

# The Lakeview Lamp

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* - Psalm 119:105

July 16, 2006

## Bitterness

Bob Waldron

(Bob Waldron will be with us next Sunday to lead us in our gospel meeting. There is a meal list for him posted above the flyers advertising the meeting. Sign the meal list and take some flyers.)

In the New Testament there is a family of words having to do with bitterness, and in the Classic Greek Dictionary, published by Follett, a greater number of words in this family [*Pikria* and *Pikros*] are discussed. They are defined as "bitterness of temper, bitterness, malice, venom, spleen;" "of sound: sharp, piercing, shrill; of taste: sharp, pungent, bitter; of persons, words, acts, etc.: bitter, cruel, harsh, stern, morose, severe; also hateful, hostile" (560).

Often bitterness is the result of things that have happened in one's life. When Naomi returned to her home in Bethlehem, her former acquaintances asked, *"Is this not Naomi [Pleasant]?" She answered, "Call me not Naomi [Pleasant], call me Mara [Bitter] for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me"* (**Ruth 1:20**). This is the person who has had such suffering as to cause despair. In the words of King Lemuel's mother, wine is not for the king who must think clearly and exercise good judgment. *"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul: let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more"* (**Prov. 31:6-7**). Of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the Bible says, *"And she was in bitterness of soul"* (**1 Sam. 1:10**). This bitterness may consist of one's conviction that his situation is hopeless. He sees no good anywhere. He is depressed, disappointed, and cynical.

Probably there are times when we have all experienced this feeling. We may have been betrayed by a friend, defrauded from what was rightfully ours. We may have suffered great loss, seen our aspirations dashed to the ground. Think of Jesus. *"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"* (**John 1:10-11**). What did He do, when these things happened to Him? He *"committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously"* (**1 Pet. 2:23**). At times like these we need our faith the most, and one of the great lessons of scripture is to wait on the Lord. The message of the 25<sup>th</sup> Psalm is so helpful to avoid bitterness arising from life's inequities and disappointments: *"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, in thee have I trusted, let me not be put to shame; let not mine enemies triumph over me"* (**Ps. 25:1-2**). Verses 3, 5, 21 all entreat us to wait for the Lord. Our prayer should be: *"The troubles of my heart are enlarged; oh bring thou me out of my distresses"* (**Ps. 25:17**).

Of the greatest concern in the Scriptures is bitterness toward others. Sometimes one's faith has been so shattered that he is completely cynical and sees no good or hope in anything. One may be so motivated by hatred and malice that every action is filled with venom and spleen. The Hebrew writer warns us to look carefully *"lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled"* (**Heb. 12:15**). The idea of bitterness is found in the context of *"following after peace with all men"* (**vs. 14**). This "follow" is plural. Everyone is to follow after peace. This following involves a "looking carefully" lest any root of bitterness spring up and trouble those involved with the result that the many be defiled. Bitterness was associated with poison because many natural poisons are bitter. It was probably such bitterness that alerted the sons of the prophets that *"there is death in the pot"* of pottage that had been cooked for them (**2 Kings 4:40**).

In Paul's description of the wickedness of men in **Romans 3**, he says, *"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"* (**Rom. 3:14**). This bitterness includes the excesses of language, such as railing, that many practice. It is disturbing to see how those who claim to be brethren can say the sharpest things. Even when one disapproves what another teaches, there is no room for bitterness, and one wonders what really drives the harshness of language that is used. Could it be matter of ego to think that anyone would challenge what another says? Could it be a matter of personal dislike that spills over into hatred of a person, and not just hatred of the evil that another does? If ever excessive language would be justified, it would be in dealing with the devil. *"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee'"* (**Jude 9**).

In dealing with bitterness remember that it can just be short-circuited. If one refuses to harbor bitterness, then it cannot prompt him to manifest bitterness in wrong-doing. Suppose one is truly mistreated by another. If sin is involved, go to the brother and talk to him about it (**Matt. 18:15-17**). Whatever another person does, determine that bitterness will not find a home in your heart. And be doubly determined not to cause bitterness in another by your words or deeds.

When Paul tells husbands to love their wives and to be not bitter toward them (**Col. 3:19**), he is warning those who have been given leadership in the relationship not to be harsh. Husbands, listen to yourselves when you deal with your wife. How would you like to be spoken to like that? As the physically stronger, as the one who is the head, harshness can come easy in dealing with those who are under our care and who are dependent upon us, but it must not, neither to our wives, nor to our children.

Bitterness begets bitterness. Harsh, severe treatment tends to provoke a response in kind. Moulton and Milligan define the word found in **Ephesians 4:31** (*Pikria*) as “properly ‘an embittered and resentful spirit which refuses reconciliation’ (Robinson *ad* Eph. 4:31)” (p. 512). Coupled with the word “wrath” in that passage, bitterness means “bitter hatred.” In any relationship we need to remember the admonition of the apostle Paul: “*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love*” (**Eph. 4:1-2**).

*“May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.” – Psalm 90:16*

# **Family News**

**Alex Bansemer** is in Sewanee till Saturday. You can email him at alexbans@comcast.net or write him at (use four lines):

Alex Bansemer          SSMF          735 University Ave          Sewanee TN 37383

**Mary Burnett** was doing well this past week.

Remember **Quinton Coppage**.

**Dorothy Davis**, Troy's grandmother, is in Maury Regional Hospital with bacterial pneumonia.

**Elmo Ferrell** has been having stomach problems but was better yesterday.

**Sandra Hunt** still has a great amount of shoulder pain. She has several doctors' appointments over the next few weeks.

**John Jenkins**, Robert's father, has lung cancer.

**Jennifer Lindzy**, Fran Pickens' 33-year-old granddaughter, still faces more chemotherapy treatments for cancer.

**Laura Moore** was involved in a wreck that totaled her car, but she is fine.

**Fran Pickens** has had a lot of pain and been sleeping a lot lately.

**Cotton Read** is waiting for his eyes to heal some more after his surgery before getting new glasses. **Nancy** is feeling some better.

**Laura Reed** had to put a sick dog to sleep – a very difficult decision for her.

Remember **Georgia Taylor**.

**Ame White** had several bad days this past week.

**Robert Wray** continues to see better out of his right eye after cataract surgery. He will return to the doctor on July 25<sup>th</sup>. If things continue to go well, he should have surgery on his left eye soon after that.

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: **Alex B.; Heyboer's; Doris Johnson.**

## **Lakeview church of Christ**

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*"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).*