

Overreacting – A Symptom of Bitterness

From a message by Galen Byers

Southwest Fellowship Meetings

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“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: (25) The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: (26) The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24–26).

I want to bring greetings to each one in Jesus precious name this afternoon.

Overreacting – A Symptom of Bitterness.

For a text I would like to read, turn to Hebrews 12:15 “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.”

This afternoon we are looking at a very negative subject. I am looking to our Brother Stanley for the positive side of it. The brethren have indicated that I take the liberty to be practical. I stand before you in the fear of God. What is being shared this afternoon is not being shared because I have the answers or because I have never had to deal with bitterness in my heart, but with the love and compassion for those who are floundering in this grip of bitterness and also sometimes they do not realise they are in it. Our hearts go out to those as we think of this.

Why was a message of this nature assigned? Are there needs today among the South West churches that have given rise to such a message?

If overreacting is indeed a symptom of bitterness why are these symptoms being tolerated in our homes and churches if this is true? If the bitterness is a sin, and it is, why are we as parents then not rooting out this root of bitterness whereby many are being defiled? Is it possible we are like Isaac of old that we are being we partial because of intemperance in our life? Do we love that savoury meat from a wayward son, is it possible that we have become lax in our convictions that we despise the teachings, the traditions, the lifestyle of the more simple living?

If you are here yet this afternoon and are old enough to understand what we are talking about, do not look critically at your parents, do not look critically at your peers, and also do not look critically at your min-

istry but please look inwardly.

I have been asked to, as I mentioned to be practical, and I cringe at that.

Overreacting. And I would like to read again this verse: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby defile many.”

The Hebrew writer aptly describes bitterness as a root because bitterness works underground or unseen but eventually will surface, bitterness has typically been growing for some time before anyone generally observes it. To deal with it we must know what to look for and what are the symptoms?

And the irony of it is that we can slide into resentment, we can slide into bitterness toward the very people we love and are the ones to help us the most. And this merits and diligence on our part of each of us, to recognize the symptoms of anger and bitterness so that we can deal properly with it for the sake of all. And I am sorry this afternoon but this message has gripped my heart as I see the reactions in the things that are happening amongst our churches today.

Normally I do not define the title but this afternoon I would like to define the title.

Overreacting is “to react with greater force or intensity or emotion than is necessary or expected.” Symptoms — “something that is an outward manifestation of something else or something inside, an unusual feeling or reaction that is a sign of something deeper.”

Bitterness is “a strong feeling of displeasure, a deep-seated feeling of ill-will or a manifestation of such feelings.” Also “an inward seething against something or someone who displeases them.” Words are often critical and often filled with ridicule used to convey to rebuke. Many times an overreacting person is defensive and supersensitive to what others are saying or doing in relation to their life.

Words are often filled with self-pity, sadness and complaint.

An over reacting person does not realize they are on the outlook or susceptible for hurts and slights, it seems that it makes them feel better if they can somehow make others feel guilty, afraid, intimidated or miserable so that others will let them be. The fact that they are helpless to change someone who does not agree with them moves them to frustra-

tion and wrong feelings within.

Over reacting is a sign that we need help.

Many times we do not understand why we act or react to this situation which we find ourselves. Our attitudes are so important and it makes a difference in our actions when circumstances overwhelm us, we make a choice to focus on God or to focus on our problem, and when we focus on the problem we generally drift either to blame or to self-pity, the natural response to hurts and trouble and the most helpless thing we can do is to blame others for our problems, for in doing so we alienate ourselves, poisoning our relationship with that person who can help and should help us.

We all struggle with accepting personal responsibility for certain kinds of behaviour. With a bitter person this problem is multiplied. "It is not my fault that I am in this mess," or "Look what he did or said." "You know people just do not understand me or treat me fairly." And pity is soaked up like water on a sponge.

You know the slightest hurt sends the self pitying person into what I call the "Poor me" syndrome, with sighs and tears and silent suffering and whining or if we blame God we shut off our most important source of help.

Maybe another reaction is the "know it all" attitude.

This is often the result of being ridiculed by others. The "know it all" attitude, the compensation is the compensation for feeling like a nobody. Other areas might be a tendency to go to extremes. It could be a carelessness or a laxness in dress standards or in child training.

When we knowingly, when we intentionally go against the direction, the guidelines of the brotherhood or what the ministry has given for the welfare of the congregation, it is one of the symptoms of bitterness, it is a symptom of bitterness in our hearts. When we intentionally say I will wear "that shirt" or "that pair of trousers" we know that have been spoken against, it is one of the symptoms of bitterness in our hearts. I am convinced that if we desire to be close to God and to desire what God wants us to do and what we know is right that desire would not be there.

Maybe another response or reaction might be to have a "I do not care" attitude instead of responding in a right way, maybe we just block out things or block out people from our lives. I like to look back over

some experiences in the preceding years and I would like to share first a Scripture and then some thoughts that have come to me, I feel like I had been scattered in my thoughts in this message, but bear with me.

In Numbers 20:1–13 we have the account of the children of Israel murmuring against Moses and Aaron because there was not any water. Once before this happened and God told Moses to speak to the rock and it brought forth water and again at this point God told him to speak to the rock and it will bring forth water. And no doubt Moses was tired of hearing the complaining and the frustrations that were coming to him and Moses said to the people: “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock (verse 10-11).

Over reacting is very serious and it cost them their entrance into Canaan, the promised land.

1) One observation is that often a bitter person does not, or will not recognize they are bitter. All we can see is the other individual’s fault and are blind to our own.

2) Secondly, forgiveness stops the snowballing of anger and resentment from continuing on in one’s life.

We know it, we understand it, we’ve been there, how that if we do not deal with these feelings how that it will grow, how that will overcome us if we do not forgive.

3) Thirdly sometimes the overreacting of the individual is a reaction to an overreacting parent.

Sometimes the reaction of someone from a troubled home or church is misunderstood. You know they could be begging for help and they just do not know how to ask for it. And then on the other side this sometimes is a cover-up of one’s carnality or for one’s own lack of conviction and commitment.

4) And overreaction can be because of inconsistencies in church life.

And I am sorry to say that but I think if people know me, I am probably, I hope I am considered as one who is conservative in my attire and all, but brethren the call to modesty is more than that of dress. It is a call that affects our speech, it is a call that affects our conduct, it is a call that affects all of life, it is a call to holy living. And there have been young Christians new in the faith who have become hurt and embittered

by careless and unwise comments from our people, they have had to struggle with feelings that they never needed to endure and one of the sad things that happens when people leave troubled homes and churches and church settings, because of reactions to inconsistencies, there are often convictions lost in the process and then faced with the help that is needed the help is not always received, is not always appreciated as it ought to be.

When people move into new settings, some for good and right reasons, and we appreciate that, and then there are some for reasons not so good, we are in talking in general terms, but if you come here from churches that are troubled and you just cannot get along with your ministry and that they are just critical, I am here to tell you that likely you will find our churches to be the same. And it does make it difficult for us when people come to our churches with the concept that they just love our administration and church life instead of the churches where they come from, they have such a glorious testimony of peace and happiness and the Lord blessing their life until at some point a finger is put on their needs and all of a sudden we are just like the churches back home.

May I say that is a reaction to bitterness.

There is a way for each of us in these situations. Do not despair, do not give up, with God's help we can grow into a relationship with Christ and the Church. Become a builder, be a supporter, put your whole heart into church life you will never regret it.

1) When we blame others, when we blame our parents, our church leaders for inconsistencies, we will pass it on to our children, it will destroy our family spiritually.

This afternoon my mind goes back to the years of a home setting, the husband in the home was a very critical person, he was critical of the ministry, of the church standards, of church authority, today that family of 12 children are largely lost and one step further their grandchildren are less faithful. How sad. In his last few years of his life he repented of his sin, in his dying hour he faced extreme temptation, his plea, I went to visit him in his last hours of life, and his plea to me was: "Galen pray for me, pray with me that I will remain faithful."

When we were not praying we were singing and encouraging him.

In another room were many of his sons, and not concerned about their father or their father's struggle.

If you in your healthy years, your youthful years give place to the tactics of the evil one, give place to the deceiver, even if you repent, there will be a reaping.

My plea brethren and sisters, young men and young women, now is the time to confess your criticalness, now is your time confess your rebellion against authority, now is the time to discipline your lives to change those subtle feelings against worldliness.

Resentment is the cancer of the inner spirit, it will destroy your soul in hell if not repented of. The change from resentment to happiness will not happen in a moment while we are possibly waiting for something to happen. Brethren it involves a connection between the heart and the will and God's grace. Happiness will not coexist with the advent of resentment or bitterness, learning to forgive the people who have hurt us will do more good for our complexion than a car load of facial ointments brethren!

Does God have the answers to our over reacting? He does indeed!

Paul wrote to the Romans about the Holy Spirit who helps our infirmities.

In James 5:16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

Face your problems squarely with unrelenting moral honesty and with God's grace, however deep your feelings, acknowledge it and confess them.

Some people miss deep inner healing because they lack the courage to share and to confess deeply.

2) Secondly accept our responsibility in the matter.

But you say: "I was sinned against, I was a victim, you do not know what happened to me."

True.

But what about my response? What about the fact that we learn to hate or resent or to escape into an unreal world.

Bear with me brethren but there are two reasons why I am against some of these so-called Christian romance books: One is that it is wrong and the second thing is that it allows you to escape into an unreal world

and it will do your family well if you can destroy those books.

But you say: I was innocent, I was ignorant and that is the way it happened the first time.

But what about the second time and the third time whose fault was it then?

You know life is like a complicated tapestry woven with a loom and shuttle, we have heredity, we have environment, all the things that you experienced in childhood from your parents, from your siblings, your teachers and all those handicaps of life, all these are on one side of the loom and they passed the shuttle to you, but remember that you have to pass the shuffle back through the loom and this action together with our response weaves the design in the tapestry of our lives.

We are responsible for our actions.

We will never receive healing until we stop blaming others and accept our own responsibility.

3) Thirdly ask yourself if you want to be healed?

This is what Jesus asked the sick man there who lay thirty-eight years by the pool at Bethesda: “Do you really want to be healed?” (See John 5:1–9).

Or do we just want to talk about our problem? Do we want to use a problem to get sympathy from others?

I am convinced brethren that much of the counselling today produces a dependency on more counselling, and understand me there is a place for counselling and I have no problem with that in the right way, but I am convinced that a lot of the so-called counselling today produces a dependency on it.

4) And fourthly forgive every one who is involved in your problem.

Facing the responsibility and forgiving the people are almost the same action. Jesus makes it very clear that there is no healing until there is deep forgiveness.

5) And fifth forgive yourself.

Yes I know that God has forgiven me but I just cannot forgive myself. How can we really believe that God has forgiven us when we are not willing to forgive ourselves and what others have done?

6) And sixth ask the Holy Spirit our real need.

Ask Him what the problem is and how we ought to pray, He maketh

intercession for us according to the will of God.

May we be open to each other and desire that God through His spirit show us what our real need is.

Now in conclusion there are three tests that I would like for you to take with me.

1) The first one is the resentment test.

Is there someone that we resent that we have not let go of?

It could be a parent, a brother, a sister, it could be our marriage partner, a friend or co-worker. It could be someone who has wronged us in our childhood. Have we let resentment go?

2) Secondly is the responsibility test, and it is a little harder and it goes something like this:

If only John or Joe or Mary or my parents or my wife, my husband or my children, if they had only given me what they owed me I would not be in this mess today.

You know if they would have treated me right I would not have all these personality problems. Do I hear a comforting voice within me saying: "Don't worry Galen, it was not your fault, you would have been o.k. if only . . . you know . . . they made me what I am."

3) And third is the reminder and reaction test, and it is a little more subtle.

Do you find yourself reacting against someone because they remind you of someone else?

Maybe you do not like the way your husband disciplines your children because he reminds you of your father whom you feel over did it. So that causes a clash. You do not like someone, why? Because we really have not forgiven them. Our reminders of that unforgiven person from the past triggers resentment against another person.

I would like to close with a verse, bear with me if it is taken out of context. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8). If we cannot, or if we do not forgive others, we are in a great debt.