

DOCTRINE OF BITTERNESS

1. Bitterness [מָרָר (*marar*); to be bitter] is a reaction sin, a reaction to adversity, loss (negative circumstance), or not having things go the way we think they should go (Isa 38:1-3). Hezekiah first feels sorry for himself and then becomes bitter. We don't simply wake up one morning bitter; it is a reaction to another sin that has gone unchecked. (Naomi is bitter because she is resentful toward God, and she has not resolved this original mental attitude sin through confession. Her bitterness has developed from her resentfulness toward God (Ruth 1:13). What Naomi doesn't realize is that "clinging to her" is the future hope of Israel. However, she is focused on herself and her dismal situation.)

2. Bitterness assumes that we are right and someone else is wrong. Bitterness is a rejection of personal responsibility or the Sovereignty of God in our lives (1 Sam 1:10). It is a rejection of God's plan and purpose. It is to forget that in Rom 8:28 God says He can work all things together for good. (Naomi thinks that what she wanted is right and that what God has allowed or brought about in her life is wrong.)

3. Believers can become bitter when we misinterpret God's plan for our lives. He may be providing grace testing for spiritual growth (Jas 1:2), but instead of being thankful, we become bitter (Job 9:18).

4. Bitterness therefore is the product of arrogance and the sin nature. As such, it leads to soul fragmentation/ destruction and fragmentation/ destruction of relationships around us (Col 3:19). It destroys our capacity to love. It contaminates others (Heb 12:15).

(Naomi has forgotten the wonderful grace of God which, even at this point, is making provision for her. First, rain has returned to the Promised Land. Second, she gets word that the famine has lifted. Third, God will bring her back to her people and they will accept her warmly. Fourth, God will not allow Ruth to leave her and she, Ruth, will be the immediate source of her blessing, with God being the ultimate source. Cursing will be turned to blessing.)

5. When we allow sin to remain in our life, God the Holy Spirit can only convict us of sin (John 16:8). He is not able to perform His other ministries to us: teach us, walk with us, effect spiritual production (John 14:26; Gal 5:16, 22-23). When we remain in sin, when we maintain unconfessed sin in the life, we are said to grieve God the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). God the Holy Spirit is prevented (frustrated) from accomplishing His ministries in our lives and this is described as "grieving the Spirit." Grieving is defined as mental or emotional distress, irritation, offending, insulting, and vexing (this is a figure of speech with regard to GHS). If we remain out of fellowship long enough, we parlay sins into bitterness (Eph 4:31).

6. Bitterness is caused by frustration, failure, hopelessness (Isa 33:7; Ezek 27:30).
 7. When we are bitter, we are not pleasant people to be around. Our bitterness causes us to complain, whine, find fault with or “bad mouth” others (Job 7:11; 10:1).
 8. Bitterness has a twin in jealousy (unchecked jealousy turns into bitterness), and the increased focus on self motivates us toward self-preservation and resentment toward others (Jas 3:14-16). (Often our envy or jealousy of someone else springs from being focused on self and soon turns to bitterness. Bitterness is a lie against the truth. What we are saying in bitterness is that I know better than God. My plan is better than God’s plan. God is so ignorant and so calloused toward me that I am going to reject God and blame everything on Him. This is a lie against the truth, because of course, none of this is true.)
 9. A bitter person always lies to himself (self-deception). He never tells the truth because bitterness warps his judgment and his sin nature destroys objectivity. When we are so subjective, we cannot truly understand what is going on around us. We cannot properly evaluate the problem and we can not apply any of God’s solution to the problem (Jas 3:14).
 10. Bitterness destroys capacity to enjoy life and the pleasures of life (Job 21:25). We cannot enjoy life while bitter. (Naomi is home with a rejoicing family greeting her, but she is filled with bitterness, blaming God, and completely unaware that all of this is grace provision for her and Israel.) (Ruth 1:19-21.)
 11. Bitterness leads to self-induced misery and destroys one’s capacity for blessing and happiness (Ruth 1:13). A bitter person is on the road to self-destruction. The first person hurt by bitterness is you. It fragments the soul and wipes out your capacity for blessing and happiness. The bitter person continues down the road of bitterness and does not recognize blessing when it appears. (Naomi does not recognize the blessing of being home nor the blessing of a wonderful woman who has refused to leave her.)
 12. Recovery from bitterness. Confession of sins is the first step, 1 John 1:9
- Isa 38:17 “Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; it is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.”