanding that we know what happened with that wounded soil. It's because we understand what happens. It's because we understand that there's

seeds that get blown around in the wind, and that when these seeds hit soil, they push roots downwards and a stalk upward. And it's with that understanding that we can check ourselves to see if there be any root of bitterness in us. These things produce something. It produces ungratefulness, it holds grudges,

suspicious, distrust, anger, acts of vengeance, subtle attacks, difficulty in resolving conflicts, a fault finding attitude, hypersensitive and hypercritical. These are some of the things, probably only some of the things, that are produced by this root.

And as we saw here in Hebrews, it says, lest this root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it MANY be defiled. And that's what this root can do, it can defile many. Not only the first person that had the wounded spirit, because hurt people hurt people. Out of a heart that has bitterness comes a tongue like a spear and it wounds others. Out of a heart of bitterness comes rebellion and stubbornness, it wants to work against the work of God, or doesn't want to submit to the work of God, and doesn't want to pursue peace with all men.

It would rather sit around and brood over its troubles. And if we brood over our troubles, we will only hatch despair. We'll lose our reverence for God. After all, whatever we've done to the least of these my brethren, we've done it to the Lord. And if we were once enlightened, and we once tasted the goodness of his word, and we walked in this way, and then this root of bitterness comes up, and we start wounding others and spearing others, we've just pierced the spear through the side of Jesus Christ and crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame.

There's quite a few examples in the old testament of people who resented others, and had this root growing in them, and I'll mention a few of them. I'm sure there would be more, but I want you to think about what it resulted in. There was Cain, who resented Abel, because his brother's works were righteous and his own weren't. And he hated him and he ended up killing him. And then he tried to excuse himself - am I my brother's keeper? There's Saul, who saw that the people had greater respect for David than for him, and he resented him.

A root of bitterness grew in him and he tried to kill him. He turned to every kind of rebellion to the point where he turned to the witch of Endor or advice because he couldn't hear from God anymore. There's Job's wife, who lost all her children and everything they had, and she turned bitter toward God and said to Job, Doth thou still keep thy integrity? Curse God and die. There's a man by the name of Ahithophel, the Gilonite. He was one of David's counselors, and he was such a man who had such great counsel, and such great wisdom, that when David heard him, it was like he heard the oracles of God.

That's what the bible tells us. That's how this counselor was. But there's something interesting about Ahithophel. He was the father of Eliam and Eliam was the father of Bathsheba, and Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite. And this is this woman that David lusted after and ended up killing Uriah to take her for his wife. Ahithophel is Bathsheba's grandfather. The bible doesn't explicitly tell us that Ahithophel grew bitter at David because of that, but I can easily see that happen.

We could just about think that Ahithophel had reasons to get angry at David. What if somebody did that to your grand-daughter? It would be a hard thing to accept. But what makes me think that he did, when Absalom came on the scene, Ahithophel went and joined Absalom and he counseled Absalom, this is this man who had this great counsel, who had this great wisdom, and when he spoke it was as if he spoke the oracles of God, and he says to Absalom, Go and lay with thy father's concubines and dishonor your father's house.

This was the kind of counsel he's now giving, against the man he was once counseling real good and wise counsel, and that's what can happen if we let roots of bitterness grow against our fellowman. Our counsel can be completely distorted. There's Esau, who grew bitter at his brother Jacob. In Genesis 27. I know you

all know the story fairly well but I just might read, starting in chapter 27, Now it came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim he could not see, that he called Esau, his older son, and said to him, "My son" and he answered, "here I am" and he said, "behold now, I am old, I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore take your weapon, your quiver, your bow and go out

into the field and hunt game for me. Then make savory food such as I love and bring it to me that I may eat that I my soul may bless you before I die." Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son, and Esau went to the field to hunt game for his father. So Rebekah spoke to Jacob the younger son, saying, "Indeed, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother saying 'bring me game and make savory food for me that I may eat and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death'.

Now therefore, my son, hear my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the sheep and bring me from there two kids, choice and good, and I will make savory food of them for your father such as he loves, then you shall take it to your father that he may eat it and bless you before his death." Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me and I will seem to him to be a deceiver and I shall bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing."

But his mother said to him, "your curse be on me son. Only obey my voice and go and get them for me" so he went and got them and brought them to his mother and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house and put them on Jacob her younger son. She also put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the exposed part of his neck. Then she gave the savory food and the bread she had prepared into the hands of her son Jacob.

Thus he went to his father and said, "My father" and he said, "here I am, who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done just as you have told me. Arise, sit and eat of my game that your soul may bless me." But Isaac said, "How is it that you have found it so quickly my son?" He said, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me." Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near me that I may feel you, my son, whether you are my son Esau or not," so Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's".

Thus he did not recognize him because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands, so he blessed him. Then he said, "Are you my son Esau?" He said, "I am". He said, "bring your game to me my son and I will eat from it, that my soul may bless you." So he brought it near to him and he ate and he brought him wine and he drank. Then his father said to him, "come near and kiss me, my son" so he came near and kissed him, and he smelled the smell of his clothing, then he blessed him and said, "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field the Lord has blessed.

Therefore may God give you the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brethren and let your mother's son bow down to you. And cursed be every one who curses you and blessed be those who bless you." Now it happened as soon as Isaac finished blessing Jacob his son and Jacob has scarcely gone out of the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

He also had made savory food and brought it to his father and said, "Father, let my father arise and eat of his son's game that your soul may bless me." And his father Isaac said to him, "who are you?" so he said, "I am your son, your firstborn Esau" then Isaac trembled exceedingly and said, "Who? where is the one who

hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came and I have blessed him, and indeed he shall be blessed." When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, me also, O my father" but he said, "Your brother came with deceit and he has taken away your blessing" then Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he supplanted me these two times.

He took away my birthright and now look, he has taken away my blessing" so he said, "have you not reserved a blessing for me?" and Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed, I have made him your Lord and all his brethren I have given to him for servants, with grain and wine I have sustained him, what shall I do now for you, my son?" Esau said to his father, "have you only one blessing my father? Bless me, me also Oh, my father." But when Isaac was troubled, Esau lifted up his voice and wept, and Isaac his father answered and said to him, "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of

the earth and the dew of heaven above. By your sword you shall live and you shall serve your brother, and it shall come to pass when you become restless that you shall break his yoke from your neck." Thus Esau hated Jacob for the blessing with which his father blessed him and Esau said in his mind 'let the days of mourning for my father draw near, then I will kill my brother Jacob' so the word of Esau his older son were told to Rebekah and she sent and called Jacob her son and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau is threatening to kill you, now therefore my son obey my voice, arise and flee to Mesopotamia to my brother Laban in Haram and stay with him a few days until your brother's anger and wrath turn away from you and he forgets what you did to him.

Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" Rebekah had a fancy idea. "Arise and flee and stay away for a few days until your brother's anger and wrath turn away from you and he forgets what you did" Wouldn't that be easy? Just go away for a few days until the anger is settled and you've forgotten everything that happened, or he's forgotten what you did to him. The trouble is, that's not the way it works. To think unresolved differences will disappear if they're left alone is a deception.

Jacob did leave, and he didn't only stay for a few days, but he was gone for 20 years. And when it was time for him to return, he had not forgotten. The last thing he had known about his brother was that he wanted to kill him, and Esau had not forgotten. In these 20 years this bitterness toward his brother had grown and spread until he had gathered himself 400 men who were ready to go take vengeance on Jacob. Neither a few days nor 20 years resolved that. But it only grew worse and worse.

Time did something-it did something! It gave it time to just grow worse and worse for Esau, as those roots went deeper and deeper, but it didn't make him forget it. And time did something, I think, for Jacob too. I think in those 20 years Jacob learned that true blessings come from being a servant, and not from deceiving your father, not from trying to beguile someone that you are someone that you're not. He found out that rather than trying to deceive someone for a few moments to try and get a blessing.

He served for seven years for Rachel. He served seven years for Leah. He served six years for his flocks, and he learned a lot about being a servant. Skip forward to Genesis 33. Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau his brother was coming and 400 men with him, so Jacob divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants, then he put the maidservants and their sons in front, Leah and her children behind, and then Rachel and Joseph last. He then crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother.

But Esau ran to meet him, embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. Then he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children and said, "Who are these with you?" he replied, "The children God has mercifully given your servant" then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. Leah also came near with her children and bowed down, afterwards Rachel and Joseph came near and they bowed down. Then Esau said, "What are these things to you, all this company I met?" so he said, "That your servant might find grace in sight of my Lord" but Esau said, "I have enough, my brother, keep what you have for yourself" but Jacob replied, "If I have now found grace in your sight, receive this present from my hands and as much as I have your face as though someone might see the face of God, and you were pleased with me, receive my blessing I brought you because God has shown me mercy and I have enough."

So he urged him, and he took it. You know, all of us, I dare to say have at one point or another in our life had a wounded spirit. Maybe some of us many. Some of us have dealt with spouses who were unfaithful, or with false brethren, or had to work our way through with people who turned against us, or who were false and we had to separate from them, all these things can create wounds. But there is healing available, but if we sit around and we nurture offenses that people have done to us, it's just like putting fertilizer on these roots.

If you think you can't let someone off the hook, the reality is that you're the one on the hook. I read a saying that said, Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping it will hurt the other person. I once witnessed two brothers who had some conflict with each other, and this conflict was not resolved, it just grew worse to the point where it did not appear as if they could fellowship with each other anymore. And one thing that was common with both of these is that they viewed critically and suspiciously whatever the other person said.

Every time the other person opened his mouth to speak, it was viewed with suspicion and criticism. These brothers resolved their problems and as far as I know, they're still resolved in a beautiful way, but that was the one thing they had to lay down. I'll read a few more verses telling us what God thinks, what he wants us to do about these things. Ephesians 4:30 says, do not grieve the Holy spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Col. 3: 12-15 says, So as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond these things, put on love which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ grow in your hearts , to which indeed were called in one body.

And be thankful. One thing that both of these passages remind us of, is that we need to forgive just as Christ as forgiven us, and if we don't, the forgiveness of Christ will not be for us according to what Jesus says. I'm going to read in Isaiah 61. it's pretty easy to just say, O Jesus is the answer. He is. But is he really? If it doesn't result in the rooting out of these roots, has he really been the answer? I want to read this chapter, at least part of it. The spirit of the Lord is upon me because of which he anointed me.

He sent me to proclaim the good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To declare the acceptable year of the Lord, the day of

recompense and to comfort all who mourn. To give those who mourn in Zion, glory instead of ashes, the oil of gladness to those who mourn. The garment of glory instead of the spirit of indifference. They shall be called generations of righteousness, the planting of the Lord of glory.

They shall build the ancient desert and raise up those formerly abandoned and renew desert cities that lay waste for generations. Foreigners shall come and shepherd your feet and aliens shall be your plowmen and vine dressers, but you shall be called priests of the Lord and ministers of God. You shall eat the strength of nations and be admired because of their wealth. They shall inherit the land a second time, and eternal gladness shall be upon their head, for I am the Lord who loves righteousness and hates robberies and wrong doings.

I will give their labor to the righteous and I will make with them an everlasting covenant. Their seed and their offspring shall be known among the gentiles. All those who see them shall know these are the seed blessed by God and they shall have exceeding gladness in the Lord. Let my soul rejoice exceedingly in the Lord, for he clothes me with the garment of salvation, and the tunic of gladness. He put a miter around me like a bridegroom and adorned me with ornaments like a bride.

As the earth caused its flowers to grow and as a garden its seeds, so shall the Lord cause righteousness to rise up and exceeding joy before all the gentiles. As the earth causes its flower to grow and as a garden its seeds, so shall the Lord cause righteousness to rise up and exceeding joy before all the gentiles. You know, when you break fallow ground, or just wound the soil like I talked about earlier, that can also be a fertile bed for flowers, and for fruitful things and so can a wounded spirit.

In fact, that's what Christ came for, to heal the broken hearted, to set free the captives. And we read there, when Jesus came to Nazareth, he went into the synagogue and as was his custom, he sat down and they delivered him the book

of Isaiah and he opened it to this section right here and read it, and then he said, Today this is fulfilled in your ears.

I just want to share a little testimony yet of something that happened to me one time. This was some years ago. A brother had done something one day that just really bothered me and I did not feel well against that brother. He didn't really do anything to me but I was just really disturbed, and it was on a Saturday, and I was planning to preach a message the next day and that night I turned around and tossed in bed. I couldn't sleep. I didn't know how I would be able to preach a message with this kind of a feeling towards this brother, and I went out and I prayed. I didn't know what else to do, I didn't even know what to pray, but I prayed, until, there in the night the Lord showed me something, I can't necessarily call it a vision, but I guess through the eyes of my heart I saw the Lord, hanging on a cross, wounded and bleeding, and I longed for him, and I realized that he died for my brother too, the one that I had ill feeling towards, and that I was no greater than him. It may not necessarily meant that he was right after all, but it changed my feeling towards him, it changed my attitude toward him. And the issue was able to be resolved.

I just want to leave it there, and maybe we could pray yet. Father, we thank you for your love and mercy to us, and that you came to heal the brokenhearted, to release the captives. We know you've got healing on your wings, Lord, and we pray Lord that you would help us to see that we are no greater than anyone else. And Lord, we know that if there is any root of bitterness in any of us, in myself, or anyone, that you must reveal it, or we will not see you. We pray that you would do that. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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