

1 Samuel 19-20 • Bitterness in the Heart

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Last week we started off in a New Testament passage that helped us, helped create a springboard for us for understanding what we were looking at in 1 Samuel. We're going to do that again tonight.

We dealt with the passage from Corinthians last time, but this time we're in Hebrews chapter 12. And then skip down if you would please to verse 15, Hebrews 12:15. It says, *"See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;"* I want to take that passage and open us up in prayer.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Spirit tonight. Lead us in wisdom, grace, and understanding. We look to you, O Lord of grace and goodness. Oh, that we might not miss the grace of God, that no bitter root would grow up among us, defiling many. And it does, Lord, it poisons, it defiles it, it ruins.

Jesus, help us to learn what we need to tonight from these passages, for we ask it in your name, amen.

Now let's go over to 1 Samuel chapter 19. 1 Samuel, the 19th chapter. I share this passage from Hebrews as a starting point for you and I to understand how incredibly important that type of an exhortation is to you and I. That exhortation to not let a bitter root. And the reason the exhortation is given for you and I in Hebrews is because of the great potential for it to happen. If it really weren't a big issue, I don't think God would have gone to the trouble of reminding us, don't let this happen. But it can happen. In fact, it can happen very easily.

We all get offended from time to time. Sometimes we are personally offended by what someone does to us or against us. Sometimes we're offended by what has been done to someone whom we love, or even sometimes it's just someone who we've met. Sometimes we even get offended for people we've never met before.

And we have a very real capability of carrying an offense. It's basically called getting your nose in other people's business. I heard someone say there's a lot of things that happen in a given day and very few of those things are actually your business. I think that's probably a good sort of an axiom to live by.

But the potential for you and I to become offended when people do and say things that we consider offensive is so high. And as Christians, the potential for it to ruin our hearts before the Lord and our ability to witness to other people is very, very high.

The example that we're going to be getting and we've been getting in the life of king Saul is just that. Last week we started off with the passage about where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

This week we begin with the exhortation about a bitter root because it has now become so bitter in king Saul's heart and life, that he is no longer acting out of pretense. He is just simply and openly hostile toward David. Someone who had never done anything against him and only ever did good.

And yet a bitter root does this. Look at verse 1. *“And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David.” (ESV)* We already know that.

We knew, because we read before, that last week that Saul and Jonathan were knit together in their souls. They loved one another and they made a covenant one with another. This was the hand of the Lord to protect David.

But Jonathan is in a very difficult place. You notice how that passage, you remember that passage we just read in Hebrews, said that we're to be careful not to let a bitter root grow up because it defiles many. It ruins everybody. Anyone you come in contact with.

Jonathan is in the very, very difficult place of dealing with his father's bitter root and having it ruin a great many things for him. In fact after this point, after this point of what we're going to be looking at here tonight, Jonathan and David are going to have to part. And they will only briefly see one another once more before Jonathan will be killed in battle.

Their friendship for all intents and purposes has been short circuited. They will not be able to spend time together as friends. They will not be able to enjoy one another's company. And Saul will live with the constant shame that his father is hunting his best friend, hunting him to kill him.

Jonathan is in a very difficult place here, because his father, who's not only his father, but the king, has given him a command. And that command is, son, kill David. Right? This is difficult. The Scripture does say, children, honor your father and mother. (Exodus 20:12) We're to honor our parents. Now, this is tough because day Jonathan is faced with that command but is he going to honor it? Just after that is you shall not commit murder. (Exodus 20:13)

And Jonathan knows that what his father is asking of him is not a righteous judgment, but is instead the result of a jealous heart that has become angry and bitter. And he knows. And if he were to obey his father, he would be committing murder. And yet this is the conundrum that Jonathan finds himself in between honoring his father, the king, and not committing murder.

So what should Jonathan do? Well, it goes on in verse 2 and it tells us what he did. It says, *"And Jonathan told David,..."* So he goes to David and he says, *"Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. ³ And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you."*

And Jonathan did just that. It says in verse 4, *"And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, 'Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. ⁵ For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. (Dad) You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?'"*

Two things about that, that I want to bring out to your attention. Did you notice in this quick thing that Jonathan is giving to his father? Two times, he refers to what his father wants to do in killing David as a sin. He's not pulling his punches in any way. Yes, he's talking to his father. Yes, he's talking to the king. And yet he says to him, why would you sin in this way by killing David? Don't do this sin.

Sometimes we just have to call it what it is, don't we? Sometimes when you're talking to somebody, when you're confronting somebody who has given into a bitter root, sometimes we have to tell it the way it is. I know you're angry. I know, I understand. No, none of that. We come back and we say, listen, this is sin. This is sin. You are playing with sin here and nothing less. Let's not play patty cake with this thing. Let's not soft pedal this thing.

To harbor ill will towards someone, whether it is just anger, or bitterness, or hatred, it's a sin. And we need to be willing to speak the truth in love to people who are struggling with that sort of a thing and say, what are you allowing in your life? Don't you see where this goes?

Remember what Jesus told us about murder? In the Sermon on the Mount, He said, you have heard that it is said, do not commit murder. But I say, if you just harbor that sort of an angry attitude in your heart towards somebody, you've already committed murder. (Matthew 5:21-22) You've done it.

Do you know what that means? That means every single person in this room has committed murder from a spiritual standpoint. You may have never snuffed out a physical life, but we've all committed murder. So you see, in the end, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

We comfort ourselves. Well, I've never committed murder at least. Oh yeah. According to the standard that Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount, you have, and so have I. Attitudes toward other people can become so dark that we in our hearts can commit murder. And it's a serious issue and we need to call it what it is. It's sin.

The second thing that I think is really important here is, notice the question that Jonathan asks his father. Here it's really the last question that he asks in this section and the end of verse 5, look at it again with me. He says, "*Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David* (look at these last two words, at least they're the last two words in the ESV) *without cause?*" Did you catch that? I want you to take note of those words. Why would you do this, Dad, against David, without cause?

Now, that's an interesting sort of a statement. Jonathan is bringing out what you and I want him to bring out. It's what we believe he should bring out. We want him to say, Dad, come on, man. He hasn't done one single thing wrong to you. And he's only done good things. So your attempts to take his life are completely and utterly without warrant. They are without cause.

Now, again, that satisfies us somehow to hear that because it's reality. Do you understand? Listen, Saul's not dealing with reality, and in Saul's mind, there is a cause. Saul isn't attempting to kill David without cause. He has cause in his mind and that's what bitterness does to us.

When we become angry and we eventually give into bitterness and hatred, we begin to justify our hatred toward that person or group of people. And we justify

it in such a way as to say, that's why I'm angry. That's why I hate. Any rational, reasonable, sane person, would hate, just like I hate you. Oh, it's all justified in our minds. Somebody might come along and tell us, you know what? You don't have one single reason to hate this person. Oh, but in our minds we do and that's enough. Because we've created the situation in our own minds, in our own hearts. And even though someone may call us on it.

Now in this case, we're going to see that Saul is going to listen to his son, at least in this chapter, but it's not going to last very long. Eventually, he's going to appeal to his dad and he's his dad, Saul is going to be beyond any reasonable sort of exhortation But I want you to understand something about this situation. In Saul's mind, David was guilty.

And if you have been struggling with ill will towards someone, and you've been comforting yourself by saying, well, I have good reason. You don't know how he treated me. Could be one of your parents. Could be the way you were raised. You have good reason to hate them. I've talked to people who said, when I was a child, I prayed for God to kill my dad. I prayed for the Lord to take my mother. She was just, she was horrible. She was just a terrible person to live with. And now they're dealing with that whole thing of just— of the feelings that have just been pent up all that time. But they've learned not just to live with them, they've learned to justify them.

That's the way people feel when they're treated that way. That's just natural. It's normal. Who wouldn't hate a person for doing the things like that person did to me? Who wouldn't? We're justified, you see. It's okay. I can feel that way. It's all right. Anyone would. But that is looking at your life and your pain through the twisted, and yes, I said twisted, and sinful eyes of bitterness.

And you got to bring it to God. And you got to repent. I'm not saying you have to change it. I'm saying you have to repent. God does the changing. If you've been dealing with that bitterness and you have just struggled against hope, that there's just nothing you can do to change those circumstances, or what's in your heart about them, you need to know something here tonight, right now. God isn't looking for you to change your heart. He's not looking for you to do that. He doesn't expect you to change your heart. He doesn't. He knows that's not possible.

He's looking for you to give Him your heart. He's looking for you to surrender and to want His will more than your own bitterness. That's what He's looking for. He's looking for you to turn it over and say, Jesus, you know what? This is this is just ruining me. That's all it's doing. All this is doing is just souring my

life. It's souring my relationships. It's souring my connections with other people. That's all it's doing. It's not doing me any good. None. And I can't help this thing. I can't change this thing. I need to give it to You. I need to surrender it to You. And only then are you going to begin to see a change in your life.

Listen, you can surrender it to the Lord. You can give it to Him. And what that means is you start to trust Him to change you day by day. And as often as you have to repent, repent! As often as you have to bring it back to Him and say, Lord, this is me again. And I've let these feelings well up in me and I know they're not right. I know they're not good. I repent. I give them to You.

Some people think that if you have to repent every day or several times a day, that your repentance is hypocritical. It's not so, it's not so. It's just intense. And sometimes that's the way we have to live for a while. Just giving it to the Lord daily, sometimes minute by minute. God, I give You this because this is going to kill me.

And make no mistake about it, it will kill you. And it will start by killing your relationships and it'll eventually take its toll on you. That's what bitterness does. It's something that is so seriously to be avoided.

Now, it says in verse 6, and again, this is the positive side. It says, *"And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. (in fact) Saul swore, 'As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death.'"* ⁷ *And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before."*

But things don't stay that way for very long because in verse 8 it says, *"And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him."*

You know what that means? Do you know why it told us what it just told us there in verse 8? Because it's telling us that really nothing changed. David was still in charge of the army in a very real way. And he still went out and he still attacked the Philistines. And he still had success. And that was still going to be a problem. You see because Saul never dealt with the root of the problem.

Do you understand how fruitless it is to make promises that you can't keep? And that's what Saul is doing here. You have to appreciate maybe at least the effort. But, listen people, we don't get an A for effort in the kingdom of God because we're making promises about things that we have no control over.

Saul says, I promise—I swear, this is it. David will not be put to death. And the fact of the matter is David wasn't put to death. But what Saul was essentially saying is, I'm not going to keep hunting him. He's going to go back on that real soon. And the reason he's going to go back on it is because he's simply making a promise he can't keep. I promise. And we do that. We do it to people. We do it to God. We do it to our family.

When a root of bitterness overtakes us, and we just poison the people around us, eventually they come to us and they say, you know what? I can't even live with you. You are so full of poison. So full of hatred and bitterness. I can't even deal with you. And then we're just, oh, I'm so sorry. I promise. I promise. I promise. I'll never do this again. You can't promise! You can't do it. You can't. You can't change your heart. You cannot.

As much as you want to, as much as you might even try to, you cannot and you will fail. And when you fail, you'll become disappointed and discouraged. And the potential of losing hope is very real at that point. And it happens. It happens. It happens to Christians all the time because they don't, they think somehow the changes in their hands. You hear it. you hear Christians say it all the time, I'm just really working on that area of my life.

Stop working on that area of your life. Give it to Jesus Christ. Give it to His power. Give it into His hands. Let Him do that work. Ask Him to change your heart. Ask Him to give you a new heart. Ask Him to renew your heart. That's what we need to do.

We need to come to Him and say, you know what? I am bankrupt. I have nothing. I have nothing to offer. This heart of mine has been corrupted, and poisoned, and embittered, to the point where there's no, what am I going to do? What am I going to do with this thing? God, I give it to You and I ask You in Jesus name, give me a new heart. What God is looking for out of you is to just come and surrender it at His feet. So no promises. Okay

But “...*there was war again. (verse 8) ...David went out (as before) ...fought with the Philistines (as before) ...struck them with a great blow, (as before) ...they fled before him.*” As before. What do you suppose is not being said here? What's not being said is the people continue to appreciate David. Saul continued to see the people's appreciation for David

And what happened? Because Saul never dealt with the root of the issue, because Saul never came and said, Lord, I give You my heart. It was just all waiting to spring to life. Because what he did is he made an empty promise. It's

all he did. For a moment, he made an empty promise. He didn't come to God and say, deal with the root of my problem.

And so it says in verse 9, *“Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre.”* Now David was playing the liar because he was trying to soothe Saul. That's what he did.

“¹⁰ And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.” And with verse 10, that David, where it says *“David fled and escaped,”* this will now begin a 10 to 13 year run for his life. David will not be restored again. David will scarcely see Saul ever again, only on rare occasions, and from a distance. And eventually Saul will die in war.

Well, so where do you go when you got, leave the king's presence? He's out for you? I suppose you go home. *“¹¹ Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, (now remember, David is married to Saul's daughter, right? Yeah. Michal) David's wife, told him, (listen) “If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.” ¹² So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped. (and then it's interesting what she did) ¹³ Michal took an image and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats' hair at its head and covered it with the clothes. ¹⁴ And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, (well) “He is sick.” ¹⁵ Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.” ¹⁶ And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head. ¹⁷ Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?” And Michal answered Saul, “He said to me, ‘Let me go. Why should I kill you?’”*

You can tell, this gal is, she's a little , she's a piece of work. Remember, she was the one whom Saul gave to David, thinking, oh, I'll let her be a snare to him. They didn't explain that, but, it must mean he knew something about her.

But we know that she had some household idols. Some of your Bibles, if you have a New King James, it says that she simply put an image in the bed. And the New King James translators were being very kind to Michal because the word that is used there in the Hebrew literally means, a household idol. The kind of idol that people would worship, bow down to. She had some of those. And that's what she put in the bed.

And then when she's confronted by her father about letting David get away, she says to him, well, he basically threatened me and told me if I didn't let him go, he'd kill me.

“Now David fled (verse 18) and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and lived at Naioth. ¹⁹ And it was told Saul, “Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.” (and) ²⁰ Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.”

What that means is the Spirit of God came upon them and they began to just speak praises and statements. And doesn't necessarily mean they prophesied about coming events. People often connect prophecy with foretelling the future. And sometimes, sometimes, it's that. But again, again, prophecy is forth telling, speaking the wonders of God. They just began to speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And here are these messengers, again, it calls them messengers, let's face it, they're hit men. And they're sent there by Saul to find David and to bring him back. And the Spirit of God just comes upon them and they begin to prophesy.

And, “When it was told Saul, (I'm at verse 21) he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. ²² Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?” And one said, “Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah.” ²³ And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, “Is Saul also among the prophets?””

What's going on here? What's happening here? It's a strange sort of a passage. And by the way, the comment here about him being stripped naked doesn't mean necessarily he was, buck naked. It basically is a term that means that he was more or less down to his undergarments.

But even further than that, Saul would have showed up in his kingly array, no doubt. And the sense of the passage is more like God stripped him of all that so that he was like any other man. Do you understand?

He came in the power and authority of the king and God showed him who was really king. Because God does that, when we walk in pride. He'll strip you down. God will do that. The Bible says that if we are prideful, we'll be cut down, we'll be made humble. But if we humble ourselves, He'll lift us up. So Saul comes in his great pride, his kingly state, and God strips him down because of his pride.

But more than that, I think what God is communicating in no uncertain terms, is I am in charge. And you come against David, my servant, and I'm here to tell you, I am in charge. But notice how He's in charge.

If I were writing this story. I mean, if I were God, and you can thank Him that I'm not or even anywhere close. But if I were in charge of this whole thing, I probably would have had, oh, I don't know, a well-placed lightning bolt, right? Wouldn't you? Or how about, I love the ground opening. That's always a good one. Or sometimes, lions coming out of nowhere and just devouring people. That one works. I'll take any one of those. Lord, just, pick one, we'll go with it.

Here comes Saul. He's just a madman. He's just given over to his insanity. And he's searching for David completely without any cause of any rational sort of a kind. And what does God do out of the mercy of His heart? Here's how He stops Saul. The Spirit of the living God falls upon the man and he prophesies. And then he gets up and goes home. We could have maybe done an animal after that, like a lion or something like that, but God is so merciful.

God is so merciful. In fact, God is going to let Saul stay on the throne for the next 10 to 13 years. I don't, I mean, would you, wouldn't you have taken him off? Wouldn't you've said, you know what, this guy's got to go. I'm done with this guy. David, I anointed him years ago. Let's put him on the throne. He'll learn as he goes.

Not God, because there's two things that are going on here. Number one, God is giving Saul another 10 to 13 years of merciful time in which to repent. And God is doing a work in David's life to prepare him for the throne, because the next 10 to 13 years in David's life will be a time of preparation that no kingly school could ever attain to. David is going to learn the most important lessons of his life during this next 10 to 13 years.

He's going to learn to trust in God even more than he did before. He's going to learn to be a man of mercy. He is going to learn to leave things in God's hands, even when God puts them in his hands. Yeah. Just wait till we get to that chapter. I mean, that is one of the most powerful chapters in the Bible.

Cause it's one thing to say, well, God never put that in my power to do anything about it, so praise the Lord. What about if God did put it something in your power, but yet taking that power would be wrong.

Chapter 20 begins with David fleeing again. He's on the run. It says, he “...fled from Naioth in Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?”² And he said to him, “Far from it! You shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. And why should my father hide this from me? It is not so.” Well, obviously Saul's been hiding it from Jonathan, hasn't he.

“³ But David vowed again, saying, (listen) “Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he thinks, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.’ But truly, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.” (and) ⁴ Then Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you say, (whatever you say) I will do for you.” ⁵ David said to Jonathan, “Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit at table with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field till the third day at evening. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, then say, ‘David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the clan.’ ⁷ If he says, ‘Good!’ it will be well with your servant, but if he is angry, then know that harm is determined by him. ⁸ Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?””

Boy, that's quite something to say to Jonathan, isn't it? Listen, he says, Jonathan, if I'm guilty, kill me yourself. Do it yourself. I'd rather it come from you.

But “⁹ ...Jonathan said, “Far be it from you! If I knew that it was determined by my father that harm should come to you, would I not tell you?” (obviously, Jonathan doesn't know) ¹⁰ Then David said to Jonathan, “Who will tell me if your father answers you roughly?” ¹¹ And Jonathan said to David, “Come, let us go out into the field.” So they both went out into the field.

¹² And Jonathan said to David, “The LORD, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you? ¹³ But should it please my father to do you harm, the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. May the LORD be with you, as he has been with my

father. ¹⁴ If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; (and look at this) ¹⁵ and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth. ””

By the way, that's a promise that he asked David to make and David held to that promise after Jonathan was dead and when David finally came to the throne of Israel, he made good on this promise.

“¹⁶ And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the LORD take vengeance on David's enemies.” ¹⁷ And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ On the third day go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself when the matter was in hand, and remain beside the stone heap. ²⁰ And I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a mark. ²¹ And behold, I will send the boy, saying, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to the boy, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you, take them,’ then you are to come, for, as the LORD lives, it is safe for you and there is no danger. ²² But if I say to the youth, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go, for the LORD has sent you away. ²³ And as for the matter of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever.

²⁴ So David hid himself in the field. And when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. ²⁵ The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty.

²⁶ Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, “Something has happened to him. He is not clean; surely he is not clean.” ²⁷ But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, “Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?” ²⁸ Jonathan answered Saul, “David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. ²⁹ He said, ‘Let me go, for our clan holds a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brothers.’ For this reason he has not come to the king's table.”

³⁰ Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?

³¹ For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your

kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.” ³² Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?””

We've already gone through this though, haven't we? And we know there's no answer, because it's all in Saul's mind. So what do you do when you're faced with something that's all in your mind? Anger, even toward those whom you love the most.

“³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. ³⁴ And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him.

³⁵ In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David, and with him a little boy. ³⁶ And he said to his boy, “Run and find the arrows that I shoot.” As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. ³⁷ And when the boy came to the place of the arrow that Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy and said, “Is not the arrow beyond you?” ³⁸ And Jonathan called after the boy, “Hurry! Be quick! Do not stay!” So Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. ³⁹ But the boy knew nothing. Only Jonathan and David knew the matter. ⁴⁰ And Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy and said to him, “Go and carry them to the city.” ⁴¹ And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most.”

By the way, in the Middle East they're not afraid to embrace and cry and show that emotion. We men living in the United States of America, we read this and we're slightly embarrassed. Really? They cried? Oh yeah? Oh yeah? Not a problem.

“⁴² Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.’” And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.”

So what are we seeing here? What are we understanding from this passage? Well, we're seeing the severing of probably one of the most beautiful relationships that we see in the Bible. Aren't we? It's coming to an end. Because a root of bitterness defiles many. It ruins relationships. This is what happens. What we're seeing is the fallout from this sort of a thing.

Why were the Old Testament passages given to you and I? Why do we study these on Wednesday night? Are we doing this just for a historical lesson? I mean, it's interesting. I like history, frankly, I didn't really care for it when I was in high school. I didn't care for much when I was in high school.

But, later, after I got out of school, which is probably when I should have started high school, when I was about 20, I started realizing, history is pretty interesting. And I like history. But this is so much more than a history lesson. This is so much more than you and I just reading something in the Bible and saying, oh, that's really interesting.

The Bible says in the New Testament that the stories were given to us in the Old Testament as examples for us. This is an example for you and I. Some of you have not only read this example and seen what it's saying here, you've experienced it in your life.

You have been with people who have risen up in such a level of bitterness that you have been made to pay the price of that bitterness. Some of you have even been the recipients of bitterness. Some of you have even held a bitter attitude toward other people. And you know how devastating it can be.

But the passage that we've just read is again another warning to you and I. Jesus told us that we are to love one another in the body of Christ. I know, seems almost impossible sometimes, doesn't it? Because some people, let's just face it, they're not very lovable. In fact, sometimes with all their prickles, and all their other issues, you just, you don't even want to be around them, let alone love them. But is that not what we are called to do?

And did not Jesus say that they will know that you are My disciples for the love, because of the love you have one for another. (John 13:35) Wow. So you see, even our identification with Christ is dependent upon this issue of how we treat one another within the body of Christ, not for legalistic reasons. We can, you can do that. You can suck it up with just about anybody. Well, I have to be a good Christian, so I suppose I better do this. It's what a good Christian would do. It's your Christian duty.

God wants our heart to be in it. Peter wrote to the church and he said, now that you've learned how to love one another, I want you to love one another now deeply from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22) It's interesting that he would say something like that. You would think Peter would say, hey, now that you've learned to love one another, I just want to let you guys know you guys are the bomb. I mean, you're just, you're great. Go for it. Good job.

He didn't stop there. Now that you've learned to love one another. Now go, I want you to go on and love one another deeply from the heart. Peter said, I want you to move on to the next level. You see, we're never satisfied. We're never complacent. We're never sitting back and thinking, all right. Well, I got that one handled next what's next here on the list? I got that, check.

I think we begin to show love, God says, now I want you to love even more. Wow! But what you and I have to be so aware of, so careful about, are the hurts? The hurts that come along. Hurts are going to happen, aren't they? I wouldn't think of asking you to have a show of hands. I don't have to. But if I did, I'm willing to bet that there's a great many of you here who could express a past of great hurt, great difficulty.

Let me tell you one of the great keys of getting over a hurt when someone has hurt you badly. And I mean badly. And maybe they continue hurting you. How are you ever going to get free from something like that? Jesus told you how to get free. He said, love your enemies and pray for them that spitefully use you. (Matthew 5:44)

Do you know that's the secret? And it's not a secret because He gave it to us in the scriptures. But it's a secret probably in light of the fact that very few people know it and or do it. But when you are hurt by somebody, the best thing you can do is start praying for them. Put them on your prayer list! And at first, you might find that praying for this person is a perfunctory sort of a thing. And by that I mean, it might be a little wooden, it might be a little, just going through the motions and that sort of thing.

And by the way, you can't pray, God, kill them. That's not, I've had people say that. It's like, pray for my enemy? Sure! I'll pray just like David prayed. God, knock their teeth out! Smash them! Let them go into the grave alive! Stuff like that.

Listen, Jesus came along in the New Testament. He gave us the higher road. Okay? Jesus came along with the best path when it comes to people who've hurt you. He said love them and pray for them. Pray for them. Pray for them. Pray for them. There comes a point. It's like you say well, how long should I pray for them? Until you know that you know that your prayer is no longer perfunctory. Until you know that your prayer is now from the heart.

It's really amazing. You keep praying for somebody and it is, it becomes impossible at the same time to hate them. And you find that there is nothing that kills any potential of a bitter root more than praying for somebody. That's why

Jesus told us to do it. He didn't just say pray for your enemies because it sounded good and it does sound good for the religious person. It's like, I pray for my enemies every day. I mean, it makes me sound, very spiritual. Yes, I do. I pray for my enemies.

That's not why Jesus told us to pray for our enemies. He did it because it's the answer to a bitter heart. It's the answer. It's the antidote to a heart that is overflowing with hurt and bitterness and can't see life anymore through the eyes of love, and joy, and peace. It just can't because now you're consumed with bitterness. So what are you going to do? Give your heart to God and begin to pray for the people. Begin to pray for those who've hurt you so badly. Pray God's blessing. Pray God's abundant blessing.

There's another wonderful reality to praying for your enemies that comes into play. And it's all tied up in that spiritual principle of, what a man sows, so also shall he reap. It's a wonderful principle, but it can either be a curse to you or it can be a blessing because you can sow seeds of bitterness and that's what you'll reap. Or you can sow seeds of blessing and that's what you'll reap. So when Jesus was telling you to pray for your enemies, He wasn't only giving you the antidote to a burdened, hurt-ed heart. He's giving you the secret to blessing.

And pretty soon you find as you pray, you just put this person or people or whoever on your prayer list and you pray for them diligently. You pray for them daily. You ask God to bless them. You ask God to pour out His grace, and goodness, and love, and tenderness, and peace. And you, and suddenly you begin to find your heart is overwhelmed with compassion for that person. You're going, oh God, they're so hurt. And that's why they hurt other people. And they need your healing. They need your power and your grace. God just flood them like a balm, like a soothing ointment.

Suddenly I not only realize that I'm no longer controlled by bitterness, but I find that I'm also the recipient of the very thing for which I've prayed for others. And I find my own heart healing in ways that I never thought possible. And I start seeing myself walking in such blessing that I never knew or understood could happen in the life of a believer all because we took God at His word and decided to obey.

It's really important, very important reminders, very important warnings, very important things to, to remember. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble by it, many become defiled.