

Bitterness, Grudges, Forbearance, Forgiveness

- A. We are to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called*. **EPH 4:1.**
1. We are *called to be saints (ROM 1:7)*, i.e., sanctified in thought, word and deed: separated from the way of the natural man and the world. **ROM 12:2.**
 2. Transforming grace was needed to fit us for this calling. **TIT 3:1-5.**
 3. The way we live in this world, and especially the way we deal with one another in Christ, should be a positive testimony to all. **JOH 13:34-35.**
- B. Believers are warned to be on guard against *any root of bitterness*. **HEB 12:15.**
1. **bitterness**: 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.
 2. This requires DILIGENT looking, whether that be through self-examination or through watching out for this danger in others that they might be converted. **JAM 5:19-20.**
 3. The phrase, “springing up” denotes germination and growth. This is an issue which is best handled by pre-emergent treatment (preaching, warning, repentance) lest it break through the surface, grow and cause trouble.
 4. If it does manifest itself and cause trouble, MANY will be affected by it.
 - a. Unchecked heresy in the church will spread and overthrow the faith of SOME. **2TI 2:17-18.**
 - b. Unchecked bitterness will spread and defile MANY.
 5. Consider the following about bitterness.
 - a. One can be in bitterness about one’s fortune, failings, perceived failings, etc.
 - b. Naomi and Hannah were overwhelmed with bitterness about their conditions. **RUTH 1:20; 1SAM 1:10.**
 - c. Hezekiah under oppression was in bitterness of soul but the reality of God’s mercy undergirded him. **ISA 38:15-17.**
 - (1) Beware of unchecked bitterness about personal failings and their fallout.
 - (2) Reject the devil’s lie that you are defined by your failings. You are defined by *Christ in you (COL 1:27)*, more than the darkness and the light were collectively called “day” in **GEN 1:5**. Note **1JO 4:4**.
 6. One can be bitter against or about others.
 - a. Husbands are expressly warned to *not be bitter against their wives*. **COL 3:19.**
 - b. The Greek word from which “bitterness” in **HEB 12:15** is translated is *pikria*, which Strong’s Dictionary defines as “acridity (especially poison), literally or figuratively.”
 - (1) **DEU 32:32-33** shows a connection between “bitter” and “poison.”
 - (2) Mind how the bitterness that Paul’s enemies had towards him defiled others by poisoning their minds. **ACT 14:2; GAL 4:15-17; ACT 15:24.**
 7. The greatest danger is when one is bitter against God. **MAL 3:13-14.**
 - a. This is a terrible condition in which one perceives his best Friend to be his enemy, his selfless Savior to be a selfish taskmaster, his Giver to be a withholder, his Just Judge as a capricious tyrant, his soul’s Lover to be his tormentor.
 - b. The irony is that God is none of these negatives. It is our deceived analysis of circumstances that paints Him so blackly.
 - c. Bitterness against God can easily manifest in bitterness against others who you perceive to be unfairly blessed by God. **JAM 3:14-16.**
 - d. **HEB 12:15** places “fail of the grace of God” before “any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.” Bitterness towards brethren is likely to develop in those

who have de-prioritized the salvation and power of grace. **2PE 1:7-9.**

- C. Another dangerous force among brethren is *grudging*.
1. **grudging**: The action of the verb grudge: †**a.** Murmuring, grumbling, complaint. **b.** Reluctant or unwilling action. **c.** The cherishing of ill-will, resentment, or envy.
 2. **LEV 19:18** plainly forbids bearing a grudge against brethren and contrasts that with the royal law. You are not fulfilling the royal law if you are holding a grudge against a brother.
 3. Do not underestimate your Judge's opinion on this. **JAM 5:9.**
 4. We are commanded to "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (**1PE 4:9**).
 - a. This is a two-pronged command that doesn't stop at "Use hospitality."
 - b. If you can't entertain (give reception to) brethren in your home and at your table, how can you sit with them at the Lord's table in His house?
 - c. If conflicts strain our relationships as brethren, there are superior godly ways to handle them rather than bearing a grudge.
 - d. "If our brother has done us an injury, we must not return it upon him, that is avenging; we must not upon every occasion upbraid him with it, that is bearing a grudge; but we must both forgive it and forget it, for thus we are forgiven of God. It is a most ill-natured thing, and the bane of friendship, to retain the resentment of affronts and injuries, and to let that *sword devour for ever*." (Matthew Henry)
- D. Contrary to bitterness and grudging, our Lord gives us His way of brotherly interaction which fits situations where someone has been offended.
1. When a brother does something that we deem to be an offense against us, we should first consider the weight of the offense: was it a great threat or permanently injurious or was it something absorbable (**MAT 5:38-42**)? Beware of straining at gnats. **1CO 6:7.**
 2. We are supposed to be meekly "...forbearing one another in love..." (**EPH 4:1-3**).
 - a. **forbear**: To bear with, have patience with, put up with, tolerate. To abstain from injuring, punishing, or giving way to resentment against (a person or thing); to spare, show mercy or indulgence to.
 - b. It is our glory to pass over a transgression where possible. **PRO 19:11.**
 - c. Has someone said something that ruffled your feathers? Have you ever done that? **ECC 7:21.**
 3. If we deem an offense against us something that we are persuaded to pursue, Christ gives us a formula to follow. **MAT 18:15-17.**
 - a. This formula provides for justice and for mercy. At any point, the one who deems himself to have been offended can drop the matter. If it comes before the church for settlement, all parties must accept the judgment.
 - b. This formula does not authorize bitterness or grudging.
 - c. Christ further presses the necessity of forgiving a repentant brother multiple times. **LUK 17:3-4.**
 - d. Good-faith efforts of repentance and reconciliation should be honored lest we be deemed *implacable* (That cannot be appeased; irreconcilable; inexorable: of persons, feelings, etc.). **ROM 1:31; MAT 18:35.**
 - e. In lieu of an offender's repentance, there is even the higher option of undeserved forgiveness. **LUK 23:34.**
 4. Let us be thankful that Christ forgave us rather than hold every infraction against us, and live accordingly. **EPH 4:31-32.**