

PULLING UP THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

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This is a little subject – of course, we always want the Lord to direct – but there are a lot of different points in this message so I just pray that the Lord would help me to say it right.

The title tonight is: Pulling up the Root of Bitterness.

In Spanish, and in English as well, the beginning of that phrase makes it sound like something we would do in the garden because it speaks of the *root*.

We know if it rains a lot, we begin to see weeds. And the easy thing to do is to go out and pull the weeds. But many times when we do that, it breaks off. It looks fine at that moment: you can't see the weed anymore, it's gone. Or at least, that's how it looks. But there is still a *root* there. All that root needs is a little bit of time, another nice rain, and the weed will return.

We know when we pull out weeds in the natural, we want to get the *root*. Amen. And if it's been a while, if we're not careful and we let it go for a while, that root can be very hard to pull. Some of those plants, their root goes straight down and it has other little roots coming out from it.

Last night my wife said: did you know there's a tree growing on the other side of the house? And unfortunately, yes I did know. That's not something I can grab and pull out. I'm going to have to get a shovel, I'm going to have to dig and then pull. And if that doesn't work, I'm going to have to dig deeper, not because of what's on top *but because of that root*.

So the title tonight is: Pulling up the Root of Bitterness.

Now does the Word even speak about such a thing?

Well, let's go to Hebrews 12 and we'll start in verse 14. We're just going to read a couple verses.

The first thing Paul says here is:

Hebrews 12:14
Follow peace with all men,

He says: *with all.*

That's clearly our brothers and sisters in the Lord. That's also: friends, family, enemies, and whoever is out in the world.

He says: *follow peace with all men.*

And really, it's *not* about what we do regarding everybody else. It really has to do with *what's in our heart*. If our heart is in the right place, then we can be at peace *with all*. But again, it comes back to *our heart*.

When we come to the Lord, *we give our life to the Lord*. And one of the first things we learn is: we have to crucify this flesh, our carnality. But sometimes we want to hold on to that. We don't want to force the old man to die. And we really *can't* say that we are *living a Christian life*. We might have a profession. We might go to church. But we have to come to a point that we're *willing* to crucify the things of this flesh.

And when I say: we have to come to a point, it really isn't something we should be looking at: well, one day I'll get there. It should be *the first thing on our mind and in our spirit* in our Christian walk.

If we haven't made that decision yet, we need to make it *tonight*, that we are going to work to *put our carnality to sleep*.

Now, are there times we may falter? Of course there are. We're human, we can make mistakes. But *our desire* and *our effort* should be: *to get our life in line with this Word*. Praise the Lord.

So he says:

Hebrews 12:14
Follow peace with all men,

If I have *bitterness, anger, and irritation* in my heart, it doesn't matter what I try to do on the exterior, I'm going to fail.

We cannot hide what's in our heart. We can try, we can go a certain amount of time and maybe we can fool somebody, but sooner or later, we're going to show what's really inside.

So the only way we can *follow peace* is: we have to *be at peace with all*.

If we're not, then we have a decision to make. Are we going to hold on to the fact that we feel they treated us wrong, that they were wrong and they deserve it? Or are we going to *get our life in line with this Word?*

If we decide *not* to subject what's in our spirit to the Word of God, the Lord will *not be pleased*. We're going to have problems that we did not expect or want. And basically, we're going to be – I'll say it like this – *taking one-step-forward and two-steps-back spiritually* until we make the choice: *I want to be in line with this Word*. Lord help me: my flesh doesn't want to change *but I want to be in line with this Word*.

He says here:

Hebrews 12:14
and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

I'm not going to preach a lot on *holiness* tonight, but again, that's something that *comes from the heart*.

There are different religions, they say: you have to *dress like this*, you have to *dress like that*. They can put on an exterior display and look very spiritual, very holy, but inside their heart, it's 180 degrees different than what we're seeing before us.

If the heart is right, the exterior will naturally take care of itself. Praise the Lord. Because we naturally present ourselves according to what we have inside.

So he says here:

Hebrews 12:14
without which no man shall see the Lord:

Verse 15:

Hebrews 12:15
Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God;

If we have really allowed the *Grace of God* to work in our life, we're going to be able to *be at peace*, we're going to be able to *live a holy life*.

Next, he says here:

Hebrew 12:15
lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Now this is getting serious, because again, Paul uses that word: a *root of bitterness springing up*. [Hebrews 12:15] That's exactly the same terminology as – like I said – a weed in the garden.

He says: *we don't want that to spring up and trouble you.*

Again, that word *root*, I will say: *if we let it grow*, it will become more and more difficult when the day does come and we realize: we have to get rid of it. It's going to be *more difficult*.

That tree growing next to our house, I'm sure there was a day when it was just two inches tall and I could've pulled it. But now, I'm going to have *to dig*. I'm still going to get it out but it's going to be *a lot more work*.

Now somebody might say: a tree is not a weed. Well, I took a class once and – just so you know – the definition of a *weed* is: a plant that's growing where you don't want it to grow. So roses could be a weed – maybe the sisters have a hard time believing that – but that tree is a weed because I don't want it there.

So he says here:

Hebrews 12:15
and thereby many be defiled;

Not just one. We're going to come back to that. I'm just going to leave that open right now.

But let's go now to Ephesians 4 and we're going to start in verse 29.

Paul says here:

Ephesians 4:29
Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth,

We are responsible for what we say.

Ephesians 4:29
but that which is good to the use of edifying,

In other words: *building people up, helping them, helping their spirit.*

There's an old saying: if you don't have something good to say, then don't say anything at all.

Paul is saying here: what we say should be *to the help* and *to the benefit* of those who are listening. We need to think about that. We need to let that sink in.

He says:

Ephesians 4:29
that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Ephesians 4:30
And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

If we have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Lord is present with us by the Holy Ghost. What could we do to *grieve the Holy Ghost*? Well, what we could do is live in a way that *runs contrary* to the work that the Lord is trying to do in us.

So he says here in verse 31:

Ephesians 4:31
Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Praise the Lord.

Let that be put away. Take it out.

All of it. He says: *all of it.* Amen?

Does it say: take away a bunch of it, there's too much? [Laugh] No, he says: *get it **all** out.*

He starts with those things that are clearly *in our heart*. *Bitterness* is not something that is spoken, *bitterness* is something that is either *in the heart* or it's *not*.

And he says:

Ephesians 4:31
anger,

Again, that's *in the heart*.

Ephesians 4:31
clamour,

Then he says:

Ephesians 4:31
evil speaking,

Now that's something we can see, or hear. But that's really – we can say – *the manifestation* of what's already *in our heart*.

He says here in verse 32:

Ephesians 4:32
And be ye kind one to another,

That's a pretty simple instruction. But we've sometimes heard the term: it's much easier said than done.

I heard a brother once, he was ministering and for an-hour-and-a-half or maybe an-hour-and-fifteen he preached on *love*. When the service was over, he was talking with me and he immediately began criticizing another brother, another minister. And it wasn't just a quick phrase or something like that, but he spent three to five minutes expressing: *I can't understand why he's doing this, why he's doing that*. Yet, he had just spent over an hour preaching on *love*.

Now, are there times when there are situations to analyze? Absolutely. If we need to figure something out, or if we need to understand a situation, we're going to look at it, we're going to think about it.

But that's *not* what Paul is talking about here because he starts with: *get the bitterness, the anger out*. And he says: *be kind, be tender-hearted*.

So we can look at a situation and say: there's something wrong, and still – *in our heart* – be in the right place concerning the individual.

And really, *we have to get to that point*.

You say: when? I say: *yesterday!* This is *not* for five years down the road as we grow in the Lord. We have to get to the point that our heart can be right even *when* and *if* we see errors or we are treated wrong.

Sometimes we think somebody has treated us in a way that was wrong because we don't like the result. But in the big picture, they may not have treated us as badly as we think. And it doesn't really matter: *if we feel offended*, we should be able *to deal with that without allowing the bitterness to begin to grow in our heart*.

So let's finish this verse and then we'll go look at that.

Paul says:

Ephesians 4:32

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Praise the Lord.

I thank God that *because of Jesus Christ, I was forgiven*. Who forgave me? *God forgave me*.

I deserved *death*. And *not just death*, I deserved *punishment* and then *death*. And there was nothing I could do on my own. But praise the Lord, one day Jesus Christ voluntarily took my punishment upon himself. He suffered and he died. And because of his sacrifice, *if I believe on him* – which I do – *then God forgives me*. Praise the Lord.

Now, you say: well Brother, what if I've been trespassed against? *They* offended me, *they* treated me wrong. Are you saying I need to go down the road, smiling, just forgiving them for any wrong they've done?

Well, let's go to Matthew 18. And we're going to look at verse 15.

Jesus says here:

Matthew 18:15

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee,

There it is. And it's even a stronger word in Spanish. In Spanish it says: *if thy brother shall sin against thee*.

So now, we're going to know what to do.

Matthew 18:15

go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:

That's *not* our nature. We think: he knows what he did. Why should I have to go tell him what he did? He did it. *He knows!*

The reality is: we *don't know* what is actually going on in their mind.

But if we will do this, if we will go and tell them their fault with a good spirit: *this is what you did, I'm offended and I feel wronged*, we would be amazed how quickly things can be worked out.

Yet many times for many reasons, we don't want to go this route.

If we do talk to our brother or sister, we want to have three or four people with us who are also looking at the situation the same way we are. We want to know we have some support.

But that's *not* what Jesus said. He said: *alone*. [Matthew 18:15] Amen. That's what he said. It's *you and them*. Or it's *me and them*.

Or, if we don't want to do that – which again, we tend to *not* want to do – then what's another thing we might do? We go and tell everybody else: he did me wrong! We tell *this one*, and we tell *that one*.

We're really *not so sure in ourselves* because if we were certain, we could go directly to the brother or the sister, and we could say: you did *this* and *that*. We could tell them directly: the light was red. They might say: no, it was green. And again we'd say: no, I saw it, it was red. *When we know, we're ready to talk*.

Many times we feel something and we think we've been trespassed against but we don't have the courage to do what the Lord said, which is: *go to them alone*.

The purpose of going is *not* to yell at them and expose their sin. The purpose of going is *to fix our heart*. Praise the Lord. That's the purpose.

It's *not* to judge our brother: I want you to know there's a judgement against you. You've mistreated me. It doesn't matter what you say, that was wrong. That's *not* the point.

The point is: one of two things is hopefully going to happen. One is that the brother recognizes it and says: I'm sorry. You're right, I was wrong.

Another thing is: they might give an explanation that we had not even realized. Oh, that's what you were thinking? That can start a discussion which allows us to understand them, and we no longer feel like we were even trespassed against. In other words: we just understand it better.

He says:

Matthew 18:15
if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

I say: praise the Lord!

Now, there's a *step two*, and there's a *step three*.

I've been serving the Lord for quite a while now. In my memory – which isn't perfect [laugh] – I don't think I've ever seen a situation go to *step two*. I can't think of one. Can it happen? Sure. Am I forgetting something? Maybe.

The Lord said it, so yes, there is *step two* and *step three*. But I'm not going to look at that tonight because 90% of the time our carnality is: we don't want to do *step one*. We're concerned about how it's going to turn out and it's easier to go *talk about our brother to somebody else*. We say: *they did this*. And we hope: maybe this person will fix it, maybe they'll go talk to them.

So that brings us back, let's go back to Hebrews 12 and verse 15.

In the second part of the verse, Paul says:

Hebrews 12:15

lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

How are *many defiled* if there's a *root of bitterness* in *my* heart?

James said: *from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh*. The Lord Jesus said that as well. In fact, now that I'm thinking, I'm not so sure it was James but I know the Lord did say it. *From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh*. [Matthew 12:34] [Luke 6:45]

If I have *bitterness in my heart* against somebody, I'm going to be talking. I'm going to be *talking against them*. I'm going to let others know what's wrong about them. How *they're wrong in this*, and *they're wrong in that*.

And what happens? *Others are being contaminated because they're hearing that*.

We have to understand: we can't escape the fact that there are human emotions. The devil himself uses that.

So now others know how we've been wronged. And that can be a *seed* to eventually become *bitterness* in them as well.

Jesus said: *if there's an issue* – I'm paraphrasing – *if there's an issue, go and talk to the person*. [Matthew 18:15] Tell them what's wrong, and then you can work that out. And yes, if they just ignore the issue, at that point there is a *step two*.

I will say this: when we address it, it can't be something we just say in passing. It has to be clear: *Brother, I need to talk to you*. We find a time, we find a place, and we sit down. *Brother, I want you to know I love you as my brother but you did this. And I'm hurt*.

Then, the question is: how is that brother going to respond? In my mind, I can't remember a case when this didn't fix the situation as far as a personal offense one to another. You know what that does? *It kills that root of bitterness.*

So I have two choices: I can just forgive my brother. If I can forgive him and be a peace in my heart, praise the Lord.

But if I see something and I feel: he's done it before, he'll do it again. Or if it's just too big and I don't feel like I can just forgive that – well, I still have to forgive him – but the Lord has allowed a way to deal with that: *we go and we discuss it alone, me and the brother.* [Matthew 18:15]

Because otherwise, what does he say? *Many be defiled.* [Hebrews 12:15] We have to avoid that.

We have to be at the point – I mentioned how somebody may talk to me – we have to be mature enough that we don't just accept an accusation. We've heard the saying: *there's two sides to every story.* The worst thing we can do is take one side: well, I know this person, I believe them.

We all have a wonderful way to tell our story – maybe I shouldn't say *wonderful* – but we know exactly what to leave out and what to exaggerate a little bit so our story sounds rock-solid.

I will say: it doesn't matter what we hear. We should be able – if we're going to make a judgement – to set that to one side and *not make any judgement until we hear the other side.*

Again, the enemy will use our emotions, and that can get into *carnality.* We can say: that's my dad, that's my uncle, that's my sister. I'm talking about *in the flesh.* And that's fine. But when we get to the point that we think we're going to protect our friends or our family even when they've done something wrong according to the Word – that because they're my friend, they're my family, don't touch them! – I have to say: we have something to change in our heart.

If we are mature Christians, we should be able to say: my sister did something wrong. My cousin: what you did was wrong. It's not a bad feeling toward them. It's just that if there is something wrong, we should be able to *stand with the Word* and not just say: well, that's my friend, that's my family.

There is a place, yes, for respecting family. Honouring father and mother, absolutely. But that *doesn't* go against the Word.

There was more I was going to go into, but hopefully this is helpful tonight. I just pray that the Lord has helped me to say it in a right way.