

Learning To Put Off Bitterness: Colossians 3:19
5-18-14 AM

Do I Struggle With Bitterness? An important question we need to ask ourselves. Bitterness is often hidden in us, only popping up when provoked. It comes with unexpected emotional outbursts of wrath or anger; it simmers and agitates like a thorn stuck under the flesh. Often it is found in our most intimate relationships. Paul tells us this in Colossians 3:19, knowing that it can be husbands bitter against their wives, and just as easily, wives bitter against their husbands. Too we might see this with children bitter against their parents, or parents bitter against their children.

The problem is this: "*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled*" (Hebrews 12:15). We might ask "how is it a "root""? If it is a root, what does it produce? A "tree" of bad behavior? A "thorn" of rejection? Perhaps more frightening is the warning: by it many be defiled.

Paul also said this: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice".(Ephesians 4:31). He makes it sound easy, "put away". How do we "put away" bitterness? The Greek word used here is *Airo*, to pick it up. It is the same word that Jesus used in Matthew 9:1-6, when He ordered the paralytic to "get up, pick up your bed and go home." Jesus cured the dilemma that caused the necessity of the sick bed; now it was time to pick it up. Perhaps we might find our answer here.

From other studies, we have seen the bitterness of God (Genesis 6:6). We have caused God to be bitter, by our sins in life. How does God put away bitterness? For one thing, He demands no repayment of the debt of sin, having sent His Son to remove it. He simply "lets go", or puts it away. It is not to say there is no condition to this; God expects reciprocal conduct (Matthew 18:21-35).

Sometimes we hold on to bitterness because we think we might need it. It is like keeping a sick bed after being healed. We hold on to it because we fear being fools to forgive another. We allow it to root itself in us because we may not be able to identify it. Let us understand that the Scriptural point here is simple: put it away. If God has done so for us, we ought to do the same. The problem is not the putting away, it is finding it in the first place.

Conclusions: Bitterness happens in close relationships. It leads to ungodly harmful conduct. We must "put it away" all bitterness. God is our living example of how it was done, and why we must do so.