

Understanding the Poison of Bitterness

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Introduction: A powerful faith can mold our thinking

- A. What (or who) is actually *in control of our hearts*? (**Rev 3:20-21**)
 1. Satan seeks to enslave by manipulating our passions and fears.
 2. When emotion is the driving force behind our actions, reason and faith will be pushed away. (**Lk 8:11-12**)
- B. The act of conversion always involves *an open heart committed to change*.
 1. How do we make decisions? How do we respond to problems?
 2. We have to choose light over the darkness of *our past ways* and the examples the preachers of Satan put before us. (**Mt 6:23; Jn 12:35**)

I. Understanding the pandemic of bitterness

- A. Satan can plant sin in our lives *through others*. (**Heb 12:14-15**)
 1. We often imitate others in how we think and act. (**James 3:14-15**)
 2. We can humbly pursue holiness, or we can be trained to become slaves of passion and emotion. Angry, arrogant speech is applauded in this culture.
- B. Bitterness is an *advanced form of unchecked anger*.

Bitterness - literally, of plants that produce inedible or poisonous fruit; used metaphorically of a person whose influence or actions become harmful to a community *one who causes trouble* figuratively, as a hostile attitude (*angry*) *resentment*, *animosity* (**Eph 4:31**)

2. It is well described as a poison because it will destroy your faith, your marriage, your family, the church and *everything that it touches*. (**1 Pt 3:7**)
3. Bitterness will make you such a crazy person that *you would even fight God*.

II. Anger is a God given emotion

- A. Because of that there is *a proper place for it*.
 1. Did Jesus *ever become angry*? (**Mark 3:5**)
 2. Does God the father *ever become angry*? (**Isa 30:27-28, 66:15; Heb 1:9**)
 3. We too can be angry but always *allowing the Lord to control it*. (**Eph 4:26-27**)
- B. We can control it when both our anger and our lives are *Christ centered*.
 1. Anger serves as *a good teacher* of right and wrong. (Godly anger in a father.)
 2. Because I know God sees and knows, I will *be satisfied with that*. (**Acts 4:29**)
 3. Anger does not turn into bitterness because *I yield to Him for vengeance*. (**Rom 12:19-21**)
 4. A self-centered person *cannot do this*. Rest assured that terrible fruits will come.
 5. Are we *able to reason* when angry about God's will? Are we angry with the things that make God angry or the very opposite?

III. The deception of bitterness

- A. Uncontrolled anger has been *a neglected subject among Christians*.
 1. Some *joke and laugh about their anger*. (**1 John 3:15; Gal 5:19-21**)

2. Consider the “anger family” in the works of the flesh. This is *true darkness*.
- B. Many imitate what *they have seen in their home* and in the church. **(Heb 12:15)**
 1. Many families have angry and vengeful parents that *teach their children*.
 2. Uncontrolled anger teaches you *to bury your anger and hide*. These homes teach you dishonesty and *to run from problems*.
 3. Some highly respected Christians have raised children that have faith but also are *crippled emotionally from what went on behind closed doors*.
 5. This teaching *goes through generations*. What are you teaching? **(Eph 6:4)**

C. People express anger in different ways.

Active and Strong expressions: Murder, suicide, physical violence, physical damage, bullying, cursing.

Not as Strong expressions: Slander, ostracize others, provoking others, humiliate others.

More Subtle expressions: Gossip, ridicule, sarcasm, criticism, careful revenge.

Unsuspected expressions; Withdrawal from others or activities, psychosomatic illness, depression.

D. Do people often think I am angry? Maybe I am!

1. The three levels of communication. **Content of words** - 7%; **The tone of voice** - 38%; **Non-verbal, body language** - 55%
2. How often do people seethe with anger, but then try to deny it?

III. Satan’s use of bitterness

A. Satan’s slaves often are *enslaved by bitterness*. **(Titus 3:3)**

1. Why would a person *fight God*? Why would a person have no concern for truth?
2. Bitter, self-center people will often blame God and His people.

B. The *opponents of Nehemiah* were dominated by anger and bitterness.

1. Why would the non-Jews be so bitter about the Jews returning? Because of past defeats from God! Anger *will blind you to yourself*. **(Psa 38:19-20)**
2. *Ridicule, bitter laughter and threats* characterize them. **(Neh 2:19-20)**
3. The opponents *share their anger*. **(Neh 4:1-5)**
 - a. This causes no one to challenge the angry one.
 - b. It also makes them miserable. Who pays the most for anger?
4. The opponents focus on *those they are angry with* while faithful men *look to God*. We must choose to look to God! This is not easy! **(Neh 4:7-13)**
5. Bitterness focuses on the adversary *wishing for evil*. **(Jn 16:20; Psa 38:16)**
 - a. Nehemiah found God’s wisdom that bore good fruit! **(Neh 4:6)**
 - b. Bitter people become increasingly isolated and miserable.

IV. Is bitterness in my life?

1. Do people often ask me why I am angry? 2. Do I find myself rejoicing in the misfortunes of another? 3. Am I often dwelling on the hurts another has done to me? 4. Do I enjoy talking about the wrongs of others? 5. Have my mate and my children become afraid to communicate with me? 6. Have I deliberately refused to greet another, or do I seek to avoid another because of bitterness? 7. Does my anger often make me tired and desire to withdraw from life? 8. Have I considered doing what I know is wrong but justify it by my bitterness?

Conclusion: What fruit do we seek in our lives? **(1 Pt 3:8-9)**