

## **Brambles in the Vineyard, Bitterness is Spiritual Leprosy**

October 28, 2016



May the Lord help us to change poisonous habits into life giving wisdom and joy. Amen

My Beloved Heartdwellers, I cannot over-emphasize the power of bitterness. This is such a subtle and pervasive spirit. It taints every blessing in our lives. Our health, our thinking, our emotions, our relationship with each other, and God. If you have bitterness you are being poisoned every single day and this virus puts out tentacles that infect every area of our lives.

It is a spiritual cancer, which permeates the entire system. For instance, if the bitterness is in our stomach, it spreads to the hundreds of tiny glands in the body: the lungs, the liver, the pancreas, brain, bones and skin, feet, legs, neck, back arms and hands until the spiritual, physical and emotional body is thoroughly poisoned.

Is it not written that a, "A joyful heart promotes healing; but a broken spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22

And looking at that bone marrow is one of the most important substances in our bodies. It produces blood cells. So the very essence of life, our blood, is affected by bitterness.

The longer we live, the more bitterness that has permeated our being. I am personally convinced that old age is nothing more than accumulated bitterness that has poisoned our entire bodies and sucked the life out of them; just as cancer feeds on our own bodies and steals all the nourishment meant for our health.

Thank the Lord there is a remedy, 'a joyful heart,' but joy means rejoicing, which we cannot do without gratitude and thankfulness.

And this is becoming a supernatural commodity, these days! With all the trials that we go through, we have to find new ways of relating to our trials, because the old ways are poisoning us.

I am coming to understand: BITTERNESS comes in whenever we are irritated, impatient, angry, putout, judgmental. ANY NEGATIVE EMOTION ALLOWS THE SEED TO COME INTO OUR HEARTS. And a demon comes with it, and then the root of bitterness is tended and it chokes out the Lord's light, His grace and our faith.

This happens immediately and without our consent! This is why demons are so effective when they bring disorder: we react with immediate irritation and in comes the demon of bitterness and seed, along with plenty of fertilizer to get it started.

Once we allow this seed in and fail to immediately repent and ask for the Lord's mercy and grace to deliver us from it, it is already too late. In other words, right on the spot, we have got to

stop and get on our faces and ask the Lord, "Please, Lord! I am so sorry! Forgive me. Please deliver me of this demon and blot this seed right out of my heart."

We are already infected and beginning to weaken if we let it sit there. Negative thoughts also begin to multiply until we can no longer concentrate on what we were doing because our anger is growing every minute.

When we first conceive of these thoughts, we are already infected by the demons of bitterness and a seed is planted, which will grow quickly and choke out life, inspiration, health, clear thinking, hopeful emotions. And every good thing that we associate with will be deprived of its goodness the very moment we entertain bitterness.

Knowing this, my very first prayer to the Lord in the morning is "Please, Lord, forgive me for my bitterness, help me transform my irritations to joyful gratitude. Please deliver me from the demons and their dedication as well as the seed and roots of bitterness. Please bathe my heart in Your blood, cleansing it from all unrighteousness."

But before I say this prayer, I have to reflect on the occasions of anger, unforgiveness, resentment, impatience, grumbling. And I have to ask Holy Spirit to please show me my sin.

So, these three steps need to be taken before I ask for deliverance: (1) examining my actions, feelings and thoughts; (2) forgiving anyone I am holding resentment against; (3) repenting for an ungrateful attitude. Because truly the Lord allowed these things to happen and grumbling or complaining or even anger, for that matter, is not just at the person who caused the offense, but at God who allowed them to cause it.

And this I should do as well, "Lord, please heal anyone I've given offense to."

Sharing this with you, I recognize that I probably jump on my own case and am critical of my own self more than anyone outside of myself. I'm seeing, as we are talking, that it is NOT good. I am actually destroying myself with my negative attitude towards failures - even little ones like clumsiness and mistakes. I try to catch myself. But if I don't manage that, I can at least call the glass stupid! "You foolish glass, you tipped over!" Until, that is, I get control of this knee-jerk response.

Interestingly, the readings from the missal today really brought to light how serious it is to have bitterness:

First reading was from Leviticus: The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. Leviticus 13:1-2

The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like a defiling skin disease, the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head. Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp. Leviticus 13:43-46

Bitterness is the Leprosy of our age, guys. Notice that God isolated the infected person. Bitterness is highly contagious and spreads easily from person to person.

Let's just put ourselves in a leper's place. You get up in the morning, you have to choose torn garments to wear, you cannot brush your hair, you must keep your mouth covered at all times. You live quite a distance from the community, so you cannot socialize with anyone, other than other lepers. Anything you touch is unclean, so you have no occupation. If someone comes near your isolated camp you must cry out, 'unclean! unclean!' When you go into town people run from your presence and you continually must cry out "unclean!" And this is the way you live for your entire life. In those days, there was no cure for leprosy.

When Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses (yes, let's look at the cause of this. This is so interesting.) because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the Lord heard this. Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.

(That's an interesting statement. I wonder who wrote that!)

At once the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you." So the three of them went out. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, he said, "Listen to my words:

"When there is a prophet among you,  
I, the Lord, reveal myself to them in visions,  
I speak to them in dreams.  
But this is not true of my servant Moses;  
he is faithful in all my house.  
With him I speak face to face,  
clearly and not in riddles;  
he sees the form of the Lord.  
Why then were you not afraid  
to speak against my servant Moses?"

The anger of the Lord burned against them, and he left them.  
When the cloud lifted from above the tent, Miriam's skin was leprous —it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease, and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother's womb with its flesh half eaten away."

So Moses cried out to the Lord, "Please, God, heal her!"  
The Lord replied to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back." So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until she was brought back.  
Numbers 12:1-15

In an instant, the woman ranking highest in the whole Israelite community was turned unclean and isolated from the community. This is the power of bitterness. And it is highly contagious. Just one thought, that's all it takes, and you've been infected. Just like one mosquito bite is all it takes for malaria, one cough in a closed room to contract the Ebola virus.

James speaks of it, saying, Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

So, there he's talking about the source. This comes from the devil.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. James 1:26 & 3:6-12

Please Heartdwellers, I beg of you: repent of all bitterness and pray for me because I see that poison in my heart. Bitterness causes your cancer to be more painful and spread. Bitterness causes headaches to be worse. Bitterness causes your mind to be twisted and thinking to be off. Your body, soul and spirit are poisoned by this just as surely as if you had leprosy. Whatever good you wanted to do in your life will be greatly compromised by bitterness.

When the Israelites were in the desert of Shur, three days out from the Red Sea, they came to a defiled spring. The Lord told Moses to throw a beam of wood into the water and it would become sweet. Exodus 15

I can't help but think of the crossbeam of wood Jesus had to carry for His crucifixion. It is through the power of the Lord's Cross that we are forgiven and given new life, free from bitterness.

Moving on to the New Testament.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him. Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Luke 5:12-14

The Lord is so full of compassion. Let us come to Him repenting and asking Him to heal us of the habits of complaining, bitterness, grumbling, and lead us into a new habit of praising Him for all the lessons He gives us through unfavorable circumstances, knowing that our holiness is being forged and going from glory to glory. So, there's nothing, really, to grumble about. It's for our own good that He allows these things.

At this point, I asked the Lord, if He had something He wanted to say.

And He said, *"No, this teaching is complete in itself - only truly hearken to these words and make a resolution in your hearts to put aside all grumbling, resentment, bitterness. Make a firm resolution, dear ones. This is the number one inroad for Satan to turn your lives sour. He gains your consent when he causes trouble. Your anger is your stamp of approval on his gift of a bitter seed with a demon to tend it in the garden of your hearts."*

*"Can you imagine what the garden of your heart looks like when it is overgrown with bitterness? May I tell you, it is no longer a garden, rather a tangle of thorns and briars that one cannot walk through, let alone sit down in. There are no flowers there, no fruits, only skanky tangles of shrubs with sharp thorns whose tips are poisoned. There is no rest or nourishment in this garden, rather it is a representation of Hell on Earth."*

*"This, indeed, is what becomes of the soul who entertains bitterness; all life is choked out. There you will find jealousy, hatred, resentment, depression, judgment, impatience, selfishness, cruelty, retaliation, pride and every noxious, dark thought known to man."*

*"When the seed enters, it finds good soil and slowly stretches out its roots. At first the soul may not be aware that something inside of them has been compromised. As the demons tend this plant and the roots spread to different areas of your life, they wait for the opportunity they need to take over the soul. Perhaps it is adultery, or the loss of a child, or unfair loss of a job, cancer or serious disease, false accusation or betrayal."*

*"Once the incident occurs, the roots put out shoots that can be felt in resentment and anger. Then they become noticeable. They choke out and reject My love, and the soul becomes more and more bitter and hardened. Then the prolific fruit-bearing vines coming from the Wine dresser, cannot produce choice grapes, because all that is good and healthy for the plants has been choked out by brambles."*

*"Thus though you think you are abiding in the vine and bringing forth fruit, in reality you are abiding in the thorns of Hell, in bitterness."*

*"Come to Me, My children. Confess all of those feelings and let us work it out together. Let us clear the vineyard and burn the thorn bushes in the fires of charity. Then I will work with you to restore a fruitful and fragrant garden that we can walk together in, planning for new life, and bringing forth new fruit."*

*"We can do this together, if you will. You must make an act of the will and hold to it under all circumstances. We can do this. You can begin today to lead a life of celebration and thanksgiving, knowing without a doubt that all things work together for the good when you are in Me, and I am in you."*