**Opening Scripture**

*Hebrews 12:14-15 NLT*

*Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. [15] Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.*

**Resisting The Temptation to Live In Bitterness**

Intro: Recently I have been addressing the concept of the Gospel and Social Justice and what it means to conduct righteous protest (Expound to summarize). Yet, during the outcry for justice for the oppression of black people over the years, there has been a spirit at work/way of thinking being promoted, behind the scenes that is trying to increase the divide that has already been at work in the world and within the church (the Body of Christ) for far too long. The recent events in our nation have stirred up some to a place of righteous indignation that has provoked positive changes. However, these same events have provoked some to commit acts of violence and display distrust of those in their very own families and communities. I endeavor to identify what is working behind the scenes and declare the biblical response necessary to resist this and abide in peace and walk in unity with our brothers and sisters in the faith.

**Offence-Unforgiveness-Bitterness**

*Proverbs 18:19 AMP*

*A brother offended is harder to win over than a fortified city, And contentions [separating families] are like the bars of a castle.*

Offence is a weapon that the enemy of our souls has been using for a long time. It started with Cain, as he was offended at God’s response to Able’s offering vs. his own. Cain’s offence led to murder. So we have to go no further than this to see the potential damage that offence can have on us if we do not deal with it directly.

*Genesis 4:3-10 NLT*

*[3] When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. [4] Abel also brought a gift-the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, [5] but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. [6] "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? [7] You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." [8] One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him. [9] Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?" [10] But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!*

*James 1:12-15 NLT*

*[12] God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. [13] And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. [14] Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. [15] These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

**Offence that is not addressed turns into unforgiveness.**

A modern day manifestation of offence that has grown into unforgiveness within our culture today is what is known as the Cancel Culture. “Cancel Culture” is a term that’s gained more traction in the online sphere in recent weeks. Put simply, it describes publicly shaming people for bad tweets, opinions or past transgressions, usually.

Cancel culture refers to the popular practice of withdrawing support for (canceling) public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive. Cancel culture is generally discussed as being performed on social media in the form of group shaming.

**Why is unforgiveness so dangerous?**

*Matthew 18:21-35 NLT*

*Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” [22] “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven! [23] “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. [24] In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. [25] He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold— along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. [26] “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ [27] Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.*

*[28] “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. [29] “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. [30] But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. [31] “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. [32] Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. [33] Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ [34] Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. [35] “That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.”*

(Give illustrations of the negative effects of unforgiveness: drinking poison wishing the other person would die, taking a knife that you have been stabbed with and stabbing yourself again…)

**Bitterness skews life...and hinders your ability to receive the goodness of God.**

Secular definitions for the word Bitterness include: a deep-seated ill will, anger and disappointment at being treated unfairly; resentment. While Thayer's Lexicon: extreme wickedness, a bitter root, and so producing a bitter fruit. Bitterness being in the family with offence and unforgiveness is something that we are to avoid at all costs, because of the potential harm it can cause us and those around us.

*Proverbs 14:10 NLT*

*Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can fully share its joy.*

A bitter heart is a hard heart that can not see or receive that which is good. Bitterness filters life through past hurts, thus creating a skewed view of people and life as a whole.. The Danger of Bitterness is clear and needs to be avoided.

**How to Avoid and/or be released from Offence, Unforgiveness, Bitterness**

**Remember your own sin & Remember that God has forgiven you through the work of Christ**

Ecclesiastes 7:20-22 AMP

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who always does good and who never sins. [21] Also, do not take seriously everything that is said, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you, [22] for you also know that you too have cursed others many times.

*Ephesians 4:31-32 AMP*

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor [perpetual animosity, resentment, strife, fault-finding] and slander be put away from you, along with every kind of malice [all spitefulness, verbal abuse, malevolence]. [32] Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave you.*

*Proverbs 19:11 AMP*

*Good sense and discretion make a man slow to anger, And it is his honor and glory to overlook a transgression or an offense [without seeking revenge and harboring resentment].*

Expound on verses and close