



## Nuggets 28: Enjoying Bitterness

"I can never go back." The elderly white-haired man pulled out a bundle of letters to document the wrongs his church had done to him. It was my first ministry with a local church and I was visiting various members who no longer attended services. The old man was adamant. I tried to reason with him: If Jesus could forgive his murderers, could this man not work things out with his church enemies? He could not listen. As far as I know, he died still carrying his load of hatred.

My minister brother has conducted many funerals but he tells of one where the grief was unusually wild and uncontrollable. He later found out why. Several family members had been estranged from the deceased and had waited too late to be reconciled. In spite of our Lord's teaching, many Christians are like that today. A church member was visiting a friend in hospital. She said, "I need to go, because my sister is coming here to see you and I don't want to meet with her." When I heard of the incident I urged the two sisters to reconcile their differences. "You don't want to go to meet the Lord without having forgiven each other."

We get a sick satisfaction from wallowing in bitterness and self-pity, but it comes at a huge price. Stay angry long enough and it turns your heart to stone. You are robbed of the joy of life and are likely to lose your health. In fact you have given your enemy control of your life. Worst of all, you cannot pray for forgiveness of your own sins if you refuse to forgive others their sins against you. Scripture clearly says God will judge you with the same measure you apply to other people. Your addiction to bitterness is not worth it. Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. Vengeance belongs to God. Ask God to soften your heart. Give your anger up to God and be free.

Luke 23:34; Matthew 5:21-26; 6:9-15; 7:1-5; 18:15-18, 21-35; Mark 11:25; Romans 12:16-21; James 2:12,13

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