

The clear implication in this eight-term list is that if hostility is not recognized and resolved at its onset, it will produce the full range of ugly results.

The resentful heart. The word "bitter" is a sense word. It has to do with how a thing tastes or feels. Something with a penetrating odor or disagreeable taste is said to be bitter. Bitterness is like poison in a person's digestive system. It hurts, it threatens and it can kill. The Old Testament speaks of bitter grief, e.g. Ruth 1:13; 1 Sam. 1:10; 15:32. The death of one loved is bitterness to the soul. (Perhaps the idea of anger is implicit in the term since anger is an important element in grief.) In Matt. 26:75 Peter wept "bitterly," i.e. in grief at his betrayal of his Lord. His behavior had poisoned his life and his convulsive weeping was significant of the inner pain he experienced. The New Testament word *πικρία* means originally something sharp and penetrating. It speaks often of something that penetrates the senses and causes discomfort. "In the sphere of the soul" writes Wilhelm Bern Michaelis, it has to do with "the experience of what is unpleasant, unexpected, or undesired."<sup>14</sup>

In some cases the poison in the inner being is unbelief, e.g. Deut. 29:18, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." This

---

<sup>14</sup>Gerhard Kittel, ed., The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 6, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 122.