

The Spirit of Offense

Matthew 24:10-13 “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

Proverbs 18:19 “A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city.”

- An offended person will eventually betray
- Walls were built around ancient cities to keep people out
- Walls are called strongholds in the NT (2 Cor. 10:5)

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. **4** For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **5** casting down imaginations (reasoning, thought processes) and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

- “imaginations” are thought processes we develop deep within our souls to protect ourselves

What is a betrayal?

- **Betrayal** is when I seek my benefit or my protection at the expense of one I have a covenant relationship with.
- We build thought processes at the expense of someone with whom you have a covenant relationship
- When we keep someone out, we leave out Jesus
- This leads to hatred (hatred means to love less, the absence of love, vacuum of love, the void of)
- An offended person leads to betrayal which leads to hatred
- An offended heart is the breeding ground of deception
- Jesus calls false prophets: “wolves in sheep’s clothing”
- Wolves travel in packs
- Separate the caribou (sheep) from the herd
- They isolate people from the body

Proverbs 18:1 “A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.”

- Isolation happens within the soul (thought processes)
- Anomia (GRK for lawlessness) – you are a law unto yourself

- A lawless thought is when you develop a thought contrary to Scripture
- Because of lawlessness the love (agape) of many grows cold
- “many” – the vast majority
- He is speaking of the church
- V. 12 – “lawlessness will abound”
- We are a law unto ourselves
- We develop a law contrary to God’s law of love
- Love – eros, storge (awe), phileo, agape
- In vs. 12, Jesus uses the word “agape” – self-giving love of God
- Jesus is talking about the church (24:13, “but he who endures to the end shall be saved”)
- The one who can hurt you the most is the one closest to you
- We as believers set ourselves up for offense because of our expectations
- Some say, “The world treats me better than a lot of Christians.”
- Why? – because our expectations of the world are lower
- Category 1: those who have been genuinely mistreated
- Category 2: those who think they’ve been mistreated
 - a. They have inaccurate information
 - b. They have accurate information but they have discerned it inaccurately
- (Misinterpretation of events)
- Will speak about no. 1 - This message deals with the aught within us (we are offended and need to be freed)
- Do you have the right to be offended? – If you want to walk with God - No.

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?

Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 Therefore

the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And

when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and

he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 So his fellow servant

fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants

saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that

debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay

all that was due to him.

35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

- 10K talents = 7.5 Billion dollars

- 100 denarii = 100 days salary = 1/3 of a year's salary

- 100 denarii is a big offense, but nothing in comparison to 10K talents

- An offended person doesn't know what they've done to Jesus

- An offended person who cannot forgive does not realize what he has been forgiven of

- Mt. 18:21 – our forgiveness is to be like our heavenly Father's (inexhaustible)

- We deserve hell, but God chose to forgive us

Acts 24:16 – "This being so, I myself always strive (exercise) to have a conscience without offense

toward God and men.”

- take pains, strive – means exercise (we need to be praying, reading the Word)
- If we exercise forgiveness, nothing can touch us (offend us)

Psalm 19:165 – “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”

- Some offenses wound us
- Some people are weak in the spirit and when offenses hit them they are wounded.
- Wounds, if not properly healed, can stay with us for life

Matthew 5:44 – 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”

- In prayer, we focus on those who abuse us

Psalm 35:11-14 “False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.”

- fast and pray for those who offend us
- Often we have to do what doesn't feel good
- When we forgive, Jesus has the purpose of reconciliation
- What led us to repentance? The goodness of God

Matthew 18:15 “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

- This is not an excuse to explain how badly you have been treated.
- Jesus has the purpose of reconciliation.
- Jesus forgave us at the cross.
- Jesus did not wait for us to apologize.
- We are reconciled when we ask for forgiveness.
- An offended person who cannot forgive is a person who has not realized what he has been forgiven of
- Offense is not a right!

- Our forgiveness is to be like our Heavenly Father's – it is inexhaustible (70x7)
- God took our unpayable debt and nailed it to the cross
- Like our Heavenly Father, we are to create an atmosphere of goodness that will make the other want to be reconciled

Luke 17:1 “Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come”

- The love of God covers a multitude of sins
- offense (skandalon) – bait stick of a trap (to capture and kill the animal)
- offense is the bait of Satan to pull you into captivity

2 Tim. 2:26 – “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

- People can be used by the Holy Spirit, but waters of bitterness are flowing from them
- An offense is the bait of Satan to draw us into his schemes of sowing bitterness
- Offense does not justify sin
- What was done to you may have been wrong, but it doesn't justify the sin of holding offense.
- Two wrongs never made a right.

Reflective Questions:

1. Let's examine our own hearts. Are we harboring offense?
2. Can we identify “imagination” (thought processes) within our minds and hearts that are leading us down the path of offense, bitterness and isolation?
3. The action of another pushes a button in us. Are we willing to face our buttons and the pain they represent?
4. Are we willing to walk the path of forgiveness and reconciliation? What would that look like for us and the people who have offended us?
5. How do we handle situations where there may never be resolution/restoration (marriage, family, church, work, team, etc)?
6. Walking the path of Christ (seeking forgiveness, peace and reconciliation) may get us killed. Are we still willing to follow the path?
7. In practical terms, what does it mean to forgive 70x7 (those repeated offenses which are made on a daily basis)?

8. How do we move from forgiving the other to blessing them? How do we pray for blessing when we don't think the other is worthy of blessing?
9. How are our hearts transformed to become like the Father's heart (forgiving 70x7, extending grace, loving our enemies, etc)?
10. How do we deal with the systems (church, family, team, work) that generate offense?