

# FORGIVENESS

MATTHEW 6:12; 2 SAMUEL 16:20-17:4

Text: Matthew 6:12, 2 Samuel 17:23

## **Matthew 6:12**

<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

## **2 Samuel 17:23**

<sup>23</sup> And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Introduction:

In this example of prayer that the Lord gives us He deals with the subject of forgiveness.

One of the greatest problems in churches, homes, the work place, and any number of other places that there is an interaction with people is the problem of forgiveness.

Many churches have been destroyed because someone refuses to forgive someone else.

Many homes have been destroyed because of a lack of forgiveness.

Someone once said, “Christians are the most forgiven people in the world. Therefore, we should be the most forgiving people in the world.”

When we become bitter or unforgiving toward others, we assume that the sins of others are more serious than our sins against God. The cross transforms our perspective. Through the cross we realize that no sin committed against us will ever be as serious as the innumerable sins we’ve committed against God. When we understand how much God has forgiven us, it’s not difficult to forgive others.

I want us to look at an example of a man who allowed bitterness to take root and grow, which resulted in his death.

Over the years I have done a little gardening, I have discovered that some plants especially weeds will never die unless you dig out their roots and utterly destroy them.

You can cut them off at the surface time after time, but they just keep coming back. However, when the root is exposed and removed from the soil, the plant is gone. It takes work to dig out roots, but it is worth the effort, since it protects the other plant in the garden.

Bitterness is defined as:

1. **Strong and sharp in taste:** having a sharp strong unpleasant taste, for example, like that of orange peel
2. **Resentful:** angry and resentful.
3. **Difficult to accept:** painful or very hard to accept.
4. **Hostile:** expressing intense hostility.
5. **Very cold:** penetratingly and unpleasantly cold.

It is that second definition – Resentful that I want us to consider this morning.

Resentful – It has the idea of brooding anger over that which has happened in your life. This anger produces a bad spirit within a person. It is a spirit of hostility and coldness toward God or others.

The Bible speaks about the “root of bitterness.”

**Hebrews 12:15**

<sup>15</sup> Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

**Deuteronomy 29:18**

<sup>18</sup> Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go *and* serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

It is called a root because it begins hidden within the soil of your heart. From there, its roots will entwine themselves around your heart and mind, until they choke the life out of you emotionally and spiritually. If allowed to grow unchecked, this “**root of bitterness**” will spring up into a plant that will cast a shadow over everything you are and do.

In our text, we are presented with a man who was in the strangle hold of a massive “**root of bitterness**”. Ahithophel met a tragic end because he allowed a root of bitterness to flourish in his life. His was a sad fate, but thankfully, there are lessons that we can learn from his tragedy that will help us to avoid the same fate.

What we can learn here will give us much help in fighting the battle with bitterness we all face from time to time.

## **1. THE TESTIMONY OF AHITHOPHEL’S LIFE**

### **A. He Had the Testimony of a Saved Man**

Many things in this man’s life give the indication that he was a saved man.

- He Sacrificed to God

### **2 Samuel 15:12**

<sup>12</sup> And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered

sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

- He Spoke for God

### **2 Samuel 16:23**

<sup>23</sup> And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, *was* as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

## B. He Had the Testimony of a Serving Man

Reading about this man's life teaches us that he did not just believe in God, but he also served God by serving others.

- He Was a Counselor to God's Man

### **2 Samuel 15:12**

<sup>12</sup> And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

Great leaders have always surrounded themselves with good counselors and David was no exception.

Ahithophel was one of the men David trusted for advice and direction as he governed the nation of Israel.

- He Was a Companion of God's Man

### **Psalms 41:9**

<sup>9</sup>Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.

In this Psalm, which looks back on the treachery of Ahithophel's life, David refers to him as "***my familiar friend***".

Note:

In spite of the fact that Ahithophel gave every outward indication that all was well between himself and the Lord and between himself and David, there was something working in his heart that would destroy everything. Even during these times of his life, Ahithophel was being eaten alive, from the inside out, by an event that had happened years earlier.

I pointed out all those positive things from the life of Ahithophel to say this to you: You cannot always tell from the outward signs what is happening in a person's heart!

You may be thinking: "No one here has a root of bitterness in their heart. After all, we are at church on a Sunday. We have a smile on our faces; we are joyous; we are worshiping together; everything is alright."

I think Ahithophel is about to teach us that what you see on the outside does not always show you the true condition of the heart!

## **2. THE TRAGEDY OF AHITHOPHEL'S LIFE**

The bitterness that was hidden within the heart of Ahithophel finally came out. Notice how it reveals itself in his life.

### **A. A Tragic Conspiracy**

When David's son Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel saw his chance to get his revenge upon King David. Ahithophel joined the rebellion and stood against God's anointed.

#### **2 Samuel 15:31**

<sup>31</sup> And *one* told David, saying, Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

#### **Psalms 41:9**

<sup>9</sup> Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.

### **B. A Tragic Counsel**

Out of his hatred for David, Ahithophel gave Absalom two words of counsel. The first recommendation he made was designed to **Disgrace** King David.

## **2 Samuel 16:20-23**

<sup>20</sup> Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. <sup>21</sup> And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that *are* with thee be strong. <sup>22</sup> So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. <sup>23</sup> And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, *was* as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

By having Absalom go into his father's concubines, he publicly disgraced David and created a rift between father and son that could never be healed.

The second recommendation was designed to **Destroy** King David.

## **2 Samuel 17:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: <sup>2</sup> And I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that *are* with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: <sup>3</sup> And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest *is* as if all returned: *so* all the people shall be in peace. <sup>4</sup> And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel. Had this second piece of advice been followed, it is possible that David would have been defeated.



## C. A Tragic Conclusion

Thankfully, David had a true friend in Absalom's court, a man by the name of Hushai. Hushai had originally planned to go with David when he fled from Absalom, but at David's request, he stayed behind in the city to try and overthrow the counsel of Ahithophel.

### **2 Samuel 15:32-37**

<sup>32</sup> And it came to pass, that *when* David was come to the top of *the mount*, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head: <sup>33</sup> Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: <sup>34</sup> But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; *as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant*: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. <sup>35</sup> And *hast thou* not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, *that* what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell *it* to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. <sup>36</sup> Behold, *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's *son*, and Jonathan Abiathar's *son*; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. <sup>37</sup> So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Hushai comes to Absalom and professes his loyalty.

### **2 Samuel 16:16-19**

<sup>16</sup> And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king. <sup>17</sup> And Absalom said to Hushai, *Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?* <sup>18</sup> And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the

LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. <sup>19</sup> And again, whom should I serve? *should I not serve* in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.

After he has gained Absalom's confidence, Hushai contradicts the wise counsel of Ahithophel, in 2 Samuel 17:1-22, which resulted in Absalom accepting Hushai's counsel and David being warned of what is about to take place and thus David is spared.

### **2 Samuel 17:14**

<sup>14</sup> And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite *is* better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

When Ahithophel sees that his counsel has been rejected and that his plans to defeat and destroy David have failed, he returns to his house, puts everything in order and commits suicide! What a tragic end to what had been a good life!

Ahithophel did all these evil things because there was a root of bitterness in his life. He hated David and had merely pretended to be his friend all those years. As that root of bitterness grew in his life, Ahithophel lost sight of his former friendship with David. He lost sight of his walk with the Lord. Everything of value in his life had been choked out and he was left with nothing but

bitterness and hatred. The root of bitterness had utterly consumed this man.

As tragic as these events may be, I would like to point out that there are many today who are also afflicted with a root of bitterness. Because of some events in your past; because of what someone said to you or about you; because you didn't get your way at some point, your feelings are hurt and nothing means as much to you as getting your pound of flesh. You are angry at someone else and you want revenge. You are hurt and you want them to hurt. You are offended and so you give them the cold shoulder, or purposely go out of your way to avoid having to speak to them. You think you are hurting them, but in reality, you are hurting no one but yourself!

### **3. THE TEACHING OF AHITHOPHEL'S LIFE**

#### **A. The Reasons That Produced His Fall**

I have talked a lot about Ahithophel's bitterness, but I have not yet told you what he was bitter over. I think we need to know. There are three passages that reveal the reasons behind this man's bitterness and hatred toward David.

2 Samuel 11:1-27; 2 Samuel 23:34.

When you look at these passages you'll discover that Bathsheba the woman that David committed adultery with was Ahithophel's grand-daughter.

David had treated his grand-daughter like she was a plaything and had arranged the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite.

Considering what David did to Bathsheba, it is no wonder that Ahithophel was angry! And, he allowed his anger to burn for some **9 years**, all the while feigning friendship toward David, biding his time until he could exact revenge.

## B. The Remedies That Prevent Our Failure

With all this in mind, what can we do to avoid being consumed by a root of bitterness? Thankfully the Bible holds the answer to this question.

- Acknowledge you own sin in allowing a root of bitterness to flourish.

When you harbor resentment in your heart and fail to extend forgiveness to those who hurt you, then you are just as guilty as they are in the eyes of the Lord. Your first step is to admit your own wrong before the Lord.

- People must be forgiven.

This is not an option; it is a necessity.

### **Matthew 18:15-17**

<sup>15</sup> Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. <sup>17</sup> And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

### **Matthew 18:21-35**

<sup>21</sup> Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? <sup>22</sup> Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. <sup>23</sup> Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. <sup>24</sup> And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. <sup>27</sup> Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. <sup>29</sup> And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. <sup>30</sup> And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. <sup>32</sup> Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: <sup>33</sup> Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? <sup>34</sup> And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. <sup>35</sup> So likewise shall my heavenly Father do

also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

### **Luke 17:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! <sup>2</sup>It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. <sup>3</sup>Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. <sup>4</sup>And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. <sup>5</sup>And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

### **Ephesians 4:32**

<sup>32</sup>And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- Past events must be forgotten

What happened yesterday can never be changed. But, you do hold the key to tomorrow. You should never allow the hurts of yesterday to control your life today. It is a shame when we drag around the baggage of what someone said, what someone did or how we were hurt. It does nothing but strangle the spiritual life right out of you!

- Hatred and anger must be forsaken

### **Ephesians 4:26-27**

<sup>26</sup>Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: <sup>27</sup>Neither give place to the devil.

This gives serious warning concerning anger within our lives. It allows our adversary, the devil, a foothold from which he can attack every area of our lives! You must bring your bitterness to the Lord!

Close:

If you are carrying around bitterness you need to bring it to the Lord.