

Bitterness

Let's face it, our humanness causes most of our problems.

We all are bundles of potential problems looking for a place to happen.

Ephesians 4:22-24 [NIV] *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**”*

We must **not** remain a prisoner of our human nature if we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

God is creating in us, through Jesus Christ, a new nature by a renewing of our minds.

What do we put off, reject from our minds and life?

Ephesians 4:25-26 [NIV] *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. **“In your anger do not sin”**: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,”*

Paul did **not** say we can never be angry, but **not** to sin when we are angry.

Jeremiah 12:13 [NIV] *“They will sow wheat but reap thorns; they will wear themselves out but gain nothing. So bear the shame of your harvest **because of the LORD's fierce anger.**”*

This is but one of many references to God being angry, but He cannot sin.

What makes the difference?

God is angry when He sees humans doing things that hurt others and eventually themselves.

Human anger is the result of being hurt or humiliated by other people, it is self-centred.

Ephesians 4:31 [NIV] *“Get rid of all **bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**”*

Anger as it matures turns into bitterness, and bitterness is a destroyer of relationships.

Ephesians 4:27 [NIV] *“and do not give the devil a foothold.”*

Anger turning to bitterness allows Satan to get a foothold in our mind and life, for anger and bitterness are the basis of his nature.

Bitterness destroys friendships and fellowship in the church.

Why is this?

A bitter person cannot keep his or her bitterness to themselves. They find sadistic pleasure in telling everyone who will listen how they have been hurt.

If allowed, this will spread through the church like a cancer.

Ephesians 4:32 [NIV] *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**”*

If we forgive those who have hurt us, anger and bitterness cannot get a foothold in our life.

Hebrews 12:14-15 [NIV] *“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no-one will see the Lord. **See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**”*

Only when we see and accept the grace (undeserved forgiveness) that God offers us and forgive the person who has generated our anger and bitterness can we begin to tackle this sinful nature.

Bitterness is a sin.

Bitterness is a longstanding resentment or a spirit that refuses to be reconciled.

Such an attitude is the perfect description of Satan, who sinned and has **no** desire to repent and be reconciled to his Creator God.

The vehicle for expressing most bitterness is the tongue.

We all know that loud talking or arguing, almost always accompanies anger.

Ephesians 4:29 [NIV] *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*

The term “*unwholesome talk*” used by Paul is “*stretching the truth*” when recounting how someone has wronged us.

This is expressing bitterness through slander.

1 John 1:8-9 [NIV] *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

If we hope to deal with bitterness then recognise it is a sin and go to God and confess it as we would any other sin.

Matthew 6:14-15 [NIV] *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But **if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**”*

Always have in the front of our minds the forgiveness we have received from God through Jesus Christ.

This will be a prompt for us to be forgiving to all who have offended us.

Matthew 5:23-24 [NIV] *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**”*

Jesus does **not** discuss who is to blame, **nor** whether your brother has the right to be angry with you.

We have the responsibility to take the initiative in restoring right relationships through reconciliation. Failure to do so will hinder our worship for we will be cut off from God because of sin.

Colossians 3:12 [NIV] *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”*

This is something we need to practice daily for it will solve lots of human relationship problems.

As Christians we have the responsibility to be kind to others as well as forgiving them.

Doing this we will bid farewell to anger and the bitterness it can generate.