

(Basics) 64. Unforgiveness and Bitterness

by Zac Poonen

The sermon warns against the dangers of unforgiveness and bitterness, urging believers to forgive as a means of spiritual protection and community health.

Duration: 13:01

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:1

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the role of Satan as a full-time worker who constantly accuses and deceives believers. The preacher warns against harboring bitterness and unforgiveness towards others, as this gives Satan an opportunity to destroy us. The sermon references Colossians 3:13, which urges believers to forgive others as the Lord has forgiven them. The preacher also highlights the importance of being aware of Satan's schemes and not giving him any entry into our lives, using 2 Corinthians 2 as an example of the need for discipline and forgiveness within the church community.

Transcript

And today we want to look at the way in which, one way at least, in which Satan seeks to find an entry into our life. You know that the devil is out to destroy us, and if we give him any slight entry into our life in any area, he's going to take over many other areas as well. So we need to be careful.

We want to turn today to 2nd Corinthians and chapter 2. I want to give you a little background to what we're going to read here, so that we understand this verse. When Paul wrote the first letter to the Christians in Corinth, he had heard there were some serious sins in that church that were not judged, and the man who was living in that sin was not disciplined. And so Paul wrote concerning that to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and told them the sin that man committed was so serious, he needed to be put out of the church altogether.

Yes, it is true that some sins require that a man be disciplined so severely that he be put out or excommunicated from the church altogether. It may sound hard, but the purpose is to save his soul. And in this particular case, it did save his soul, because we read a little later when Paul wrote the 2nd letter to the Corinthians, maybe a year later, you find that the man has repented.

When he was put out of the church, he realized the seriousness of sin a little more, he realized how terrible it is to be out in the darkness without fellowship, and that brought him to repentance. As long as he

was sitting in the church and breaking bread, he never realized the seriousness of sin. Some people realize the seriousness of sin only when they are put out of the church.

And so this man realized it, but now what was happening was that some of these Corinthian believers and elders, perhaps, went to the other extreme. At first, they were at one extreme, where they tolerated sin and were first-class compromisers, but now they went to the other extreme, where they became self-righteous Pharisees, where they wouldn't even accept this man, even after he had repented and had set matters right, and given up his sin and given every evidence of repentance. They still would not accept him, and so Paul had to write to them again.

And he wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, he said, Whom you forgive anything, I also forgive, for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ. So he says, now this man, he has already suffered a punishment, verse 6, sufficient for such a one, 2 Corinthians 2, 6, is this punishment which is inflicted by the majority. What is the punishment? The punishment was that the people in the church would have no more fellowship with him.

He says, okay, he experienced that for a whole year now. Now, what should you do? You should forgive him and comfort him, lest somehow he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So he says, forgive him now and receive him, because he is really repentant.

And even though he has brought a bad name to the church in the past, now he is repentant, forgive him. And then Paul says these words, in verse 11, In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of Satan's schemes. So what do we see there? We see that when you don't forgive somebody, Satan can take advantage of you.

That's the message we need to get from this passage. And he says, we are not ignorant of Satan's schemes, so let me urge you, don't be ignorant of Satan's wiles. We need to be more afraid of Satan as a deceiver than as a persecutor.

Satan may try to persecute us, but that won't harm us as much as when he tries to deceive us. And Satan is very, very subtle, very, very clever. He will nurse in your heart and take care that you keep in your heart an unforgiving, bitter attitude towards someone, so that he can finally destroy you.

And this is far more deep-rooted than we imagine. The Bible speaks in Hebrews chapter 12 about a root of bitterness that can cause trouble. You don't have to wait till it becomes fruit.

You know what a root is. When a tree has started taking root, it's probably not even come up above the surface of the ground. Nothing is visible.

When you plant a seed in the ground, it first of all takes root before it comes up. And bitterness is like that. You sowed something in your heart, it is beginning to take root.

If you don't pull it out, it's taking root. And it will cause a lot of trouble. And not only that, a lot of trouble to you, first of all.

And many people can be defiled. Many people can get that infection. Because a person who's got this bitterness in his heart, will go around telling other people.

It's like a person who's got the chicken pox, goes around giving it to others. Or a person who's got tuberculosis, goes around giving it to others. A person who's got a cold, goes around giving it to others.

Or the flu. You see, it's very easy to transmit this sickness. It's highly infectious.

And you find people who are bitter everywhere in the world. You find Christendom is full of it. When a man comes to you with a complaint against another, a gossip, who's talking evil of others, what has he actually got in his heart? He's got bitterness against that person.

I want to say to you, dear friends, if you want to save yourself from infection, be careful about whom you listen to. Would you like to get AIDS from somebody? Oh, how careful you are! Well, this is more serious. It can destroy you more than AIDS.

Would you like to embrace a man with leprosy? Well, this is more serious. Why do you welcome and embrace a gossip in your home? A backbiter. The Bible speaks about women who go from house to house.

In 1 Timothy 5, women who go from house to house gossiping. There are lots of women like that in many of our churches. I have no hesitation in saying that every one of those women are agents of Satan.

You not only welcome them, you give them a cup of tea and biscuits and sit and listen to whatever Satan wants to tell you through them, and you get defiled yourself. And then she goes to the next house with her tale, and you also go to somebody else's house with this tale that you have heard. And Satan is multiplying his agents by the hundreds every day.

Believers are doing his work for him in the church. Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10.

The accuser of the brethren has been cast down. The one you are listening to who has come to your house, is he or she an accuser of the brethren? Are you an accuser of the brethren? Of believers? See, the point is not whether what you say is right or wrong. The Bible says here in Revelation 12, 10 that Satan accuses the brothers before God.

Now Satan may tell us, human beings, many many lies. He is a liar. But he will not dare to go and tell a lie to God.

When Satan accuses you before God, what do you think he accuses you about? Do you think he cooks up some story about something you never did, and tries to bluff God with it? Satan is not such a fool. What he will tell God about you is what you have actually done, which was wrong. And he is watching your life pretty carefully.

And when you have done something wrong, he goes to God and says, see, that's what this fellow did. And it's not a lie. It is 100% true.

And the same thing he says about somebody else. See what that fellow did over there. And it's 100% true.

So, we see that the accusations that Satan makes before God are all 100% true. Not 90%, but 100% true. So, from that we learn another thing, that when somebody comes and tells you a tale, even if there is no exaggeration in it, and it is 100% true, that person can still be an accuser of the brethren.

He is 100% in fellowship with Satan, who is the great accuser of the brethren. And it says here, Satan does this day and night. He is a full-time worker, full-time accusing the brethren.

He needs agents on earth. He's got multitudes of agents among the unbelievers, who are his children and his servants. But, he's got a lot of agents among God's children too.

People who got some bitterness against somebody, people who haven't forgiven someone, who got a complaint against someone, and who go around telling tales about that person. That's why the Bible says, in Colossians 3, it says, if anybody has a complaint against anyone, Colossians 3.13, as the Lord forgave you, you should also forgive him. Anyone.

Do you have a complaint against someone? Has someone done something wrong to you? Forgive. If you don't forgive, you'll become an agent of Satan. Very, very easy.

You may think, no, no, no, I've forgiven. But deep down, the very fact that you go to someone and tell your tale of woe, and make that person feel sorry for you, is an indication, that you haven't really forgiven that person at all. And who are you destroying? You may think you're destroying that person's reputation, by spreading stories about him.

Do you know, that if that person loves God and is wholehearted, God will make even the evil that you do to him, work for his good, and sanctify him. The one who will be destroyed will be you. So get rid of that.

Jesus prays for his children, for his brothers and sisters who fail. Satan accuses them. You can have a choice.

Either fellowship with Jesus and pray for them, or fellowship with Satan, and accuse them. I hope we'll make the right choice, at least from today.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8174.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/basics-64-unforgiveness-and-bitterness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net