

WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

HERODIAS

Patlyn McKinnon

The root and fruit of bitterness: Mark 6:14-29

Historians record her as Herod the Great's granddaughter. She was first married to Phillip (Herod the Great's son, her uncle). Gets divorced then marries a man who was also divorced (her other uncle, Phillip's brother, Herod).

Bitterness, when not dealt with, is very much like a weed. It takes root and grows until it produces fruit which produces seeds of bitterness that spread and infect those around it.

Causes of bitterness

John spoke out publically and continually to Herod against his sin of being married to his brother's wife (v18). This was not John's opinion but God's law.

"Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife, for this would violate your brother." (Leviticus 18:16-18)

Herodias's reaction (v19) – she bore a grudge and wanted to kill John.

Root: pride. The underlying problem is always one of pride. Herodias didn't like being called out. Perhaps she thought herself above the law so could do whatever she wanted.

Jealousy/envy, ingratitude, etc all become fertiliser in growing bitterness.

Results of bitterness

1. Causes us to act opposite to God's will and leads us further from him (Deuteronomy 29:18)
2. Bitterness consumes us, poisons us and holds us captive (Job 7:11; Acts 8:23)
3. Causes us to sin even more (Romans 3:14-18)
4. Seeks out vengeance—Herodias was so consumed by bitterness that she wanted John killed and grabbed the opportunity when Herod threw a birthday party for himself (Psalm 10:9; Jeremiah 9:8)

Infection

Not only does bitterness infect the individual there will always be collateral damage

- Herod—acted to appease his wife (v17). Herod had John arrested as a favour to his wife
- Herodias's daughter—manipulated into bringing about a man's death (v24-25,28)
- Guests at Herod's party—had to witness this because of Herod's vow (v26)
- Executioner—had to kill an innocent man (v27)
- John, the greatest prophet (Matthew 11:11)—lost his life for speaking God's truth
- Disciples—lost a leader and friend (v29)
- Jesus—lost His cousin (v29)

Prevention & Eradication

Dealing with just the symptoms of bitterness does not cure it. It has to be dug out, just like a weed. We have to take it to God to deal with, we can't do it on our own.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behaviour. (Ephesians 4:31)

1. Examine ourselves daily against God's standard (Psalm 139:23-39)
Each heart knows its own bitterness (Pro. 14:10)
2. Deal with it, don't let it grow (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 2:20)
3. Forgive (Matthew 6; Ephesians 4:32)

Conclusion

Bitterness is ugly. It grows and not only does it consume you, it infects spouses, kids, friends. It has the power to destroy relationships, churches and nations. It is something we have to recognise in ourselves quickly, repent of it and bring it under the authority of Jesus. ultimately Jesus is the only one who can change us.

Bibliography: *Women of the New Testament*, Phyllis Le Peau; *Matthew Henry's Commentary*

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THE CANANNITE WOMAN

Kona Seisay

Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely." But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. "Tell her to go away," they said. "She is bothering us with all her begging." Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel." But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, "Lord, help me!" Jesus responded, "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs." She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table." "Dear woman," Jesus said to her, "your faith is great. Your request is granted." And her daughter was instantly healed. (Matthew 15:21-28, NLT)

Perseverance is hard work. The Canaanite woman showed great tenacity in her encounter with Jesus.

What does it mean to persevere?

Persevere: to stay at or with, to tarry still, still to abide, to continue, remain

1. of tarrying in a place
2. to persevere, continue
 - of the thing continued in
 - in the work of teaching
 - of the blessing for which one keeps himself fit
 - denoting the action persisted in

As well as being still, remaining in and abiding in, perseverance also means to tarry. To tarry means to linger in expectation. Lingering in expectation is what the Canaanite woman was doing. She lingered in expectation because she knew her God. She remained firm in her faith and in her confidence and was not deterred by the silence nor deterred by the remarks, instead she came, bowed down and said Lord help me.

We persevere in prayer and in faith because we have the confident hope that He who promised us is faithful. We know that in Him all things are possible, we know that in Him we have the victory and we know that in Him we are more than conquerors.

"Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23)

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings." (John 8:31, NLT)

What can we learn from this passage?

The greater lesson to be learned from this passage is that while we can be assured of God's provision when we are persistent in prayer and in faith, ultimately, He cares most about the condition of our hearts.

"Christians are able to persevere because of the power of God working within them...God requires of Christians not only that they believe the gospel, but also that they persevere in living according to the gospel, regardless of the difficulties they meet. Perseverance is proof of the genuineness of faith and leads to spiritual maturity." (Bridgeway Bible Study)

It was always evident that when Jesus called people to believe in Him, He was calling them into a continuous relationship with Him. It wasn't enough to just believe in Him because while some people profess to be believers, later, by their lack of perseverance prove not to be and in seasons of waiting, the true condition of our heart is revealed.