

Audio ■ Bitterness

by K.P. Yohannan

This sermon delves into the destructive nature of bitterness, using real-life stories to illustrate how unresolved pain can lead to deep-seated anger and resentment. It emphasizes the importance of addressing bitterness biblically to prevent it from defiling many lives. The speaker warns against the harmful effects of bitterness on relationships, physical health, and spiritual well-being, urging listeners to seek peace with others and strive for holiness to avoid being controlled by bitterness.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:15, Hebrews 12:14, Philippians 2:5, Matthew 6:14, Colossians 3:13

Topics: "Bitterness", "Healing Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

The next few minutes, I want to spend our time discussing on a very important subject, and it is on bitterness. The scripture about this, for our study, we find in the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, and verse 15. See to it that no one misses the grace of God, and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

A few years ago, it was reported in many international daily, that is, newspapers, about this incident that took place in Manila, in the country of Philippines. The story was about a maid, or a servant, who stabbed her master 37 times to death. As she was brought to the court, the story began to unfold, that this girl was raped repeatedly by the man, the owner of the house, and she was helpless and suffered a lot.

She internalized the pain, turned into revenge for the mistreatment, being molested sexually, being raped. And the court sentenced her to prison, by saying what she did was more than revenge. It was good enough to stab four times or five times, but also the story reported the deep pain and the deep bitterness with which she lived, and for how long, and what she did was a result of that.

Then there was another story that I read that kind of shocked me too. In one of the newspapers in the United States, talked about a young man in New York, who stabbed a man over a hundred times. And the

man who was stabbed and died on the street of New York, to the man who did it, he was a total stranger.

There was no reason why that should happen, but again the story was told, this young man who was doing this cruel act, who did it, grew up in a home without love, without any affection, at school he was rejected, mocked, ridiculed, and he grew up with such circumstances that made him bitter toward life, everyone, circumstances, and finally he took it out on a stranger that he met on the street. Whether we talk about it or not, admit it or not, bitterness touches everyone you have faced it too in your own life. It can be a temporary irritation, some dislike.

Unless we resolve it, find solution to it, and deal with it, in the end it can turn into bitterness. We are living in a world, whether Christian or non-Christian, with people that are filled with bitterness, and living a life of bitterness. Dictionary defines bitterness like this, it is a deep-seated anger, hatred, resentment towards someone or something that may have mistreated us, or we think so, taken away our rights, whether real or unreal.

Bitterness, it is an emotional response from not resolving conflicts. Think about it, we all have been pushed down by others. It won't take very long for you to close your eyes, and within a split second you can travel back in time.

The first grade, now you can go back to kindergarten. Second grade, the early days of your life in your school where you studied. In your home, your brothers and sisters, your neighbors, and then on to your college life.

Think about your parents, whether they intended it or not, it was a joke or a fun, something to laugh at. Names they used to address you with, nicknames. You looked like a crow, your face looked like pancake, what happened to your nose? You laughed with them, you walked away from the crowd, you avoided them, you kept quiet.

You went to your room, you cried alone, you came out, you wiped your tears, and you made sure nobody understood that you cried. What happened? Emotionally you are damaged, you are hurt. You've been pushed down, and some people do it deliberately.

They find some kind of entertainment by hurting others, and you became the target. And then too, for what you said, the way you performed that duty, you never received a word of thanks, rather you were criticized for it. Then smart, clever people, either family members or friends or whoever, simply being crafty, smart, manipulated you and taken advantage of your sincerity, and just used you to get what they want.

Some things you never want to tell anyone, but you still live with the memories that hurts. The study shows in many families, husband-wife relationships end up in deep trouble. A lot of them end up in divorce.

And the study shows that those kind of tragedy in home began long, long time ago. The girl was hardly 4 years old, 5 years old. She was abused, molested by people that she believed and trusted without any reservation.

She had no reason to doubt, but now the deep secret must be buried forever. But now, later in her life, she gets married, she still lives with bitterness. Just like that young man who stabbed a stranger over 100 times, she doesn't know why, but she can't live with the husband anymore in peace.

The same thing happens to the young man. And later in life, he finds himself, he cannot help himself, his ability to be open, loving and gentle, it's impossible. The problem began long ago, when he was a teenager.

And the bitterness that took root deep down, now defiles every area of his life, behavior and his entire life. And then too, think about the times you've been severely misunderstood. You never thought what they said you thought.

You never said what they say you said. You never took that, that they said you stole it, you took it. You never wrote that letter, but they said you are the one who did it.

And no matter how hard you try, somehow you cannot convince even your own parents, your brother, your sister. And you say, please believe me, I didn't do it, I didn't say it, I never saw it. But you remain helpless.

And then, deliberately, people violate your rights. Think about your parents, especially in the village setting. They own an acre of land on half an acre or a plot.

And the neighbor simply encroaches and cut down your tree. Or deliberately harm the chicken or the cow or the animal that your people own. Your rights are being violated.

They have no right to do it, but by force they encroach into your property. And you saw how your parents, they want to fight back, but they are helpless. They are newcomers to the society.

So, in the end, in despair, they say, let God take care of it. God is just and righteous, we can't do nothing. But those words are not really prayer or giving up their rights.

But rather, those are words of pain and anguish and helplessness. Actually, bitterness. Now, take root.

We all, sometime in our life, have been criticized without mercy. Who has not been criticized? Think about it. As a matter of fact, I think one of the most painful things we go through in life, it is when people criticize us.

Well, even when we do something wrong, someone comes and points that out to us. We don't want to accept it. But then if someone criticizes you for something that you are innocent of, much more it hurts.

And there are people, maybe you are sitting here, your reputation being ruined, your good name, maybe for a short few weeks or days, maybe for a long time, maybe for a lifetime. These are experiences that human beings, we all go through. Some, maybe in small measure.

But some, more severely. When these kind of experiences we encounter, our heart is scared. It begins to boil.

Even when you say, I don't care, I forgive, it's okay, I mean, everybody fails. But even in the midst of camouflaging, even in the midst of covering up with these nice statements and spiritual words, still somehow there within your heart, deep down, there is a stinging, that disturbance, that problem of losing peace. And when we don't handle these irritations and pain biblically, what happens, the seed of bitterness now begins to take root.

Then it starts to grow deep. That's the reason the Bible has a very clear warning. The warning is this.

Be aware of it. Take heed that no root of bitterness defiles your life. Sad to say, it never ends there.

It defiles many others. Your husband, your wife, your children, your neighbors, your colleagues, and people that you come in contact with. They are defiled by your bitterness.

True, these people have nothing to do with your pain or bitterness. But now you are contaminated. It is like someone who carries an incurable disease.

It is fatal once you get it. This person goes around in the bus, in the train, in the airplane, in the college, in school, or home, wherever. This person is contaminating, spreading this illness.

And many are defiled. It's a warning. This affects everyone.

The rich, the poor, educated, illiterate, spiritual, unspiritual, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, atheist, agnostic, everyone. It touches all. Now when someone lives with bitterness, what are some of the results? The defilement, the polluted mind, emotion, all the mental faculty now is defiled.

Perception, distorted. The ability to process information and come to accurate, just conclusions are no more correct. And life becomes like an open wound, pus oozing out.

It stings. It is rotten. And one becomes restless.

And with that, these are some of the tangible or visible results. One, finding fault. Have you seen individuals, no matter what, they always find fault with others.

They are need. You don't help them. And they say, What a cruel, nasty, selfish individual.

Alright. You help them. You give them money.

You show kindness. And he says, He got so much. Why he couldn't do it more? Or, well, you know, he's a crooked businessman and he's trying to give me a little bit so he can please God.

And what a punishment. These people, their life is marked by discontent. No matter where they go, what they do, they always find fault.

The preacher either preached too long or his message is too short. The worship was not so lively or it was so dull. They can find fault with everything.

The problem is not out there. The problem is on the inside. It's their problem.

It is like someone who wears specs made of green lens or yellow lens or red lens. So you put it on. What happens? Whatever you are looking at, they are colored.

Are you one? It seems that you find, and your ability seems to find fault with anyone, everyone. And no matter what you run into, there is something wrong with the circumstances or others. This kind of person always got this mindset.

Because of he said it, she said it, they did it. Because of this or that, I did it. They never seem to be able to understand the real reason for the problem is themselves.

Then, people who live with bitterness, they always shift blame on others. Husband always blaming the wife. Kids are disobedient.

They don't study. They don't behave well. They don't give respect.

So, instead of helping the children to understand and help them grow up, what does the man do? He now starts scolding his wife. It's you. It's your nature.

Because of you, look at your children. He never says, my children, your children, your daughter, your son. And these people who live with bitterness are usually very critical.

You know, it's a healthy thing to find deficiencies and have the ability to fix it. Make things better. But there are people who are always critical.

They themselves don't do the job. Their job, it seems, God appointed them to be criticizing everybody else. They are self-appointed prophets.

Just a few weeks ago, somebody wrote me a letter. I never met this person. In this email, he had this one sentence.

Could it be that I am appointed by God as a prophet to share this with you? I read it twice. I said, he's a prophet? God appointed him so he can write this to me? And I read several times what he was writing. Well, he read one of my books.

And then he's criticizing what I wrote in the book. And I said, I cannot believe this, he's doing it. But then I took the book and began to read this chapter that he's criticizing me with.

And I realized the man missed the message completely. What I write in the chapter is opposite of what he's saying. It seems that he found one paragraph and he read it and he made his decision and judged me and hanged me before I had a chance to even tell him what I was doing.

The interesting thing, later I will learn, this is his permanent job. Every book he comes across, he will write a letter to the author pointing out what is wrong with the book. And he calls himself a prophet appointed by God.

Well, I didn't want to receive his criticism because I don't think he's a prophet. See, there are people who are gifted by God. They have special grace God gave them.

Gift of discernment. Gift of prophecy. Gift of faith.

But unfortunately, some of these people, as days go by, they misuse these gifts. And instead of being a blessing, the enemy twists these things and they become self-appointed prophets pointing out problems with others. You are not spiritual in this area.

You are not spiritual here. You are not singing enough. You are not this.

And it's all always something is wrong with others. And really, the problem is with themselves. Then, those people who live with bitterness usually, in the long run, end up with vengeful attitude toward others.

Bible has lots of illustrations. In the Old Testament, we read about King David. He grew up with Ahithophel, his best friend in the whole world.

They went to school together. They went to church together. Everything they did together.

David's best friend. But later in life, through the failures of David, Ahithophel became a bitter, bitter individual. The sad end of this man, he hanged himself.

Are you living with revenge toward someone? There are people, God-fearing people, because they cannot physically attack someone. They will resort to taking God's name. God will judge you.

God will take care of this. I am not going to do anything. But really, what they are wishing is God will come to their aid and destroy this individual, hurt that individual, cause them damage and punish them.

The problem is bitterness. Then, living with not only anger toward others, but always complaining about everything that they touch us. Especially in homes, you will find this one child or husband or wife, one family member, always complaining about this or that, whatever.

In a school setting, you will find it. In Bible colleges, you will find it. In church, you will find it.

They are now expressing, vending what is hidden within them. That incident, that experience happened long ago. They never solved it, never found solution to it, never addressed it biblically in God's way.

And now, their life is filled with complaints. Another result of this contamination is an argumentative spirit. Always arguing about things, senseless things, meaningless things.

They pick up on sentences, words. They argue in the classroom, in the church, in prayer meetings, in home, just anywhere. Those who live with bitterness, again, are people who seems to find such joy in others' failures.

They just find happiness to talk about somebody's failure. They spread news faster than email, telephone, word of mouth, whatever. It just seems they cannot find rest unless they spread what they heard.

It's always bad news about someone. And this person's heart is hardened, and mercy, kindness vanishes. As months and years go by, as bitterness takes deeper root in this individual, what happens? There's no more kindness, no more mercy.

Their face always is hard like rock. Somehow, this individual being so polluted, with their own anger and bitterness and pain, they keep it. And somehow, their facial expressions and their words, what they give out, is harsh and hard.

And it is a result of living with some form of bitterness. Then, bitterness becomes a reason or the source, I said it earlier, of defiling others. Warning! Watch out! Be careful that no root of bitterness will control you, lest you be defiled, and many, many are defiled by it.

Let me say here, it is your responsibility and my responsibility, when we have to deal with people who live with bitterness, that we, by God's grace, seeking Christ's help and protection, guard our heart, our emotions, that what they say or what they do, their attitude and reactions, don't cause us to open our heart and receive those words of gossip or anger or whatever, and we become partakers of their bitterness, and then now we are infecting others through our bitterness. By the way, it is more serious than we want to understand. People who live with bitterness, one of the classic evidence of these people, I tell you, is their relationship with others always strained.

They never can sustain a continuous, perpetual, positive relationship. It is always a strain and it's painful. In the home, at work, they move continually, and they blame others.

They get married, they try for a few years, it don't work, they divorce. Remarry, again the same problem. Change job, the same problem.

They move again. They never seem to find a place where they have peaceful, kind, wholesome relationship with others. Another result of living with bitterness, simply physical illness, such as continuous headache, BP, tiredness, ulcers.

In the book, None of These Diseases by Dr. Macmillan, he says 85% of illness, disorders in the body, can be attributed to psychosomatic illness. That is bitterness, anger, unforgiveness. A person who lives with such things usually becomes sick physically.

I can tell you, the many years of my doing the radio broadcast, and the hundreds of thousands of people have written letters. Many, they write, of miraculous healing they receive. Instant deliverance from oppression and fear.

They heal from many physical disorders. And then they always say this, You know, I heard you speak on forgiveness. And that helped me to understand, I am living with bitterness, unforgiveness.

And I decided to repent and change, ask forgiveness. And you know what, I did it. Just as the Bible says, the miracle took place, I am healed.

My headache gone forever. My ulcer, I am healed. My arthritis, I am now healed.

And I have peace. What happened? The real problem, it was on the inside. Self-pity, becoming lonely, becoming a prisoner of hate, it is all the result of living with bitterness.

The funny thing is this, it's not really funny, it's sad. Who on earth, I ask you, who on earth want to live with hate, pain, irritation, envy, worry and care? Who want to do it? The answer is, no one. Not you, my friend, no one.

But, whether you know it or not, living with the bitterness simply means you live with such pain and hatred. And all happiness and joy vanishes. You don't want to live with such horrible traits and anguish.

But you do live with it because of bitterness. Now that controls you. You don't control it, it controls you.

Now, when the scripture giving us this warning, simply says in such clear terms, watch out, be aware of it, that you don't live with bitterness. But then, what is the answer? Verse 14, Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14, Make every effort to live in peace with all men. Make every effort to live in peace with all people and to be holy.

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. I mean, look at that scripture again. It's quite interesting the way the author puts it.

And God is speaking to us through his unchanging word. He says, instead of living with bitterness, the solution is to understand you need to do something before the possibility of ending up with bitterness. You know, it is better, a million times better.

You avoid going to places, contacting, being in places where you can be infected with fatal illness. That room, that area is quarantine. Don't go there.

Because there are patients who are living there, laying there with illness, diseases that will kill you also. It is a thousand times better to avoid such places and people than getting it and then trying to treat it. It must be our priority, our decision, proactive measure to live in peace with all people, with our family members, with our friends, wherever they are that we deal with.

I want to, I choose to live in peace. But you know what? Along with that, without a full stop, it continues. And be holy.

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. So what is the answer? The answer is by nature we are all corrupt, sinful people. The sons and daughters of Adam.

We are all fallen people. Always prone to react and do what's wrong and suffer the consequence. So, when we relate our life to the Lord, when Christ becomes more important to me, when Jesus becomes the reason for my living, when I'm more concerned about pleasing Him and be approved by Him and what offends Him, what hurts Him, I am sad about, I do not want to hurt Him.

And Christ tells me, Love others as I have loved you. Forgive others. Don't take revenge.

Let it go. As the Father has forgiven you, you forgive. When you stand and pray, you begin by saying, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Then as you continue that prayer, you always want to say, Father, just as I have forgiven those who did wrong to me, you also forgive my failures. What is to be holy? That word simply means set apart. Without being set apart from anger and bitterness and disappointments and the ways of the world and the rationale of the world thinking, that is, eye for an eye.

You do this to me, I will do it back to you. You say one unkind thing about me, I will say ten things about you. That is the way the world works.

But I am now leaving that. I am set apart for Him. There is a chorus we often sing in our worship.

Set apart for you. And that means, now I think the way Christ wants me to think. The writer in the book of Philippians says, Let this mind be in you, that was in Christ Jesus throughout His life on earth.

He faced misunderstanding, accusation, abuse, lots of pain, loss of His right. They spat on Him. They beat Him up, the Holy One of Israel, the Almighty, the Prince of Peace, the Son, now stands there condemned as a sinner.

But He never opened His mouth. And He said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Let this mind be in you.

Don't take things upon yourself to find solutions, but be set apart, be holy, be different. Don't be like them. Come near Him.

His grace and His love is mercy. And if that be the case, I will have the ability to live in peace with all. Then I will have a better chance to live a life that is not infected with bitterness and be defiled by it.

Our time is running away. And I will have to stop here tonight. The Lord willing, maybe tomorrow we will pick up here.

There are six reasons why people become bitter. And there are some seven practical solutions how you can handle bitterness. But let me encourage you tonight.

Being hurt, irritated, or face discouragement, is normal. We all face it. But it is abnormal for a child of God to maintain bitterness.

And you know, I wish I could say to you, these kind of problems are only found among unconverted people, non-believers. But I find it in my Christian walk, more than we want to acknowledge or accept, so-called believers, evangelicals, people who claim to know God, even preachers, they stand up to preach, they read the Bible verse, but really, what they are teaching is not they are going to preach a message to hurt, to correct someone, to point out someone's fault, to make someone feel ugly and small. They do it from the pulpit.

There are people who pray, loud, wonderful prayers, but they do it often not to God, but for people to hear and hurt others. Their bitterness comes out. People who give their testimony, sometimes you'll be surprised to know the things they say.

The intention is not giving a testimony to glorify God, no, usually it is to spit out their bitterness. Something happened to them or somebody did. But you know, it is a very sad thing that they are not taught, they do not know how damaging it is for their life and for others.

And tonight I'll let you go by simply saying to you, when you go to bed tonight, take a few minutes to pray. I mean, pray a different kind of prayer. With your sincere heart, say, Father, please help me to see if there is anything in me, any root of bitterness, anything in me that helps me to understand if I am living in bitterness.

And say, Holy Spirit, please bring back to my memory of things that caused bitterness. It could be a brother or sister that abused you, unjustly punished you. They did that wrong thing or said it and they put the blame on you and you got the punishment from your parents.

It could be who didn't treat you right. Instead of caring for your mother and for your brothers and sisters, he drank and wasted the resources and abused your mother and your brothers or sisters and somehow such shame that he brought upon your family. And that memory is not very pleasant.

It could be some relatives that did wrong to your parents. It could be the teacher in your school, maybe way back you were 6 years old, 3 years old, 7 years old, someone who unjustly made fun of you and punished you and made jokes out of you and you never liked it. It may be the pastor, the priest, a prophet, a Sunday school teacher who misused the freedom you gave them, the pulpit, you sat and listened but what they said, you know it was about your family, you.

It may be someone that you helped but never returned a word of thanks, ignored you. I do not know. Thousand things must have happened.

We all have to live with it. But you know what? You don't have to live with the pain. The memory you cannot erase but it don't have to hurt you anymore.

You don't have to live with bitterness anymore. And ask God tonight to bring back to your memory of the past and then you take time and say, Father, I was bound for hell and forever you forgave me all what I have done, all the sins and mistakes I will never do. You already forgave me there on the cross.

I forgive my father. I forgive this my brother. I forgive my teacher.

I forgive my neighbor. I forgive this individual. If you know the name, you call the name, you don't have to shout it out.

You can simply be in your own world and the Lord hear your thoughts. He will forgive and let it go because you are now living in your own prison with pain and hurt and you need to be free. You don't have to live with broken wings.

You can fly again but the key is in your hand. No one is out there to open the cage, the prison door. The key is with you.

The key is forgiveness. There is no other answer than just forgive and the Lord give you the grace and you know when you forgive, you become like God because He forgives. You know what happens when you forgive? You become like Christ for Christ forgives.

You know what? You become holy. You know why? Because He is holy and He forgives. Let us pray.

And Lord, thank you for giving us this evening and the things we talked about. Instruction from your word not to give our lives to bitterness. Lord, we are not capable of doing any of these things without your help.

Lord, we cannot do it. So, dear Father, we ask since we want to please you, we want to be people set apart for you. We want to live in peace with all people.

We don't want to be defiled. We don't want to defile anyone. Father, please help each one of us.

May tonight be a turning point a new beginning. Thank you for teaching us from your word and thank you so much for loving us. In spite of all the problems and mess we live with, Lord, you never throw us away.

You love us all the same always. For this, we are grateful. Now, Lord, I speak your blessings upon my brothers and sisters and may they find your grace to live in freedom.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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