

# Root of bitterness clouds good judgment

*This article is from the "Among Friends" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's Web site, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of Jan. 2-3, 2010.*

**By Dave Havir**

BIG SANDY, Texas—In the book of Hebrews is a section of Scripture that can be very useful to believers who are dealing with disappointment and anger. Hebrews 12:15 talks about a "root of bitterness."

Have you ever dealt with a root of bitterness? You may have had a rare occurrence when bitterness manifested itself in volatile expressions of anger. But it is more likely that you have had bitterness manifesting itself in quiet times of hurt, discouragement or depression.

In his book *Total Forgiveness*, R.T. Kendall makes some references about bitterness. On page 75, he writes: "One way we walk in darkness is by holding bitterness in our hearts towards others—bitterness that creates confusion in our minds and oppression in our hearts."

Dr. Kendall later discusses the dangers of keeping a record of wrongs against others. From page 126:

"Total forgiveness obviously sees the evil but chooses to erase it. Before a grudge becomes lodged in the heart, the offense must be willfully forgotten. Resentment must not be given an opportunity to set in."

On page 127 he writes: "Love is a choice. It is an act of the will. Keeping a record of wrongs is also an act of the will—a choice *not* to love—and it is the more natural, easy choice for us to make."

Dr. Kendall explains that keeping a record of wrongs becomes more of a problem when a person cannot control the tongue.

He continues: "The irony is that, instead of 'getting something off our chest,' our words can cause an uncontrollable fire to erupt and incinerate what remains inside us. And instead of that fire subsiding, it doubles, intensifies and gets a thousand times worse in the end. It is a satanic victory, ultimately traceable to our keeping a record of wrongs."

When the author of Hebrews talked about the root of bitterness, he used Esau as a prime example (Hebrews 12:16-17).

At whom was Esau angry?

- He was angry at Jacob (Genesis 27:36, 41).
- Undoubtedly, he was angry at himself.

Outward bitterness toward other people generally reflects an inward bitterness toward ourselves.

On pages 135-136 Dr. Kendall writes: "Forgiving oneself means to experience the love that keeps no record of our *own* wrongs. This love is a choice, as we have seen, and to cross over the place where we choose to forgive ourselves is no small step.

"It is one thing to have this breakthrough regarding others—totally forgiving them and destroying the record of their wrongs; it is quite another to experience the greater breakthrough—total forgiveness of ourselves."