

LOVE VERSUS BITTERNESS

by Jeff Rath 7-98

Have you ever wondered why God chose the dove to represent the Holy Spirit?

John 1:32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

God chose the dove because it has no gall bladder; gall is a very bitter fluid, and God wanted to make the point that there is no bitterness in Holy Spirit. Bitterness is part of the human experience. Sooner or later something will happen in life that will cause bitterness. God does not send this bitterness; He does not test us with bitterness.

1 John 1:5b God is light, and in him is no darkness [evil, bitterness] at all.

God warns us about bitterness and what it can do to us.

Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled.

Looking diligently is translated “oversight” in I Peter 5:2.

1 Peter 5:2, 3 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [looking diligently] *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God’s* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

God needs people to rise up and look diligently and take the oversight over His people. God needs men and women to serve the Word of God to His people, not because they feel obligated or because they think it would be a way to make money, and definitely not if they are abusive and on some power trip and desire to be served instead of serving.

The word “fail” from Hebrews 12:15 is also translated as come short in Romans 3:23.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and come short [failed] of the Glory of God;

None of us are perfect; we have all failed and come up short, but God who is rich in grace sent His son Jesus Christ so that we need not fail and come up short of God’s love and get trapped into bitterness.

Acts 8:23 For I [Peter] perceive that thou [Simon the sorcerer] art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.

Simon the sorcerer was bitter because before Philip, John, and Peter came to Samaria, he had the people convinced that he himself was some great one. The Samaritans said “this man is the great power of God.” Then Simon wanted to buy a ministry from God so he could be a lord over God’s

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heritage and make a lot of money. Simon was used to being the front man for his own false spiritual system, but he saw that Philip, Peter, and John operated a greater power. He was bitterly jealous, so he wanted to buy the power of God so he could continue on his power trip and be a Christian power abuser instead of a black arts power abuser. God does not want or need leaders that set themselves up as “some great one,” or as “the great power of God.” God needs leaders who will walk in the love of God.

Ephesians 5:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

5:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.

Colossians 3:19 Husbands love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

We all get bitter at times, but God’s Word exhorts us to put away bitterness.

In Hebrews 12:15, the Greek word for “springing up” simply means a plant springing up out of the ground, but the Aramaic word for “springing up” means “to spring up and bring forth a flower.” Anyone who has ever fought dandelions in his lawn can understand this. If you have a nice lawn of green grass with one dandelion in it, the dandelion will flower and go to seed. Then with a slight breeze the seeds are spread all around; all you need is a little rain and the seeds will germinate, and the next thing you know is that you have many more dandelions. Your once beautiful green lawn is turned into a sea of yellow flowers. Then each dandelion will spread out its leaves and kill the grass around it by depriving it of light. When all of those flowers go to seed; you are left with a multitude of ugly stems instead of your nice green grass. Your lawn is defiled. The last thing mentioned in Hebrews 12:15 is “thereby many be defiled.” Defiled means to have a spot, or blemish, or stain. When we allow bitterness to remain in our minds, we become defiled; it spreads in our mind like weeds, and then it can spread to others around us.

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things *are* pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

1:16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, [disgusting and extremely hateful] and disobedient, [unwilling to be persuaded, refusing believing and obedience] and unto every good work reprobate. [void of sound judgment]

This is the end result of staying bitter for a long time. It takes time to heal from the hurts the world puts on us, but we can’t afford to stay hurt, or stay bitter.

Matthew 26:75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

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Peter had just witnessed Jesus being accused, beaten and mocked all night long, and he did not even have the courage to admit to anyone that he knew Jesus Christ or that he was one of Christ's followers. Peter was very hurt; he had supposed that Jesus Christ would be like King David in the Old Testament; he thought that Jesus Christ would be a political and military leader as well as a spiritual leader, but he had just seen a night of pure horror. All he could do was save his own skin, and lie about knowing Jesus Christ. In the next days he witnessed Jesus Christ beaten beyond recognition, then killed in a horrible manner. After being dead 72 hours, God raised His only begotten son from the dead. Jesus Christ appeared to the apostles many times; he even appeared to them when they were hiding behind locked doors. Peter knew that those who killed Jesus Christ could kill him as well. Jesus Christ had only forty days to work with Peter and his other followers while he was in his resurrected body; Jesus Christ had a short time to get Peter over his bitterness and ready to take on the responsibilities of leadership.

John 21:1a After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias;

John 21:3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

Peter saw Jesus Christ raised from the dead but he decided to give up the "ministry business" and go back to the fishing business. Jesus Christ was walking around in his resurrected body; Jesus Christ's resurrected body is different from our physical body; it has abilities beyond our bodies, but it is also similar to our bodies. For instance, he ate with them. He was the first person God raised from the dead. When Christ returns, **all** believers will be raised from the dead and get a spiritual body like his (I Corinthians 15:51-53). This new spiritual body will be incorruptible. In Luke 24:31, Jesus Christ vanished right from the dinner table after he spent the afternoon teaching the Word. In John 20:19, the disciples were behind closed doors and Jesus Christ came and stood in the midst; he got in without unlocking the doors. Yet even after seeing this and other miracles, Peter is still hurt, bitter, and fearful - so he goes fishing and he takes others with him.

They fished all night and caught nothing; then, as the sun was coming up, Jesus Christ was on the shore and he asked them if they caught anything. They answered "no." Jesus Christ told them to let down the net on the other side of the boat, and they caught so many fish that they could not pull the net in. Finally they figured out that the man on the shore was Jesus Christ, so they got their catch ashore, and made breakfast. This was the third time that he showed himself to his disciples since he had risen from the dead. After they finished their meal, Jesus Christ asked Peter, "do you love me more than these fish?" Peter told him, "you know that I do." Jesus Christ said, "then feed my lambs." The whole dialogue repeats two more times. This upsets Peter, but it was the loving reproof and confrontation that Peter needed to get him to continue in the "God business" and not the fishing business. Jesus Christ did not publicly humiliate Peter and tell him he should go figure things out on his own; instead, he lovingly constrained him to do the work of God's ministry instead of fishing. If Jesus Christ had not convinced Peter to put away his bitterness and walk in love, then Peter would have been saying "Fresh fish! Get your fresh fish

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here!” on the day of Pentecost, instead of “Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:” It wouldn’t have done God or God’s people much good to have Peter and the other apostles out fishing on the day of Pentecost. God needed, and still needs, leaders to proclaim what is available, and to teach people how to receive it. But those who do lead must be rooted in love, not bitterness.

Ephesians 3:16 That he [God] would grant [give] you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Matthew 12:34b for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

James 3:11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

We cannot be filled with all the fullness of God if we are rooted and grounded in bitterness. We must fill our hearts with the love of God and not bitterness so we can give love and not bitterness. If your heart is full of bitterness, then you will give out bitterness. You may be able to hide it for a while, but it will come out, and as Hebrews 12:15 says, many will be defiled. Do you want those who hear you to be blessed with love, or defiled from bitterness?

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“When you have real love [God’s love] you are not harsh; you are not bitter; you do not speak unkind words. There are no cruel insinuations; no needless, knifing, punchy sarcasms. There is no envy; there is no suspicion; there is no fear; no worry; no anxiety,”

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