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Bitterness is one prison that can mentally enslave us. It is always destructive and never constructive. It keeps us focused on past negatives and prevents us from claiming a future bright with the promises of God. We learn that we can overcome bitterness in Ephesians 4:31.

*Ephesians 4:31:*

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you....*

Let's consider some actions and principles that can help us overcome bitterness.

Overcoming bitterness takes diligently watching our thoughts. We are to be on guard in our own mind and life so there is no category where we allow any root of bitterness.

*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.*

We are not to allow bitterness to even germinate. When I was a young boy, our family had a huge garden that would produce much good fruit. We took great care to see that each plant had good soil and plenty of water and nutrients. Weeds would try to grow next to the plants and steal those life-giving nutrients, so the weeds needed to be plucked out. They could be removed easily when they were small, but once they had sunk their roots down deep, it took considerably more time and effort to pull them out! I would check the rows of plants daily in order to pull those weeds before they had a chance to get rooted in. Similarly, we need to guard our heart and mind to not let even one bitter thought take root and begin to spring up.

Another action we can take to overcome bitterness is to refuse to envy. Often bitterness comes from envy, where an individual believes something that should have been theirs

was given to someone else or that they were deprived of something that should have been theirs.

*James 3:14,15:*

*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.*

*This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

We must refuse to envy, which could lead to seeking revenge or wishing ill toward the person we are envious of. Thoughts such as these that rise up in our minds are “earthly, sensual, devilish,” and need to be cast down and rooted out.

Additionally, true forgiveness eradicates bitterness. Bitterness comes when people retain and incubate anger and hurt rather than resolve issues according to God’s Word; it comes from being unforgiving. If I think I may have offended someone, I find them and ask for forgiveness. If I am offended, I go to the person I have a conflict with, get the matter cleared between us, and offer my forgiveness to stop any resentment that may try to incubate in our hearts toward each other. When we remember that God has forgiven us, it can be easier for us to decide to forgive others.

*Ephesians 4:32:*

*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*

We also walk out of the mental prison of bitterness when we are kind and forbearing. The principle of being kind includes the idea of being good and gentle toward others, even in the face of ingratitude. When we are forbearing, we bear up, bear with, endure, hold up, or sustain others. Realizing the kindness and forbearance God has shown us can help us be kind and forbearing as well, which will prevent bitterness from germinating.

Overcoming bitterness requires diligently watching over our thoughts. We weed out thoughts of resentment and anger and replace them with the Word. We refuse to envy others, and we forgive others as God has forgiven us. In all situations, we can choose to be kind and forbearing. As we apply these actions and principles, we walk out of the mental prison of bitterness so we can move forward to claim a future bright with the promises of God.

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