

Rising Above Bitterness

Soon after being converted, Simon did something terrible. He tried to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit with money (Acts 8:14-23). Peter rebuked him because he had the spiritual poison of bitterness in his heart.

Have you ever been poisoned by bitterness? This a serious sin for many of God's people. It is something that the devil can use to destroy and wreak havoc in our lives.

What is bitterness?

- It is a sin that is easy to hide. It is easy to conceal because it occurs in a person's heart (Acts 8:21-23). It eventually manifests itself in a person's speech and treatment of others.
- It is tied to other sins. It is often linked to jealousy, envy, unkindness, and unforgiveness (Galatians 5:19-21). Bitterness led Simon to be jealous of the miraculous power that God had given to Peter and John (Acts 8:23). This poison is indeed a root to much trouble (Hebrews 12:15)!
- It will keep us out of heaven (Hebrews 12:15; Acts 8:20; Galatians 5:21). The fruits of bitterness stand in opposition to the qualities of God.
- It can destroy our relationships. Bitterness has contributed to the division of churches, elderships, preachers, and marriages.
- It is deceptive. Bitter people can easily lie to themselves and try to justify their condition. They can behave as though they are entitled to harbor grudges and envy. They can foolishly say things like, "I deserve to feel this way because that person hurt me so bad."
- It can linger a long time. Saul's bitterness towards David destroyed his soul (1 Samuel 18:7-9). Esau's bitterness towards Jacob impacted their descendants for many years (Genesis 27:41).

What do we need to rise above bitterness?

- We need humility. We need to be honest with ourselves and humbly admit that we have a problem (James 3:14). We can't continue arrogantly lying to ourselves if we have bitterness in our hearts!
- We need grace (James 3:13-17; Ephesians 4:31-32). We need to "put off" bitterness and put on the qualities of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. We need to become like God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ!
- We need to develop a strong desire to put God's will first. Harboring bitterness will not lead us to do God's will in our marriages (Colossians 3:18-19). It will distract us from doing the work that God has called us to do. Paul and Barnabas refused to allow an argument to hinder their work for the Lord (Acts 15:36-41).
- We need to repent. We need to beg God to forgive us and replace our bitterness with His love (Acts 8:20-23).

Conclusion:

Praise God that He doesn't hold grudges and an unforgiving attitude towards us!

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