

BITTER ROOT

“See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” (Heb 12:15)

Everybody knows what a root is. It is a source of life and nourishment. Not only so, it also determines the nature of the plant that grows from it. So, if the root is holy, so also the branches (Rom. 11:16).

The Scriptures encourage us not to miss the grace of God, and warn us to avoid a bitter root that grows up, causes trouble, and defiles many. Obviously, we have control some control over our minds and hearts. If we allow a root of bitterness to be in our heart, we can logically expect that root to grow and produce more bitterness. More bitterness, as you know, will cause trouble and defilement.

Our English word “resent” comes from a compound of two Latin words: “re” and “sentire”. “Re” means “again”, and “sentire” means “to feel”. Resentment means to “feel again”. When our emotional wounds are starting to heal, resentment picks off the scab and causes us to “feel again” the hurtful things that wounded us in the first place. If there is a bitter root within us, resentment will water that root and help it to grow.

Obviously, the bitter root does more damage to the person who has it than to anyone else. Let us suppose, for example, that someone insults you with hateful words. Jude said that some abusive speakers are like “unreasoning animals” (v. 10). Their calloused hearts are immune to feeling. If you allow those evil words to fester in your mind, they can produce a bitter root. You do not, however, have to let those hateful words take root in your heart. You do not have to allow bitter roots to grow.

Please prayerfully consider this poem, written by Edie (Bowers) Moore when she was only 12 years old.

The heart is a garden when thought flowers grow.
The thoughts that you think are the thoughts that you sow.
Every kind loving thought bears a kind loving deed.
While the thought that is selfish is just like a weed.

We must watch what we think of each minute of the day,
And pull out the weed thoughts and throw them away.
And plant loving seed thoughts so thick in a row,
That there won't be room for the weed thoughts to grow.

When the Hebrew people came to Marah, the water was so bitter that they could not drink it. Then God showed Moses a special piece of wood that turned the waters sweet (Ex. 15:25). Sweet water helps take away a bitter taste. So Jesus, the Water of Life, can replace bitterness with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The waters of Marah are symbolic of what God can do with any root of bitterness. The Egyptians, for example, made a deliberate decision to make life bitter for the Hebrews (Ex. 1:14). They oppressed them with forced labor and worked them ruthlessly. When the Hebrews multiplied the Egyptians decided to kill all the little boys who were born. One can well imagine the bitter memories that every Hebrew had of these horrible days of slavery. Apparently God did not want them to totally forget what happened in Egypt for He ordained Passover Feast as an annual reminder of what happened. “Bitter herbs” were a part of that feast (Ex. 12:8). These herbs were not to make the Hebrews bitter, quite to the contrary. They were to indelibly impress on every mind the dramatic difference between slavery and freedom.

The Scriptures teach that Christ is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), and we are specifically commanded not to keep this feast with malice and wickedness. You can do it! You can see to it that you do not miss the grace of God because of a bitter root growing in your heart! Now do it!