

BITTER ROOTS BEAR POISON FRUITS

I. Hebrews 12:14-15

A. Hebrews 12:14-15 (ESV) was initially written to Jewish Christians who were experiencing trials and persecution with some considering abandonment of their faith:
*14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.
15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled...*

B. Deuteronomy 29:18 (NLT) is the passage the author of Hebrews is eluding to in our main text: *18 I am making this covenant with you so that no one among you--no man, woman, clan, or tribe--will turn away from the LORD our God to worship these gods of other nations, and so that no root among you bears bitter and poisonous fruit.*

C. Once upon a time I lived in Lexington, Kentucky. Some of us worked at a factory called Solar Suede. (A book could be written!) Every now and then we'd decide to clean out the lunchroom fridge. So we'd put on a little lunchtime show. We'd pull out and open those smelly discarded lunch bags, adding in our humorous commentary, bag after bag. The abandoned fare might include: a tunafish sandwich where the white bread was now turquoise; cottage cheese or yogurt with various colored patterns of growth; black bananas and shriveled up oranges oozing goo. There'd sometimes be mystery items as well. The odors were beyond putrid. But it was a lot fun...

D. *The Parable of the Solar Suede Fridge* isn't without meaning. All those lunches were made to be consumed. Nobody packed them with spoiled food. But each one, once abandoned to the back of the fridge, went from past-expiration, to rancid; to moldy, to rotten, to nasty and gross. The road to bitterness is strikingly similar...

E. A person gets hurt or offended or slighted. The act may've been deliberate or unintentional. It may've been an offense that was perceived but not actual. The person becomes angry. Maybe even towards God. But they do nothing. The hurt festers, the wound deepens, hurt morphs into resentment. But still they harbor it. They smile but seethe. Rage smolders beneath the surface. Resentment decomposes into bitterness. Bitterness spreads like gangrene--infecting their emotions, thinking, speech, and actions. Vengeance usurps forgiveness. Then the devil slithers in and makes his nest. Sadly, those poisoned with the contagion of bitterness are in very grave danger...

F. Caustic reactions become normal. Victims may darkly fantasize getting even: "You made me stub my toe; I'm gonna break your leg!" "You blew leaves in my yard; I'm gonna torch your house!" "You slighted me more than once; I'll show you disdain forever!" Eventually 30 pieces of silver looks enticing! When resentment lingers past the expiration date, bitterness takes root. Paul prescribes preventative medicine in Ephesians 4:25-27 (ESV) *25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. (So what's the expiration date for anger? Sundown!)*

G. Jesus knew the potential for resentment and bitterness taking root. His disciples had long exhibited their rivalries. Their claws came out often. James & John even had their Mom lobby Jesus for positions on His right and left. Therefore, at the Last Supper, the eve of His sacrifice, and right after Judas Iscariot left the room, Jesus addressed the issue. John 13:34-35 (ESV) isn't merely a nice suggestion: **34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35* *By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*"**

H. Let me ask: Can bitter mix with sweet? Can you love God but hate His children? Can you love Christ but hate His bride? Will people know we're His disciples without loving one another? If we're snarky and sarcastic, dismissive and cynical, uppity and condescending, will they know we belong to our loving Savior? If we think more highly of ourselves than what we ought or think more lowly of others than what we ought, will the world see we belong to Jesus? The fruits of bitter roots are poisonous. They can be deadly. Can a bitter soul even bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit--love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control? I dare say no!

I. So what if we discover (i.e. God graciously reveals) that our short fuses, our vitriol, are jealousies are rooted in unresolved resentment and bitterness? What do we do? Just let it go? Hope it goes away? Drown it in alcohol? Feed it with gossip? Vent our hostilities with rants on social media? Or do we cry out to God for repentance?! The late Adrian Rogers put it thusly with regards to bitterness: "*Let God reveal it; let grace remove it; and let good replace it!*" May God help us!

J. 1 John 1:5-9 (ESV) **is the Gospel solution: 5** *This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. 6* *If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7* *But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8* *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9* *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (He will forgive us and He will cleanse us!)*

K. If there was ever a time the world around us needed to see Christ, experience His love, and see His people loving one another, that time is now! We are stewards of our Lord's reputation. We dare not drag it through the muck & mire of worldliness, carnality, bitterness, wrath, and malice. Lift your vision higher! Let your heart go deeper! Humble your spirits! Ephesians 4:30-32 (AMP) takes us home: **30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [but seek to please Him], by whom you were sealed and marked [branded as God's own] for the day of redemption [the final deliverance from the consequences of sin]. 31* *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor [perpetual animosity, resentment, strife, fault-finding] and slander be put away from you, along with every kind of malice [all spitefulness, verbal abuse, malevolence]. 32* *Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave you.***

*** Close with Prayer...**

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

Hebrews 12:14-15 (ESV)

14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. **15** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled...

Deuteronomy 29:18-21 (NLT)

18 I am making this covenant with you so that no one among you--no man, woman, clan, or tribe--will turn away from the LORD our God to worship these gods of other nations, and so that no root among you bears bitter and poisonous fruit. **19** Those who hear the warnings of this curse should not congratulate themselves, thinking, ‘I am safe, even though I am following the desires of my own stubborn heart.’ This would lead to utter ruin! **20** The LORD will never pardon such people. Instead His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them, and the LORD will erase their names from under heaven. **21** The LORD will separate them from all the tribes of Israel, to pour out on them all the curses of the covenant recorded in this Book of Instruction.

Ephesians 4:25-27 (ESV)

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil.

John 13:34-35 (ESV)

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **35** By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 John 1:5-9 (ESV)

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Ephesians 4:30-32 (AMP)

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [but seek to please Him], by whom you were sealed and marked [branded as God’s own] for the day of redemption [the final deliverance from the consequences of sin]. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor [perpetual animosity, resentment, strife, fault-finding] and slander be put away from you, along with every kind of malice [all spitefulness, verbal abuse, malevolence]. **32** Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave you.

[Video Clips & Important Articles](#)

How to Be Free From Bitterness - Jim Wilson

<http://storage.cloversites.com/gracecovenantpresbyterianchurch2/documents/Bitterness%20Article.pdf>

How to Battle Bitterness - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nr1S19Jp-40>

The Root of Bitterness - The Late Adrian Rogers (Full Sermon)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfu_sJF5kEY

"Forgiveness" - Matthew West

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1Lu5udXEZI>

"Forgiven" - David Crowder

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_ZWEO36jok

"Forgiveness" - Toby Mac & Lecrae

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfkhqpl81NA>

"Love One Another" - Matt Doeland

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQNpWSc2C4w>

Millersport's Emma DiYanni is a Bright Light for Her Community - Tom Wilson

<https://www.lancastereaglegazette.com/story/sports/high-school/2020/11/14/millersports-emma-diyanni-bright-light-her-community/6262725002/>

[Bonus Stuff](#)

[Matthew 5:21-22 \(AMP\)](#)

21 You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not murder,' and 'Whoever murders shall be guilty before the court.' **22** But I say to you that everyone who continues to be angry with his brother or harbors malice against him shall be guilty before the court; and whoever speaks [contemptuously and insultingly] to his brother, 'Raca (You empty-headed idiot)!' shall be guilty before the supreme court (Sanhedrin); and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of the fiery hell.

[John 15:9-17 \(ESV\)](#)

9 As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. **10** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. **12** This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I

command you. **15** No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. **17** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

The Facts of Love in 1 John

The NKJV Study Bible

In five short chapters, John uses different forms of the word love 46 times. He wanted to teach his readers the importance of love in the Christian walk.

Principle

- * Keeping God's Word is the proof that we love God.
- * When we love our brother, we will live without stumbling.
- * We are not to love the world or the things in the world.
- * We cannot love the world and love God also.
- * God's love prompted Him to make us His children through the death of His Son.
- * Loving other believers is a fundamental requirement of the Christian life.
- * A failure to love other Christians raises serious questions about the genuineness of our faith.
- * Genuine love always results in action--not merely sentimental words.
- * God is the source of all love.
- * Mature love does not produce fear but instead imparts courage.
- * Long before we loved God, He loved us first.

Passage

2:5; 5:2, 3
2:10
2:15
2:15
3:1, 16; 4:9-11
3:11, 16, 23; 4:7, 11, 12
3:10, 14; 4:8, 20
3:17, 18
4:7, 16
4:17, 18
4:19

- Theological note on First John, *The NKJV Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson, p. 2009.

1 John 3:10-24 (ESV)

10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. **11** For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. **12** We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. **13** Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. **14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. **16** By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. **19** By this we shall know that we are of

the truth and reassure our heart before Him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him. **23** And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Romans 12:9-13 (AMP)

9 Love is to be sincere and active [the real thing—without guile and hypocrisy]. Hate what is evil [detest all ungodliness, do not tolerate wickedness]; hold on tightly to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another with [authentic] brotherly affection [as members of one family], give preference to one another in honor; **11** never lagging behind in diligence; aglow in the Spirit, enthusiastically serving the Lord; **12** constantly rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast and patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength], **13** contributing to the needs of God's people, pursuing [the practice of] hospitality.

Romans 13:8-10 (ESV)

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9** For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Colossians 3:12-17 (NIV)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. **15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Peter 4:8-10 (NIV)

8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. **9** Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10** Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Proverbs 15:17 (AMP)

17 Better is a dinner of vegetables and herbs where love is present than a fattened ox served with hatred.

Quote by John C. Broger

"Anger and bitterness are two noticeable signs of being focused on self and not trusting God's sovereignty in your life. When you believe that God causes all things to work together for good to those who belong to Him and love Him, you can respond to trials with joy instead of anger or bitterness."

Quote by Lou Priolo

"The Scripture likens bitterness to a root (Heb. 12:15). Roots have to be planted. So, what's the seed that sprouts into a root of bitterness when planted? It's a hurt. When someone hurts you it's as if a seed has been dropped onto the soil of your heart. You can choose to respond in two ways: You can either reach down and pluck up the seed by forgiving your offender, or you can begin to cultivate the seed by reviewing the hurt over and over again in your mind. Bitterness is the result of dwelling too long on a hurt; it's the result of not truly forgiving the offender (Mt. 18:34-35)."

Quote by Lee Strobel

"Acrid bitterness inevitably seeps into the lives of people who harbor grudges and suppress anger, and bitterness is always a poison. It keeps your pain alive instead of letting you deal with it and get beyond it. Bitterness sentences you to relive the hurt over and over."

Quote by Watchman Nee

"Frequently the enemy entices Christians to harbor an unforgiving spirit - a very common symptom indeed among God's children. Such bitterness and fault-finding and enmity inflict a severe blow upon spiritual life."

Quote by Kay Arthur

"In any trial, in any bitter situation, you are not alone, you are not helpless, you are not a victim. You have a tree, a cross, shown to you by the Sovereign God of Calvary. Whatever the trial or temptation, it is not more than you can bear. It is bearable. It can be handled. You can know as Joseph knew, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Genesis 50:20)."

Quote by Tim Keller

"The Cross is not simply a lovely example of sacrificial love. Throwing your life away needlessly is not admirable — it is wrong. Jesus' death was only a good example if it was more than an example, if it was something absolutely necessary to rescue us. And it was. Why did Jesus have to die in order to forgive us? There was a debt to be paid — God Himself paid it. There was a penalty to be born — God Himself bore it. Forgiveness is always a form of costly suffering."

Quote by Woodrow Kroll

"When the root is bitterness, imagine what the fruit might be."

Quote by Jerry Bridges

"Uncontrolled temper is soon dissipated on others. Resentment, bitterness, and self-pity build up inside our hearts and eat away at our spiritual lives like a slowly spreading cancer."

Quote by John MacArthur

"Forgiveness breaks the bitter chains of pride, self-pity and vengeance that lead to despair, alienation, broken relationships and loss of joy."

Quote by Lee Strobel

"The medical evidence is clear and mounting. It's no exaggeration to say that bitterness is a dangerous drug in any dosage and that your very health is at risk if you stubbornly persist in being unforgiving."

Love Gives

By John Oxenham

Love ever gives.
Forgives, outlives,
And ever stands
With open hands.
And while it lives,
It gives,
For this is love's prerogative—
To give, and give, and give.

- William Arthur Dunkerley, English journalist, novelist, and poet authored his poetry under the name, John Oxenham