

Lesson 65 - The Character of Avoiding Bitterness

1. What body part is affected most by bitterness? **Proverbs 14:10, Jeremiah 4:18**

EGW: The blessing of God has rested upon us in a wonderful manner at this meeting; we believe that God has forgiven our sins, and we must never go back of this experience to take up the burden of our sins. The light of Heaven has shone upon us here, and our feelings may change, but this does not change God's love toward us. God wants us to make the best use of it by reflecting it upon others. That which has shut away the light from our souls in the past has been the spirit of criticism. Many have watched the course of others, and have condemned their actions instead of keeping their own hearts with all diligence. They have judged the motives of their brethren; but mortal man is not fitted to do this work. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. We all have hereditary and cultivated weaknesses, but we may obtain precious victories every day. When a man climbs upon the judgment-seat to judge his brother, he makes it manifest that Christ is not enthroned in his heart. The Spirit of God will go out of the soul that admits the spirit of criticism. {ST, April 1, 1889 par. 1}

There is so much misunderstanding in our world, and I so often hear the dark side presented. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." It would be well if we were more careful not to pour our sorrows into the hearts of others. {20MR 80.1}

2. What body part shows bitterness the most? **Romans 3:14**

EGW: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good; no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes." The eye of Him who sees the present condition of things has portrayed the state of things existing in the world and the church today. Psalms 14:1-4. And what has brought about this terrible condition?--It is the making void of the law of God. {ST, March 20, 1901 par. 3}

3. What does one lose when they are bitter? **Isaiah 38:17**

EGW: Dear brethren, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." [2 Corinthians 13:5.] Many

may respond, "Why, yes, I am in the faith; I believe every point of the truth." But do you practice what you believe? Are you at peace with God and with your brethren? Can you pray with sincerity, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"? [Matthew 6:12.] Or are you estranged from your brother, because you think he has injured you? Are there no heart-burnings among you? Is there no bitterness in your hearts, no envying, no jealousy, no evil surmising, no misjudging of your brethren? Is there no emulation, no desire for special favor or honors, no wish to have the supremacy? These feelings should not exist among Christians. {GW92 429.2}

4. What action leads to bitterness even if one does not sense they are bitter? **Jeremiah 2:19**

EGW: (no comment)

5. What do we need in the heart to get past our bitterness? **Acts 8:22-23**

EGW: When the thought of evil is loved and cherished, however secretly, said Jesus, it shows that sin still reigns in the heart. The soul is still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. He who finds pleasure in dwelling upon scenes of impurity, who indulges the evil thought, the lustful look, may behold in the open sin, with its burden of shame and heart-breaking grief, the true nature of the evil which he has hidden in the chambers of the soul. The season of temptation, under which, it may be, one falls into grievous sin, does not create the evil that is revealed, but only develops or makes manifest that which was hidden and latent in the heart. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he;" for out of the heart "are the issues of life." Proverbs 23:7; 4:23. {MB 60.1}

6. In a spiritual application where Egypt represents Satan and the children of Israel is us, what does Satan use to keep us from God and turn us to exercising bitterness? **Exodus 1:14, John 8:33-34, 2 Peter 2:19, Galatians 5:1**

EGW: The Scriptures are indeed fulfilled in this, that the blind are leading the blind. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. These deluded souls are under the most abject slavery to the will of demons. They have allied themselves to the powers of darkness and have no strength to go contrary to the will of demons. This is their boasted liberty. By Satan are they overcome and brought into bondage, and the great liberty promised to those they deceive is helpless slavery to sin and Satan. {RH, April 15, 1875 par. 6}

7. Who is an example of suffering bitterness of the soul? **1 Samuel 1:9-10**

EGW: Elkanah's love for his chosen companion was deep and unchanging; yet a cloud shadowed their domestic happiness. The home was not made joyful by the voice of childhood. At length the strong desire to perpetuate his name led the husband, as it had led many others, to adopt a course which God did not sanction--that of introducing into the family a second wife, to be subordinate to the first. This act was prompted by a lack of faith in God, and was attended with evil results. The peace of the hitherto united and harmonious family was broken. Upon Hannah the blow fell with crushing weight. All happiness seemed forever swept away from her life. She bore her trials uncomplainingly, yet her grief was none the less keen and bitter. {ST, October 27, 1881 par. 2}

8. What made Mordecai cry bitterly? **Esther 4:1, 3:9-10**

EGW: Through Haman the Agagite, an unscrupulous man high in authority in Medo-Persia, Satan worked at this time to counterwork the purposes of God. Haman cherished bitter malice against Mordecai, a Jew. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him worshipful reverence. Scorning to "lay hands on Mordecai alone," Haman plotted "to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." Esther 3:6. {PK 600.2}

9. When one is bitter in the soul, what can one long for? **Job 3:20-21**

EGW: (no comment)

10. When one is bitter what can a person end up doing? **James 3:14**

EGW: We are to be constantly seeking for precious pearls of truth. There must be a dying to the world. There must be no cowardice, no compromise. There must be an earnest seeking for the wisdom that is from above. The apostle asks, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is

confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." {RH, July 22, 1890 par. 19}

Brethren, God would work for us if he could do it safely; he wants to do great things for his people, but the strife of tongues has dishonored God, weakened the hands of his professed children, and brought dearth and feebleness into the church. Is it not time to arise, to open the heart to receive the rays of light that are shining forth from the living oracles? Is it not time that the love of God should be permitted to make its impress upon the soul, that Jesus may be glorified among those who claim to be his followers? {RH, July 22, 1890 par. 20}

11. What can be as a sword and as arrows when bitterness is involved? **Psalms 64:3**

EGW: "Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: that they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep. {RH, March 15, 1906 par. 1}

"But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory." {RH, March 15, 1906 par. 2}

This scripture will be literally fulfilled. Everything is to be shaken that can be shaken, that those things that can not be shaken may remain. I am amazed as I consider the past, present, and future of the people of God. The Lord will have a pure, holy people,--a people who will stand the test. Every believer needs now to search his heart as with a lighted candle. {RH, March 15, 1906 par. 3}

We may well ask the question asked by the lawyer, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ said unto him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The answer came, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." And Christ said, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." {RH, March 15, 1906 par. 4}

12. To avoid the result of bitterness from the spiritual strange woman, the harlot church, what instrument should we allow to be used to cut out the connection? **Psalms 64:3, Hebrews 4:12**

EGW: When our minds are controlled by the Spirit of God, we shall understand the lesson taught by the parable of the leaven. Those who open their hearts to receive the truth will realize that the word of God is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. "The entrance of thy words giveth light," the psalmist declares; "it giveth understanding unto the simple." And Christ prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." {RH, July 25, 1899 par. 5}

13. Who suffers bitterness when a child is foolish? **Proverbs 17:25**

EGW: You have thought so much of yourself, of your own smartness, that it has led you to such affectation and vanity as to make you almost a fool. You have a deceitful tongue, which has indulged in misrepresentation and falsehood. Oh, my dear girl, if you could only arouse, if your slumbering, deadened conscience could be awakened, and you could cherish a habitual impression of the presence of God, and keep yourself subject to the control of an enlightened, wakeful conscience, you would be happy yourself and a blessing to your parents, whose hearts you now wound. You could be an instrument of righteousness to your associates. You need a thorough conversion, and without it you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. {LYL 58.3}

14. Which spouse has to resist holding bitterness towards the other? **Colossians 3:19**

EGW: When husbands require the complete subjection of their wives, declaring that women have no voice or will in the family, but must render entire submission, they place their wives in a position contrary to the Scripture. In interpreting the Scripture in this way, they do violence to the design of the marriage institution. This interpretation is made simply that they may exercise arbitrary rule, which is not their prerogative. But we read on, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Why should the husband be bitter against his wife? If the husband has found her erring and full of faults, bitterness of spirit will not remedy the evil. [Colossians 3:12-16, quoted.] {13MR 75.1}

15. What approaching event may cause a person of God to cry bitterly as they see loved ones, friends, and church members not ready for it? **Zephaniah 1:14**

EGW: Reader, another storm is coming. The earth will again be swept by the desolating wrath of God; and again sin and sinners will be destroyed. Do you feel that it is an event of little importance? Read some of the utterances of the prophets in reference to the day of God: "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." "Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." {ST, November 27, 1884 par. 15}

But though this is a day of trouble and distress to the wicked, the righteous will be able to say, "Lo, this is our God;" "we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." The truth will be their shield and buckler. God will be their refuge, and under his wings shall they trust. Says the psalmist: "Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." {ST, November 27, 1884 par. 16}

16. Who was so proud yet turned to bitterly confessing his sin so quickly showing us to be careful to not follow such an example of pride, even spiritually? **Matthew 26:69-75**

EGW: When the crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ, surprised and shocked at what he had just done he turned and looked at his Master. At that moment Christ looked at Peter, and beneath that grieved look, in which compassion and love for him were blended, Peter understood himself. He went out and wept bitterly. That look of Christ's broke his heart. Peter had come to the turning point, and bitterly did he repent his sin. He was like the publican in his contrition and repentance, and like the publican he found mercy. The look of Christ assured him of pardon. {COL 152.3}

Now his self-confidence was gone. Never again were the old boastful assertions repeated. {COL 154.1}

17. What disposition would be swapped with bitterness? **Isaiah 5:20**

EGW: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Men may possess capabilities given them

in trust of God, but if they are not humble men, daily converted men, as vessels of honor, they will do the greater harm because of their capabilities. If they are not learners of Christ Jesus, if they do not pray and keep their natural hereditary and cultivated tendencies under control, traits of character that God abhors will pervert the judgment of those who associate with them. {1888 1301.2}

18. What are we to do with bitterness? **Ephesians 4:31**

EGW: Those who are chosen of God and found faithful will be heavenly-minded. Their affection will not be bound within four walls, will not be centered simply upon their own family; but they will impart to others the gracious influence that has been cherished in their own hearts and manifested in their lives. By studying and copying the life of Christ, they will constantly enlarge the circle of their interests, and their estimate of Jesus and his matchless love will be ever increased. Loving Christ, they will love those for whom Christ died. They will heed the injunction of the apostle, where he says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." {RH, July 18, 1893 par. 10}

19. What do we have to do towards others to get over our bitterness? **Ephesians 4:32**

EGW: How many there are who retain wrong habits because they think they cannot overcome them. They do not make determined efforts to overcome. They cherish their sins as if they were precious jewels. If they are reproved, they murmur against the one who is watching for their souls as he that must give an account. Some, when reproved, act disrespectfully toward the one who, in the fear of God, showed them that they were misrepresenting their Saviour. They need to learn the meaning of true conversion. Paul writes, "If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." {RH, June 11, 1901 par. 14}

20. Where do we need to kill bitterness at? **Hebrews 12:15**

EGW: "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." If you do not have the grace of God in your hearts, the root of bitterness will spring up in you, and many will be defiled. When you feel that some one has done you an injury, you say, "I will let him alone, and have nothing more to do with him." It is not this the way you feel about the matter? But do you let him alone? The first thing you do is to tell it to some one else. Now this is what the Bible calls a root of bitterness. You tell your trouble to every one but Jesus, and the reason that you do this, is because you do not feel clear in your conscience, so, of course, you do not want to tell it to your Saviour. {RH, August 14, 1888 par. 13}