

## **Bitter is Not Better**

### **2 Samuel 13:19-39**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 9-22-2013

Please turn to 2 Samuel chapter 13. Over the past couple years we have been doing an extended series in 1 and 2 Samuel. And we are going to pick up today at verse 19.

### **Introduction**

A few weeks ago I shared the story of C. L. Culpepper, a missionary in China in the 1920s, and how God had brought profound conviction of pride and other sins in his life. And as he confessed his sins to his fellow workers, God sovereignly moved in their lives and spread what later became known as the Shantung Revival. Let me tell you about one of Culpepper's close friends, Wiley B. Glass, during that same revival. Glass was a very well respected missionary, but unknown to others he had a deep root of bitterness in his heart.

As Glass sat in the prayer meetings, a man's face repeatedly came before him and God was convicting him about his ungodly attitudes toward that man. Because the incident with that man had been such a long time ago, he tried to brush it aside, but he simply could not. And his resistance to the Holy Spirit's promptings were making him absolutely miserable. At one point he begged Culpepper to pray for him, but he was so ashamed of his unspiritual attitudes that he couldn't express his problem to his friend. Culpepper said,

“He was pale as death and kept groaning in his anxiety. I prayed with him and for him several times during that day and the next. In the evening of the second day he came running to me and threw his arms around me. ‘Charlie, it's gone!’ ... I said, ‘What's gone?’ He replied, ‘That old root of bitterness.’

And in his book, Culpepper summarized what Glass told him that day. Culpepper writes,

He told me that thirty years earlier [Imagine that! We can hold on to things for so long to our detriment. But anyway, he said, “thirty years earlier”], before he came to China, a man had insulted his wife. The insult had made him so angry he felt he could kill the man if he ever saw him again. [Keep that in mind as we look at Absalom's murder. Culpepper goes on:] He realized a called servant of God should not feel that way, and it had bothered him for years. Finally he just turned the man over to God. When the Holy Spirit began working in his heart during that week, the question came, ‘Are you willing for that man to be saved?’

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He answered, ‘Lord, I’m willing for You to save him... just keep him on the other side of heaven!’ Finally, he came to the place where he said, ‘Lord, if that man is alive, and if I can find him when I go on furlough, I will confess my hatred to him and do my best to win him to You.’ When he reached that decision, the Lord released the joys of heaven to his soul, and he was filled with love and peace. He became a more effective preacher for the Lord, and during the next few years he led hundreds to Christ.

And that ends the quote. I started with that story because it may seem hard to believe that any regenerate person could feel and act like Absalom did. Now, I’m not going to be making any determination on whether Absalom was regenerate or not in this sermon. It really doesn’t matter, since the same principles that we are going to be looking at in this chapter can be found governing the bitterness of true believers like Sarah (Abraham’s wife), Joseph’s brothers, Naomi, Hannah, Jonah, the Prodigal Son’s brother, and others. And each one illustrates the truth of the title of today’s sermon, that “Bitter is Not Better.”

## **I. There is usually a good reason for bitterness (vv. 19-22)**

I’m not going to look at every verse like I normally do. Instead, I am going to look at seven general principles related to bitterness that are found in this passage. And the first is that there usually are good reasons for a person to be bitter. If you want to argue with the Holy Spirit this morning, I’m sure you can come up with some pretty good reasons as to why you have the right to be bitter. Sarah had a good reason to be bitter against Hagar – especially with the demeaning attitudes that Hagar had towards her in her childlessness, and later, the persecution that Ishmael brought to Isaac. Joseph’s brothers had a good reason for their bitterness against Joseph, especially with the favoritism that dad obviously showed toward Joseph. They longed for their dad’s love and approval. But having a good reason for bitterness does not make bitterness any less dangerous to our soul. Naomi had a good reason for her bitterness, given that she had lost her property, been forced to immigrate to an enemy country where she was a second-class citizen, had lost her husband and her only two sons. Life was not fair. In 1 Samuel 1 we discover that Hannah had a good reason for her bitterness against the Lord and against Peninah. The text says that she had to share her husband with another woman, she had no children, and the text says, “her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable...” Jonah had a good reason for being bitter against the Assyrians. The Assyrians were one of the most sadistic peoples on the earth at that time, and Jonah’s hometown had been overrun by the Assyrians, no doubt resulting in the torture and death of some of his friends and relatives. He probably thought that he had every

right to be bitter, and every right to wish that those Ninevites would go straight to hell.

But it doesn't matter what the good reasons you may have for being bitter, there is not a single story in the Bible that will show that being bitter will ever make you any better. It always, always, always makes you worse. Hebrews says that it defiles you. It makes you spiritually ugly. It makes you ineffective. And if godly people like Sarah and Jonah could be overcome by bitterness, then you can be overcome by bitterness as well – at least if you do not guard your heart.

Despite the fact that Absalom had an eminently good reason to hate Amnon and to be bitter against Amnon, who had ruined his sister's life, the text does not approve of his bitterness. Instead it teaches us that bitterness always destroys. And if Absalom's reason for bitterness is not justified in the sight of God, then I would say that you better stop rationalizing your reasons for bitterness. Let me just read without comment verses 1-22 so that you can see why Absalom hated Amnon and allowed himself to get bitter. Since I've already preached on these verses, I will just read without comment:

**2Samuel 13:1** After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name *was* Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

**2Samuel 13:2** Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she *was* a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.

**2Samuel 13:3** But Amnon had a friend whose name *was* Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab *was* a very crafty man.

**2Samuel 13:4** And he said to him, "Why *are* you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

**2Samuel 13:5** So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat it from her hand.' "

**2Samuel 13:6** Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

**2Samuel 13:7** And David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Now go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him."

**2Samuel 13:8** So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded *it*, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes.

**2Samuel 13:9** And she took the pan and placed *them* out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, “Have everyone go out from me.” And they all went out from him.

**2Samuel 13:10** Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand.” And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* to Amnon her brother in the bedroom.

**2Samuel 13:11** Now when she had brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister.”

**2Samuel 13:12** But she answered him, “No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!

**2Samuel 13:13** And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.”

**2Samuel 13:14** However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

**2Samuel 13:15** Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her *was* greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Arise, be gone!”

**2Samuel 13:16** So she said to him, “No, indeed! This evil of sending me away *is* worse than the other that you did to me.” But he would not listen to her.

**2Samuel 13:17** Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, “Here! Put this *woman* out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her.”

**2Samuel 13:18** Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king’s virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her.

**2Samuel 13:19** Then Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly.

**2Samuel 13:20** And Absalom her brother said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now hold your peace, my sister. He *is* your brother; do not take this thing to heart.” So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom’s house.

**2Samuel 13:21** But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry.

**2Samuel 13:22** And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

By refusing to deal with Amnon, David guaranteed that this sin would fester and Amnon would continue to be a menace. By failing to counsel his daughter, David helped her to be destroyed by her own bitterness and to become a desolate woman. He didn’t give her the tools for handling that tragedy with the healing power of God’s grace. By failing to speak to any of his family about this rape, David failed to uncover problems that might be under the surface in time to deal with them. Everything simply festered

under the surface, and bitterness began to defile many. So if you are a parent and you see bitterness in your children, do not overlook it.

But back to our main point, when Colossians and Ephesians calls you to put away all anger, malice, hatred, and bitterness, it is not discounting the seriousness of the sins that have been done against you. Not at all. It is not saying that bitterness is surprising. It's not. That's what you would expect from a son of Adam. When Scripture calls you to put away all anger, malice, hatred, and bitterness, it is calling you to stop living in terms of the Old Man Adam (because your old identity was crucified), and it is calling you to start living by the power of the New Man Jesus – the Second Adam. You have a new identity and a new power that enables you to live above the reasons that drive the world.

You can have joy when others have misery. You can demonstrate love when others demonstrate hatred. In fact, that is the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount – that if you are truly sons of God, you will demonstrate the supernatural powers of heaven in your life. If the only people you love are the kind of people any pagan can love, you are not giving evidence of grace and true sonship. If you only bless those who bless you, how are you any different from pagans? But when you can bless those who curse you, and do good to those who persecute you, and rejoice in the midst of persecution, and love those who hate you, you are demonstrating the power of the kingdom. Jesus says that this shows sonship.

Because you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, there is no excuse for bitterness. When Colossians 3:9 tells husbands not to be bitter against their wives, it also shows you how that is possible – by no longer following the basic principles of the world and by seeking those things which are above, where Christ is. Day by day we must be asking for God's will to be done on earth more and more and His kingdom to come into our lives more and more. He is calling us to live in terms of the supernatural. And you can. Because the Father has predestined you to be conformed to the Son, and the Son has purchased everything that you need to be so conformed, and because you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you have compelling reasons to live in the supernatural that trump your reasons for bitterness.

## **II. Bitterness can linger for years (v. 23a)**

Point II. If bitterness is not immediately confessed and put under the blood of Christ, it can linger and fester for years. In the case of Culpepper's friend, it lingered for thirty years. Verse 23 begins, "**And it came to pass, after two full years...**" This shows that the American proverb, "Time heals

all wounds” is a lie. Time does not automatically heal all wounds. Only God’s grace can heal all wounds. And we need to be proactive in going to the cross with our wounds, rather than nursing them. If you ignore the kinds of wounds that Tamar and Absalom felt and you hope that they will eventually go away, you are deceiving yourself. Bitterness always grows if it is not mortified, or put to death.

### III. Bitterness leads to premeditated revenge (vv. 23-27)

The third thing that I see in this passage is that bitterness tends to lead to premeditated revenge. People will sometimes deny that they have revenge in mind, but they do daydream about it. Their form of revenge might be how to humiliate the other person. They will lie awake at night thinking about different comebacks that they could have said that would have put that person in his place. And by relishing those thoughts, they feed the monster of bitterness. In this chapter, Absalom planned to kill Amnon when he got a chance. It was just one step further than missionary Glass, who just *wished* he could kill that man. Verses 23-27:

**2Samuel 13:23** And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal Hazor, which *is* near Ephraim; so Absalom invited all the king’s sons.

**2Samuel 13:24** Then Absalom came to the king and said, “Kindly note, your servant has sheepshearers; please, let the king and his servants go with your servant.”

**2Samuel 13:25** But the king said to Absalom, “No, my son, let us not all go now, lest we be a burden to you.” Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed him.

**2Samuel 13:26** Then Absalom said, “If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us.” And the king said to him, “Why should he go with you?”

**2Samuel 13:27** But Absalom urged him; so he let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.

It is clear from this section that the harm intended had been premeditated. In fact, verse 32 indicates that it had been planned from the day of the rape. He was just looking for a good occasion to do it. And people wonder, “How could that happen?” William Secker once said, “He that carries [bitterness] to bed with him will find the devil creep between the sheets.”<sup>1</sup> That’s how close the devil will become to you if you do not immediately repent of bitterness. And the reason given by Paul is that bitterness and anger are two of those sins that gives a foothold to Satan. If we do not confess and forsake those sins, they will poison our spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> William Secker, *The Nonsuch Professor in His Meridian Splendor* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1899), p. 150.

vision and allow demons to begin to influence us. And since Satan was a murderer from the beginning, it is not surprising that he motivates people to desire that form of revenge as well.

#### **IV. Bitterness defiles many (v. 28)**

The fourth thing that I see is that Absalom is not the only one poisoned by his bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 says, **“looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”** Bitterness has a tendency to infect others. And Absalom’s bitterness against Amnon made his men willing to do what he commanded. Verse 28:

**2Samuel 13:28** Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, **“Watch now, when Amnon’s heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon!’ then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant.”**

Notice how Absalom’s own thinking was skewed. He treats the action as an action consistent with being courageous and valiant. People who are bitter often think of themselves as very spiritual. He treats this murder as a virtue. He was probably thinking, “Though this is a tough thing to do, someone needs to take care of this criminal. If my father is not willing to give justice, I will.” So, the very way he words this shows that he is excusing this as a good deed. But the fact that he has been so secretive about it shows that deep down he knows it is not a good deed. His own judgment is skewed. It shows self-deception.

But the men who hang around him have not been able to keep from seeing Amnon in the same light that Absalom does. Was Amnon a criminal? Yes. Did he deserve the death penalty? Yes, he did. But deep down these men knew that it was not their jurisdiction to avenge. That was for the courts and the executive office to carry out. But the bitterness of Absalom defiled their thinking too. And that’s what Hebrews 12:15 guarantees will always happen. Many other believers will be defiled by our bitterness. It will spread, and spread, and spread if that bitter root of the weed of bitterness is not plucked up.

#### **V. Bitterness can lead to murder (v. 29)**

Verse 9 shows that bitterness can even lead to murder.

**2Samuel 13:29** So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.

The bitterness of Cain led him to kill his brother. The bitterness of Dinah's brothers over her rape led them to murder an entire city. David's bitterness over Nabal's mistreatment and lack of gratefulness for his sacrificial service almost led him to murder an entire family. Joab's bitterness over the loss of his brother led him to murder Abner. The disciple's bitterness over the mistreatment that a Samaritan village had given to Jesus and to them made them so upset that they asked Jesus for permission to call down fire upon the entire village and destroy them. Jesus could see the bitterness that was motivating them. Don't think that bitterness is a cute little pet that you can safely harbor. It is a monster that has murder on its mind, and if it is not outward murder, it will seek to destroy the person's reputation, position, or office. Recognize that bitterness is demonic. It comes straight from the pit of hell. Do not cherish it; learn to hate it. And if you recognize that it has murder on its mind, it may help you to quit housing that bitterness as a pet to be cherished and fed and caressed.

## **VI. Bitterness leads to alienation (vv. 29b-39)**

In verses 29-39 we see that bitterness also leads to alienation.

**2Samuel 13:29** So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.

**2Samuel 13:30** And it came to pass, while they were on the way, that news came to David, saying, "Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left!"

**2Samuel 13:31** So the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn.

**2Samuel 13:32** Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.

**2Samuel 13:33** Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."

**2Samuel 13:34** Then Absalom fled. And the young man who was keeping watch lifted his eyes and looked, and there, many people were coming from the road on the hillside behind him.

**2Samuel 13:35** And Jonadab said to the king, "Look, the king's sons are coming; as your servant said, so it is."

**2Samuel 13:36** So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king's sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

**2Samuel 13:37** But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day.



**2Samuel 13:38 So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years.**

**2Samuel 13:39 And King David longed to go to Absalom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead.**

Throughout this section we see that Absalom has risked losing everything by killing his brother. He has alienated his brothers and they will no longer trust him. But he himself is now alienated from his dear sister Tamar, from his father and mother, and from the kingdom. And while some of that was because he was a fugitive criminal, alienation has always been the fruit of bitterness. It alienates. People don't like to hang around you when you are bitter, unless they have allowed themselves to become bitter too. So you can see that where grace and love bind the church together, bitterness causes us to shed grace and love like water off a duck's back and to no longer enjoy the fellowship of the saints. It drives us apart. It alienates.

## **VII. While others can forgive and move on (v. 39), the bitter person becomes more and more absent of God's graces (next chapter)**

And the last thing that I see with regard to Absalom is that while others can forgive and move on (like David does in verse 39), the bitter person can't forgive and as a result he becomes more and more sapped of God's graces. The next chapter is quite clear that Absalom gets worse and worse as time goes on until it is impossible to reclaim him. And that's the most scary thing about bitterness – that it can lead you so deep within the pit of self-pity, malice, anger, and other negative emotions that eventually you cannot escape, and don't want to escape, and don't want others to help you to escape. You start acting like an unbeliever.

And if you don't think it can happen to you, I want to tell you the testimony of Rosalind Goforth, the wife of the famous Presbyterian missionary to China, Jonathan Goforth. You've heard of *him*. Well, this is about his wife. In her autobiography, *Climbing*, Rosalind Goforth told of the internal rage that she harbored against someone who had really harmed her and her husband Jonathan. It was a serious injury that neither Rosalind or Jonathan would ever talk about. So to this day we don't know what this offense was, but we do know that it was a rather serious thing. While Jonathan easily forgave the offender, Rosalind refused to do so.

For more than a year she would not talk to or even recognize that person who had hurt them, even though the person lived on their missionary

station in China. Four years passed and the matter was still not resolved. It's just an amazing thing how long the sin of bitterness can linger.

One day the Goforths were traveling by train to a conference in China. And Rosalind recognized the total lack of joy and power in her life and ministry. She recognized that she was plodding on in her own strength, but was not walking in the Spirit as Paul commands us to do. So in her train compartment she bowed her head and cried out to God to please fill her with the Holy Spirit. She said,

Unmistakably clear came the Inner Voice, 'Write to (and she leaves blank the one she hated and refused to forgive – "Write to [blank]) and ask forgiveness for the way you have treated him.' My whole soul cried out, 'Never!' Again I prayed as before, and again the Inner Voice spoke clearly as before. Again I cried out in my heart, 'Never; never. I will never forgive him!' When for the third time this was repeated, I jumped to my feet and said to myself, 'I'll give it all up, for I'll never, ever forgive!'

One day afterward, Rosalind was reading to the children from *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was the passage in which a miserable ragged man was imprisoned in a cage. And that man moans, 'I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone; I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me.' Instantly a terrible conviction came upon her, and for two days and nights she felt in terrible despair.

Finally, talking late at night to a fellow missionary who was a young widower, she burst into sobs and told him her whole sordid story. He was kind of puzzled and asked, "But Mrs. Goforth, are you willing to write the letter?"

After a long pause she replied. "Yes." And he said, "Then go at once and write it."

Rosalind jumped to her feet, ran into the house, and immediately wrote a few lines of humble apology for her actions, without any reference to his sin against Jonathan and her. She didn't bring up his sin; she just asked forgiveness for her own. And immediately the joy and peace of her Christian life returned to her. And she ended by saying, "From that time, I have never dared *not to forgive*."<sup>2</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>2</sup> As told by Robert J. Morgan, in *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, & Quotes* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), pp. 312-313.

And if you are a Rosalind Goforth, I would urge you to forgive, to relinquish the bitterness and animosity that you have harbored in your heart and to run to God for cleansing. You don't want to turn out like Absalom, but apart from acknowledgement to God that your bitterness is a wicked sin against Him and a horrible enemy, and apart from His cleansing and supernatural love, that is exactly where you are headed. You are going to become more and more like Absalom.

I know every excuse in the book as to why your bitterness is different, and why it is justified. I know because I have experienced bitterness, and have sought to justify it myself in the past. But there is no amount of evil done to you that can ever justify your sin of bitterness, and I urge you to cast that demon off. I don't know where I got the quote, but someone once said, "No matter how long you nurse a grudge, it won't get better." (Anonymous). And you don't want it to get better. So quit doctoring it and nursing it. Kill it. You must kill it Biblically before it kills you. If you want the step-by-step process for doing so, I suggest you download my booklet on bitterness from Biblical Blueprints.

Psychology will not help. Sigmund Freud died at the age of 83, a bitter and disillusioned man who could not sustain friendships. He wrote in 1918, "I have found little that is good about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash..." And I could give you similar testimonies from other psychological gurus. They couldn't even help themselves. Psychology will not ever get you past your bitterness. It is a powerless religion. Only the cross of Christ can cleanse, and only the power of the Holy Spirit can replace bitterness with a love that overcomes.

Ignoring the bitterness will not help. Dr. Spock was known as the guru of child-raising, and in his humanistic philosophy he encouraged parents to ignore the problems, saying that the kids would eventually outgrow it. Yeah, right!? With no discipline, his children despised him, and this guru on child rearing raised a brood of brats who were bitter against him and he against them. Though I can't say everything that needs to be said for putting off bitterness, let me quickly outline six steps given by the apostle Paul.

1. First, forgive. You may not feel like it, but forgive in faith, despite the absence of feeling.
2. Second, refuse to bring the situation back to your memory. Resist your heart's attempts to resurrect the pain. Rebuke demonic attempts to stir it up. Say, "Get behind me Satan, I buried that

under the cross and will not blaspheme the blood of Christ by trying to dig it up.”

3. Third, pursue peace. This is the true test of whether that bitterness is still there: can you start hanging around that person without getting upset. Pursue peace with him. That means you have to be around him. Don't fool yourself into thinking you have conquered your bitterness against a true brother or sister if you refuse to be around him or her.
4. Fourth, Paul admonishes us to put on tenderness and kindness. Our flesh may want to pound such a person, but declare a war of love instead. Romans 12:9 through the end of the chapter tells you many steps of how to do it. It shows you how not to be overcome by evil, but how to overcome evil with good.
5. Fifth, thank God every day for that person, and for trusting you with your responses to him. Thank God that this person has caused you to grow in grace. Thank God for everything you can think of to thank God for about that person. God often brings healing through thanksgiving because it is an action of faith.
6. Sixth, start praying God's blessings into that person's life. They don't deserve to be blessed, but then neither do you. So ask God to bless that person. Ask God to give them a raise, to give them joy, to fill them with blessings. The first times you do it will feel like gravel in your mouth, but over time it will be sweet oil with all the fragrance of heaven. Your stepping into the supernatural will restore grace after grace into your own heart. So bless those who curse you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely – yes, bless them even if they are your spouse. Bless and do not curse.

If you take those six steps, you will find remarkable changes taking place within your heart. You will find closeness to God, new power, new insight, new ministry opportunities opening up, new joy, new meaning to life. Bitterness robs you of everything good, and Jesus Christ, the Savior who refused to get bitter, can restore everything good that you have lost if you are willing to trust Him to live His life through you.

C. S. Lewis once said, “Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”<sup>3</sup> God has put stories like this into the

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<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 89.

Bible to let us know that He understands what we are going through, but He does not approve when we give in to bitterness. Rise and conquer and enter into the joy of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 9-22-2013

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### Conclusion

1. Forgive
2. Quit nursing the grudge
3. Pursue peace (yes, hang around that person)
4. Declare a war of loving actions
5. Thank God every day for that person
6. Start praying blessings into that person's life



Mattia Preti – The Murder of Amnon  
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