

Battle for Your Soul #3: Jericho – The Wall of Bitterness

Battles of the Soul

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Well, what I want to do today is save you thousands upon thousands of dollars of counseling later in your life and if you will listen and take copious notes, I hope, and apply the truths that are presented today, I think that you can do just exactly that. And the fact is, I think that if you were to apply what you learn in this lesson, you could prevent a lot of sickness and illness and psychological problems that could otherwise drain both your energy and your finances.

I spent four years of my life as a, first of all, a psychiatric technician and then later a chaplain to the criminally insane at what was then Russ State Hospital and later part of that became part of the Texas Department of Corrections. I used to teach a Bible class to murderers every week. I used to go pick up about eight guys that had committed murder on a Saturday, took them over to a building where there was no guards by myself and taught them the Bible. And, of course, every now and then one would begin acting up a little bit and I would know that there was about to be a problem and I would take them back to the ward and I remember one time I took one individual back to his ward and I told the nursing staff. I said, "You need to have him seen to right away because he is going to be violent in a day or two." And they didn't pay attention to me. He ended up killing another inmate there that week. And I wasn't afraid because I controlled the coffee. That is how I, you know, if you control coffee you have real power in this world and the people that own Starbucks are in more in control of this country than you really know.

But it was an interesting thing for me to be able to do that. I have also spent 30 years now or, well, coming up on it is actually 29 years here a few months ago as a pastor. And I have discovered that in all of my counseling there is one problem that I have seen people for more than any others. This one problem causes more marriage problems. It causes more problems with kids. It causes more problems with other family members. It causes more psychological damage. It causes more divorce. It causes more physical problems than any other single problem that I am seen about as a pastor. And that is the sin of bitterness.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 2:15-16 that there are three sins that we need to be concerned about. He says, you know, that the... that in the world we meet up with three major sins: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. The lust of the eyes is immorality. Pornography is the number one addictive sin in the United States right now. When people get addicted to it, they just can't seem to quit and it is causing devastation in our society. The second is the problem of the lust of the eyes which is greed. That is, wanting unjust gain. I am amazed that, you know, I was in Las Vegas a few... just it seems like weeks ago, but it has been probably over a month ago now and it is amazing how you can walk out of the hotel at six o'clock in the morning and there will be people who are at the gambling tables who have been up all night long gambling because they have a problem with that desire for gain that is outside of the way that God wants us to get it.

But I think that even though those are both devastating sins—and, by the way, gambling is addictive. That is why they have gamblers anonymous that you can call. And, by the way, it is so cool. You go to the ATM machines in the hotels where you get money so that you can then go to the tables and bet your money. You go to the ATM machines and they have a little statement on there about, you know, if you need gambling help, call so and so.

And I think, “How appropriate. They let you get all the money you have got in your checking account out and gamble it away, but they, just to protect themselves, are going to put the little sticker there that says you may need help with your gambling addiction.”

But, you know, if there is one problem that is worse than any others that I see more people for and I think I have had more time to counsel people for, it is this problem of bitterness in their life. There is nothing quite so much about that.

Now we have already established in two previous sermons that there is a picture in the Old Testament. When people were saved or when people left the slavery and Israel left slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt and then they move out, that was a picture of our... what we would call salvation, but which is more appropriately called in the Bible justification. They had to put the lamb inside of them before they could leave on Passover, basically. They put the lamb inside them and that is, by the way, was beautifully illustrated during the Seder dinner that we had. Then they have to leave Egypt and Egypt was represented by the Pharaoh who wore a picture of a serpent on his crown. That is a picture of our salvation when Jesus Christ comes into us, we leave slavery to the devil. And then they go through the wilderness wanderings and they have the... to go into the Promised Land. And there was a period of wandering because the problem wasn't so much getting the people out of Egypt, it was getting Egypt out of the people. And we talked about the lessons that were learned while they were in the midst of their wilderness wanderings. And now we are getting into the seven battles of the Promised Land.

There are seven key battles listed for us in the story of the Promised land in the book of Joshua and each one of these battles corresponds directly to one of the seven attacks Satan puts on our souls.

Now I want you to notice that there is three kinds of salvation. We are a trinity because we are made in God's image and he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so he made us a trinity as well. We are spirit, soul and body.

By the way, I have heard several times people say, "Body, soul and spirit," but in Scripture it is always mentioned in the order spirit, soul and body. And the fact is, if you want to write this down in your notes, it mentions the word spirit six times for every three times it mentions the word soul and for every one time that it mentions the word body. I take that to mean that the spirit, then, that God looks at us and he sees us as about 60 percent spirit, about 30 percent mind will and emotions and about 10 percent body.

That, by the way, is why we subscribe to courtship rather than dating because the principle of courtship is that during the first phase of courtship you are to be building up spiritual unity with one another. You are to study the Bible together. You are to pray together. You find out if you are spiritually compatible. Then when you are engaged you work on that mind will and emotions. Do you have the same plans? Do you have the same interests? Can you make out your mind together where you are going to live and what kind of work you are going to do and, you know, how many kids you are going to have?

And it is not until after marriage that there is a physical consummation that takes place. That is God's order based on the three parts of man.

Well, in the Bible in Romans chapter five Paul says, "being justified by Christ's death, much more shall we be saved through his life." Justification is knowing that Jesus Christ has forgiven me of my sins because I invited him into my heart as my Lord and Savior and I repented of my sins and I asked for the forgiveness that comes by his shed blood.

Now when I do that, my salvation of my spirit is instantaneous and instantaneously, according to Ephesians four and verse 30, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside my heart and he dwells with me forever. There is also a salvation of the soul which is a progressive kind of thing. It is called sanctification. Every day I should be becoming more like Christ. Now I will tell you, I am nowhere near there yet.

I like Paul in Philippians chapter three where he says, "It is not as though I had already attained either were already perfect, but this one thing I do. I forget what is behind and I set before me the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And that is what I am pursuing. I am to become more and more like Christ every day."

Now, you know, I know my wife thinks I am better than I used to be, but she also will tell you that I am not as good as I need to be. So I am still in that progress. It is a progressive thing.

And then there is one day going to be the salvation of the body or glorification where Paul says in Philippians three that he shall change our vile body, that is the body that gets

all the sin and the sickness and the disease, to be fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Now if you add up justification plus sanctification plus glorification, it equals salvation. That is what we are talking about when we use the word “salvation” is the whole enchilada or the whole package.

Now, when we get into this Promised Land, it is significant to me that the very first battle of the Promised Land is the battle of Jericho because it represents the bitterness of one who is offended.

Now how can we say that? Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 19 said, “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.”¹

Now of all the cities in the Promised Land, Jericho had the most significant walls. The walls of Jericho were 150 feet high. They were 32 feet thick. They could run four to six chariots side by side along the top of the city wall. That is a significant city. That was Jericho’s big claim to fame was how thick and heavy their walls were. They had huge, heavy gates. And how are you going to conquer a city like that back in that day and time?

Well, the common method was to build what was called siege ramp. What you did is you took rocks and you took rubble from some other city you destroyed and you hauled the rocks outside the city and you started piling up the rocks on the city wall. And the problem was is every time you took up a rock to dump outside the city wall, somebody up on top of the walls is pouring hot boiling oil or they are pouring boiling water or they are showering down arrows on you and it was a costly thing. It took sometimes years to build a siege ramp. A city that was a large enough city and had crops growing inside of it and had a water source inside of it—and you will remember Jerusalem had a water source inside of it, because the Bible tells us that Hezekiah stopped up the fountains that were going outside the city of Jerusalem when Sennacherib came and attacked. So you have got all this thing... water and you have got growing. You could survive an awful long time. So they could keep their city shut.

So you [?] to build a siege ramp which may take years because about every time you chunk a rock up there to start building a ramp where you can just drive up the walls and over them, well, somebody is going to get killed.

The other thing was to try to bring down the gates with large battering rams. But these were thick gates. We are not talking about, you know, your average two by four here. We are talking about gates that were sometimes four and six feet thick, of solid wood.

So it was not an easy thing to overcome a city like that. The Bible says that a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.

¹ Proverbs 18:19.

How many of you have ever noticed that when you get your feelings hurt, you can remember it for a really, really, really long time? How many of you have ever noticed that?

The last time somebody really hurt me like that and I still remember it. I have forgiven them, but I still remember. That is the thing. A brother offended is like a strong city.

If we will learn how God says to conquer Jericho, we will learn how we can get past the sin of bitterness in our lives. It is significant that the first city they come to is here. Do you know why? Because if we fail at overcoming bitterness, we will never conquer anything else that is in the Promised Land. Everybody who is going to be a dedicated Christian has to overcome the sin and everyone who doesn't overcome the sin will live the rest of their lives as a defeated Christian.

You see, if you are bitter, you will make others bitter. You will defile many.

Hebrews chapter 12 says that we are not to let the sin or the root of bitterness spring up among us and thereby defile many. So it is easy for us to defile others though that.

Now, whatever we fail to conquer will then continue to torment us. If you don't deal with bitterness in your life, you will continue to feel the effects of it.

Now you need to understand, though, something that God's method of conquering is different from ours. Joshua chapter six. Let's look at these verses, the first five verses of Joshua six.

Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.²

Now, you need to understand man's method for doing a siege, as I indicated, a siege ramp or battering rams. And when people have psychological problems, usually caused by bitterness, do you know what they tend to do? They tend to go see their doctor first. Do you know why they go to the doctor? Because one of the symptoms of bitterness is depression and they think, "I am depressed. I need to get something for depression."

² Joshua 6:1-5.

And so you go to the doctor and they say, “Well, you need to be on [?] or something that will raise your serotonin level,” and they will prescribe that. Or maybe you are having anxiety attacks so they say, “Well, what you really need is you need to be on some [?] right now or some [?] or, you know...” And they will quote a whole list of different medications to get you on so that they can chemically adjust your response and yet what they are doing is they are attacking and treating a symptom rather than dealing with the root cause.

Now you need to understand. I am not saying there is never a time to take pharmaceuticals. But you also need to know that the book of Revelation says that in the last days it says that many will be deceived by witchcraft and the Greek word for witchcraft in the book of Revelation is φαρμακεια (far-mak-i'-ah) from which we get “pharmacy” and “pharmaceuticals.” I think in the last days people are going to depend on pills to solve their problems instead of dealing with the spiritual issues that cause their problems to begin with. And I think that is the great problem that causes so much of this.

So we need to understand that we go to... and if that guy doesn't work, then we go to a counselor. Then we go to a psychologist. And I don't have anything against psychologists. My sister is a psychologist. But the problem is psychology when it is not coming from the Word of God and it is just coming from the things that you learned in school, it is man's attempt to go through a lengthy counseling period to try to get to some lengthy [?] and find out what your momma did that made you so defective so that you can blame her and feel better about yourself and blah, blah, your problem will be cured.

But do you know what? It just doesn't really work that well.

One thing is it takes an awful long time and, secondly, it just doesn't really see results. You see in Psalm 23—and that was the first passage of Scripture I ever memorized. My dad made me memorize Psalm 23 before I ever memorized anything else. Do you remember that part about Psalm 23 where it says, “He restoreth my soul”³?

You see, your soul is your mind, will and emotions. If you have a problem with what you are thinking, you have a problem with what you are feeling, you have a problem with making bad decisions, don't expect a counselor to fix it. Don't expect a pill to fix it.

He, that is, God, the great Shepherd, he restores my soul.

And why do we turn to doctors before we turn to the Lord? Do you remember King Asa? 2 Chronicles records about him and if you remember that, you have probably quoted that passage.

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”⁴

³ Psalm 23:3.

⁴ 2 Chronicles 16:9.

But do you remember that it says in that chapter that King Asa “was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.”⁵

He probably was a diabetic, I am guessing. You know, he had a problem with his feet. But do you know what he did? The Bible points out that he trusted in the physicians rather than trusting in the Lord. And guess what? He did that same thing politically. He wanted to trust an alliance with the Syrians, an alliance with the Egyptians to protect him from the other. So he made an alliance with both of them, thinking that would get him out of trouble and it got him into trouble instead.

So we need to know that man’s method of battering rams, let’s just try to knock it down by force or let’s build siege ramps, go through a long process. This is man’s attempt. But what it results in is a great effort with very little success. And they soon find out that after the counseling is ended, the problem is still there or it comes back because even though his people were trying to provide a valuable service, they were using man’s methods.

But God’s method is a little different. God’s method is based on the fact that the victory for all of our problems has already been won by the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are to claim that victory by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There are three significant steps to any kind of supernatural victory, you need to understand.

Number one, you have to take steps in faith. God always asks us to do certain things that often do not make sense to us.

Let me ask you a question. How much sense do you think it made from a military standpoint to say, “Ok, guys, here is the plan. You are going to go out. We are not even going to carry any weapons the first six days. Each day we are just going to walk around the city. You can’t talk, by the way, while we are marching, so none of that cadence stuff you guys like to do when you are marching, ok? And you are going to be quiet and then you are going to go out and do that for six days. There is going to be a 45 minute silent parade for six days in a row. Now on the seventh day we are going to walk around the city seven times, so seven times 45 minutes, oh, about three hours and 45 minutes. Almost four hours of marching. And on that day you have to keep quiet until you hear the trumpets blow. And then you are all going to shout the word הַלְלֵהוּ (haw-lal’) for praise. You are going to shout... or hallelujah. And when you shout, then the walls are coming down.”

Now how many of you think that is sound military strategy? That is not what is the norm. It requires steps to be taken in faith. But what did Joshua come out and tell the people? He says, “God has given us Jericho.” He said that before the walls came down. Why? Because he was acknowledging that God had already provided the victory. So we need

⁵ 2 Chronicles 16:2.

to take down the wall with a word from God and that is what it means. We need to take down the word.

By the way, my sister who is a psychologist once told me that she thought the best help that could ever be brought to a person was a genuine conversion experience and that is the truth.

So we need to acknowledge that God has already provided the victory. Now, so the first thing we are going to do is take these steps in faith and they have got to march every day for 45 minutes. And, you know, they were kind of like sitting ducks, because, you remember, I mentioned that people could throw stuff down from the wall. They could shoot stuff down from the wall.

Now we do know from Rahab's account that the people in the city were terrified after they had heard about Pharaoh's army being destroyed, after they had heard about the Red Sea parting. They had.... that was a long time ago. That happened 40 years ago, but they still knew about that. They were terrified when the children of Israel came there and yet they had the advantage tactically speaking. And so it was kind of like they were going to be sitting ducks.

By the way, if you look at the Hebrew of this passage, it seems to be that every day Joshua said, "Ok, guys, we are going to have that silent parade today."

The next day he says, "Ok, guys, we are going to have that silent parade today."

The next day he says, "Ok, guys, we are going to have that silent parade today."

I don't think Joshua said, "Here is the game plan," and he told them the whole game plan all at once and said, "Here is what we are doing today."

You know, you have to... a lot of times God doesn't give me the whole picture all at once. I wish that sometimes that I could see what was coming the next 20 years, but all he gives me is what he wants me to do today. That is what he gives me. And that is what I think they did. It took faith to do something unnatural and I am sure they got laughed at quite a bit, too.

Now, you also need to proclaim that God has got the victory.

Now in the Old Testament there were two kinds of trumpets used. There were trumpets that were used to call people to battle and there were trumpets that were used to celebrate a victory. The Hebrew word in here is that these are jubilee trumpets. They are the trumpets to say, "We have won the victory."

So what they are doing and every time you hear the trumpet blowing, they are saying, "We won. We won. The walls aren't down yet, but we won."

What an amazing thing. They are proclaiming victory, the jubilee trumpets. They are basically saying, “God has already given us the victory over your 150 foot high walls and your 32 feet thick walls.” And Joshua has already told us the Lord has given you this city.

Now, we need to decide if we are going to use our weapons or God’s weapons and figure out which one is going to work better.

So has he provided a victory over bitterness? Yes, he has. He has given... he has all the authority to cast out Satan’s strongholds and tear it down and so why do we go to all these carnal weapons that don’t work well when the King of kings and the Lord of lords has already given us the plan? And he... his plan works.

Now, 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verses four and five Paul puts it this way. He says:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.⁶

So how does God want the walls torn down? He wants the walls torn down with a word.

So what is the proposed explanation of the collapse. There are a lot of theories as to why the walls collapsed. One of them is just that, oh, there happened to be an earthquake just at that precise moment.

Now, I want to tell you something quite frankly. The definition of a miracle is a supernatural event or a natural event with precise timing that God causes. So if you want to say that an earthquake hit just at the precise moment, I am ok with that, because it is a miracle. God can make it happen at the time. Although the one area I still have a little problem with the whole earthquake theory is how the earthquake got every part of the wall except for the part that Rahab lived on. By previous agreement that was left standing.

So it was not only a precisely timed earthquake, but a precisely located earthquake. That has got to be a miracle.

My favorite, though, is the idea that after the trumping on the ground sets up a vibration on the ground.

How many of you have ever seen the video of... I think it was made of the London Bridge or some other bridge when they first built it and then wind came up and they actually had video that when the wind hit the bridge there was enough vibration that the bridge just starts doing the sin wave thing and then it just blows apart. Well, a lot of people say,

⁶ 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

“Well, you know, you have all these people, three million people maybe marching around all this time, you know, and that is enough of an earthquake by itself.”

And then, you know, you top that off with they are all going to shout at the same time. It was this harmonic disturbance and the sound waves took out this 150 foot high, 32 foot thick wall.

Well, that sounds like a miracle, too, but the real answer to the question is that God brought down the walls. And not only that, it says he brought down the walls in their place. So they didn't just fall out. They came straight down.

You know, we have to go to school to learn how to set explosives to bring down a building so it comes straight down and doesn't topple all the buildings around it. God just did it. What an amazing thing. That is what really happened. It was a supernatural response of God.

And I believe the word they yelled was hallelujah. I think they were quiet and all the sudden they said, “Praise the Lord,” and that unleashed the power of God. What an awesome thing.

Now, the question is: Do you have a problem with this? Do you have a problem with holding a grudge against someone or still dragging up old offenses or do you have problem with getting depressed or having anxiety or sickness or other problems you feel like you can't get a lot of help?

Well, how do you gain surrendered ground. First of all, you need to know what a stronghold is. A stronghold is a false idea that violates Scripture. And when [?] allow Satan...

By the way, in Ephesians chapter four where it says, “Be ye angry and sin not,”⁷ it actually says in the Greek, “While you are becoming angry, don't sin by what? By being angry.” How do I know that anger is a sin? Because he says in that same chapter, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”⁸

How much of it should be gone? All of it.

James chapter one says, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”⁹

So we know that anger is a wrong thing, but if we go to bed mad we wake up bitter. We live a stronghold open. That is why he says, “Let not the sun go down on your wrath.” Never go to bed mad even if you have to wake the other person up to get that to work.

⁷ Ephesians 4:26.

⁸ Ephesians 4:31.

⁹ James 1:20.

Now, what happens when he sets up a stronghold, there, remember, Satan cannot get in our spirit that belongs to God. Where does he go? He gets our soul. So once he is in our soul, what does he do? He sends out tormenters because he doesn't want just a little bit of our soul. He wants it all. So he starts sending out problems like outbursts of anger and anxiety and maybe anorexia or bulimia.

I know a young girl that started having bulimia. She lost a huge amount of weight, nearly died all because she was bitter about something that someone said to her. Maybe it is depression. Maybe it is problems with lust that you can't get rid of.

So these are the tormentors that come out to torment us. Now here is the steps and these are the steps you should know and some of you probably have a hand on this in your files and that is great, but if you don't, write these steps down.

Number one, you need to confess your pride. Bitterness is the pride of life. How do I know bitterness is the pride of life? What is bitterness? Bitterness is saying, "I deserve better than I got. I didn't deserve to be treated this way."

Let me tell you what you deserve. I am going to be harsh with you here a minute because I need to be harsh with myself. Do you know what I deserve? I deserve eternity in the lake of fire, period, end of discussion. Now if I got anything better than the lake of fire, I ought to be grateful, right? So I don't really deserve... and a lot of me... a lot of times I want to think that I deserve to be treated better than Jesus. How was Jesus treated?

Hebrews 12:3.

"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."¹⁰

So if they are not nailing you to a real cross don't complain. And that is what bitterness does. Grace overcomes bitterness, but it can also prevent it. It says we need to look diligently lest any of us fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness trouble you and thereby many be defiled.

See, grace, though, comes to the humble. James says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."¹¹

You cannot overcome bitterness unless you first confess your sin of pride.

Secondly, you need to repent of your bitterness.

1 John 1:9.

¹⁰ Hebrews 12:3.

¹¹ James 4:6.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹²

He is not just saying, “Confess your sin nature, but confess your individual sins of bitterness.”

And, by the way, I remember one young lady that my wife and I helped her. She had had... she was suicidal. We had to get her some help. We actually got her some medicine to begin with so that we could stabilize her chemically so she wouldn't commit suicide, but the ultimate solution was to help her work through her bitterness. And when we had to get a long yellow legal pad and help her make a list of everybody she was bitter against. And she was bitter about a whole lot of things. And she had to go through one at a time and confess each one of those sins of bitterness and ask God to help her forgive those people. We have got to repent of the bitterness.

See you give up ground in a war, foot by foot, you have got to take it back the same way. You can't just say, “Oh, God forgive me for being bitter.” No, “God, forgive me for being bitter against that guy that told me such and such. And God forgive me for being bitter at that person that hurt me by doing this and doing that.” Confess each sin of bitterness.

Now what are the essentials of repentance? I am not going to spend a lot of time here, because we don't have time. But first of all it is just agreeing with God about how evil your sin has been.

The Bible tells us in Jeremiah, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”¹³

That is the way our heart is. We also need to identify, that is identify what the root cause of our problem is. It is iniquity. Iniquity means me doing things my way instead of doing things God's way. That is what iniquity is.

By the way, in Exodus 20 it says, “I will pass down the iniquity of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

When you do stuff your way instead of God's way, your way may not be sinful. It may not be evil, but if it is not God's way, you will have children who will grow up with that same attitude. They are going to stuff their way.

There is also visualization. When I need to see when I ask God to forgive me that Jesus had to die on the cross for my sins.

¹² 1 John 1:9.

¹³ Jeremiah 17:9.

I had something like this last week. Something happened to me and I actually had a moment where I stopped to picture Jesus Christ hanging on a cross and kind of looking down at me in sorrow because of what I had done. And that is what we need to do.

He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquity. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.

Picture what Jesus did. You nailed him to the cross by your sin.

We need to, then, receive cleansing.

I love the fact that he doesn't just forgive, he cleanses. If you will confess your sins, God is faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Now here is the one you are not going to do. I hope you are like my... I have one daughter that if I tell her she is not going to do something, she is not going to do it. She will do it. She will say, "That's it." You know? So she is determined.

You probably won't do this one, but this is the most important one. You need to loudly, that means, out loud with your voice that can be heard in a room claim the blood of Jesus Christ.

Do you notice that they walked around the city on the seventh day and they didn't just all then stop and silently pray for the walls to pray down? They shouted. They shouted out loud. This is the pattern for how we overcome bitterness and we need to shout out loud.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ..."¹⁴

You need to out loud say, "Father, I claim the blood of Christ. Take back the ground I have given over to Satan." And I will talk more in a minute why that is important.

What are your weapons? What are the weapons? If we know the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, what are there?

In Revelation chapter 12 it says there are three things that overcome the devil. You don't hear anything else I say to day, write these three things down. Number one, the first thing is the blood of the lamb. The devil cannot handle the blood of Jesus Christ. He can't handle the lamb. So when you start praying, "God, I ask you by the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ," right then Satan is unhinged because he can't overcome the blood. That is what overcame him.

And it says they overcame him not only by the blood of the lamb, and by... but by the word of their testimony. It means that they opened their mouths and testified of the grace

¹⁴ 1 Peter 1:18-19.

of God. And then the last thing they loved not their lives unto death. In other words, they were willing to die for Jesus.

Those three attitudes overcome the devil. Those are our spiritual weapons. So we have got to loudly proclaim the blood of the lamb. I am going to give you an example of this in just a minute.

Number four. Ask God to retake the ground in your soul. The Bible says, “He restoreth my soul.”¹⁵

He is the only one that can take it back, not the pastor, not the priest, not the chiropractor, not the doctor, not the counselor. He brings it back. And God wants to do that. He wants to glorify himself by getting you freedom from your bitterness, your depression, your anxiety. You gave the ground to Satan, but he still has to leave if God evicts him. So let God evict him. Crank up the volume. It is important you pray out loud.

Jericho is overcome by a shouted word. Do you know what? When I can ignore the normal chatter of my kids. Right? Because I am pretty good at it. Sometimes they are talking to me when I suddenly realize they are talking to me. This morning one of them walked in and I gave her instructions. I said, “Hope, I need you to do this, this and this.” And it was only minutes later that I realized it wasn’t hope that was even in the room. It was Grace, you know? And I just never even took the time to look up.

But, you know, there is another moment as a parent when I hear a child cry in pain that tall of the sudden I can drop everything and pay attention and focus on that one child.

Yesterday, I had just gotten out of the car coming back from an errand and I heard a child scream in pain. I instantly looked around. It wasn’t one of my children. Somebody else had fallen while they were roller skating and she was in some serious pain and I was motivated to want to go and help her immediately because that is what that cry does to a parent.

When we cry out loud to God it moves him to come and deliver us from... and give us back the ground we gave to Satan.

Number five, the stronghold is a false idea. You have to replace false ideas with truth. You have to replace them with truth.

Now what are the ideas that cause bitterness? One of the lies is: I deserve to be treated better than I got. The truth is I deserve the lake of fire. The truth is that Jesus endured far more and I shouldn’t deserve to be treated better than Jesus was, so I need to meditate on Scriptures to teach me that.

And then, like every good bottle of shampoo says, “Rinse and repeat,” because I find that people that have a problem with bitterness aren’t just bitter toward one person. They are

¹⁵ Psalm 23:3.

bitter about life. They become bitter people. Bitter is an acid that does more damage to the vessel it is stored in than to the victims upon whom it is poured. And a bitter person will just be full of bitterness. And guess what? You have got to keep doing this. You have got to keep going through this process. Keep asking God to take back the ground when you are bitter against that person.

Now, let me give you a case study and we will be done. You know, in my industry and I know Donny has to do this in his work, too, people are always interested in case studies. Show me where it worked.

Well, let's talk about David. David had a stronghold. We don't have time to read the story in 1 Samuel chapter 25, but it goes something like this. When David was running from Saul, he and his men happened to be up in the hills and there was a fellow by the name of Nabal and Nabal had a bunch of herdsmen out taking care of his flocks and so David just started kind of protecting them, kind of a nice thing for David to do, right? And the fact is. The herdsmen later gave the testimony. He says, "They were like a wall unto us. They protected us." So they didn't have to worry about anybody else coming to steal the flocks. That means they didn't have to worry about anybody attacking because David and his mighty men. And he had about 600 men with him about the time and he had 600 men out there protecting these herdsmen and it was like everything was great. But one day David decides to go into town. He has been doing this out of hospitality.

By the way, he does not have a signed contract with Nabal that says he gets anything. The fact is, Nabal has never asked for David's help. David has been nice and he has been doing this, but one day David gets this stronghold in his head that says, "I deserve to be rewarded."

What did David deserve? Everybody says, "The lake of fire." Say it again "The lake of fire."

What is the best... what do you actually deserve by what you do? Say it with me. "The lake of fire." That is what you deserve, right? So David deserved the lake of fire, but he thought, "I deserve, I have a right to be repaid for what I do. I want some wool. I want some fabric. I want some food. I want some drink and that food better be lamb, because I am hungry."

Well, but he had no right. So then people take his request to Nabal and Nabal sends back word and says, "Who are you? I don't know you. I don't have a contract with you. I never said I would pay you anything. Why should I give of my food and my drink and my wool when you are an enemy of the king?"

Because guess what? Saul and David are not on good terms.

Well, David gets so mad at this point. And let me tell you something. You will never do anything right when you are angry. Let me say that again, because some of you didn't get it. You will never do anything right when you are angry.

“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”¹⁶

You know what he said? He said, “Boys, put on your swords. We are going to kill every man and every boy that is part of Nabal’s household, whether it is his servants or whether it is his heirs. It doesn’t matter. There is this ungrateful idiot and we are going to go show him a thing or two.”

Now, the good news is that he never quite followed through on that because Abigail went out and took some cakes and took some other things to appease the wrath of David, but you will never read in Scripture where he repented of his unrighteous anger. He never repented of it. He never said, “God, I was wrong. I didn’t deserve those things.”

So do you know what happened? Years later he is walking along the top of a palace and he sees something he wants, kind of like he used to see the sheep and the wool and the lamb and the food. And he sees Bathsheba and he commits adultery with her. Then he has the husband Uriah killed to try to cover up his sin. And so Nathan the prophet comes to him.

What kind of story does Nathan tell David? It is a story about sheep. Now why would God send a story about sheep? Because David has never resolved his problem about sheep. So God is going to bring it back up again.

He says, “Well, there was this poor guy and he only had one lamb and it was like a daughter to him and it was like a pet in the house. And there is this rich guy next door and he has got all kinds of herds. [?] on the back 40 he gets a company comes over for dinner and he is wondering what to cook him so he steals his neighbor’s only lamb and kills him.”

Now let’s talk for just a moment about what the law required. The law says if you steal you have to repay four times the amount stolen. So what the law would require is that you... this man would have to give back four lambs to the man whose one lamb was stolen.

What was David’s reaction? He says, “Kill the man and then make him repay the four lambs.”

He actually says, “Kill him first.” And then he says, “And make him repay four lambs.”

He kind of had things out of order, right? How many of you think you are paying your bills after you die? That is one of the best things I look forward to about death is not having bills anymore.

¹⁶ James 1:20.

You know, so he orders the execution of the man and then he require [?]. He is going way beyond the law. Why is he so upset? Because he is still bitter about sheep. He has never resolved it.

We are always oversensitive in the areas we are hurting and that is where we overreact. Do you want to know if... if you want to know where you have a sore spot, look at what upsets you and that is where you have got a problem.

But I want you to look. He repented. In Psalm 51, I wish we had time just to read the psalm, but he first of all, he just confesses his sin. He says... and, in fact, just look at Psalm 51 for just a minute. I want you to notice something you probably don't notice and if you are using a Bible program or Bible software, your Bible software will probably get this wrong because there is something you may not know about your Bible.

Look at Psalm 51. Now in my Bible and this is one of those Hebrew Greek key study Bibles. It has got a big bold print title here. It says, "A prayer for this... for spiritual cleansing."

Now that is something the Bible editors put in there. But underneath in small print it says these words.

"To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."¹⁷

The Bible editors did not put that in. That is called a superscription of the psalm and it is part of the Hebrew text. Even though it doesn't have a verse number assigned to it, it is part of Scripture. And this is a psalm of David so guess who put these words here saying, "I sinned with Bathsheba"? David did. He is confessing his sins.

And then he asks for forgiveness.

He says, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."¹⁸

He is crying out loud for God to forgive him. He confesses his sin and then he asks for forgiveness. And then he acknowledges sin.

He says, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."¹⁹

So he acknowledges the root cause as iniquity. And then he repents of his sins.

He says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."²⁰

¹⁷ Psalm 51:1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Psalm 51:2.

He says, "I have done this. This is sin, all sin. It is against you."

So he repents of his sins. And then he claims the blood of the lamb. Look at verse seven.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."²¹

What was hyssop used for? Exodus. They are getting ready. It is Passover night. They were to dip a branch called hyssop into the blood of the lamb and they were to paint the door posts of their house with the blood of the lamb so that the angel would pass over him.

When he says, "Purge me with hyssop," what he is saying is, "Cover me with the blood of your sacrificial lamb."

And who is that, by the way? It is Jesus. So he claims the blood of the lamb.

And then what does he do? He asks God to take back the ground.

He says:

Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.²²

He says, "God, give me back the ground I gave over to the devil. Let me be joyful in you again."

And then he experiences revival.

He says, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."²³

Do you see how that every one of the steps that we just looked at from conquering the walls of Jericho are covered in the life of David? And if you want to find out how David felt afterwards, go read Psalm 32 because he wrote Psalm 32 immediately after penning the words to Psalm 51. And he says, "What a blessing it is to be forgiven."

So here is the time for application.

²⁰ Psalm 51:4.

²¹ Psalm 51:7.

²² Psalm 51:8-12.

²³ Psalm 51:13.

Have you given any ground over to the devil? Maybe thought the lust of the flesh, immorality, pornography; the lust of the eyes, greed and most of all the pride of life. See most of us pretty well know pornography is evil and most of us don't play the lottery, but pretty well all of us get our feelings hurt or get our nose out of joint and we let it sit and we let it seethe and we let it fester and we let it rot and we let it fume and we let the embers blow until one day we explode and hurt those we love the most.

Maybe I am just speaking for me because I have done that. Maybe you have never done it. But if you have done it, then you need to claim Christ for victory today in your life. You need to cry out.

Here is just a sample prayer. I am not going to make you do it here because I think maybe you want to do it in private, but I do pray that you will cry it out loud.

You say, "Abba, Father, take back the ground I have given to Satan through my sin of bitterness against so and so. I claim your forgiveness for my sin by the blood of the lamb Jesus Christ. I know he is my Savior. I ask you to rebuke Satan and tear down his strongholds in my life that makes me think I ought to be treated better than Christ was. Fill me with your truth, with your love and your forgiveness. I pray this as your child in Jesus' name. Amen."

Here is the ... let me tell you the difficult part about being a pastor. People have very complex problems. And do you know what people want when they have complex problems? They want a complex solution. I am an engineer. Do you know what my job is? To design complex solutions for people. But do you know the reality is the most complex of problems with God has simple solutions because God's ways are not our ways and he doesn't lay siege ramps and he doesn't knock things down with battering rams. He overcomes with just a word.

Look in the book of Revelation. When he comes back, the Messiah riding on that white horse and he has the name written in the thigh that says he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and he comes out to the battle of Armageddon where all the battles of the earth are being fought, all the armies of the earth have gathered for one great battle. And what kind of strategy does he use?

Well, in my Bible he just speaks a word and the sword goes out of his mouth and destroys the armies of earth. He doesn't use a bomb. He doesn't use automatic weapons. He doesn't use tanks. He speaks a word.

Do you know what? Just let God heal that hurt by crying out and confessing your own sin of the pride of bitterness.

Let's stand.

I appreciate so much your patience at hearing God's Word and not getting up and running out and looking at the watch, but do you know what? This is probably the most significant lesson you will ever hear me teach because I see more people of counseling for this problem than any other problem. You master this and the rest of the battles in the Promised Land start to look a lot easier.

Jericho was the hardest of the cities they took, but it was the easiest of victories because they obeyed God.

What number are we singing?