

Luke 17:1 Then said he unto the disciples, **It is impossible but that offences will come**: but woe unto him, through whom they come!

NAS And he said to his disciples, "**It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come**, but woe to him through whom they come!"

NIV Jesus said to his disciples: "**Things that cause people to sin are bound to come**, but woe to that person through whom they come."

AMP And [Jesus] said to His disciples, **Temptations [that is, snares, traps set to entice to sin] are sure to come**; but woe to him by or through whom they come!

++++ LISTEN TODAY FOR THE VOICE OF GOD WITHIN THE VOICE OF THE PREACHER! +++++

- Anyone who has trapped animals knows that a successful trap must be either hidden or baited.
- Satan is subtle and cunning! His most deceptive and deadly traps are both hidden and baited!
- One of his best baits is something every Christian has encountered - **OFFENSE**
- Offense itself (like bait) is not deadly unless it is consumed. But if you feed on it, you are trapped!
- Offended people are oblivious to their condition because they focus on the wrong done to them.
- **Jesus said it is impossible to live in this life and not have the opportunity to be offended!**
- The question is not "**Will you encounter this trap?**" but "**How will you respond to it?**"
- Don't let another's sin affect your relationship with God! Your response determines your future!

ARE YOU OFFENDED? Are you compelled to tell your side of the story? Do you fight thoughts of suspicion or distrust? Are you constantly rehearsing past hurts? Have you lost hope because of what someone else did to you? Are you hindered from fulfilling your full potential? Do you feel betrayed?

Psalm 55:12-14 ¹² For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: ¹³ But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. ¹⁴ We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

- Most often it is a fellow believer who has hurt you. The higher the expectations, the greater the fall.
- The closer the relationship, the more severe the offense. (most vicious legal cases - divorce cases)
- The greatest hatred is among people who were once close. Only those you care about can hurt you!

2 Timothy 2:24-26 ²⁴ And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, ²⁵ In meekness instructing **those that oppose themselves**; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; ²⁶ And that they may **recover themselves out of the snare of the devil**, who are **taken captive by him at his will**.

- The Greek word for "offend" in Luke 17:1 is "skandalon" - it signifies "the trigger of a trap" or "bait"
- Those who are in opposition (offense) are unaware that they are held prisoner to do the devil's will!
- When a person is bitter, they are deceived into believing they are right even though they are not.
- The enemy appeals to your pride, causing you to deny your true condition. **(Laodicea - Rev. 3)**
- The result is the same whether you have actually been treated unjustly or just believe that you have!
- A VICTIM SAYS: "I was mistreated and misjudged; therefore I am justified in my behavior."
- A VICTOR SAYS: "Two wrongs do not make a right; I will not hold onto an offense."

Matthew 24:10-13 ¹⁰ And then shall **many be offended**, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. ¹¹ And many **false prophets** shall rise, and shall **deceive many**. ¹² And because iniquity shall abound, **the love of many shall wax cold**. ¹³ But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

- One of the signs of the end time is that **MANY WILL BE OFFENDED!** These are obviously Christians, because their love (agape - God's unconditional love in their hearts) will wax cold.
- Many Christians walk in a selfish love that is easily disappointed when expectations are not met.
- **People can only disappoint you to the degree that they fall short of your expectations.**
- You set yourself up for offense if you require certain behaviors from those in relationship with you.
- Notice that Jesus warns of false prophets immediately after His prophecy of many being offended.
- Jesus called false prophets "wolves in sheep's clothing" in Matthew 7:15. They give the appearance of being Christian but have the inward nature of a wolf. They are sent by the enemy to infiltrate and deceive. They must be identified by their fruits, not their teachings or apparent spiritual gifts.
- Wolves always prey on wounded and young sheep, not healthy and strong ones. False prophets tell people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. **Offended people are easy prey!**

Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to be won than a **strong city**; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

- Strong cities of ancient times had **WALLS** around them as their assurance of protection. They kept unwelcome inhabitants and invaders out; all entrants were screened. Those owing taxes were not allowed in until they paid. Those considered a threat to the city's health or safety were kept out.
- We construct walls when we are hurt to safeguard our hearts and prevent any future wounds.
- We become selective, denying entry to all we fear will hurt us. We filter out anyone we think owes us something. We withhold access until these people have paid their debts in full.
- We open our lives only to those we believe are on our side. Yet often, these people are offended as well, so we only succeed in stacking additional stones on our existing walls.
- Eventually, our walls of protection become a prison. At that point, we are not only cautious about who comes in, but so in terror of future injuries that we cannot venture outside our fortress.
- UNCONDITIONAL (AGAPE) LOVE GIVES OTHERS THE **RIGHT** TO HURT US!

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 ⁴ *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of **strong holds**;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

- These walls become **STRONGHOLDS**, set patterns of reasoning through which all incoming information is processed. Our walls become a source of distortion because they war against the knowledge of God. Incoming spiritual blessings become stagnant (**Sea of Galilee - Dead Sea**).
- When we filter everything through past hurts, rejections and experiences, we cannot believe God!
- Offended people are able to find Scripture to back their position, but they misinterpret the Word.

Hebrews 12:15 *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness** springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*

- If roots are nursed, watered, protected, fed and given attention, they increase in depth and strength.
- If not dealt with quickly roots are hard to pull up. As the offense grows, many people are corrupted.
- Francis Frangipane: "**BITTERNESS IS UNFULFILLED REVENGE.**"

EVEN IF YOU WERE GENUINELY MISTREATED, DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE OFFENDED?

- Joseph lost all his inheritance and freedom, but still had the right to choose his response.
- He could not see that his trials were preparing him to rule and would result in his family's salvation.
- If he had been offended he would later have killed his brothers - including Judah (Christ's ancestor)!
- We often assign blame: "**If it weren't for _____, then I _____. My disappointment is their fault.**"
- But absolutely no man or devil can get you out of the will of God! He alone holds your destiny!
- Only you can thwart the will of God for your own life - **BY GETTING OFFENDED!**
- **Joseph's perspective**: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

In His parable in Matthew 18 (after 18:7!) Jesus emphasizes the consequences of unforgiveness:

- Talent = 75 lb, 10,000 talents = 375 tons, gold (today) = \$375/oz, one servant owed \$4.5 billion!
- Denarius = labourers daily wage, 100 denarii = 100 x \$40 (today), other servant owed \$4000.
- One servant owed one-third of a year's wage; the other owed more than he could earn in a lifetime.
- The unforgiving servant was turned over to torturers (experiencing pain of body and mind) and had to pay the original impossible debt (forfeiting salvation). Jesus said the same happens to believers!

Matthew 6:14-15 ¹⁴ For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

THE TRAP HAS BEEN SET FOR YOU! WILL YOU TAKE OR REFUSE THE BAIT?