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## How Can Resentment Lead To Death?

**Ephesians 4:31:** (Phillips) *Let there be no more resentment, no more anger or temper, no more violent self-assertiveness, no more slander and no more malicious remarks...*



Resentment. How dangerous is it? What kind of damage can it cause? Is there a way to prevent resentment within us? On this program, we will look at a potentially lethal evil that can cause great harm inwardly and toward others. Resentment is an emotion that has the power to enslave us to the past. When we resent people, we give them power over us. Resentment is based on a way of thinking that suggests, I have been wronged or deserve better. It comes from an entitlement or victim-type mentality and it leads to bitterness. How do we avoid this sinful state? How can resentment lead to death? Just wait and see!

There are many related emotions that can *cause or lead* to resentment: pride, discontentment, selfishness, humiliation, jealousy and anger.

We are going to look at examples of Bible characters who dealt with these negative feelings to see *if* they fell into this awful trap of resentment or rose above it. To add to our lesson on how to fight these emotions, we will connect to each word a stanza from the poem, *Gaining Victory Over Self*. This poem highlights a high standard of character development. It could be discouraging if we try to achieve the victory ourselves, but we are reminded in Philippians 4:13: (KJV) *I can do all things through him who strengthens me*. If our efforts are totally committed, he will make up the difference.

**SELFISHNESS:** Our first example is the decision made by Ananias and Sapphira, who were part of a communal living arrangement common at that time: Acts 5:1-10: They did not *have* to give all, but they said they did. Did Ananias and Sapphira's selfishness lead to an attitude of resentment? Were they *possibly* thinking these thoughts: "They want all our money? That's not fair! (selfishness) Let's keep some back and not tell them." (resentment)

How dangerous is selfishness? It leads to resentment, which did, in this case, lead to death. What does this look like for us? Selfishness that leads to resentment *could* lead to the death of our "new creature," the spiritually-focused nature developing within us. As we talk more about resentment, we will see that we need to work on the warning signs (selfishness, pride, jealousy, etc.) before they lead to resentment. We cannot harbor those emotions and let them get worse.

The Scribes and Pharisees selfishly wanted to hold onto their position of respect and control, and they felt Jesus was interfering with their plans: John 11:47-50,53: Their desire for a higher stature (selfishness) led to resentment. They had Jesus put to death - another example of how resentment can lead to death and murder. How sad the heart can get to this state! We need to look at Jesus as our perfect pattern and focus on the needs of others: Philippians 2:3,4 James 2:15-16

**(Selfishness)** When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown...  
*That is Victory Over Self.*

**ANGER:** Judas showed anger when Jesus rebuked him for accusing Mary of wasting the costly perfume to anoint Jesus before his death: John 12:1-8: (NASB) *Six days before the Passover...<sup>3</sup>Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup>But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected (he was angry), <sup>5</sup>why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? (Here it shows Judas' anger, which turned to ridicule of Mary) It was worth a year's wages. <sup>6</sup>He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief (this is where selfishness leads to anger); as keeper of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup>Leave her alone, Jesus replied. (Jesus defended Mary in front of everyone, which led Judas to resentment.) It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.*

It is interesting that Judas was getting angry, which we know turned to resentment, but Jesus is angry at *the situation*. It was well-placed anger because he was defending Mary. Judas was looking out for his own purse.



Matthew 26:15,16: Judas' nurtured anger turned to resentment and triggered Jesus' death! Then, Satan "entered" Judas - it was resentment that led to Judas's suicide; he resented himself for what he did to Jesus. We need to weed out resentment so it does not destroy us. Remember, we need to weed out the smaller things, like selfishness and anger, before they turn into resentment. Matthew 27:3-5: Judas' anger and resentment poisoned him.

**What made the Jews show anger and stone Stephen?** Acts 7:54-58: The anger of the Jews led to resentment which led to the death of Stephen. But Stephen was *not resentful* for what they did to him. His **reaction just before he died**: Acts 7:60: (KJV) *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* **How do we put away anger before it builds to resentment?** James 1:19: (NASB) *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.*

Anger and an unforgiving attitude can be troubling and poisonous to not only yourself but to the person you are angry with. When we have been hurt or insulted, we become susceptible to anger, and anger leads to resentment and bitterness. When bitterness is a firmly-established condition of the heart, it is more difficult to get rid of. If you have anger, resentment and bitterness in your heart, you cannot have God in your heart. Resentment for the Christian *could* lead to the death of our new creature.

**(Anger) When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient loving silence...That is Victory Over Self.**

Mary and Stephen were wonderful examples of this! Jesus is the image of this entire poem. He took it all in patient, loving silence.

**DISCONTENT: Moses - Pharaoh's army is coming down on the Israelites after they left Egypt. Israel is crying out to Moses, "Did you bring us here to die?"** Exodus 14:10-12: After all the miracles they just witnessed with being saved from the Ten Plagues, they would rather stay in slavery in Egypt! The Israelites' discontent led to resentment of Moses and not trusting in God. Submission is a big part of being a Christian, and if we cannot submit to God's will for us and submit to our circumstances, we will have a greater struggle.

**About one month after leaving Egypt, the Israelites were discontented without water:** Exodus 15:22-24. **They were discontented without food:** Exodus 16:2-3: They went on and on about how they had plenty in the land of Egypt, forgetting they had been slaves. Later God provided manna from heaven but they grumbled that they did not have meat. He then provided quail, but they were still discontented. Well, the Israelites' resentment continues and grows! The Israelites were so discontented that they wanted to build a golden calf to worship. **Discontentment led to resentment and almost led to their death:** Exodus 32:9,10,14: Discontentment is a problem of perception. It comes from a difference between the way we think things are, or seem to be, and the way we think they should be or expect them to be. That is what makes us discontented. Romans 8:28

**Now, an example of the opposite of being discontented - Abram showed trust instead of discontent when he left his homeland and followed God's direction:** Genesis 12:1-3: Abram didn't need any miracles to move on. He trusted God and was content wherever God would lead him. God prepares us for what we need. **Here is true contentment:** Philippians 4:12: If we leave it all in God's hands and know that all things work together for good, then we will *not* be discontented.

*Jonathan says:* When my oldest sister, Jan, died in a car accident, it was quite a shock when we got the phone call. Being a young follower of Christ, that experience *could* have made me discontented. I was being tested, and I had a choice. I could have gone down this road of, "Why did God allow this to happen to my family and how will we cope?" Resentment *could* have been the outcome. OR, I could leave it all in God's hands and know that all things work together for good and draw closer to Him. Thank God the Lord helped me choose the latter and to be an example of His love and His plan for all my family and their friends. The peace the Lord gave me through this difficult experience was amazing! My mother called me the rock of the family, and by God's grace I did the things no one else could do because of their grief. I sang the hymn, "I Love Thy Will, O God," in the car on the way to the hospital. The



strength was from God, not from my own strength. We should be content with all the Lord allows in our lives; if not, discontentment can lead to resentment.

**(Discontent)** When you are content with any food, and offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, any interruption by the will of God. When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any impunctuality, or any annoyance; when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, and spiritual insensibility and endure it as Jesus endured it...*That is Victory Over Self.*

**PRIDE:** The Scribes and Pharisees were prideful and that led to resentment. This parable spoken by Jesus described the attitude of the Pharisees versus the Publicans: Luke 18:9-14: The parable really hits home on the prideful attitude of the Pharisees but also shows the beauty of humility. We need to be careful not to fall into the same trap. Jesus rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for their prideful behavior: Matthew 23:13-14: Pride leads to resentment, which led to the death of Jesus.

**Nebuchadnezzar was another great example of how pride, this time, led to humility instead of resentment:** Daniel 4:28-32: King Nebuchadnezzar saw God working through Daniel and the three Hebrews. He witnessed Daniel's faith. He even exalted and praised God after seeing their experiences. So, what happened? He still allowed pride to overcome him. Rulers (like Christian leaders!) especially need to be careful about pride. After seven years as a beast, Nebuchadnezzar's reason returned. Did he show resentment? No! Daniel 4:36-37

1 Peter 5:5: It is only through discipline and practice we can do this! Ideally, we would like there to be no pride at all. Proverbs 16:18: Pride is destructive and can lead to death. Humility is the solution to overcome pride.

**(Pride)** When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself, and can humbly submit inwardly as well outwardly finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart...*That is Victory Over Self.*

King Nebuchadnezzar finally understood, and we pray the Lord will give US the experiences we need to understand. We cannot allow this pride to enter into our hearts. Rise above it and stop it before it can turn into resentment. Humility is the antidote to keep us in check!

**JEALOUSY: Remember the story of Cain and Abel? Why did Cain kill his brother?**

Genesis 4:3-8: God could see this anger and jealousy building up in Cain and Cain still had time to choose. God warned him to master this emotion before something went wrong. Humility involves listening and the ability to take direction.

**Observations about why Cain killed his brother:** God did not accept his sacrifice. God did accept his brother Abel's offering. Jealousy turned to resentment. What could Cain have done instead? He could have asked the LORD, "What WILL You accept?" He could have asked Abel for an animal to sacrifice. He could have humbly and lovingly congratulated his brother and profited by the knowledge gained.

**Our next example of jealousy leading to resentment is Joseph's brothers:** Genesis 37:1-4,11,18,19: Their jealousy turned into resentment and they plotted to kill him. Evil can bring us to resentment. The brothers' resentment here could have led to the death of Joseph, but God intervened. This turned out to be a beautiful story of forgiveness. Just think - if anyone had a right to be resentful in his life, it was Joseph! But he was NOT resentful as He always trusted in God. Joseph said to his brothers in the end, Genesis 50:20: *...you meant it for harm but God meant it for good.* Why can't we look at our circumstances and realize our experiences are for our eternal good - even if our flesh does not like it? Song of Solomon 8:6

1 Samuel 18:6-7,9: What an example of jealousy leading to resentment. In this case, it led to repeated attempted murder! On the flip side, Saul's son Jonathan was the rightful heir to the throne, but when God gave it to David, Jonathan supported, defended and loved him. Jonathan did this without any resentment.

**Our theme Scripture:** Ephesians 4:31: Apostle Paul tells us to not allow these things to damage each other or us. They have no place in the Christian walk. **How do we avoid jealousy?** James 1:14-15: We need to remember that God is in control and overruling every aspect of our lives. Every experience we have is from the Heavenly Father so we can develop a sympathetic love and care for the human family. He knows what we need before we do, so we



must be careful not to look at and desire what others have, what they do or how they serve. We all have different abilities and experiences to help us grow. Instead of being jealous, we should enter into the joy of others. Romans 12:5: (KJV) *Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.*

**(Jealousy)** When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel not envy nor question God while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances...*That is Victory Over Self.*

**HUMILIATION:** Peter is our first example of someone who was humiliated but *did not* let it lead to resentment.

**How did Peter feel when Jesus rebuked him in front of others?** Matthew 14:26-31: Peter *could* have said, "But I walked on water! I didn't doubt!" But we know his character accepted the words of Jesus and he did not take it negatively. Just like Peter, we also need to keep our focus on Jesus. Next, Peter was told by Jesus, "Put away thy sword." Peter must have been thinking, "But you told us to bring them!" **Again we see the ability Peter had to accept Jesus' command:** Luke 22:38,48-51: Peter had the humility to listen.

**Unfortunately, Peter denied Jesus three times:** Matthew 22:54-62: How humiliated Peter could have felt since he announced to the disciples and Jesus, just the night before, that he would not deny the Lord and he would go into death with him. Peter still did not let humiliation get to his heart. We want our lives and hearts to be like Peter's and bounce back when we fall and make mistakes. John 21:15-17: Notice Jesus counteracted Peter's three denials with three "loves." Peter did not let his failures stop him from receiving Jesus' commission to tend to the flock. **Peter must have felt humiliated when the Apostle Paul confronted him about Peter's hypocrisy:** Galatians 2:11-14: Peter was being hypocritical by separating himself from the Gentiles and going over to the Christians from Jerusalem. He may have felt humiliated but based on Peter's character, he must have soon realized his mistake and regretted it. Because of Peter's disposition, he accepted his mistakes. He accepted Jesus' forgiveness and soon after took a leadership role for the disciples. Don't look back at your mistakes and let them hold you back! We just saw how Peter's humiliation caused him growth. What about when John the Baptist lashed out at the Scribes and Pharisees for coming to be baptized?

**Did their humiliation cause them resentment? Yes!** Matthew 3:5-8

**John's rejection was confirmed when Jesus spoke to the chief priests and elders at the Temple:** Matthew 21:32: They knew John was speaking about them and based on their humiliation, they were resentful and rejected Jesus. Humiliation can lead to resentment, which can lead to death. How can we avoid being like the Scribes and Pharisees and be more like Peter? By following in Jesus' footsteps. Jesus was despised and rejected of men. As followers of Christ, we must expect the same and not be resentful. When we start to feel humiliated and those little twinges of discomfort, we should try to take it as from God and be more apt to listen and grow from the experience.

**(Humiliation)** When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight but your heart is happy being counted worthy to suffer for Christ...*That is Victory Over Self.*

We reviewed six character traits that can lead to resentment: pride, discontentment, selfishness, humiliation, jealousy and anger. Any of these things can happen to us at any time. Go immediately to the throne of grace and ask forgiveness. Forgiveness changes our destination! Keep resentment out of our hearts and minds. Forgive! **Forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment.** Mark 11:25

*So, how can resentment lead to death?  
For Jonathan and Rick and (and Vicki) and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*