



June 5, 2026

### **The Burr under the Saddle**

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Over the years, I've often been asked "why do you always wear some type of shoes, even when you go to the beach?" Then usually it's followed up with "The sand is made for you to either wear flip flops, or go barefoot!" Yes, it may seem odd, but I have to be very careful as to not cut, scrape, or puncture my feet as infection can quickly set in and severe consequences result.

Probably many of you have had infections in the past. Maybe you have cut or bruised yourself and it became infected. You then had to clean out the wound and surrounding area and apply some kind of antibiotic or healing ointment. In some cases sometimes wounds don't heal, and eventually serious consequences come about from what might have seemed the littlest injury. It is not uncommon for some who have had surgery for the wound to have to be reopened and the infection cleaned out, or the surgery performed all over again.

Having a sinus infection can also be a miserable condition with discharge and the need to expel that with frequent nose blowing. I suffer from this from time to time, and traveling over the years frequently on airplanes adds to the challenge. Sometimes even the filters in hotels are so dirty I wake up completely blocked in my sinuses. For some this can become chronic. If you have never experienced a sinus infection, you are blessed.

So, I am acutely aware of infections, for there are many that exist. In addition to physical infections, you and I can also have our minds and thinking infected by injurious attitudes and emotions. One of those is bitterness. As humans we are all subjected to this from time to time.

The dictionary describes bitterness as something that is bitter, harsh, hard to bear, grievous, cutting and/or characterized by intense animosity. Bitterness can arise when a person suffers wrong or unfairness of some kind and then holds on to the hurtful feelings and allows them to be deeply embedded. It can then spill over into other areas of our lives.

Feeling hurt and saddened over painful actions, words, etc. is a normal human reaction. But you and I need to carefully deal with the hurts in a healthy way and not feed and let them consume and poison us. Some hold on to hurts, and remain bitter for decades.

I'm reminded of the patriarch Job who endured great affliction and he agonized over why he had to suffer so. He could not hold back his words and feelings, including bitterness. *"Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."* (Job 7:11) His incessant pain was hard to endure and he acknowledged that he had some bitterness over it all. Job did not give in to imputing wrong to God. He did however struggle to understand what was happening and why. In time, God gave him understanding and Job then received healing of his painful boils and lifting of the bitterness that had gotten a grip on him. He endured and persevered (James 5:11), accepted the situation and correction from God and humbled himself. (Job 42:6) In the end, or as a famous orator by the name of Paul Harvey said, "Now we know the rest of the story", rather than being bitter he prayed for his friends, and then life truly became joyful once again.

Isaiah 38 records another lesson, the event of Hezekiah, king of Judah, being sick unto death. He was told *"to get his house in order"*. Hezekiah responded with a prayer in which he asked the Lord to consider his overall good record as he wept bitterly. (vv.1-3) Hezekiah was informed that he would be healed. He wrote of the bitterness that had overcome him as he felt the effects of his illness. *"Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back."* (v.17) He was thankful for having more life to live and expressed such. *"The*

*living, the living man, he shall praise You, as I do this day; The father shall make known Your truth to the children."* (v.19)

Brooding over the past and staying stuck in bitterness and resentment is a formula for failure, depression, or destructive anger. Hurts can come from many different directions - from a mate, from children, from parents, from friends, and even from ministers and church fellowships.

Holding on to bitterness and resentment hurts primarily the person who is holding on to it. There is an old saying I've often used that says "*the burr under the saddle on the horse hurts the horse as much as the rider*". The phrase originates from riding on a horse. A "burr" is a prickly, rough seed pod. If a burr gets caught underneath a horse's saddle, it digs into the horse's skin, causing constant discomfort and agitation. What seems small can become huge in short order.

There's always something to learn when you and I go through a trial or painful experience. Holding on to ill will and resentment against someone who has wronged us will bring further pain and injury to ourselves. The apostle Paul instructs us in working through and dealing with bitterness and anger. "*Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*" (Ephesians 4:26, 31-32)

Christ would not have admonished these inspired words in Ephesians for us, if He did not understand that we would be challenged with anger and bitterness.

So, I must ask, how am I doing? How about you?

As we enter His Sabbath, reflect, pray, and meditate on these thoughts with me will you?

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



T. S. Hoefker

Senior Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)/(*Ministerios de la Iglesias de Dios*)

[tshoefker@cogministries.org](mailto:tshoefker@cogministries.org) / [www.cogministries.org](http://www.cogministries.org)

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Offices