**A message for February 21, 2016**

**Black Creek Baptist Church**

It is a tenet of my ministry and of my understanding of the word of God that Charity is not love itself, but is instead the character of love. Not everyone who loves practices the precepts of 1st Corinthians 13. Their love becomes ineffectual. Not everyone who practices 1st Corinthians 13 loves. Instead they have a character that teaches them to obey each of the precepts of 1st Corinthians 13 towards everyone they meet. That is a pleasant person to be near. Controversially there is a character of hate. It is called bitterness. Not everyone who is bitter hates. Just as a person out of good character can practice charity towards a person that is a perfect stranger to them, so a person incapable of hate because of the love of Christ can practice the character of hate through bitterness.

**Bitterness the Opposite of charity**

1. Bitterness does not suffer long. Each infraction is viewed and treated as fingernails across a chalk board.

2. Bitterness is not kind. It is like a nurse in a hospital who performs every necessary task towards a patient with a machinelike efficiency, but is careful to never show any sympathy or understanding.

3. Bitterness envies. Each accolade earned by the person it targets, every benefit that person receives, each and every talent or virtue that person possesses is begrudged and secretly despised because the person envying does not have it, or thinks they have it better and it is not being properly recognized.

4. Bitterness vaunts itself. It doesn’t believe anyone else would see his or her needs so bitterness puts its own interest and feelings above all.

5. Bitterness is puffed up, swelled with the indignities heaped upon it as it suffers because others cannot see how phony or wretched someone else is.

6. Bitterness behaves unseemly, not every moment, just from time to time when the provocation has been so great because the person who is the target of that bitterness has pushed it too far, and because no one else sees it or takes it seriously enough. Bitterness will act out in speech; in barely concealed tantrums only witnessed by family, and in personal petty acts that look benign to the casual observer, but are vaguely suspected or understood by its target.

7. Bitterness seeks her own. Bitterness can savor a feast in a hidden corner while others are starving based upon the injustices that it has suffered in time past.

8. Bitterness is easily provoked. Woe unto the poor wretch who does not understand the booby traps lying just underneath the surface of a bitter person who has stored and nourished every perceived slight and insult received all of his or her life. Like a child in a war torn country who picks up a toy only to have it explode, so is the person who seeks to touch the life of a bitter person.

9. Bitterness thinks evil. If there is more than one possible explanation for another person’s behavior, the bitter person will always seize upon the most vile and evil of motives to explain it. It is to the bitter person’s delight to find out that occasionally they were exactly right.

10. Bitterness rejoices in iniquity. The heart of a bitter person will leap for joy or self-justification when the target of that bitterness is caught doing wrong. “See” it says, “I told you he or she was evil”.

11. Bitterness is discouraged by the truth. Any truth that exalts its enemies, any truth that does not exalt the bitter person, and any truth that does not justify the bitterness itself is a personal defeat.

12. Bitterness can bear little. From time to time a bitter person will bear a little bit and find that sufficient justification to refuse to bear more. The bitter person is too weighed down with his or her own bitterness to ever bear another’s burden for long.

13. Bitterness doesn’t believe anything. Too many times the bitter person has suffered from lies and betrayal. From now on no person is to be believed. No person is to be given the benefit of the doubt. Every person is to occupy the position that is normally only occupied by practiced liars where every word spoken is to be viewed with the greatest skepticism and proof is necessary for every statement.

14. Bitterness will endure nothing. It believes that every single thing it is asked to endure is unreasonable and is a repeat of earlier times when the bitter person was taken advantage of and made a patsy.

15. Bitterness has lost hope.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, I Cor. 13:1.*

Bitterness is like a sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. Think of a Chinese emperor sitting on his throne getting ready to hush the crowd and make a pronouncement. He has the gong struck with a large mallet. Gong, gong, goes the sounding brass. It conveys no other message than to say, “shut up and look at me”. Think of a spoiled rich person sitting in their living room and wanting a servant. They pick up a little bell and ting a ling, ting a ling. The breathless servant comes into the room and bows, ready to serve. Eventually that is all a bitter person can convey. No one hears anything but “look at me, look at me”. If there is one thing that all bitter people have in common it is the statement, “no one ever listens to me.” That is because all anyone ever hears is a gong or a cymbal.

Bitterness always fails. It is a cancer that grows in the soul of the afflicted person and slowly saps away all hope. It slowly estranges its host from every person that host has loved. As only those who truly love a person can bear the sights and smells that a person emits in the last stages of disease and still go in and embrace that sickly person; so also only a few beloved people can ever really stay close or loyal to the bitter person.

A bitter person dies alone. The object of his or her bitterness is unaffected. The bitter person wanted the world to know how evil the object of that bitterness really was. He or she wanted their antagonist to be vilified by all. They wanted everyone to know just how evil, hypocritical, false and unworthy that despicable person really was. Instead, the calumnies they wanted on their enemy are ascribed to them. Eventually everyone sees it, pities them and walks away.. The object of their bitterness lives a pretty good life.

I am convinced from the word of God that with one exception there is no single thing that a bitter person can do to pull up that root of bitterness. Only God can ultimately remove it. I am convinced by experience with God that God will not remove that root of bitterness until God is convinced that person from who he is removing it from is so sick of that bitterness and the evil fruits in their life that they will never lightly allow themselves to become bitter again.

*Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant, Isaiah 14:29, 30.*

Kill the root of Bitterness with famine. Quit feeding it.