

# Hearts Fit for the Journey

## Giving Thanks in All Things

### Letting Go of Bitterness – Acts 8:9-25

#### I. Introduction

##### A. *Moby Dick*

1. Many of you have heard of the novel *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville
2. It tells the story of Captain Ahab's relentless hunt for the great white whale Moby Dick who had destroyed his ship and bitten off his leg
3. Ahab was obsessed with destroying the whale—his life revolved around his resentment and bitterness and it tarnished everything he did
4. His bitterness had twisted him into a cruel and hateful person and the saddest things about the book, and bitterness in general, is the fact that the real victim of Ahab's hatred was Ahab himself
5. His obsession had made him a most unhappy man and that is what bitterness will do to you
6. Do you know any bitter people? Those who have been wronged in some way in life and have allowed such to turn them into negative and critical people

##### B. *Bitterness*

1. Is a terrible thing
2. It is a sin
3. It makes us miserable and it makes those around us miserable as well

**4. In this lesson we shall consider bitterness**

- a. Its definition**
- b. Its cause**
- c. Its effects**
- d. Its prevention**

**II. What is Bitterness and What Causes It?**

***A. The definition of bitterness***

- 1. Webster's defines bitterness as an attitude unfriendliness, resentment and animosity**
- 2. Doris black said that if we fail to overcome our resentment and animosity, it will likely develop into bitterness—like polyps**
- 3. Bitterness is a malignant form of resentment and anger and it is capable of spreading rapidly until it effects every area of our lives**
- 4. Causing us to become harsh, reproachful, unpleasant and unfriendly**
- 5. Do you know anyone that this describes? Do you know any Christians that this describes?**
- 6. It is sad but we all know bitter people and even more sad bitter Christians**

***B. How do people become bitter?***

- 1. Bitterness can come as the result of a number of different variables**
  - a. The loss of a dream**
  - b. Someone's rude behaviors**
  - c. Poor health**
  - d. Guilt**

- e. **Pride**
- 2. **Bitterness can be the result of**
  - a. **Someone doing us wrong and getting away with it**
  - b. **Someone achieving a success that we feel we deserve and have not yet attained**
  - c. **The feeling that life is unfair**
- 3. **Regardless of what causes it bitterness can rob us of our joy for life and make us unbearable to be around**

### **III. What are the Effects of Bitterness?**

#### ***A. Bitterness prevents us from practicing kindness and forgiveness***

- 1. **Eph.4:30-32**
- 2. **There are certain character and attitude flaws which grieve the Holy Spirit who is in us**
- 3. **Bitterness is one of those flaws because the bitter heart is filled with anger and animosity and these are contrary to what God has shown to us**
- 4. **Bitterness has no place in the heart of a child of God—there is just no room for it and it makes the journey far less enjoyable for us and for those around us**
- 5. **Thus Paul says that we should get rid of the bitterness in our hearts and replace it with kindness and forgiveness**
- 6. **“Every man should have a large enough cemetery in which to bury the faults and hurts caused by others” (Henry Ward Beecher)**

#### ***B. Bitterness destroys relationships***

- 1. **Heb.12:14-15**
- 2. **We are to pursue a peaceful existence with all men, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ**
- 3. **Bitterness makes this command impossible to obey**

4. **The more bitterness we have in our hearts the less possible it is to live at peace with others**

*C. Bitterness causes us to place too much focus on self*

1. **Jm.3:13-14**
2. **Bitterness creeps into our lives most often when we do nothing but focus on our self**
3. **The “woe is me” complex embraced by so many in our society is one of the root causes of bitterness and resentment**
4. **When you can’t think about anything except what you don’t have or who has wronged you, you are much more likely to develop bitterness in your heart**
5. **The cure then is to stop focusing on self**
6. **It is much more difficult to develop and harbor bitterness in your heart when you stop to think about how much more fortunate you are than the majority of the world’s population**

*D. A biblical example of bitterness*

1. **In Acts 8 we are introduced to a man known as Simon the Sorcerer**
2. **According to verse 9 he had astonished the people of Samaria, “claiming that he was someone great”**
3. **The people believed that he had great power from God but the truth was that he had merely deceived the people into thinking that he had supernatural powers**
4. **V.12-13**
  - a. **When Phillip preached in Samaria many believed and Simon was among them because he saw the miracles that were performed**
  - b. **Simon was no dummy, when it came to miraculous powers he knew the real thing when he saw it**
  - c. **Phillip actually had the power to do what he claimed to be able to do himself**
5. **Later in the chapter, after having heard of these conversions in Samaria, the Apostles sent Peter and John to them so that**

they might receive the Holy Spirit which was bestowed by the laying on of the Apostle's hands—v.17

6. After Phillip saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the Apostle's hands, he sought to purchase this power with money—v.18-19
7. What was his motivation?
  - a. Why did he want this power?
  - b. Was he just trying to be helpful?
  - c. Did he just want to do what the Apostle's did? Or was there something more to his motivation?
  - d. I believe his motivation revolved around bitterness that he harbored in his heart—8:23
  - e. Bitterness because there were individuals he could actually do what he had long claimed to be able to do but couldn't
  - f. He wanted to do what they could do because he was jealous and bitter that they could do it and he could not
8. How did Peter respond to his request?
  - a. Acts 8:20-22
  - b. Peter saw the bitterness in his heart and commanded him to repent because that is what bitterness called for
  - c. It is still what bitterness calls for
  - d. If we have bitterness in our hearts we need to repent of it

*E. Bitterness causes us to:*

1. Grieve the Holy Spirit
2. Have a heart of ingratitude
3. Lack kindness and compassion
4. Be unwilling to forgive

5. **If you know anyone who exhibits these traits, chances are high that they are harboring bitterness in their hearts**

#### **IV. How Do We Overcome Bitterness?**

##### ***A. Understand that all men are not equal***

1. **Now don't get me wrong**
2. **In the eyes of God**
  - a. **All men are created equal**
  - b. **All men are created in the image of God**
  - c. **All men have souls that God wants to save**
3. **However, in the world in which we live not all are born, live or die equally**
4. **This is one of Satan's greatest lies**
  - a. **Satan wants you to think your are entitled**
  - b. **There is no way to create equality in this world**
  - c. **Democracy (which is by far the greatest system of government) has not delivered it and communism which promised it has failed miserably**
  - d. **Life is not always fair and men are not equal**
5. **Satan is crafty and he will forever breed bitterness and discontentment in the lives of those who believe the lie that we have somehow been wronged if we do not have everything someone else has**
6. **There are always going to be people with more money, bigger houses, nicer clothes and fancier cars than you**
7. **Little Secret—that is OK because it doesn't matter**

##### ***B. Count your many blessings***

1. **Read the words of the song**

- 2. Let us never forget that regardless of what trial or difficulties we may be experiencing, we will always have a great deal for which to be thankful**
- 3. Women**
  - a. When the kids are sick or causing trouble**
  - b. When the car is broken and the washer isn't working**
  - c. When your husband is insensitive and calls at the last minute to say he will be home late because he is going to the lake**
  - d. God has the prevention for bitterness—Give thanks in all things**
- 4. Men**
  - a. When your wife does make your favorite meal on your birthday**
  - b. When you are passed over for a job promotion**
  - c. When your friends get new houses and new cars**
  - d. When the doctor says you have cancer**
  - e. God has the prevention for bitterness—Give thanks in all things**
- 5. Whenever you start feeling bitter about your lot in life, how about you stop for a minute and think instead about all of the blessings God has bestowed upon you and give thanks in all things**

***C. Do something for someone else***

- 1. Lk.22:27**
- 2. If anyone ever had more on His mind than my Lord Jesus Christ I would love to know about them**
- 3. Jesus had to go to the cross because of us and yet He was not bitter because of that fact**
- 4. In fact one of the things He did while waiting for His death was to bury Himself in helping and serving others**

5. **It is impossible for us to develop the mind of Christ, which Paul exhorts us to do, without developing a heart of service**
  - a. **God was a servant when He sent His Son to pay a price on behalf of humanity that we could not pay ourselves**
  - b. **Jesus was a servant when He emptied himself and took the form of a servant humbling himself to the point of the death on the cross**
6. **Jesus says in essence that greatness in the kingdom is measured by one's willingness to serve others—Lk.22:26**
7. **Do you:**
  - a. **Want to become like God**
  - b. **Want to become like Jesus**
  - c. **Want to be great in the Lord's kingdom**
  - d. **Want to overcome bitterness**
8. **Then**
  - a. **Starting serving others and stop worrying so much about self**
  - b. **It is hard to be bitter about one's own life when one's own life is invested in serving and helping others**

## **V. Conclusion**

### ***A. Broken Dreams—Lauretta Burns***

1. **As children bring their broken toys with tears for us to mend**
2. **I brought my broken dreams to God because He was my friend**
3. **But instead of leaving Him in peace to work alone**
4. **I hung around and tried to help with ways that were my own**
5. **At last I snatched them back and cried how can you be so slow**



- 6. My child, He said, what could I do, you never let them go**
- 7. Broken dreams can cause bitterness and resentment**
- 8. Bitterness and resentment can lead us away from God**
- 9. Let us understand:**
  - a. What bitterness is**
  - b. How it is caused**
  - c. What it does to us and those around it**
  - d. How we can overcome it**
  - e. If you have bitterness in your heart, why not let it go today**

***B. Invitation***