

**Title: Escaping the Stranglehold  
of Bitterness**

**Text: Ephesians 4:31-32**

**Topic: Resentment**

**Teacher: Pastor Barry**

**Time: 5/16/21**

**File Under: Christian Living**



Bitterness is **deep seated resentment** that results from some past grief, disappointment, or emotional wound.

Often those who suffer from bitterness begin to feel a false sense of **powerlessness**.

Bitterness is a **choice**.

In order to conform us to His image Jesus often uses **pain & suffering**.

Nothing passes into your life outside of God's **knowledge and permission**. (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

**BITTERNESS TEST**

- Is there a painful memory that you cannot forget, no matter how hard you try to suppress it?
- Does this memory trigger the same emotional response today as it did at the time the original pain occurred?
- Do you replay the memory over and over, imagining what you might have said or done differently?
- Is there a person to whom you can't say kind words or extend common courtesy without feeling uncomfortable or irritated?
- Do you ever want to make someone, "get what's coming" to them after a minor offense?
- Is there a physical place that you still avoid because something negative happened to you there?

If you answered yes to any one of these questions, you may be secretly bitter. If you answered yes to three or more, you very likely have deep seated resentments.

The only remedy for a bitter heart is to **FORGIVE** THE OFFENDER.

The key: forgive as **Christ** has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

**Cancel** the debt. Forgiveness is an act of your **will**, not your emotions. Say, "*I choose to forgive you [insert person's name] for [how you hurt me]*" Conclude with a declaration, "[person's name], *I release you from this debt.*"

When another offense occurs don't wait to see if bitterness takes root, apply these principles **immediately** (Ephesians 4:26-27), thus developing a lifestyle of love and forgiveness.

With **God's help** you too can overcome resentment.

**DIGGING DEEPER:** Offenders in Jesus' day were forgiven up to 3 times; a fourth offense need not be forgiven. What does Jesus' answer say about forgiveness in the Kingdom of God? How does Jesus' point in verse 35 compare with 6:12? Do we forgive others so God will forgive us, or does God forgive us so that we will have forgiving attitude?

**FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:** What effort have you made to "live in peace with all"? In relationships that fail, do you believe it is because one or both parties didn't try hard enough? What can be done to see that people who are torn apart, despite their best efforts, don't also miss the grace of God?