

Bitterness and Resentment

I. Definitions

1. **Bitterness** *n.* - The quality or state of being bitter: a. to taste; b. to the mind or feelings; c. deep sorrow or anguish of heart; d. animosity, acrimony of temper, action, or words; e. intensity of frost or cold wind.
 - A. **Bitter** *adj.* - 6. a. Characterized by intense animosity or virulence of feeling or action; virulent.
 - B. **Animosity** *n.* - 1. Spiritedness, high spirit, courage, bravery. *Obs.* 2. Excitement of feeling against any one; hostility of mind tending to break out into action, active hatred or enmity.
 - C. **Acrimony** *n.* - 1. Biting sharpness to the taste or other bodily sense; pungency; irritancy; acidity. *arch.* 2. Sharp or irritating bitterness of disposition or manner.
 - D. **Virulent** *adj.* - 3. *fig.* Violently bitter, spiteful, or malignant; full of acrimony or enmity: a. Of action or feeling.
2. **Resentment** *n.* - 1. An indignant sense of injury or insult received, or of wrong or affront done to some person or thing to which one is attached. 2. a. A strong feeling of ill-will or anger against the author or authors of a wrong or affront; the manifestation of such feeling against the cause of it.

II. Bitterness is a sin.

1. Bitterness is characteristic of the wicked (**Rom 3:14**).
2. The wicked shoot out bitter words like arrows (**Psa 64:3**).

III. Christians must work to put away bitterness in their hearts (**Eph 4:31**).

1. The fact that Paul exhorts us to put away bitterness means that we have a propensity towards it.
 - A. There are some things that are serious enough in nature to make anyone struggle with feelings of bitterness, such as:
 - i. Having a foolish child (**Pro 17:25**).
 - ii. The news of one's premature death (**Isa 38:15; Isa 38:17; Est 4:1**).
 - iii. The destruction and desolation of one's country (**Lam 1:3-4; Lam 3:15**).
 - iv. A preacher having to preach to a rebellious people (**Eze 3:4-14**).
 - v. Knowing of the impending severe judgment of God upon both the righteous and the wicked of an ungodly nation (**Eze 21:1-7**).
 - vi. The death of a child (**Jer 6:26; Jer 31:15; Zec 12:10**).
 - vii. Even in situations like these which seem justified, we must learn to put away bitterness.
 - B. There are also smaller things than can cause bitterness.
 - i. Husbands have a tendency to be bitter against their wives (**Col 3:19**).
 - ii. There are things about every one of us that annoy others.
 - iii. Don't let those things fester in your heart.
 - iv. Either deal with them or let them go and don't dwell on them.
 - a. If a brother has offended you, tell him his fault privately (**Mat 18:15**).
 - b. Don't tell others about it (**Pro 25:9**).

- c. Jesus was frustrated with His disciples, but He let it be known to them (**Mat 16:6-11; Mat 17:17**).
 - v. If bitterness goes unchecked, it will destroy a church (**Jam 3:14-16**).
- C. Church members have a tendency to become resentful of their pastor.
 - i. The pastor must reprove, rebuke, exhort, warn, and admonish the sheep (**2Ti 4:2; 1Co 4:14; 1Th 5:12**).
 - a. Reprove v. - 1. *trans.* To reject. *Obs.* 2. To express disapproval of (conduct, actions, beliefs, etc.); to censure, condemn. Now rare. 3. To reprehend, rebuke, blame, chide, or find fault with (a person).
 - b. Rebuke v. - 1. *trans.* To beat down or force back; to repress or check (a person); to repulse. *Obs.* 2. To reprove, reprimand, chide severely.
 - c. Exhort v. - 1. *trans.* To admonish earnestly; to urge by stimulating words to conduct regarded as laudable. Said also of circumstances, etc.: To serve as an incitement.
 - d. Warn v. - II. To make aware, to put on one's guard. 2. a. *trans.* To give timely notice to (a person) of impending danger or misfortune.
 - e. Admonish v. - 1. *gen.* To put (a person) in mind of duties; to counsel against wrong practices; to give authoritative or warning advice; to exhort, to warn.
 - ii. It is human nature to resent him who rebukes and points out error (**Pro 15:12; Isa 29:21; Amo 5:10**).
 - iii. A pastor will become the enemy of immature Christians when he tells them the truth (**Gal 4:16**).
 - iv. Jesus Christ was hated for rebuking sinners (**Joh 8:40**).
 - v. I have had church members become resentful toward me for what I preached, but I didn't know it because it was hidden from me.
 - a. Oftentimes those that have resentment in their hearts towards their pastor (or anyone else) will vent to others about it, but pretend that everything is okay around the person they are bitter towards (**Pro 26:22-25**).
 - (i) Dissemble v. - 1. *trans.* To alter or disguise the semblance of (one's character, a feeling, design, or action) so as to conceal, or deceive as to, its real nature; to give a false or feigned semblance to; to cloak or disguise by a feigned appearance.
 - (ii) Deceit n. - 1. The action or practice of deceiving; concealment of the truth in order to mislead; deception, fraud, cheating, false dealing.
 - b. BEWARE OF THIS! If it is left unchecked, their wickedness will be showed before the whole church (**Pro 26:26**).
 - vi. When church members become resentful of their pastor for what He has taught, they need to talk to him about it.
 - a. I am a reasonable man who will listen to complaints against me.
 - (i) If I am wrong, respectfully tell me about it.
 - (ii) If I have hurt your feelings, tell me about it.
 - b. Immature Christians will usually not do this because they know that they are wrong and the pastor's admonition was right.

- c. They don't want to change their behavior, so they never bring it up and keep letting it fester.
 - d. This will eventually end in disaster.
 - D. Pastors also have to guard against being bitter and resentful towards their flock.
 - i. The following things can cause bitterness in a pastor if he is not careful.
 - a. The pastor pours his heart into his work, but his congregation is not appreciative of it.
 - b. The church does not esteem him highly in love for his works' sake (**1Th 5:12-13**).
 - c. The pastor's admonitions, exhortations, warnings, and rebukes are ignored and not heeded (**Eze 33:31-33**).
 - d. The church is lukewarm, apathetic, and lacks zeal (**Rev 3:15-16**).
 - e. The church is full of strife and division (**1Co 3:3**).
 - ii. All of these things are unacceptable and are grievous errors for a church to commit.
 - iii. BUT, it is also a grievous error for the pastor to *allow himself* to become bitter and resentful toward the church for it.
 - a. He must endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (**2Ti 2:3**).
 - b. He must never let the bitterness and resentment build up in him to the point that he sins and loses his ministry like Moses did (**Num 20:10-12**).
 - c. I know of a pastor that his happened to, and I want to be very careful that it never happens to me.
- 2. To prevent feelings of bitterness, don't have unrealistic expectations of your brethren and then be resentful of them when they don't measure up.
 - A. This can happen between church members.
 - B. This can happen between a pastor and church members.
 - C. Remember that God has dealt to every man the measure of faith, some more, some less (**Rom 12:3**).
 - D. Saints produce varying amounts of fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, some an hundred (**Mar 4:20**).
 - E. To expect a 30-folder to act like a 100-folder is a recipe for resentment.
 - F. Be careful to not hold others to your extra-Biblical standards.
- 3. Bitterness starts as a *root* in the heart (**Heb 12:15**).
 - A. Root *n.* - II. 6. a. The source or origin of some quality, condition, tendency, etc. 7. a. A source of some quality, etc.; esp. a virtue or vice giving rise to some condition or action.
 - B. If that root is not *rooted out*, it will spring up and trouble you (**Heb 12:15**).
 - C. When it springs up, *many* will be defiled (**Heb 12:15**).
 - D. A little leaven will leaven the whole lump (**1Co 5:6**).
 - E. Bitterness left unchecked can easily destroy a church.
 - F. The LORD will root out those who are a root of bitterness in the church and who make light of the warnings of God (**Deu 29:18-21**).
- 4. Bitterness will grieve the Holy Spirit (**Eph 4:30**).

IV. Putting away bitterness

1. When we are feeling bitter towards God or others, we should earnestly pray to God about it (**1Sa 1:10; Job 7:11; Isa 38:18-19**).
2. We must give whatever is causing our bitter feelings to God for Him to deal with (**Php 4:6-7**).
3. The antidote to bitterness and resentment is being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving toward one another (**Eph 4:31-32**).
 - A. Kind *adj.* - II. Of good birth, kind, nature or disposition. 5. Of persons: Naturally well-disposed; having a gentle, sympathetic, or benevolent nature; ready to assist, or show consideration for, others; generous, liberal, courteous (obs.). Also of disposition. (This (with c and d) is now the main sense.) c. Exhibiting a friendly or benevolent disposition by one's conduct to a person or animal. d. Of action, language, etc.: Arising from or displaying a kind disposition. 6. Of persons, their actions, etc.: Affectionate, loving, fond; on intimate terms.
 - B. Tenderhearted *adj.* - Having a tender heart; easily moved by grief, pity, sorrow, or love; timid; pitiful, compassionate; loving; impressionable.
 - C. Forgive *v.* - 1. trans. To give, grant. *Obs.* 2. To give up, cease to harbour (resentment, wrath). Also, to give up one's resolve (to do something). *Obs.* 4. To give up resentment against, pardon (an offender).
 - D. Forgiveness is giving up resentment by definition.
4. If we have a genuine love for each other as brethren, we will not let bitterness and resentment build up against them in our hearts (**1Jo 4:11-12; Rom 13:8-10**).