

GRUDGES ARE DEADLY IN THE GODLY AND THE UNGODLY

Leviticus 19:18, James 5: 9, (KJV) Psalm 59: 1-17 – Pastor Richard Carlson

In this season when we are between a series of messages, I have asked the Lord to direct my heart to what He wants me to preach on. It was Monday of this week that I was reading my daily devotions. In one of the devotional books by Selwyn Hughes, I read some startling words. The writer was explaining how forgiveness does not come easily or naturally to us. Then in another similar devotional, he quoted from a film entitled, “The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoise,” by Luis Bunuel. One of the characters is a bishop, a man of God, a man of the cloth, who was orphaned as a young child when both of his parents were poisoned. The murderer of his parents was never caught. Many years later, the bishop was called to the deathbed of a gamekeeper to hear a deathbed confession. The bishop listened intently without showing any emotion. The gamekeeper recounted how he was the man who had poisoned and murdered his parents. The bishop gave the man absolution, saying his sins were forgiven, though no man can forgive sins, only God. Then the bishop walked over to the corner of the room, picked up the gamekeeper’s loaded shotgun. Then and there he shot the dying man full in the face with both barrels.” The devotional is entitled “Forgiven...So much.” The account moved me and reminded me of how deadly grudges are for the godly and the ungodly. Selwyn Hughes went on in the devotional to say that in his charge as a pastor in England, he had recounted the story and quite a few of his own parishioners confessed to him, that had they been in the bishop’s place, they would have done the same thing.

Beloved, taking up offenses and holding them bitterly in a grudge for life rather than truly forgiving is as common as mosquitoes are prevalent this summer. Some of the more bitter grudges I have ever witnessed are grudges that otherwise godly men and women have. I don’t have to leave Sweetwater County to recall such deadly bitter bile-producing grudges. Being unwilling to forgive is a deadly sin. This message is a message of warning to us all, and I believe all of us need it—every one of us. Right after Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in Matthew 6: 14, 15, He spoke one of the sternest warnings found in scripture. He said, “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. I confess that in forty four plus years of preaching, I don’t know that I have ever preached a whole sermon before on the deadly sin of keeping a grudge. Nevertheless, I knew on Monday that God was calling me to this message

which I especially dedicate to each one of you. I never want us to stand before God someday where you will say to me, “Pastor, you never ever warned me.” One believer put it this way. He said, “Forgiveness is what God is good at. I’m human. He can’t expect me to be as good at it as He is.” Just like the character Shylock in “The Merchant of Venice,” -- “We staunchly reserve our right to a pound of flesh and a lifetime of resentment.” God hates it. The text I just read to you from Matthew 6: 14. 15 makes it clear that we have all been forgiven so much more by the Lord than He will ever ask us to forgive in others. Yet if we refuse to forgive others, we put our own forgiveness in deep jeopardy.

Forgiveness is all about saying “Aye, aye, sir, to Jesus. It is His strong command. It is like a soldier being AWOL if we refuse to forgive others. To fail to forgive is to look into the tear-stained face of our Lord and to say, “I’ll leave all the forgiving to You. I will not.” Such a grudge as King Saul held in our text in Psalm 59: 1-17 is a sin God will never pass over. No, it is a deep stain and blemish He refuses to forgive, if we will not forgive others. God states in our text in Psalm 59: 14 and 15 that when the poison of bitterness is ours, we become like grudge-filled growling wild dogs. We read in the KJV, “And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.” Millions of believers carry grudges. In our church, God knows perhaps dozens of us who carry and have carried bitter grudges a long time. Why are grudges deadly for the godly and the ungodly? There are four major reasons why I urge you to drop all your grudges today. Make peace with God and others. To fail to heed God’s warning could well be deadly. If we retain our bitter grudge, it could well take our life. Let’s examine these 4 major reasons found in God’s Word for why we need to drop all our grudges today and forgive. May we not neglect or minimize this warning! Here are 4 reasons to drop your grudge today.

DROP YOUR GRUDGE NOW FOR GOD PROHIBITS GRUDGE-FILLED VENGEANCE, BUT HE COMMANDS YOU TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, OR TO SUFFER DIRE CONSEQUENCES. (I.)

Turn to the Law of God and Moses in Leviticus 19: 18. “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.” That command nails down the prohibition of carrying and bearing bitter grudges. We also read in Proverbs 24: 29, “Do not say, “Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.” Do not! Do not! It is one of

God's strong prohibitions. We read in the New Testament in Romans 12: 19, "Never!" Is that a prohibition? Yes it is. Look at this prohibition carefully. "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord, I will repay." It is true that nursing a grudge can and does cause physical illness. A typical reply Christians give when they refuse to forgive, when they nurse a grudge is, "Every time I see that man or woman, they burn me up." Beloved, when you want to burn up a person or persons, all you succeed in doing is burning yourself up. A sadistic farmer learned that vengeance comes back on us. It is like spitting into the wind. Who does it hit? It hits us. This sadistic farmer who couldn't get along with his neighbors once trapped a hawk. With venom in his heart, he tied a small stick of dynamite to the hawk's legs. He lit the fuse and let the bird loose. Guess how God dealt with this vengeful man? The farmer expected the bird to blow into smithereens in mid-air. The hawk amazingly flew straight into the farmer's barn. The huge explosion wrecked the farmer's barn as well as the corner of his house closest to his barn.

Beloved, godly Christians who otherwise know and love Jesus are just as prone to holding bitter grudges as the ungodly are. God forbids them! Bitter, grudge-filled people seldom listen to warnings. They know that God commands in His second greatest command that they love their neighbor as themselves. It often doesn't change them one iota. I read of one Christian leader in the church who could talk of little else but his fellow Christian he had come to hate. His wife feared for him as his breath became foul. His appetite left him. His digestion failed him, and he suffered countless nights of sleeplessness. After a few months, he dropped dead. You may contend that there may have been thousands of other reasons this man dropped dead. The doctor was asked by the pastor who shared this story, "What caused this man's death?" The doctor replied, "The man died of an un-drained grudge." No doctor would write that note on the death certificate. But it is costly to know what God has called you to do, to refuse to do it, and then to face the consequences, especially if the disobedience is over not laying down a deadly sinful grudge. Christians are prone to deep grudges. Many missionaries are prone to bitter grudges. I have known a few. Preachers, elders and deacons are very prone to bitter grudges. So what is the most dire consequence that we face, if we refuse to drop our bitter grudge? Physical death is not the worst. The worst consequence is—God will not forgive us.

DROP YOUR GRUDGE NOW FOR GOD IS STANDING RIGHT AT THE DOOR WAITING TO JUDGE YOU FOR YOUR POISONOUS

SIN. (II.) Turn to James 5:9. “Do not grudge or complain, brethren against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.” You may try to hide your grudge-filled face from the notice of your wife or husband or from those at church or at work. It would be easier to hide the fact that you have two black eyes. Grudges show all over your face, your body language, and worst of all, God can see. He is standing at the door, waiting for you to repent. Did you know what God is waiting for? He is not only waiting for you to repent if you are holding a grudge, but the person you have a grudge against also has an obligation. It’s just like a hot potato—drop it, do it now as the one with the grudge. Listen to the words of Jesus, in Matthew 5: 23, 24. We read, “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother (that includes sisters too.) if there you remember that your brother has something against you (that’s a bitter grudge) –Do what. Drop your offering there. I read, “Leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.” I used to think that Jesus had that mixed up as a young boy when I read these words. No, Jesus knows what to do. He is standing right at the door not only waiting to judge the one with the grudge, but He is waiting to say, “Don’t bring me your offering just yet if you know you have someone out there who has a grudge against you. Beat feet it to that grudge-filled person; work it out in love, and then come offer your gift.

Sadly, the presence of a grudge in others against us, has the power to poison us when we are not responsible for that grudge. Grudges, even for the godly, as well as the ungodly, “do a horrible number” on the church of Jesus Christ. If I could erase all the times I have spent as a pastor dealing with grudges in the membership—against each other, against me or other pastors here, against family, against in-laws, against neighbors, and even against people in office at the highest level, against strangers, there is no end to the people we can have grudges against—if I could erase all those times, I suppose it would erase years of time as a pastor from my shepherding. I’ve read that grudges are the sand that gets into the machinery of living. Grudges put the whole physical and mental and emotional systems in our body, soul and spirit into war time. Peace is gone. Walter Alvarez, a counselor and medical doctor said, “I often tell patients they cannot afford to carry grudges or to maintain hates. Such things, I tell them will make them ill and tire them out. I once saw a man kill himself inch by inch, simply by thinking of nothing but hatred for a relative who had sued him. Within less than two years, this man was dead.” A grudge or resentment is sand in the machinery of living.

Don't ever think sand helps. One of the worst things an enemy can do to us, is to find our vehicle, get into it, and to pour sand down into the engine or the transmission. Beloved, I call us today to give God the sand we have wadded up in our fist which we are ready to throw in another's transmission, and then to agree to substituting or trading it for the oil of gladness and love. Give God the sand of your resentments and your bitter grudges. Hold still and let your friend who comes to you to see what you have against them, listen to them. Let God use your friend you consider an enemy help pull out the splinter of resentment and grudges that threatens your Christian life, your walk with God, and which even threatens your days on earth. Do it now! Thirdly, there's a third reason to drop your grudge today. Let's find the last two reasons in Psalm 59: 1-17. The title of this psalm says, "For the choir director; set to Altasheth—meaning "Do Not Destroy!" A Miktam of David, when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.

DROP YOUR GRUDGE NOW FOR GOD WILL NOT BE GRACIOUS TO THOSE WHO ARE TREACHEROUS IN INIQUITY.

(III.) Notice Psalm 59: 5-6 and 13-15. What does this have to do with grudges? Notice David in verses 5 and 6 calls for no graciousness for these who howl like dogs. But in verses 13-15, he goes further to say, "Destroy them in wrath to prove You rule, Lord. He again reminds God that these men like Saul and his men, out to kill him, not only howl like dogs, but they run around the city, wandering like vagabonds looking for food and growling and grudging if they are not satisfied." Listen to the growl in the grudge of a grudge filled man or woman. Hear the GGRRRRRRR. Drop it, God says. So you ask—what was Saul's grudge all about? Was it legitimate or not? Beloved, no legitimate grudge is less sinful than an illegitimate grudge. Was Esau's grudge against Jacob legitimate? Very legitimate. But what does God say about this man with a legitimate grudge. We read strong words in Hebrews 12: 14-17. "Pursue peace with all men. (How many? Who?) It's all men/women, boys and girls. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled. That there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears." Listen beloved, if you want another person or persons to come up short of the grace of God, God will not be gracious with you and allow you to find true repentance. Back to King Saul now—I ask you. Was his root

of bitterness with David legitimate? Never! It was envious. After David killed Goliath, Saul heard the women of Israel singing a song, (I Samuel 21: 11) which got his goat. The words were, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” This evil envy opened the door in King Saul to being oppressed by an evil spirit, by a murderous desire to slay David, and before committing suicide, this grudge led him to seek counsel of the witch of Endor—I Samuel 28: 7. David asks in Psalm 59: 11—for God not to slay them as he refused to raise his hand against the Lord’s anointed. But by verse 13, David is conflicted and says, “Slay them in your wrath, Lord.” Beloved, grudges are deadly. Even the victims of grudges are often poisoned. Saul went to his grave over a grudge which in the end left him falling on his own sword. I know of missionaries, godly men and women who have had mental breakdowns because their mission organization withheld their allotted amount of support money. Karl Menninger says, “I know from clinical experience that in some women, the degree of discomfort both in pregnancy and delivery has been directly proportional to the intensity of their resentment at having to live through this phase of their female role. Beloved, grudges are deadly. Fourthly and lastly,

DROP YOUR GRUDGE NOW FOR GOD LAUGHS AT YOU AND YOUR GROWLING AND GRUDGING AS YOU HAVE LOST YOUR SONG. (IV.)

Notice Psalm 59: 7,8 and 16,17. David says, Saul and his followers “belch out their venom and they have swords in their mouths, mockingly saying, “Who hears?” But David replies to their mockery, saying, “But Thou, O Lord, dost laugh at them; Thou dost scoff at all the nations.” Be honest, are you carrying a grudge? Drop it. Ephesians 4: 26 declares, “Do not let the sun do down upon your wrath.” Don’t go just halfway in settling a quarrel. Paul says in Romans 12: 18, 20, 21, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink, for in so doing, you will heap burning coals of fire upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Half-way isn’t far enough. Do all you can to end a grudge or to help another end their grudge. Whatever shuts out your brother shuts out your Father in heaven. I John 4: 20 teaches us strongly, “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has never seen.” If you let the sun go down on your wrath, you will awaken in the morning with a corroding soul, sand in your spirit. A golfer with a grudge can’t keep his eye on the ball. He can’t drive straight or shoot straight. Let God demolish your defenses, beloved. Psalm 59: 15-17 makes it clear you that you have a

choice. You can growl, grudge or sing. Lost your song? Drop the grudge and the growl. Come to the altar—drop your grudge before it's too late. The time to get right with God is now!