

Grievances

By A.W. Pink

Amongst the various characters that are ever moving up and down in this busy world, we sometimes encounter that peculiar and by no means pleasant one which we may call *a man with a grievance*. Even amongst your own relations and friends you may find him; for he is usually not very far to seek. Most of us know some querulous, discontented individual who is the worst used person in the world, who is always being injured, and whose general conversation is a tissue of complaints against everybody—but himself.

Most of the complaints are purely imaginary, the mere suspicions of a soured mind, the workings of a proud unhumiliated heart, the heavings of a restless, fretful spirit. But it sometimes happens that this not very amiable person has a *real* ground of complaint—that some injury, not perhaps a great, but a substantial wrong, has been done him. Now he is a man with a grievance, a real, well grounded grievance. And now he is happy. He is like a married woman who, after a long series of disappointments, at last gives birth to a living child. She has now something to nurse, to look at, to press to her bosom, to show to her husband and friends. So our discontented friend has now a living grievance to nurse, to press to his bosom, to feed, and to show about. An imaginary wrong is like a still-born child: it cannot be nursed or shown about. Nobody will take it up; and though the mother pine over it, it must be put out of sight, buried and forgotten. But the living child may prove to the mother a worse sorrow than all her previous disappointments. Better have no child, than an untoward one; better be ever barren, than bare a son to his mother's grief and bitterness (Prov. 17:25).

I have put an extreme case to show the point more clearly and vividly; but many minor instances will recur to the minds of most. Assume, then, that our friend has a real substantial grievance, and assume that, with all his wretched temper and disposition, he does possess the life of God in his soul. Now, what shall he do with his grievance? He cannot bury it, for it is alive; and he has not sufficient grace to at once crucify it. He is determined, therefore, to nurse it, but if he nurse it, it must be at the expense of the life of God in his soul, for a more untoward brat mother never bore, one who, when strong enough, will not scruple to rob her of everything she possesses, and of her own life too, unless it be miraculously preserved.

Christian reader, have you never had a grievance—a real, substantial grievance? Were you never wronged by some professor in pocket or reputation? Were you never wounded in the house of your friends? Has no Christian brother ever treated you unjustly or unkindly? Has your minister, or the deacons, or some in the church, or the church itself, done what you believed to be a real, substantial wrong? and they will neither admit it, confess it, nor repair it. Well, now you have a grievance: a fair, legitimate, honest grievance. You are not naturally of such a temper and disposition as has been described, and yet you have solid ground of complaint. Now what do you do with your grievance? Do you nurse it? Do you brood over it? Do you press it close to your bosom to keep it warm? Do you listen to its cries and complaints, and do you continually feed it that it may not die away, but thrive and grow, and get stronger and stronger? Be honest with yourself, and see how matters really stand between the Lord and your soul. Do you not find that this overgrown child which you so carefully nurse, which is

scarcely ever out of your arms and never out of your mind, which you show about so much to all your friends and visitors, is *secretly draining away the life of your soul*. Where is your patience, your forbearance, your broken contrite heart, your submission to the will of God, your love to the brethren, your meekness and quietness, your forgiving spirit, your godly fear of displeasing the Lord by hating your brother, your obedience to Gospel precepts?

You have been wronged, grievously wronged, cruelly and unjustly treated. Well, all the more reason why you should *show your Christian spirit* by forgiving those who have wronged you. Will you never forgive? Will you go down to the grave in your unforgiving spirit? Will you nurse your grievance till, like a spoiled child, it becomes your master, and ends in robbing you of all you possess worth having? Do you not see how lean you are getting, wasting away like a youth in consumption? Do not you find how barren your soul is, what little access you have to God in prayer, what little enjoyment of His presence and smiles of His face? Do you not feel how dark your mind is, and how long it is since you had a visit from Jesus? But why all this darkness, barrenness, and death? Is there not a cause? Do not these increase the more you brood over your wrongs? And should not this lead you to fear lest you be holding an enemy to God to your bosom? In nursing your grievance, could you see the real state of the case, you would find that you are nursing *enmity, pride and self-righteousness; that you are walking contrary to the spirit and the precepts of the Gospel; that you are acting against the mind and example of Christ, who forgave his murderers; and yet you who call yourself a Christian, cannot forgive your brother!* "Yes but he has treated me so unkindly, so cruelly, so unjustly." All the more reason why you should forgive him. "But he has acted so inconsistently." Well, reprove him for it; but let not his sin be an occasion for you to sin too. I dare say you think you have more grace than he, for you are sure you would not have treated him as he has treated you. Then show the superiority of your grace by freely forgiving him, if you believe him to be a brother. But whether you have sufficient grace for this or not, take this friendly piece of advice, if you can-do *not nurse your grievance*; for depend upon it, you can only do so, to the eventual grief of your own soul, to the inflicting upon yourself of a deeper wrong than that from which you are suffering, and an injury worse than any that your worst enemy could inflict upon you. —From "The Gospel Standard," 1864.

--A.W. Pink