

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14th

Freedom from Bitterness

Matthew 7:3-5 **And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! (hupokrites; "hoop-ok-ree-tace": literally – "an actor" or "stage performer" – taking on the role of someone other than yourself – "disingenuous") First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**

Bitterness and how to be free from it – this morning's message can change your life – if you'll listen with a posture that you might have a "nail of bitterness" in your forehead. **Some faults are so hidden that only God can expose them.**

Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Exodus 15:22-26 So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water (**in the desert – now water = big problem**). 23 Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah (**which means "bitter" in Hebrew**). 24 And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" 25 So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, 26 and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you." (**It's a story of bitter waters made sweet**)

Bitterness comes from an emotional wound. Living with an open emotional (or spiritual)

wound is just like living with a physical one. If you don't get it *treated*, **it can fester**.

Do you have any bitterness at all – in your heart - – against anyone? Dad? Mom? Brother? Sister? Neighbor? Co-worker? Someone here? Anyone at all?

If you have sickness in your heart against someone – you have power to make a decision this morning – *over* the sickness in your heart.

You can choose to forgive. You can bring grace into the situation – instead of judgement. You can be the sweet aroma or a stench. *Lord, may our presence make things smell better – in Jesus name.*

In Exodus 15 – this is a story about the people of Israel. They had been in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. They were beaten and abused – forced into slave labor. Their lives were very difficult. It had been that way for 400 years – as long as anyone could remember (*maybe you feel that way*).

Their lives were very difficult – *until* the Lord delivered them – because the Lord had made a

promise that He would deliver them out of Egypt – which He did with great power. He delivered them *out* from bondage – *into* the Promised land.

There story is our story. If you've been tormented up until now – Jesus will set you free – *if* you'll let Him. We are no longer slaves – but sons and daughters of the King of kings.

When the people of Israel were in Egypt – they lived like slaves and thought like slaves. When the Lord set them free – they were truly free people. But they had to learn to *think* like free people. They lived as slaves for so long – they still thought like slaves – they reacted like slaves – even though they had been set free.

This is like us – we live as slaves to sin – Jesus comes to set us free – but we still think and react like slaves.

They were bitter and by all accounts deserved to be. But the Lord wanted to reveal Himself not only as their Deliverer – but as their Healer.

If you're around someone long enough – you'll see how they think by what they do and what they say.

Let's look again at Israel – what they did – in Exodus 15:22 And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water (they were thirsty – wondering where their next provision would come from).

When all of this was over – after they complained about the bitter water – and the Lord made the water sweet and promised to protect them from disease; Exodus 15:27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

So the Lord has delivered them out of Egypt – out of slavery – then He makes provision for them by turning the bitter water into sweetness. And now a nice place to camp with twelve water wells and seventy palm trees. Their loving Father has provided for His children.

But until they saw it – they doubted His goodness. They found water – but it was bitter. Then they had no place to camp. But until He made the bitter waters sweet and provided a nice place to camp – they doubted and complained.

That's how our journey with God is – He always comes thru – but in the meantime – we doubt and complain. But He *is* faithful. He loves us and He always will.

Sometimes when we're focused on present circumstances – like the children of Israel in the text – it looks like the Lord has forgotten us. "I'm all alone.." "God has left me.." "We suffer – then we die..". The bitterness in their heart – came up. Four hundred years of slavery – showed itself in their hearts. We don't see life thru our eyes – we see life thru our heart. Whatever is in your heart – will influence the way you see life.

Israel: in bondage - pain and suffering – no hope. But now they've been set free. They have a loving Father to take care of their needs. But He doesn't just want to make provision – **He wants to heal them.** If they're going to possess the land – they need to change their thinking – stop thinking like a slave. Because a slave feels powerless.

When we go thru suffering and pain – we become resentful and then we become bitter – making all kinds of judgements: "it's hopeless",

“it’s no use..”, “why even try..”, “everyone is against me..”. When a person concludes they are powerless – they become angry – resentful – and ultimately become bitter people - **angry and bitter for what has happened to them.**

But when we’re set free by our King Jesus Christ – we have the power to choose. When life, people and circumstances get ugly – we have a choice as to how we respond. **How we respond to difficulty reveals what is in our hearts.** What comes out of our mouths reveals what is in our hearts.

Exodus 15:24 And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (Bad things had happened. They were angry – resentful and bitter – and they complained)

When people have bitterness in their heart – they are bitter because they feel powerless. When they were in Egypt – they were powerless – they had no choice - they were slaves. **But now they’re following the Lord – no longer slaves – they have power to choose.** They can choose God is faithful and true and loving – or they can choose God is against them. They can choose to

believe God is good and generous or they can choose God as mean and causing them to suffer.

When you crush an olive – olive oil comes out. When life crushes you – what comes out – bitterness or sweetness? **When faced with difficult circumstances or difficult people – your response reveals what’s in your heart.**

Matthew 7:17-18 **Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.**

The fruit of bitterness – is rooted in a heart focused on anger, resentment, mistreatment, judgement and unbelief. **If there is joy in your heart = joy on your countenance. If there is bitterness in your heart = bitterness on your countenance – it effects the whole body.** Here are some signs of bitterness: Complaining, Blaming, Lack of gratitude, Lose the ability to celebrate someone else’s victory, Angered easily

Bitterness poisons every fabric of your being. Acts 8:22-23 (Peter said) Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23

For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

Bitterness has the capacity to bring down everyone under your influence. Bitter individual = bitter person. Bitter leader = bitter is everyone under your influence. Hebrews 12:15 "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" ("Defiled": miaino "me-ah'-ee-no"; "contaminated" = your bitterness is contaminating everyone around you = serious business.)

If anyone had a right to be bitter – it was Jesus. But He chose to forgive. Jesus taught us how to handle injustice and betrayal. Luke 23:34 (from the cross – Jesus said) "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Let Jesus make your bitter waters sweet. If you choose to let it go – He will take it. Will you let it

go? Will you release your grip from their neck? Release them now. **"I release you – I forgive you. I am no longer a slave to bitterness. I no longer let anger rule my life. I no longer let hatred rule my life. From now on – I let Jesus rule my life. I'm a new person. From now on - I am a forgiving person. I'm a loving person, I am merciful, I give people the benefit of the doubt, I'm not a hater, I'm a lover - no matter what people do to me".** All bitterness: Go! In Jesus name.

If you've been bitter. Jesus forgives you. Forgive yourself. Let it go. You are loved. **Here are two ways to keep it away. #1** When the person comes to mind – pray the Lord invades their life and thinking with His love. **#2** Thank the Lord for three things every morning. You can thank Him for more – but at least three. Here are three to start: forgiveness, His Spirit, heaven

Bitterness is a choice. Sweetness is a choice. Be like chocolate my friend. **Choose sweetness.**