

I believe there is nothing more dangerous to a Christian than to carry around a resentment against God. Yet I am shocked by the growing number of believers I meet who are peeved at the Lord. They may not admit as much - but deep inside, they hold some kind of grudge against Him. Why? They believe He's not interested in their lives or problems! They're convinced He doesn't care - because He hasn't answered a particular prayer or acted on their behalf.

I received a letter recently from a young man who's incarcerated in a southern prison. This convict was once a committed Christian - but now he says he's mad at God. He wrote:

"I'm in a hellhole - and I believe God is going to leave me here! At one time I wanted to follow Christ with all my heart. But I had a sin that overwhelmed me - a sexual sin. I tried to repent, but it never helped. I read my Bible, studied and prayed - but it was no use. My sin always took control. And now I'm in prison for a long time because of it.

"I've given up on doing spiritual warfare. Trying doesn't seem worth it. God delivered me from drugs and alcohol when I was a new Christian. But why didn't he take away my sexual lusts?"

Every page of this man's letter was full of bitterness toward God. He has allowed his resentment to turn into an all-out rage!

I see a similar rage among a growing number of ministers in many denominations. They've become disillusioned, burned out, angry with God - and now they're walking away from their calling.

# Are You Mad At God?

When you ask them why, they answer:

"I was diligent, faithful - I gave it my best. But the harder I tried, the less results I saw. My congregation was not appreciative. And all my prayers seemed in vain. At one point, everything I preached felt phony, because it wasn't working in my own life. Now I've quit the ministry until I can figure things out."

I have learned over the years that very few such ministers ever return. Why? They hold onto their peeve against God! They say, "I did everything right. But nothing turned out the way I'd hoped. I was faithful to Him - but He failed me!"

## **The Awful Danger and Bitter Consequences of Holding a Grudge Against God Were Brought Home to Me Recently!**

Not long ago, I picked up a missionary biography entitled Aggie - and I couldn't put it down. This amazing story gripped my heart, and I ended up reading it in one sitting. I'd like to summarize the story for you here - because it vividly illustrates the destructive power of grudging anger in a Christian's heart:

In 1921, two young couples in Stockholm, Sweden, answered God's call to the African mission field. They were members of Philadelphia Pentecostal Church, which sent out missionaries to locales over the world. During one particular missions service, these two couples received a burden to go to the Belgian Congo, which is now Zaire.

Their names were David and Svea Flood and Joel and Bertha Erickson. Svea Flood was only four-feet-eight-inches tall, and she was a well-known singer in Sweden. But both couples gave up everything to lay down their lives for the Gospel.

When they arrived in the Belgian Congo, they reported to the local mission station. Then they took machetes and literally hacked their way into the Congo's insect-infested interior. David and Svea had a two-year-old son, David Jr., and they had to carry him on their backs. Along the way, both families caught malaria. But they kept going forward with great zeal, ready to be martyrs for the Lord.

Finally, they reached a certain village in the interior. Yet, to their surprise, the people wouldn't let them enter. They told the missionaries, "We can't allow any

white people here, or our gods will be offended." So the families went to a second village - but they were rejected there also.

At this point, there were no other villages around. The worn-down families had no choice but to settle. So they hacked out a clearing in the middle of a mountain jungle and built mud huts, where they made their homes.

As the months went by, they all suffered from loneliness, sickness and malnutrition. Little David Jr. became sickly. And they had almost no interaction with any of the villagers.

Finally, after about six months, Joel and Bertha Erickson decided to return to the mission station. They urged the Floods to do the same, but Svea couldn't travel because she'd just gotten pregnant. And now her malaria had become worse. Besides all that, David said, "I want my child born in Africa. I've come to give my life here." So the Floods simply waved goodbye as their friends began the one-hundred-mile hike back.

For several months Svea endured a raging fever. Yet all that time, she ministered faithfully to a little boy who came to see them from one of the nearby villages. The boy was the Floods' only convert. He brought the family fruit, and as Svea ministered to him, he simply smiled back at her.

Eventually, Svea's malaria got so bad she became bedridden. When the time came for her to give birth, she delivered a healthy baby girl. But within a week she was at the point of death. In her final moments, she whispered to David, "Call our girl Aina." Then she died.

David Flood was badly shaken by his wife's death. Summoning all his strength, he took a wooden box and made a casket for Svea. Then, in a primitive grave on the mountainside, he buried his beloved wife.

As he stood beside her grave, he looked down at his young son beside him. Then he heard his baby daughter's cries from the mud hut. And suddenly, bitterness filled his heart. An anger rose up in him - and he couldn't control it. He flew into a rage, crying, "Why did You allow this, God? We came

here to give our lives! My wife was so beautiful, so talented. And here she lies, dead at twenty-seven.

"Now I have a two-year-old son I can hardly care for, let alone a baby girl. And after more than a year in this jungle, all we have to show for it is one little village boy who probably doesn't understand what we've told him. You've failed me, God. What a waste of life!"

At that point, David Flood hired some local tribesmen as guides and took his children to the mission station. When he saw the Ericksons, he blurted out angrily, "I'm leaving! I can't handle these children alone. I'm taking my son with me back to Sweden - but I'm leaving my daughter here with you." And with that, he left Aina for the Ericksons to raise.

All the way back to Stockholm, David Flood stood on deck and seethed at God. He'd told everyone he was going to Africa to be a martyr - to win people to Christ, no matter what the cost. And now he was returning a defeated and broken man. He believed he'd been faithful - but that God had rewarded him with total neglect.

When he arrived in Stockholm, he decided to go into the import business to seek his fortune. And he warned everyone around him never to mention God in his presence. When they did, he flew into a rage, the veins popping out on his neck. Eventually, he began drinking heavily.

Shortly after he left Africa, his friends the Ericksons died suddenly (possibly poisoned by a local village chief). So, little Aina was handed to an American couple - some dear people I know named Arthur and Anna Berg. The Bergs took Aina with them to a village called Massisi, in the northern Congo. There they began calling her "Aggie." And soon little Aggie learned the Swahili language and played with the Congo children.

Alone much of the time, Aggie learned to play games of imagination. She imagined she had four brothers and a sister, and she gave them all imaginary names. She would set a table for her brothers and talk to them. And she would imagine her sister continually looking for her.

When the Bergs went on furlough to America, they took Aggie with them, to the Minneapolis area. As it turned out, they ended up staying there. Aggie grew up to marry a man named Dewey Hurst, who later became president of Northwest Bible College, the Assemblies of God school in Minneapolis.

### **For Years as an Adult, Aggie Tried to Contact Her Father - But to No Avail!**

Aggie never knew that her father had remarried - this time to Svea's younger sister, who had no heart for God. And now he had five children besides Aggie - four sons and a daughter (just as Aggie had imagined). By this time, David Flood had become a total alcoholic, and his eyesight was failing badly.

For forty years Aggie tried to locate her father - but her letters were never answered. Finally, the Bible school gave her and her husband round-trip tickets to Sweden. This would give her the chance to find her father personally.

After crossing the Atlantic, the couple spent a day's layover in London. They decided to take a walk, so they strolled by the Royal Albert Hall. To their joy, a Pentecostal Assemblies of God missions convention was being held. They went inside, where they heard a black preacher testifying of the great works God was doing in Zaire - the Belgian Congo!

Aggie's heart leaped. After the meeting, she approached the preacher and asked, "Did you ever know the missionaries David and Svea Flood?" He answered, "Yes. Svea Flood led me to the Lord when I was just a boy. They had a baby girl, but I don't know what happened to her." Aggie exclaimed, "I'm the girl! I'm Aggie - Aina!"

When the preacher heard this, he clasped Aggie's hands, hugged her and wept with joy. Aggie could hardly believe that this man was the little boy convert her mother had ministered to. He had grown up to be a missionary evangelist to his own country - which now included 110,000 Christians, 32 mission stations, several Bible schools and a 120-bed hospital.

The next day Aggie and Dewey left for Stockholm - and word had already spread there that they were coming. By this time Aggie knew she had four brothers and a sister. And to her surprise, three of her brothers greeted her at the hotel. She asked them, "Where's David, my older brother?" They merely pointed across the lobby to a lone figure sitting in a chair. Her brother, David Jr., was a shriveled-up, gray-haired man. Like his father, he'd grown embittered and had nearly destroyed his life with alcohol.

When Aggie asked about her father, her brothers flushed with anger. They all hated him. None of them had talked to him in years.

Then Aggie asked, "What about my sister?" They gave her a telephone number, and Aggie called it immediately. Her sister answered - but when Aggie told her who she was, the line suddenly went dead. Aggie tried calling back but got no answer.

In a little while, however, her sister arrived at the hotel and threw her arms around Aggie. She told her, "All my life I've dreamed about you. I used to spread out a map of the world, put a toy car on it, and pretend to drive everywhere to find you."

Aggie's sister also despised her father, David Flood. But she promised to help Aggie find him. So they drove to an impoverished area of Stockholm, where they entered a rundown building. When they knocked on the door, a woman let them in.

Inside, liquor bottles lay everywhere. And lying on a cot in the corner was her father - the one-time missionary, David Flood. He was now seventy-three years old and suffering from diabetes. He'd also had a stroke, and cataracts covered both of his eyes.

Aggie fell to his side, crying, "Dad, I'm your little girl - the one you left in Africa." The old man turned and looked at her. Tears formed in his eyes. He answered, "I never meant to give you away. I just couldn't handle you both." Aggie answered, "That's okay, Daddy. God took care of me."

Suddenly, her father's face darkened. "God didn't take care of you!" he raged. "He ruined our

whole family! He led us to Africa and then betrayed us. Nothing ever came of our time there. It was a waste of our lives!"

Aggie then told him about the black preacher she'd just met in London - and how the country had been evangelized through him. "It's all true, Daddy," she said. "Everybody knows about that little boy convert. The story has been in all the newspapers."

Suddenly the Holy Spirit fell on David Flood - and he broke. Tears of sorrow and repentance flowed down his face - and God restored him.

Shortly after their meeting, David Flood died. And although he was restored to the Lord, he left only ruin behind. Besides Aggie, his legacy was five children - all unsaved and tragically embittered.

Aggie wrote down the whole story. Yet as she worked on it, she developed cancer. Just after she finished writing it, she went to be with the Lord.

### **This Message Is for All Who Believe - Like David Flood - They Have a Right to Be Angry With God!**

David Flood represents many Christians today. They've been disappointed, cast down - and now they're full of rage toward God!

The Bible gives us an example of this, in the book of Jonah. Like David Flood, Jonah received a missionary call from God. And he went to Nineveh to preach the message of judgment God gave him: The city would be destroyed in forty days.

After delivering the message, Jonah sat on a hillside, waiting for God to begin the destruction. But when forty days passed, nothing happened. Why? Nineveh repented - and God changed his mind about destroying them!

This angered Jonah. He cried out, "Lord, you've betrayed me! You put a burden on my heart to come here and preach judgment. Everyone in Israel knew about it. But now you've changed everything without telling me. I look like a false prophet!"

Jonah sat under the hot sun pouting - peeved at God! Yet, in

his mercy, God caused a plant to spring up to shelter Jonah from the heat: "...*that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief....*" (JONAH 4:6).

Now, the word "grief" here means "displeasure, disappointment." Simply put, Jonah was grieved because things hadn't gone as planned. God had changed his course - and Jonah's pride was wounded!

This is where most rage against God begins - with a disappointment. God may call us, burden us and send us - but He may make changes without including us in His sovereign plan. Then, when things don't go as we'd planned, we may feel misled or betrayed.

At this point, God understands our cries of pain and confusion. After all, our cry is a human one. And it is no different from Jesus' cry on the cross: "*Father, why have you forsaken me?*"

**But if we continue nursing a peeved spirit, it will grow into a rage within us.** And God will ask us the same question he asked Jonah: "*Doest thou well to be angry...?*" (verse 9). In other words: "Do you think you have a right to be so angry?"

Jonah answered, "I have every right to be angry, to the day I die!" "...*And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death*" (same verse). Here was a prophet who was so vexed, so irritated, so full of rage at God, he said: "I don't care whether I live or die! My ministry is a failure. And all my suffering has been in vain. I spent three days and nights in the stinking belly of that whale - for what? God has changed everything on me. I have every right to be angry with him!"

**Many Christians are like Jonah - they feel they have a right to be mad at God.** They think, "I pray, I read my Bible, I obey God's word. So, why has all this trouble fallen on my life? Why don't I see the blessings God promised me? He has failed me!"

**The Worst Danger of Harboring Anger and Irritation at God Is That You Might Spin Out Beyond the Point of Consolation!**

It is possible to reach a point where you're no longer able to be touched. This is a point where nothing and no one can console you!

Jeremiah writes: "...A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping: Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not" (JER 31:15).

At the time Jeremiah wrote this, Israel was being led away into captivity by the Assyrians. Their homes had been burned and destroyed and all their vineyards laid to waste. Jerusalem was reduced to a pile of rubble. All around them they saw nothing but ruin and desolation. So Jeremiah used Rachel - Israel's ancestor - as a weeping figure who's so distraught at seeing her children taken from her that nothing could comfort her.

In essence, Jeremiah was saying that these mourning Israelites had settled into their grief - and they were beyond all consolation! Jeremiah couldn't comfort them; there was no use even trying to talk to them. In their minds, God had allowed captivity to overtake

them - and they had a right to be bitter toward Him!

**Yet here is the danger: When we harbor our questions and complaints for too long, they turn into irritation. Then our irritation turns into bitterness. And, finally, our bitterness turns into rage. At that point, we no longer listen to reproof.** God's word does not affect us. And no one - no friend, pastor or spouse - can reach us. We shut out all wooings of the Spirit!

**For Those Who Admit They Are Near or Even Past the Point of Refusing Consolation, There Is Good News!**

God's word says there is hope! *"Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy"* (JER 31:16). In other words: "Stop crying - stop complaining. I'm going to reward you for your faithfulness!"

*"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always*

*abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1.COR 15:58). Beloved, your cries and prayers have not been in vain! All your pain and tears have been for a purpose.

God is telling you, "You think it's all over. You see only your circumstances - failure, ruin, no results. So you say, 'This is the end.' But I say it is the beginning! I see the reward that I'm about to pour out on you. I have good things in mind for you - wonderful things. So, stop your crying!"

Dear saint, allow God's Spirit to heal you of all bitterness, anger, rage - before it destroys you! You may see only ruin in your life - but He sees restoration! Let Him restore you now from the desolation surrounding you. He has only good things in mind for you - because *"...he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (HEB 11:6). Hallelujah!

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