

Call to Obedience #297
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Do YOU Have A Grudge?

By Reimar Schultze

Almost every book of the Bible begins with its most significant message. Look, for example, at Genesis. Here you have in the first two chapters the revelation of God as the Creator of all things. Through this, his omnipotence, his omniscience, and his divine plan for all the ages is revealed. Take the next book, Exodus, and in the first two chapters you see Moses as the deliverer of the children of Israel from Egypt. Leviticus begins with the significance of the blood sacrifice that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (forgiveness) of sins (Heb. 9:22).

What I would like to do is take you into the Second Book of Samuel. Let's talk about its beginning. 2 Samuel reveals the heart of David, the poet, the sweet singer, the warrior, the king of Israel. Here you find the heart of one of the greatest men in the Bible. Many scholars always look for doctrines and theological positions. I am more interested in the heart of a man than in his doctrines. Aren't you?

I would rather live with a man who has a heart after God's own heart and holds some wrong doctrines, than to dwell with a man who has the right doctrines but a wrong heart. Ultimately, the man with a right heart will eventually be guided by the Spirit to the right doctrines (John 7:16–17; 14:15, 23).

And talking about doctrines, we need a new theology book, don't we? We have practically no theological book on the doctrine of the heart, on carnality, on self-denial, on waiting upon God, on hearing the voice of Jesus, on love divine, and on walking with God—all under one cover. How is it that we have spent 2000 years since Christ and not produced a comprehensive doctrine on these vital matters? Pray with me that some day we will have such a book of the doctrines of practical Christian living.

But let's look at 2 Samuel to see the heart of David. David is the only man of whom the Bible explicitly states that he was a man after God's own heart. It is so stated when David was anointed king over Israel (1 Sam. 13:14), and it is so stated post-mortem, one thousand years later in the New Testament (Acts 13:22). I put great confidence in the first statement, but so much the more in the second because Paul tells me that God was pleased with David's heart from A to Z.

Of course, I know that some of you have immediate questions. You say, "Didn't David commit adultery and murder? Didn't he number the troops when he should not have?" Let me tell you two important things about this:

1) Even in failure, David was a man after God's own heart. He repented to such a depth and with such brokenness of heart that it pleased God enough to forgive him and

forget his sin. Read Psalm 51 and you find out how we ought to come to God when we have sinned! This is the confession of all confessions in the whole Bible and could be looked upon as the standard confession for all who sin. If your confession is not as expensive as David's, you might still be short of having received forgiveness. And because David's confession and repentance were so complete, his sin will not be found in the book of his deeds on Judgment Day (Rev. 20:12). Therefore, the Holy Spirit could attest of him in Acts 13:22 that David was a man after God's own heart. That includes that he repented as every man ought to repent.

2) David was not a "repeat sinner." He did not sin again and again as if it were no big deal. He knew that sin was breaking his fellowship with God. And all the Psalms he wrote, and whatever else we read about him, indicate that he craved nothing more than intimacy with God every moment of his life. Yes, David could handle anything anybody could possibly throw at him, anybody in this world and the devil himself, but he could not handle life without the Holy Spirit. Thus it is for a man after God's own heart.

Not only does Scripture say that David had a thoroughly repentant heart, the first chapter of 2 Samuel also reveals that a man after God's own heart is a man who carries no grudges.

God holds no grudges—he never has, and David did not either. Do you? If you do, you are not a man after God's own heart. We learn from David, as well as from the Lord, that there are not even justified grudges.

For over seventeen years, King Saul treated David like a mad dog, chasing him all over Israel, making his life as miserable as possible. He caused David to sleep in caves, never knowing whether he would wake up free the next day. For more than seventeen years, David had no family life worth mentioning. As far as I am concerned, he could have been one of the most bitter men of the Bible. God had ordained him to be king. He rightfully should have lived in a palace instead of sleeping on the rocks in a cold, damp cave. He rightfully should have chased God's enemies all those years, instead of being hunted by a brother of the covenant of God.

But, oh, my friend, when Saul died, instead of rejoicing, David mourned for him honestly, sincerely, from the depths of his soul as if Saul had been his best friend. And not only that, he caused all of Israel to mourn with him. The Bible says that when David heard of the death of Saul, "Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him. And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul..." (2 Sam. 1:11–12). In verses 19 through 27, you read that David even wrote a song praising the man who disdained him. That would be impossible if he had been carrying a grudge against Saul.

I can hardly think of anyone in my thirty-nine years of ministry who has never held a grudge against someone who has hurt or disappointed him—for even much less than David experienced. Someone has a grudge because he did not get an inheritance; someone against the boss because he was not promoted because of race, religion or whatever; someone against the pastor for not having been chosen to teach Sunday

School; someone against the spouse because he or she has not gotten the respect they desired. And the list goes on.

Oh, our Lord and God, have mercy on us! Where do we find a man after God's own heart? Where do we find a man who does not hold a grudge and resentment toward anybody? How does your heart, my friend, stack up against David's heart?

All our religious works and testimonies and prayers are nothing but hypocrisy if we hold a grudge against anybody. Jesus said, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any..." (Mark 11:25–26).

In plain language, this means that if you have a grudge against anyone, your prayers go no higher than your head, and you are an unforgiven, miserable wretch. Jesus says here that if you do not forgive others, your Father in heaven will not forgive you. Tell me, can anyone go to heaven who is not forgiven?

We must get rid of our grudges. We must come pure before God. Holding grudges is not only bad for your soul but also for your body. When you hold a grudge, you are under stress and that creates toxins. Toxins in the body can create sicknesses anywhere from allergies to arthritis to cancer to high blood pressure. When the body is under stress, the white blood count goes down, the immune system is weakened; that is, the defense system of the body against disease is weakened. You are miserable in body, soul, and spirit.

And how do we get rid of our grudges? Ask the Lord to help you see the seriousness of this mortal sin. Repent and confess it to the person you have a grudge against. If after that the grudge comes up again, go to the person again and again and again and humbly ask for forgiveness with no 'barbs' thrown in with it, until you get so mad at your sin and at the devil that, in your desperation, you will break through into the Spirit-filled life. If you don't work on getting rid of your grudge, it will remain in a secret closet of your heart, continually keeping you out of fellowship with God.

When we have a grudge, we are not filled with the Spirit but are in the flesh, in carnality, and carnality is enmity against God. Those who have grudges often create pockets of discontent in our churches. If we have a grudge, we try to find someone who will sympathize with us. So we go to another person who is also unhappy, complaining, hurt, discouraged, finding fault. We never go to a saint of God with it, for they would not give us the sympathy that we want.

As a pastor, I can look over most any congregation and tell that I have two kinds of people. Every pastor will agree with me. There are the happy, contented, positive faces on the one hand; and on the other hand, there are the unhappy, discontented, negative faces, all of them having a grudge about something. And once the "grudgers" get together in the church—do we ever have a problem. It can split the church or send the pastor out the back door. But, oh, if the happy ones get together, the revival fires begin to burn.

David carried no grudges. Can you go through what he went through for seventeen years—the mistreatment, the disrespect, the physical and emotional hardship—and not have a grudge? Can you keep your song through all of this?

David was a man after God's own heart—so much so, my friend, that God decided to begin the New Testament with these words: "*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David...*" Matthew 1:1

David had the godly ability to separate the man from the enemy. He knew that Saul was a man created in God's own image, a precious eternal soul worth more than all the world. He also knew the weakness of the flesh, the enemy in Saul. He focused on the eternal value of Saul as God's anointed one, and he disregarded the other part.

Is not this what Jesus did on the cross when he said to his accusers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

So when someone mistreats you, look at them as Jesus did and does, and you will become a man after God's own heart; a man through whom God will be able to do anything he has purposed to do.

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