

Weapons of Spiritual Warfare Bible Study Series
"Forgiveness: Unwrap the Bindings of Death" with Dr. Mary
Craig

Weapons of Spiritual Warfare

FORGIVENESS: Unwrap the Bindings of Death

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Words that wound fester and infect, spreading poison, pain designed to rot foundations. Bitterness is a root, manifesting in words and language, contorting and tormenting through unforgiveness. It manifests in attitudes, a paradigm refusing to be soothed, refusing healing, refusing to forget. The wound that brought the poison is real, the wrong horrible, the misery gripping to the grave, the issue demanding resolve.

Bitterness. The Greek root, *pic*, means "to cut, to prick." Something, some word, some action pricks or punctures, penetrating the soul with pungent acrimony and threatening life with its malignancy.

In Acts 8, a man named Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given. He offered money and requested that he be given this power so that he could lay hands on people and have them receive the Holy Ghost. Peter perceived, however, that Simon was "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity" for the thought of his heart. Peter said to Simon, **"Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God."**

Bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 says that a root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble, defiling many. It bears fruit if nurtured, watered, fed, and left unchecked. In Ephesians 4:31, 32, Paul said **"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."**

With bitterness, we carry someone else's sin inside of us. Bitterness keeps us bound. Bitterness holds us to the sins others have committed against us. Bitterness clings to us as we "fail of the grace of God." (Hebrews 12:15) Bitterness holds on to feelings, becoming resentment. Resentment simmers into desires for retaliation. Things heat up as anger turns into hatred, and hatred plots violence, and violence erupts in murder. Someone will pay the price. Justice will out.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave, He said to those around watching, **"Loose him and let him go." (John 11. 44)**

Appearing to Saul after His resurrection and ascension, Jesus said to him, "I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto you; delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." (Acts 26.16-18)

People were drawn to Jesus as He died, as He was lifted up. They rejected Him as He lived, but they will become His footstool as He reigns from the Throne of Grace. Their eyes will see Him whom they pierced. They will look into eyes of eternity, eyes full of light with no darkness at all, and they will wail within for their sin, their unbelief, their disrespect, the dishonor of the Anointed One, the Holy One of God.

Even demons tremble before Him. But man? Man corrupts himself, defiled with bitterness of soul. Being created in the image of God, we have within a sense of justice, some sense (though twisted and perverted) of right and wrong. We want to see justice done, sometimes more than we love mercy and desire to walk humbly with God. (Micah 6:8) Yet mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)

Bitterness is a root. It penetrates the heart, seeking to bear fruit in thoughts, words, and deeds. Nevertheless, Jesus is the Root and Offspring of David, a man after God's own heart. In the end it is Jesus' words that bring life, that are spirit and life. Jesus' words cleanse as His words of love draw out the poison of bitterness in our souls. For it is Jesus' words that will judge, as He, the Judge of what is living and what is dead, judges with righteousness and purity of heart.

Bitterness eats away, like a cancer. It festers within, producing toxins. The enemy knows that bitterness, guilt, and fear can be used of him to control us as we compromise the spiritual dynamics of God's truth. Our thoughts influence our body chemistry. Our bodies secrete chemicals in response to our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Satan prowls like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He stalks our souls, looking for a foothold, a way to hold us captive to do his will.

Jesus died to pay the penalty of sin. The wages of sin is death. Our sense of justice, fueled by Satan and twisted by his lies and perversions, tells us to seek vengeance. Someone must pay for this wrong, this abuse, this hurt, this dart of death. But **"vengeance is Mine," says the Lord. "I will repay."** (Romans 12)

We can't hang on to bitterness, to anger, to resentment, to hatred and also to the gospel of Jesus Christ at the same time. We are serving two masters, believing two "gospels." We deceive ourselves if we think we are not struggling with such issues.

We can oppose the principle of sin with the service and worship of God. We are to serve one another in love. We worship only after we come to God with thanksgiving for what He does and praise for who He is. We approach on the basis of the Blood of Christ, celebrating not only what Jesus has done for us, but what He will do in us. His words, taken in, ingested, are as medicine. He is a Balm in Gilead, healing in worship, as the worth and holiness of Christ soaks into our souls.

In anger, fear, and frustration, in self-serving, self-protection, concern for how others might judge us, we lash out to bite and devour one another. Yet the words of Christ restore. Jesus said in John 15 that we are made clean by the words which He speaks.

We bring our bitterness to God together with the Blood of Christ. We offer up the Body and the Blood of Christ, desiring to be healed, cleansed of the bitterness. Jesus the Root puts an ax to the root of bitterness, drawing to Himself the venom from the bite of the snake. He bore sin in His own body on the tree. On the cross He became sin (the sin offering) for us that we might die to sin and live for God. The grace of God has done this for us.

Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1, 2)

Evil things within defile. (Mark 7:20-23) We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1) As we are saved by grace, so also we walk in accord with the Spirit of Grace, the Holy Spirit. We are not to serve sin and give it mastery over us, but rather, the Living God. We serve what we worship. We worship what we ascribe worth to, what we value.

Bitterness is a sin that can lead to death, either in violence and murder of another out of hatred, or in violence and murder of self out of self-hatred. Cast off the works of darkness. Put off bitterness, anger, clamor, etc. They have no value. They are not worthy of worship and service. Forgive one another. Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:17-32.

(See also [Colossians 3:1-17](#))

Ephesians 4:17-32 BSB So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God because of the

ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts. Having lost all sense of shame, they have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity, with a craving for more.

But this is not the way you came to know Christ. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him—in keeping with the truth that is in Jesus—to put off your former way of life, your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one another. “Be angry, yet do not sin.” Do not let the sun set upon your anger, and do not give the devil a foothold.

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing good with his own hands, that he may have something to share with the one in need.

Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up the one in need and bringing grace to those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, outcry and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and tenderhearted to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.

Lazarus came out of the tomb clothed and bound in the bindings of death. Jesus brought him out, but He commanded others to **"Loose him and let him go."** How did Lazarus die? His sisters said to Jesus that if Jesus had been there, he wouldn't have died. Lazarus died. He was rotting with death. Yet raised, Jesus says to others, **"Loose him and let him go." (John 11)**

We are not called to bite and devour one another, to offer our members as instruments of destruction and death. We are called to life, to the giving of life. We are called to forgive. We are called to extend the grace, peace, and mercy of God to others. We are called to be sons and daughters of the Most High. We are called to the worship and service of the One true and living God, believing in Jesus and loving one another.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ did not mark the end of Jesus' life as He rested from His work of redemption. It marked the beginning of His reign and rule in the power of an endless life. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father as our great High Priest, our faithful High Priest, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

Many today pray for the healing of diseases, but when disease comes out of bitterness and unforgiveness, we need instruction. We need others to perceive, to approach us in our grave clothes and unwrap the bindings of death.

We are to go to one another in love to remove the curse of death from our lives, to comfort and console, to bring the gospel of grace, the message of the Body and Blood of Christ, that we might encourage one another to confess our bonds of iniquity, our common humanity, the out-workings of our fallen nature. As we minister grace to others, we find others ministering to us.

As Paul carried the light of the gospel, he wrote, "**Brethren, if someone be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**" (Galatians 6:1, 2)

"**And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will.**" (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." (Luke 11.4)

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Study Questions

See answers [here](#)

Question 1: What is bitterness? What was Simon doing? What did Peter say to Simon in Acts 8? Consider in your answer "thought," "words," and "deeds/actions."

Question 2. Hebrews 12:15 says that a root of bitterness springs up to cause trouble, defiling many. To minister to others effectively, we need to "stay clean" before the Lord. What does that even mean? How do we get "clean" and stay "clean".

Look up John 15:3; John 17:17; Romans 6:19; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 5:26; James 4:8ff; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:10; 2 Timothy 2:20-22; 1 John 1:7, 9; Jude 19, 20; Revelation 22:1.

Consider in your answer confession of sin, faith, and repentance.

Question 3: Read Ephesians 4:17-32, Ephesians chapter two, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Corinthians 13.

What condition were we in when Christ forgave us our sins?

Read 1 Peter 5:6; Proverbs 15:22; Philippians 2:5-8. How does pride inhibit forgiveness? Our relationship with the Father?

Question 4: What do we learn from Lazarus being raised from the dead and about loosing the bonds of shame? (John 11: 38-44)

Question 5: Review Ephesians 4:17-32. If we are not called to bite and devour one another, to offer our members as instruments of destruction and death, to what are we called? 2 Corinthians 7:1; Galatians 6: 1,2; 2 Timothy 2:14-26.

Question 6: It is said that “bitterness is betrayal’s baby.” Discuss the role of betrayal behind the root of bitterness.

What was Jesus doing while Judas was in the process of betraying Him? See 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Identify two other times when Jesus was tempted by another’s words or actions we would deem a betrayal? How did Jesus respond?

Question 7: What might we do to overcome bitterness? What process would be helpful towards “forgiving from the heart” when we know we need to forgive? What does perception have to do with it?

Question 8: Discuss the benefits of forgiving as a weapon of spiritual warfare.

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Corinthians 1:30