

Have You Seen What We've Seen? (Observation 3)

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

In Observation 2 we cited our God's view of Himself, ***"I AM WHO I AM"*** (Exodus 3:14). You can readily understand that our Lord as Creator of everything (including redeeming you) has a right to do whatever He wants. *But* that understanding comes ***if*** you haven't brought Him down to your level by perceiving Him through the lens of your own human attributes. *Consider this*: What you think is unjust or unfair concerning the past pain and suffering He allowed in your life doesn't give you the grounds to judge a Lord Who is the personification of ***love, forgiveness*** and ***compassion***.

Do your own religious beliefs say that He *doesn't* use suffering and trials, or that He *has no right* to inflict them on you? If this is what you believe then you're sorely mistaken. It's an *undeniable biblical fact* that our Father does use suffering and trials to help us become more Christ-like. So we want to encourage you about those you went through in your past *before* you became *genuinely* born again.

For those Christians who know that our heavenly Father does use suffering and trials, yet think that He only started to use these to develop Christ-like character *after they were born again*, that's not so! We've found through our own experience as well as the testimonies of many of our Father's children that He had been using suffering and trials *during our unbelieving years* to help prepare us in our transformation *after we received the indwelling Holy Spirit*.

Our Father certainly allowed a variety of instruments to contribute to or cause our emotional suffering. A common source of emotional suffering from the past for many people was parenting which had little of Christ in it. But no matter *who* has incited your pain, you need to face this reality: Our Father allows those who will later on become His child as adults to experience the temptation to give in to a **prison of bitterness** *if* they refuse to forgive those who hurt them, including their parents.

"For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin" (Acts 8:23).

Why are we discussing bitterness for the umpteenth time? Because during the years we conducted retreats and seminars around this nation and Canada, we came to realize that **bitterness is the most prevalent sin (and demonic stronghold) within Christianity**. Today even more people are beset by the impact of bitterness in their lives, especially in the intensity of ways in which their bitterness is acted out.

You might think that you aren't "bitter" against anyone. But think about this. Any ongoing unforgiveness, any deep-seated resentment against someone, any categorical hatred for a specific category of people, any desire for vengeance against someone who hurt you: these are all manifestations of unresolved bitterness within you.

We're going to delve a little deeper into bitterness by stating firmly that **TIME DOESN'T HEAL!** We met many people as we held seminars on the Hebraic foundations and shared the Gospel of the Covenant. During that period we discovered that only a tiny

handful of every 100 self-identified “Christians” have a ratified and consummated Covenant relationship with our Father in Christ. The majority of “Christians” admitted there was no sign or evidence of the Spirit’s presence in their lives. For many, someone had told them they were “saved” when they agreed with a few Bible verses and “went forward.” And tragically, each had in common one particular sin they clung to which kept our Father from ratifying and consummating His Covenant with them: **bitterness!**

If you’ve read our article, *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation* <<https://restorationministries.org/download/gospofcov2.pdf>>, or our series of lessons with the same title <https://restorationministries.org/gospel_covenant.html>, then you know that our Lord’s first followers understood that our Father will not consummate a relationship with an unforgiving person. Why? Because in light of the tremendous sacrifice of His own Son to bring about His forgiveness, our Father refuses to consummate His Covenant by sealing the unforgiving with the Holy Spirit (2Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30). The bitter and unforgiving have no grateful appreciation for the price Jesus paid on their behalf. Rather, they trivialize His sacrifice as their “escape route” from punishment so that they can continue to enact their own will and desires and yes, their perceived right to not forgive those who hurt them. That attitude reflects self-righteous, self-excusing pride. And to the earliest followers of Jesus, bitterness and pride were synonymous.

To our Father your bitterness is obnoxious arrogance!

Several years ago we knew an older married woman who seemed like the epitome of Christian kindness. But during a visit with her and her husband, Mike had a revelation from the Holy Spirit that she was hiding behind a **sinister facade**. (*Any time the Holy Spirit used the word “sinister” to reveal something about someone to Mike, he knew he needed to probe this secret motive more thoroughly.*) Mike prayed silently and asked the Holy Spirit for guidance. He heard in his spirit to ask her about her sister’s relationship with her own daughter. She told us that she was the “bridge” between her sister and her daughter because there was a lot of tension and misunderstanding between the two of them. Mike pressed the woman for what she did to serve as a *peacemaker* between the mother and daughter. The woman unashamedly admitted that she had no intention of bringing about peace — she was bitter against her sister and felt her sister deserved the emotional pain she was in.

Can You Be Forgiveness of Anything by our Heavenly Father If You Do Not Forgive Those Who’ve Hurt You? NO!

Many inside Christianity today have been made to feel comfortable in their bitterness, that it’s not anything they need to deal with. We haven’t heard of one clergy person or other religious leader insisting on *forgiveness as a prerequisite to someone who’s bitter becoming born again.* So there are masses of bitter people within Christianity who were entertaining bitterness *before* someone declared them “born again” and who haven’t repented of their bitterness even now. This sad reality is also true for those who were baptized as infants and go on in Christianity beset with unresolved bitterness, wondering why they can’t find lasting peace.

Our Lord Jesus clearly warns of the dire consequences of holding on to unforgiveness. His words should evoke fear in you if you haven't forgiven all who have hurt you.

• *“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins”* (Matthew 6:14,15).

• *“And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother”* (Matthew 18:34,35).

The apostle Paul also offers this mandate to forgive:

• *“Bearing with each other and forgiving one another if any of you has a grievance against someone; as indeed the Lord forgave you, so also you must forgive”* (Colossians 3:13).

“Bearing with” and “forgiving one another” are ongoing commands. So, **FORGIVE!**

Again, our heavenly Father's aim before we became His child has been to use suffering as a sort of “meat tenderizer” in our emotions. That's so we could truly appreciate His amazing gift of reconciliation through His Son Jesus and the ongoing transformation work of the Holy Spirit when we are born from above. Most people respond to being hurt by others by incarcerating themselves in a **prison of bitterness** rather than remaining free and forgiving. And among the bitter who are inside westernized Christianity, few want to face the reality that our loving God would *allow* injustice or mistreatment to happen to them.

We'd like to share about parenting for those of you hurt by your own: **“Every parent does the best they can with what they have going for themselves at the time they're raising their children.”** Relationally secure and loving homes haven't been the growing-up experience of many who become parents themselves, so they don't have godly role models to draw from in their own child raising. And with the prevalence of broken homes and multiple marriage partners, even adult children find themselves deeply wounded and vulnerable to bitterness.

This is why we've encouraged parents who become a child of our heavenly Father to quickly take this essential step for the well-being of their children: 😞 to ask forgiveness from their offspring for not knowing His way of parenting earlier. And as soon as possible after that child becomes the Father's child in Christ, 😞 he or she should ask forgiveness of their parents for holding onto unforgiveness. (If the child had been instructed according to God's Word, he or she would have forgiven others when they sought to be forgiven by Him.)

If you're a parent or an adult child who has hurt the feelings of others, or if you have been the person whose feelings have been hurt, see if you recognize this result in yourself:

After you have asked and/or received forgiveness, did you notice that your heart is more tenderized and receptive to being transformed into our Lord Jesus's foremost character qualities of **love, forgiveness** and **compassion**?

Before you were *genuinely* born again our heavenly Father allowed painful emotional experiences in your life so that you may feel the **prison of bitterness** if you choose to take that path. But when the Holy Spirit takes up His dwelling in you since you *have* forgiven others, you also experience that it is easier for Him to instill within you **love, forgiveness** and **compassion**. Maybe this will help you understand:



Reconciliation with our heavenly Father through asking and receiving *His forgiveness*, as well as asking forgiveness *of one another* and giving it to each other is one of the reasons we used the drawing of the father and the prodigal son on the cover of our book, *Restoring The Early Church*. The Hebraic Restoration is our Father's means to reconcile people to Himself through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus in the Covenant union He wants them to have with Him. Living out our part of this union as His beloved children means that we resolutely strive by His grace to fulfill His purposes. And key to this role is living as His *ambassadors of reconciliation* so that others too might respond to Who Jesus is and what He has done.

“Now all things are of God, Who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2Corinthians 5:18,19).

After freeing yourself from your own prison of bitterness through forgiving whoever hurt you, you are prepared to serve as our Father's *ambassador of reconciliation*. Having tasted the bitterness of unforgiveness yourself and found healing in Jesus, you are better able to help others who are beset by bitterness themselves. Your new character qualities of **love, forgiveness** and **compassion** both humble you and help keep you from having a holier-than-thou Pharisaic attitude toward the bitter unbeliever you're reaching out to as Father's ambassador. Your own prior bitter experience causes you to care more for the ones you're ministering to rather than wondering with self-righteous disdain how could they ever be so unforgiving.

You may have observed as we so often have over the years that our Lord's three non-optional “cards of transformation” — **love, forgiveness** and **compassion** — are in very short supply in Christianity. Bitterness by far outpaces our Lord's character qualities which uphold His gracious reputation! If anyone falsely believes that they're our Father's child even while they refuse to be His humble ambassador of reconciliation, they're really just a dead fly on a dung heap.



***“The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;
they go down to the inmost parts” (Proverbs 26:22)***

We want to end this Observation by discussing how some who have been freed of bitterness may have slipped back into sin, specifically becoming bitter on behalf of someone else you believe has been mistreated. This is because you *allowed yourself to listen* to **bitter-laden, disparaging gossip** that was spoken against another person. We've warned a good number of Christians to avoid this demonic trap. Over time, listening to gossip or slander becomes as addictive as opioids — you crave more bad reports about others because it makes you feel better about yourself. What you don't realize is that demonic strongholds develop in your soul, and they sound just like your own mental voice. **You're back in a bitter-ensnared prison!**

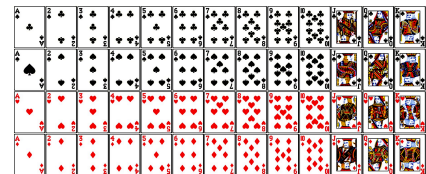
If you want to respond in the grace of our Lord Jesus, do this. When someone is trying to disparage another person's reputation, you should immediately ask them, 🖐️ **“Why are you telling me this?”** and, 🖐️ **“Why are you telling me this now?”** Serving as a Spirit-empowered and Christ-loving peacemaker compels you to confront gossip and slander at its root so that authentic reconciliation might then take place.

And finally, some questions for yourself:

- Do you have anything against anyone else?
- Does anyone else have anything against you?
- Through *your* very lack of being an ambassador of reconciliation to God, and/or, a peacemaker with others, are you keeping others from being reconciled to Him?

In our next Observation we'll dive deeper into bitter issues which face parents and their children in particular. But for now we encourage you to look for evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in yourself, your family and your faith family. One of the more crucial evidences is that you are a determined ambassador of reconciliation — first with our Father and then as a peacemaker with others. You will increasingly manifest these responses *and* our Lord's key character qualities of **love, forgiveness and compassion** if you are resolutely determined in pursuing all 52 cards of His transformation process in your life.

Mike & Sue



PS Thank you for joining us in praying on behalf of the work of Ron and Nicki and the orphanage/unwed teen mothers farm in Ecuador! Three more needs have arisen this past week. In order to market the coffee beans they grow to help them be more self-sustaining, the farm needs to incorporate that part of their work separately. Please pray that our Father will incline the heart of Pedro Lopez, Ecuador's corporation official, to approve it. Also, the latest harvest of coffee beans at the farm was stolen (not unusual for that area, Ron says). Please pray for creative ways to protect subsequent harvests, and for repentance to come upon the thieves. Finally, the sale of the property in Bend, Oregon has almost finalized so the funds can be used to help the orphanage ministry. Please pray for completion of the sale to meet this need!