ROOT OF BITTERNESS

By

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The Root of Bitterness

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Authorized or King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

DEDICATION

TO MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS

AMONG THE NATIONS

PREFACE

This booklet is a transcription of a teaching series that I produced on cassette. The sermons were transcribed and reproduced in booklet form with minimal editing to maintain the integrity of the message and the spirit of the sermon itself. I hope that what the booklet lacks in literary excellence will be superseded by the anointing emanating from the words of its message.

The purpose of this booklet is not to impress the reader with a flowery array of literarily significant prose, but rather to challenge him with a message that I believe is critically relevant to this prophetic generation and to the coming time of revival that God is preparing for His church. I pray that God will touch your life as you read this booklet on the Root of Bitterness.

Dan Duke

PART I

There are all sorts of messages that we hear and read as we spend time studying the things of God. Some are silly messages, some are serious messages, and some are what I would call *surgical* messages. A surgical message is the type of word that somehow works on you on the inside. This message may well be that type. You be the judge. Listen carefully to what the Spirit of the Lord may be saying to you through this word.

Our opening text is found in Hebrews chapter 12, beginning with verse 13. *"And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."* I believe that a major emphasis of the Holy Spirit today is to bring healing to the church. This healing is in preparation for the greatest event the church has ever known, our catching away into His presence. The Bible says there's going to be a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. (Ephesians 5:27) What that says to us obviously is that there's a process in place, a process of preparation to prepare us for that great day when we're going to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever more.

There are some things that will occur in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, and we will be changed. (I Corinthians 15:52) But there are other things, vital and important things that take place as we work out our salvation daily, as the Bible says, with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12) So there's a work going on in the soul of man. Your salvation is three-fold. There's part of your salvation that's already accomplished. The spirit man has been saved, *past tense*, if you've

been born again. That's not something that takes place gradually nor is it the result of a process. When a person is born again, his spirit is redeemed, and that is a complete, perfect work in the realm of the spirit.

Then there's the aspect of your salvation that is *future tense*, the redemption and the glorification of your physical body. At that moment, you will be caught away and mortality will be replaced by immortality. You will be changed in the twinkling of an eye! At that moment, you put off the body of this flesh, and you put on a body like unto His glorious body. (Philippians 3:24) That's something we're looking forward to in the future.

But there's a process that's taking place *right now*. This is a daily process in the soulish realm of man. Speaking of the soulish realm, the Bible says you must be renewed. The reader should study carefully the following verses: II Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 4:23, Colossians 3:10, and Romans 12:2. You will be changed by the renewing of your mind. The point is there is a part of your salvation that is a daily work of grace. This daily work of God in your life is designed to change you into His image. That really describes where we are today. There are three things to consider: what's already happened, what's going to happen, and what's taking place right now. That is what this booklet is about. If you have a proper past experience (born again), and if you cooperate in the immediate process, then your future experience (the glorification of your body) is sure to be nothing less than wonderful!

Let's continue with Hebrews 12:14-15. *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently*

lest any fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." The word used for "trouble" is an interesting one. It comes from the Greek word, *enochleo,* from which we derive the English word, inoculate. You know what inoculation does. It gives you just enough of something for your body to build an immunity. So the writer of Hebrews says, "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you or inoculate you." Another meaning of the word is to crowd you out. The picture is that of a plant that's been crowded out by undergrowth and weeds. So the writer says *"looking diligently lest any fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."*

What I'd like to point out in this message is the idea of a root of bitterness. Bitterness is dangerous because of its potential to defile you, insulate you from spiritual things, and crowd you out of your place in God. It defiles not only the person that has the root of bitterness, but it defiles those that it comes in contact with. In the natural world, you understand the importance of a root system of a plant. The root system is what receives the nutrients from the ground and feeds the plant. The portion above ground is fed of the nutrients that the root structure provides for it. The plant then gives the manifestation of whatever it's being fed. So it's important that we are aware of this important principle. It's important that we realize the defiling effect of a root of bitterness feeding its nutrients into us. Bitterness comes to people in everyday life as a result of hurts, pains, and betrayals that we all encounter and go through. However, the Lord wants to deliver us from

any existing root of bitterness. He desires to remove the religious inoculation and crowding out of our spiritual lives. As the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 12 verse 13*, "rather let it be healed*."

Let me show you the principle here as we see it in the scripture. We will examine two places. The Bible says in II Corinthians 13:1, "*In the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established.*" Just for your reference, Isaiah 37:31 reads, *"And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward."* I bring that out merely to illustrate Biblically the principle that what you're rooted in is going to affect the upward bearing of fruit in your life. If you're rooted in grace, mercy, and purity, then that's what's going to be manifest. On the contrary, if there is a root of bitterness working in your life, then your life is going to manifest that bitterness. Obviously, the objective of this booklet is to bring you to a place of recognition, and hopefully, help. Many things occur in life that affect us adversely. So many dreams have gone sour. So many relationships go a different way. So many promises are made to us that are never fulfilled. So many things happen. So many expectations and needs go unmet, and people are affected by it. It affects their lives and affects the fruitfulness of their lives.

PART II

The antidote for a root of bitterness is found in Galatians 5:14-15. *"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."* Ephesians 4:27 says, *"Neither give place to the devil."* There are many folks that have incessant problems with the devil. There are some that spend their whole life at war with the devil. It seems that to some, "Their devil is bigger than their God."

I would like for you to consider something. Satan has no place except a place that he's given. That's true because Jesus utterly defeated him. What he must do now to gain access to your life is somehow coerce you into giving him a place. Not everyone would agree, but I believe that. I believe the devil is defeated. I also believe that the more place Jesus has in your life, the less place the devil has.

If the devil could kill you, he would. If he could steal all of your money, he would because he's a thief. So obviously somewhere there's some restraint and some restriction on him, thank God. It does seem obvious, however, that Satan's restraint varies some from person to person. That seems obvious, doesn't it? One area where he gains a foothold is through exactly what we're discussing right now, a root of bitterness. If that bitterness springs up in you, instead of feeding you the life and blessing of God, it feeds you bitterness, resentment, rejection, hurt, pains, and the list goes on.

In response to these things, the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:27-30, *"Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good,*

that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." As a root of bitterness is given a voice to speak corrupt communication, it grieves the Holy Spirit. Friends, you will agree with me when I say if there is one person that we ought not to grieve, it's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one sent to lead us and guide us into all truth. Maybe you still think you can find your way through all this by yourself and you don't need a guide. Fine for you, but if you don't need Him, send Him my way. I need help!

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." How many of you are repenting already? Proverbs 21:23 says, *"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."* "But he that openeth wide his mouth will have plenty of trouble," and all the house of God said, "Amen!"

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Verses 31-32, *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* We have all heard messages on forgiveness, so let me not elaborate on it. However, just to help you remember, if you've been offended, wronged, taken advantage of, or hurt, the Bible says to forgive. You and I know that's easier to say than to do, but let me remind you that Jesus said offenses

would come. (Matthew 18:7) To forgive someone doesn't mean that what they did to you is okay. It does not mean it doesn't really matter, because it does matter. It doesn't mean it's okay, because it's not okay. To forgive them means to release them. It doesn't justify or excuse what they've done. Forgiveness doesn't say it's okay that they did it because they did it to you. Actually it has very little to do with you. It has everything to do with a principle established by God which says if you will release them from any personal obligation to you, God says, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay," saith the Lord. In other words, "If you'll take your hands off of them, I'll take care of them."

PART III

"Lest any root of bitterness springing up defile you." An angry, bitter spirit gives place to the devil. How can one know when there's a root of bitterness? That's a good question. The Bible gives us the answer in Proverbs 14:10. *"The heart knoweth his own bitterness."* Your

heart knows. To those that may have been diagnosed with a root of bitterness, a surgery is in order. You require the surgery of the Holy Spirit. Really, it requires a miracle. Jesus wants you free to worship Him, free to praise Him, free to hear His voice, free to love and forgive. Unless you are free in your soul, you cannot respond properly to Jesus or anyone else.

Sometimes things seem more complicated than they are. The Bible says that faith works by love. (Galatians 5:6) Everything that God is doing in you is by faith. Everything you receive from God is by faith, because He loves you. Every bit of growth that's ever going to take place in your life is by faith. All progress in your Christian life is by faith. All promotion is by faith, and faith works by love. On top of that, the Bible says, *"love never fails."* (I Corinthians 13:8) It's the one fail-safe attitude in which to posture oneself. Walk in love.

It's not always simple to walk in love. We are barraged and constantly given opportunities to respond in another way. God knows those situations are real. The world is, generally speaking, not a friendly place, but God is training overcomers. The overcomers are the ones who inherit the kingdom. An overcomer is one who has learned proper principles of response such as are revealed in this booklet. Overcomers know that offenses, hurts, wounds, lies, challenges, betrayals, and broken promises are real, and they know how to deal with them. Sometimes however, before you know it, you are responding to a hurt and a root of bitterness in your life that seems justified because of what someone did. But a real overcomer is one who

wants the root severed. An overcomer wants the root of bitterness killed and replaced so he's *"like a tree planted by the rivers of water whose leaf fails not, who brings forth his fruit in its season and doesn't even know when the drought comes."* (Jeremiah 17:8) When someone comes to tell you how bad things are, you can respond, "Is that right? I didn't know things were so bad. I thought they were pretty good." In other words, you're free. Your root is deep in the river of life, drinking deeply of the goodness of God.

PART IV

"Lest any be defiled by a root of bitterness springing up." How do you know when it's sprung up? One way you know is by the corrupt communication that comes out of your mouth. You will learn a lot about yourself by paying attention to what you say. The Bible says that a disciplined tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue is a breech in

the spirit. (Proverbs 15:4) So when corrupt communication begins to flow, put a stop to it immediately! When corrupt communication begins to flow between husbands and wives, stop it immediately! The Bible tells us, "Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them." (Colossians 3:19) When corrupt communication, a bad attitude, or criticalness begins to flow, stop it in its tracks. That kind of communication not only defiles you, it defiles those who hear it. The Bible says in Proverbs 15:4, *"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."*

The way to approach this issue in ourselves or others is to recognize a need for healing. Let's not approach this in a condemning or critical way, but look at it as a need for healing. There may be some reading this booklet, and probably are, that realize you're struggling with this very thing. You're being nurtured by a root of bitterness. So what are you going to do about it? I suggest you go to God's operating room and submit yourself to divine surgery. The Holy Spirit can take His scalpel, sever the root, and heal your soul. He will give you a new root, a tap root right into His manifest presence. He will feed you with His very presence and nurture you by His very life. Do you want that? I know you do. It's not impossible. You can do it. You can forgive. You can release those who have hurt you. You can be free.

PART V

This may not be an easy thing to respond to, and I'm conscious of that, so I'm appealing to you in a sympathetic and compassionate way. However, you simply cannot continue to entertain that which will ultimately starve or destroy you. Where I'm going with this is obvious. I want an opportunity to pray for you in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is nothing to play with, it's nothing to justify, and it's nothing to excuse by saying, "Well, you don't know what's happened to me." That's true, I don't, but I know what *will* happen unless that root is

severed and removed. I also know what will happen with just a little bit of adjustment and just a little bit of outpatient Holy Spirit surgery to your heart. He won't even hospitalize you. If you really want help, you're going to get help.

I'm telling you right now in Jesus' name, you're going to get help. You're going to be touched. This is real. This is from God. This is as serious as any surgery taking place in any hospital in the world. It's just that serious, and it's just that real. This is not hype or sensationalism. Jesus is going to remove a root that has been troubling you so long. He's going to remove it, and you're going to be healed. Your life is going to be different. What you couldn't do up to now, you're going to do today. What's tormented you is going to be removed. I'm telling you in Jesus' name. We all need to realize and accept the reality of spiritual things.

If you had a growth or a tumor and you went to a doctor to ask him if he could remove it and he said, "I can remove it," you would believe that. It would be, in many cases, a simple procedure. Well I'm telling you "Dr. Jesus" can remove an awful root of bitterness from your life. To Him it's easy. Let's pray.

Father, I'm praying for those, my brothers and sisters that are holding this book in their hands right now. Lord, I don't know them, but You do. You know everything they've experienced—every pain, hurt, and need. I'm praying for them right now. Lord, my heart is breaking for them as I pray. I know Your heart is weeping for them too. I know, Lord, that more than anything else, You want to touch them and heal them.

Perhaps they've been betrayed, abused, or forsaken. It could be that they have been wounded by a loved one or hurt by the church or a minister. Maybe they placed their trust or confidence in someone who left them. Lord, I know that awful things can happen to good, honest people. Lord, help them. Let it break right now!

Lord, it takes confidence and courage to be healed. It requires humility, risk, and sometimes, desperation. Lord, I ask You for Your provision of grace upon every person holding this booklet right now. I ask You to help them open their hearts and release to you whatever it is that has affected them. Amen.

Now my friend, it's time to be well. It's time to get on with your life. The best years are still before you.

You are loved!