

The High Cost of Getting Even

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Turn to Romans 12. Here is something the Lord asks us to do, but it is probably the most difficult thing to do. Yet, the Lord did that for us. Romans 12:17: *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* (That goes for women also.) *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* Our Father, help us tonight. Somebody in this audience, I am sure, is having a difficult battle with these verses. Lord, we always have that battle, but, Lord, somebody especially tonight. Move in our midst now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

"The High Cost of Getting Even." Look how this passage is addressed in verse 19: *Dearly beloved . . .* He does not say, "Now, you carnal folks, listen to me." *Dearly beloved . . .* That is a tender admonition. Why does he ask folks that are dearly beloved? Because our first reaction is to knock back, to hit back, to talk back, to smart back. That is built in. Look at James and John in Luke 9:54. The Lord Jesus was coming through Samaria, and the people did not receive Him. James and John said, "Shall we call fire down from heaven?" "If they do not receive you, we will burn them off like Elijah did." The Lord said, "No, you do not know what manner of spirit." Turn to 2 Samuel 6:23. I never saw this before. I saw it, but I did not quite comprehend it. David brought the ark back to the city. He lost his dignity, and he was rejoicing all over the street. Michal, King Saul's daughter saw him losing his dignity in the street. The Scripture says: . . . *she despised him in her heart.* When he came in the door, she poured cold water on him. She did not like his display. David said, *And I will yet be more vile than thus . . .* ("You have not seen anything yet.") . . . *and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.* He rejected her. Now, I do not think that I misread that. Look at the saints in Heaven in Revelation 6. They have been martyred for their faith. *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* Folks in Heaven say, "God I wish you would hurry up." There is this matter of vengeance. You read the newspaper, and you want to cry, "Even so come, Lord Jesus, and take vengeance." But, this is not the day of vengeance. This is a day of grace. Our Lord, when He went into the synagogue in Luke 4 and took up the Scriptures and found the place in Isaiah 61, began reading. He read, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* He closed the book and sat down. Isaiah 61 concluded, *To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God . . .* The Son of God stopped in the middle of that sentence and sat down. Why? This is the day of our Lord. This is the day of acceptance. One day the Son of God will stand up and finish that sentence in His time. It is judgment day, but it is not now. This is not Judgment Day. Of course, we want it now. I have clipped an article. I have clipped several that I will share with you tonight. This is from Dr. F. I. McMillan. Listen to what he has to say, and we must learn from this. "I received much inspiration for this chapter from Dale Carnegie on account of a trip to Yellowstone Park." The name of that chapter — I knew when I wrote the title, I said, "I have heard that title somewhere." The name of that chapter was "The High Cost of Getting Even." He said, "Dale Carnegie visited Yellowstone Park and the place where the grizzly bears are fed. He did not have to wait long before a grizzly bear came into a clearing where garbage had been dumped to entice him. The guide told the group that a grizzly bear can whip any animal in the West with the possible exceptions of the buffalo and Kodiak bear. That night as Dale Carnegie sat with other tourists in the bleachers, he noticed that there was only one animal that the grizzly would allow to eat with him — a skunk. Of course, the grizzly could have won in any fight with a skunk. He resented the skunk and yearned to get even with him for his brazen impudence, but he did not. Why? Because he knew there would be a high cost to getting even." Go to the ant, thou sluggard. Learn from him. Go to the grizzly bear. Now, an animal has more sense when he weighs the factors and says, "It is

not worth the price to get even.” That is like a farmer hoeing out his corn. Of course, that was a long time ago. You do not hoe them I do not suppose now. You have got tractors. He was hoeing out his corn and ran across a field mouse. He knocked down a quarter acre of corn and finally killed that field mouse. He got him, but it destroyed one-fourth acre of corn. We need to remember the grizzly bear. Happiness is a choice. Two Christian psychiatrists made this statement, “There is only one unconscious motive for retaining anger or for holding grudges, and that single motive is vengeance.” We hold it and will not turn it loose. Why? It is a matter of vengeance. “I am going to get even with you.” That is something that we really need to check in our hearts.

Now, the cost of vengeance. I could preach until midnight. I do not think that you have any doubts about that. The Bible is filled with this particular subject.

NUMBER ONE, IT WILL COST YOU PEACE OF HEART. Ephesians 4:30: *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* Why? Because of the fact that it grieves the Holy Spirit. You grieve the Holy Spirit. You turn off the stereo, and the music goes out of your heart and life. Many a man and woman plays havoc with his inner man because of the fact that he carries a grudge. If you carry a grudge in your heart, you do not have any peace in your heart. You do not have any joy in your heart. They do not go together. Now, you just choose whether you want music and joy or anger. It is up to you.

NUMBER TWO, YOU SACRIFICE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. I read in 1 John 1: *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* But, I read in the next chapter where it says: *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* When resentment comes into the heart, then the lights go out. You are out of fellowship with God. I mean, the fellowship is gone.

Not only will it cost you peace of heart and fellowship with God, but,

NUMBER THREE, LOSS OF DIRECTION. You lose direction. Look at 1 John 2:10-11: *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.* (I mean, he will not fall over something.) *But he that hateth his brother . . . (. . . his sister, her husband, his wife, his parents, his neighbor) But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.* A person who owes a grudge loses his sense of direction and stumbles around and stammers around and makes one wrong choice after another. What happens? He is in the dark. It is bad to make decisions and see where you are going when the lights are out. Loss of direction.

NUMBER FOUR, IT WILL COST YOU ASSURANCE OF HEART. 1 John 4:7: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* Verse 11: *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* A person who carries animosity in his heart toward another believer does not have a whole lot of assurance of his own salvation. Now watch. I did not say, “Lost his salvation.” The Holy Spirit of God is not going to witness to your son when at the same time your heart is filled with anger. Those who have hatred and animosity do not have a lot of assurance in their heart. You lose that. You must be serious.

NUMBER FIVE, IT WILL COST YOU BROKEN HEALTH. Proverbs 14:29: *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly. A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.* Could that speak of arthritis and many other problems? The grizzly is smarter than some folks today. Why? They roll and toss weary days and nights in resentment and brooding over and trying to plan a way to get even to squelch someone. They have not learned that it causes toxic odors, strokes, fatal heart attacks, and many other things because of the matter of animosity. It will kill you. I will quote an article from a book. Let me give you an experience about “The Name of Jerome Weller.” Jerome was a formidable manager of a small department manufacturing firm in Trenton, New Jersey. One day, his boss called him into the office and said, “Now, Jerry, you know that things have lost control around here, and I have been ordered to cut one supervisor. I know you have worked hard in one of the best departments in our company, but I am letting you go.” Why, he was dumbfounded. He was the only Christian on the job. The boss and the rest of them loved to party a whole lot, and their work had suffered as a result.

Jerry would step in and rescue them many times and worked hard, and that was his reward. Not only that, but his finances shrunk. He was making payments on a new car and a new home. His salary was cut in half. He was in serious trouble immediately. He lost both his house and his car. He had to move in with his parents who lived in Michigan, and he spent all that time living with them sitting there with no job. He had time to sorrow over his experience. He thought, "Well, this is what I get for working hard and clean living." He said it over and over and over to himself, and he became more bitter and bitter and bitter. He found the more he thought about it the more bitter he became. It was hard to eat and hard to digest what little he did eat. He suffered from painful cramps. His physician told him that his condition stemmed from his emotions. His emotions stemmed from his bitterness. Did you know people say, "Well, I have got emotional problems."?

Most of this goes back to adrenaline problems — working overtime. Here he sat. Most of his friends assured him, "You are right." I wish we would learn one little thing: *Blessed are the peacemakers*: We do not learn that. We harm people. We join sides with them. We multiply their problems, and we think that we are doing them a favor. No! No! No! You do not pity people. When you pity people, you drive them farther into it. You say, "Well, I would want someone to pity me." You better not. It makes it worse. Here he is. What happened? Well, it was twelve years later, and time seemed to heal the wound. He found a successful job. He became general manager of a successful outlet with eight plants. One day when he was inspecting one of the plants, the personnel director asked him if he would like to meet the new chief engineer of that plant. Guess who? Yep. He went to meet that fellow, and here he saw face to face the man that had fired him twelve years before. Here he is looking him eye to eye. Here this man had caused him so much grief and pain, and now, was working for him. The man said, "I sure made a terrible mistake back there. Would you forgive me?" He said, "Well, sure. Forget it." Now, he said, "Forget it," but he did not forget it. He began rehearsing all of those days of nursing bitterness toward this man. His stomach problem returned, and he began reliving those days. He thought it was all gone. Here he sat in his plush office, but he only wanted to get even. One day, he related the experience to a brother in Christ and asked how he could work with a person who treated him like that. The dear brother sat down and told him that God would furnish grace to forgive the individual, and that the end products of distress, blood pressure, respiration and digestion were all affected, and that you get freedom by forgiving. He said, "You mean to tell me that I am my own problem? Are you saying that you would have acted differently had you taken what I took?" The man said, "No, I do not think that I would have acted differently, but that does not make it right." The man assured him that he was his own problem. Then, what happened? You should have seen his attitude toward the man who fired him. He was not only upset at the engineer, but he was upset at this brother for telling him that his problem was himself. Now, that is bad to say that the problem is "me." The last person in the world we are going to come to is our self. I mean, it is somebody else's fault somewhere, even if it is your wife. It has to be somebody besides us — your husband, or the devil made me do it. We have got to blame somebody. Now, he was mad at two people. What happened? Who was the man hurting when he carried his grudge around within him? Who was affected when he sat in his chair in Michigan and seized over a man who lived several hundred miles away? Obviously, he was hurting only himself. Who is hurt when you get upset at someone who is not even in your presence? There are folks tonight who are not even in your presence who may be removed from you hundreds of miles, and you cannot rest. They are not anywhere around. You do not hear their voice, and you cannot see them. You cannot rest. When this happens and I carry a grudge around about someone, I cannot enjoy the steak that I eat. That individual will not let me. I cannot enjoy the nice bed that I have to sleep on. That individual will not let me. That individual will not allow me to enjoy driving a nice automobile. That individual will not allow me to enjoy wearing a nice suit of clothes. That individual will not allow me to get pleasure and joy on the golf course. That individual that I hate and resent will not allow me to enjoy life anywhere. He never will. You can murder him, but he still will not allow you to have any joy. People who get even still hate. They go on and on. They will do this on and on. Here is a man that said he wanted relief from his upset condition and became more upset when he was told that he did not need to be upset. You think that he would have seized the opportunity and said, "Well, praise the Lord! I want relief," and forgave the man. But, he did not want to forgive the man. He wanted to carry a grudge and would not turn loose of a long-standing grudge. There he sat in his office. (That is normal. That is the way we act. That is the reason he said, "Now, dear Beloved, do

not do that.”) Until finally, Jerry Weller came, and today his digestive disorder and aches and pains are gone. He is at peace with himself and with the man who had abused him. He is enjoying God’s peace and the fruit of the Spirit in his life. You think that you can hold a grudge and get by. No, sir. It will hurt you physically and spiritually. It will hurt you every way in the world. Nobody can gain by it.

NUMBER SIX, YOU LOSE A HAPPY HOME LIFE. Proverbs 15:17-18: *Better is a dinner of herbs . . . (That is vegetables — turnip greens, mustard grains, spinach, and cabbage. That is good eating. And crackling cornbread — that is not a vegetable — is something else.) Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox . . . (That does not mean that he is stalled out on the road. That means that he has been butchered.) . . . than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. A wrathful man stirreth up strife . . . (He stirs it in the pot and keeps it boiling and stirs it and stirs it.) . . . but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.* Proverbs 17:1: *Better is a dry morsel . . . (That is toast — Melba toast, probably, with no butter on it.) Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.* It is goodbye to a happy home-life. You cannot even enjoy a good meal at home because of the strife. If a person has bitterness that they stir, they will not let it die down. They will not turn. They just make sure that it is stirred so that it will be even hatred — balanced hatred in every part. What will it do? It will destroy a happy home-life.

NUMBER SEVEN, IT WILL DESTROY THE EMOTIONAL STABILITY OF YOUR CHILDREN. The Bible says: *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* I read in Proverbs 22:24: *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.* If mama and daddy are angry and filled with resentment and revenge, they teach their children how to handle the same problems. What happens? They learn the ways of their parents. You say, “Well, I love my boys and girls. I came out of a loveless home.” Well, you are making a loveless home. Your parents may have acted toward you and that sort of thing, but you are simply repeating what you saw your parents do. What makes you think that your children will be any smarter than you because they are parenting and acting exactly like mama and daddy? I know a man in Chattanooga valley that when he got drunk he would beat up his wife. So, his son figured that when you got married that is the way you celebrated by beating up your wife. The son made a practice of beating up his own wife imitating his own dad. One day, that girl’s daddy came in and killed him. I preached his funeral. Now, where did the son get his idea of what to do when you get angry — you take it out on your wife? He got it from his daddy. Parents, if you love your children, you had better back off and look and consider, “How am I teaching my children to react? When I am wrong, then this world is not a just world. When you say, “I want justice,” you just as well wait a while. There is no justice in this world until King Jesus, the Prince of peace, the Just One comes. What will it do? It will destroy the emotional stability of your children and wreck them emotionally. That is the high cost.

NUMBER EIGHT, IT LEAVES YOU DEFENSELESS. Proverbs 25:28: *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.* A man that cannot control his temper and his emotions, he said, is like a city that does not have any walls or gates around to keep the enemy out. He is defenseless. Let me explain to you. The other day I did something that I think everybody has done. I do not think it is maturity, but I was driving down Memorable Boulevard. I do not trust mirrors, but I have to use them. Now, I trust that when I look in it, it shows how nice looking I am. I trust that. I mean that is a wise mirror. Now, these mirrors in cars. I have almost pulled out in front of people after looking in the mirror, and there are blind spots. Do you know what I am talking about? I looked in my mirror outside. I was in the right lane on East Memorable Boulevard coming toward town. I looked, and I did not see anything. When I pulled over, I saw a car, not in the mirror, but back there. It was a mistake. I was not deliberately careless. I was not so senile that I did not look. I looked. Oh my soul, that guy sat down on the horn, and he blew the horn it seemed like for miles. It was not quite that long, but it seemed like it. He was not trying to embarrass somebody. He was angry. He was spitting fire. He came past me spitting fire. I am sure with his language that he was not quoting Scripture when he passed me. He was still on his horn. When he passed me, I waved at him. He looked back at me, and he was furious. Now watch, he did not have any defenses. That means that to a person like that, somebody else decides what his day is going to be like. You do not have any defenses. So, you get up and go to work, and somebody blows the horn behind you at the stop light. They always hit on the

horn when the light turns green, but they were on the horn before the light turned green. The red was still in transition. What happens? Man alive, something rises up in you. That guy back there has messed up your day. You have no defenses. Somebody else decides how your day is going to go. You are defenseless. Now, I do not believe in retaliation. Mine is educational. I have to confess when someone behind me is in such a hurry, I go slow getting off. I find it so difficult. I can hardly get that car moving. He needs patience back there. I guess that is a form of retaliation, but I do not lose any sleep over that. Not unless that guy pulls me over and blacks my eye. Then, I might lose some sleep over it. What does it say? You are defenseless. It leaves you without any defenses whatsoever.

NUMBER NINE, IT CAUSES INCREASED MISERY. *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.* That means more anger. *Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.* It just means more misery. Do you like misery? “I am going to eat some worms. Nobody likes me. Everybody hates me. I am going to eat some worms, red worms, yellow worms, long worms, short worms, green worms. I am going to eat some worms.” That is what the prodigal son’s brother did in Luke 15. He got angry at his brother. He would not even go into the banquet party. They were rejoicing in there. “I’m not going in there.” So, he stayed out in the cow lot. What did he do? He griped and complained and got even with his brother. “I won’t even go to the table with him.” Increased misery. He was rejoicing on the inside, but he was hurting on the outside.

NUMBER TEN, YOU LOSE YOUR CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY. When we retaliate, we associate with a lot of famous people. We associate with Cain who got even with Abel and killed him. We associate with Joab who murdered Abner. We associate with Absalom who got even with his daddy and tried to kill his daddy. We associate with Haman who tried to kill Mordecai. We associate with Herodias who had John the Baptist’s head cut off. We associate with the Jews who had Christ crucified out of envy. That is bad association. Turn to Titus 3. When we do that, we lose our testimony, and we forget some things. Titus 3:2: *To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, (That is loud argument, fussing.) but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,* He said that when we do that, we have forgotten where the Lord found us. Do you remember the past life? Paul said, “We did this.”

NUMBER ELEVEN, IT WILL CAUSE YOU TO FORGET THE GRACE OF GOD. Not only that, we forget our Example. 1 Peter 2: *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:* Here is the matter where we lose our Christian testimony. You have heard me tell about a fellow in my church, a quiet, meek fellow — great big fellow. He broke his leg. When I went to visit him in his home, his wife had left him and left a note that she was going to Pennsylvania. This was in North Georgia. She said, “Do not come after me. I am not coming back.” He said, “Preacher, I love her. Would you go with me to try to get her back?” I said, “Yes, Sir.” He could not drive; so I drove to the outside of the city of Philadelphia. On the way, he stopped and sent her some flowers and a telegram and told her that he loved her. We pulled up in the yard in Philadelphia. This lady came out spitting fire. “What did you come after me for?” “I came after you because I love you.” “If you love me, give me the keys to the car so that I can run down the street to go see my boyfriend.” He gave her the keys. She ran off. She came back. That night, he took her to downtown Philadelphia and bought her a mink coat. In the middle of the night, we got a message that his father had just died. We got in the car early the next morning and headed back towards North Georgia without her. He was a doubly broken hearted man because his wife did not come back with him and because his daddy had died. I came back and preached the funeral. A couple of months went by. Suddenly, she wanted to come home because she was pregnant. I loaded him back in the same car, took the same trip, picked her up, and headed home. She heckled him all the way home. No repentance. No grief. She was trying to see how much she could get out of him and how much she could impose upon him. He built her a beautiful brick house. He took the little boy that was born as his own. He would bring that little boy to church and sit on the front row and hold that little boy. He was my music director. He would stand up and sing a song about the

Lord Jesus Christ. I would sit and watch him and wonder how in the world he could take it. Well, it was not long after the baby was born that she took off again. He went through the same route and got her again — another child. Then she was gone for good. He took that boy and put him in business. That boy is grown now. He put that boy in business. Here me now, I am not saying what I would do. I am simply saying that I saw what God enabled a man to do that which my own human flesh said, "I would not take that." You sit out there and say, "I would not take that." He did. I never one time heard that man bitter. Not one time did I hear that man attack her. All I could say is that I saw the love of God shown abroad in a man's heart. Young people, you have got a wrong story from Hollywood. That is love. Hers was not love. He loved her. She did not love him or anybody else. She loved herself. I have been here twenty-three years, and I look across the congregation. I know what is happening in many of your lives, and I marvel that you are sensible and sane. I marvel at how God has helped you, and you are still going on for the Lord and not spuing fire and brimstone. That is the grace of God. The rest will kill you, drive you insane. The desire to get even drove Saul to almost insanity to kill David. Here is forgetfulness. In Matthew 18, it talks about a man who owed a great deal and the master forgave him. Then he turned and grabbed somebody by the throat who owed him a little bit and said, "Pay me," and he put him in jail. The master said, "I will put you in jail, and you will stay there until you pay me all." When a person will not forgive, they go into a prison of torment and lock the door behind them and do not get out until they get over it.

NUMBER TWELVE, IT WILL COST YOU CHASTENING. This comes from "Emotions, Can You Trust Them?" by Dr. James Dobson and the verse of Scripture that I give you in Proverbs 18:6: *A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.* Have you ever seen someone talk too much and somebody puts a fist in their mouth? Have you ever seen that? . . . *and his mouth calleth for strokes.* Here is a good illustration about how God will chasten you. This comes from Dr. Dobson how it happened to him. He said, "I was an impetuous young student in college. I had perfected the art of verbal combat to a high level of proficiency. I took pride in my ability to put down an opponent particularly those whom I perceived as being unfair or disrespectful to me or my friends. It is a skill which I recall with some embarrassment today, although the exchange of insults and verbal abuse is not uncharacteristic of young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. After graduating from college and getting married, however, I began to be aware that God disapproved of the way I handled human conflict. I read in Proverbs: *A soft answer turneth away wrath:* This was plainly an area wherein my Lord expected me to bring my behavior into harmony with His Word, yet the bad habits of childhood were not easily broken. It seems like God brought people across my life and allowed a series of offensive people to confront me during that period to teach me more about self-control and tolerance; and each time I failed, the Holy Spirit seemed to rebuke me. God gave me one test after the other. The final exam came about three years later." He said, "I decided to surprise my wife with a corsage on Easter Sunday morning. I was a firm believer in marital flower power." Men, you understand that — "Flower power." So, he went to the florist and ordered the orchid. They said it would be ready at 5:00 on Saturday. He said that he worked all week long anticipating his noble deed from his generous heart and smiled to himself how he was going to surprise his wife on Sunday morning. He said, "Saturday afternoon came around, and I went down to the florist shop and made some excuse to get out of the house so my wife would not be suspecting." He went the florist shop to get the secret package. The shop was crowded. He said, "The lady was overworked and stressed. My first mistake was not understanding or discerning soon enough the beads of sweat which came down her upper lip." He waited until his turn came and he stepped up and asked for his flower. The lady shuffled through a stack of tickets and then said, matter-of-factly, "We are not going to be able to fill your order. You will just have to get your flower somewhere else." Saturday night. She did not offer any reason or apologize for the error. He said that her voice had a take-it-or-leave-it tone, very irritating. She stood there with her hands on her hips and glaring at him as though he had somehow caused the mistake. He said, "At first I was puzzled and then I asked, 'Why did you accept my order if you were unable to prepare it? I could have gone somewhere else, but now it is too late to buy a corsage at another shop.'" Now, here begins the final examination for him. "I remember distinctly that my response was very controlled under the circumstances, although my displeasure was no doubt apparent. My brief question had no sooner been uttered than a curtain swung open at the rear of the building, and a red faced man burst into the shop. He stormed

toward me and pressed his chest against mine. I had no idea how big he was. I only know that I am six foot two and weigh 190 pounds, yet my eyes focused somewhere between his pulsating Adam's apple and his quivering chin — a big one. It was immediately apparent that Goliath was not only upset but also was livid with rage. He curled his lip upward and shook his clenched fist in the vicinity of my jaw. For the next few minutes or so, he unloaded the most violent verbal attack I ever sustained. He used every curse word I knew and then taught me a few I had not even heard in the army. Then after questioning my heritage, he announced his intention of throwing a certain portion of my anatomy out the front door. It is difficult to describe the emotional shock at that moment. It was a conflict that I neither sought nor anticipated. Suddenly, without warning, I had tripped the spring that must have been winding tighter and tighter throughout that hectic day or year. The next move was clearly mine. Silence fell on the shop as a half dozen customers gasped and awaited my response. The toughest part of the encounter involved the instantaneous conflict between what my impulses dictated and what God had been trying to teach me. In a matter of two or three seconds, it seemed as though the Lord said to me, 'Are you going to obey me or not?' I muttered some kind of defensive reply and then did the most difficult thing that I had ever been required to do. I turned on my heels and walked from the shop. To the customers, I probably appeared cowardly especially in view of the size of my adversary. Or, perhaps they assumed that I could think of no appropriate reply. All of these agitating thoughts reverberated through my head as I walked to my car. Did I go home in triumph as having done what God wanted of me? Certainly not immediately. Hot blood pulsed through my neck and ears and adrenaline surged through my veins. My immediate response was to do something primitive like heave a brick through the window where a bouquet of roses sat. I could think of a lot of things to do. Gradually, however, my physiological state returned to normal, and I looked back on my restraint with some satisfaction." Hey, that is chastening. God will put you in a place of humiliation where you will pass. That is bad, but that is good.

NUMBER THIRTEEN, IT WILL CAUSE FOOLISH ACTIONS. Proverbs 14:17: *He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.* You heard me preach a few weeks ago about the man in Oklahoma and the shoot out. Why did he do that? Because he was angry and it built and built and built. I used to work for a man who was a manager of a department store in Ocala, Florida. He got married. She left him. She went to Chattanooga and got a good job. I got a job right across the street at a JC Penney store. I was sick that day. If I had not been sick, I probably would have witnessed a murder and a suicide. The man went to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and he began to drink and drink. Then, he got on the phone and said, "You better come back to me, or you will wish you had." He was in the motel several days liquoring up. One day, the store closed at five o'clock. The ladies and the men were coming out on the south side of that building to go home. The man wedged his way up in the crowd and ran up to her in the crowd and put a gun to her head and killed her. Then he turned the gun and killed himself. Why did that all happen? It happened because anger built and built and built. People will do things they never thought they would do if they carry it and carry it -- child abuse or murder their spouse or murder somebody. God's Word says that you will do something foolish. I preached a funeral of a young man in the city. His wife left him, and he wrote her and said, "If you do not come back to me, I will kill myself." Well, she did not come back. I preached his funeral. He killed himself. Nobody is worth taking your life over.

Two of my relatives were talking the other day. One told the other relatives, "I have hated you since a little boy." They grew up together, "I have hated you since a little boy." Both of them grew up and had children. He said, "Not only that, when your boy was born, I hated you. I have talked about you all over the country." And, he had. He wrecked the relationship with other people, and he carried this. This man claimed to be saved, and I believe he was saved. He apologized to him. He said, "I have wanted to forgive you, but I have hated you all of my life." How sad. If you carry something forty years, how sad that you cart that thing, that garbage, around in heart and your life. It will wreck you and ruin you. It will make you destroy others trying to get even. It will hurt you more than it hurts them. Foolishness. Turn to Proverbs 26:23. I am going to read some verses of Scriptures. Proverbs 26:23-26. I am going to do something tonight that I do not normally do. I want to hear what the King James says and a couple other in our modern language. That is the only reason that I am doing it. Proverbs 26:23: *Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair,*

believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart. Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation. Now let me read from Tyndale: “Pretty words may hide a wicked heart just as a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot. A man with hate in his heart may sound pleasant enough; but do not believe him, for he is cursing you in his heart. Though he pretends to be so kind, his hatred will finally come to light for all to see. The man who sets a trap for others will be caught in it himself. Roll a bolder down on someone, and it will roll back and crush you.” Then, I have the NIV: “A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart, he harbors deceit. Though his speech is charming, do not believe him; for seven abominations fill his heart. His manners may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.” You sit on it long enough, and it will surface. It will surface in your health. It will surface in your home. It will surface in your actions. It will make you do something foolish and dastardly and something violent if you do not take care of it.

Now, in closing, what is the cure? Four things. Number one, humility. James 4:6: . . . *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* In this matter of unforgiveness is a matter of pride. *A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.* God said that He gives grace to the humble. Get low. Number two, confession. 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Name it what God calls it. Number three. Turn to Matthew 5:44. I wish that I had time to preach through these verses. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies . . .* That does not have anything to do with your emotions. Some teenagers about twelve to fourteen years old jumped on the pastor in a church in Thomasville, Georgia, and beat him up. He is in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. They did not even know him. They beat him up to rob him. Now, normally, I could sit the rest of my life in the wheelchair and hate those people because of what they did to me, but if I do, what happens is I get a whole lot more injury done to me than the physical. Now, I read in Matthew 5: *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: (That simply means that you act like your Father in Heaven.) for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* What does it say? God asks us to do an act of kindness toward those that misuse us. Now, that will not be the easiest thing in the world, but God does that. When I do it, it dis-diffuses mine anger. And heaping coals of fire upon his head may mean that it brings him to repentance. I do not know what it means. It is like the woman who said, “I tried that, and it did not work.” She put literal coals of fire on his head, now. God said, “You do an act of kindness.” Last, He said, “Trust me.” *I will repay, saith the Lord.* “I will take care of it.” You do not know all of the circumstances. God does — nobody but God. God said: *I will repay . . .* This is not Judgment Day. They may repent and become your brother in Christ; and if it is your brother or sister in Christ, then God said, “I will take care of it. I will repay.” It is an act of faith. Proverbs 6 says, “Go to; consider the ant.” I could go back and say, “Go to; consider the grizzly bear.” There may be somebody that you consider a skunk, but you cannot afford to get even. The price is too great. What should you do? Do you want to get rid of it? Tell the Lord about it. Empty the garbage out. Who is going to take the garbage out? Nobody but you can take it out.