

Trapped “*The Spirit of Offense*”

Matthew 24:10–13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

- Most agree that we are in the season of Christ’s return
- Never before have we seen such prophetic fulfillment in the church, in Israel and nature
- One of the signs of His return – “*Many will be offended...*”
- Not a few, not some, but many

He said, “*lawlessness will abound and the love of many would grow cold.*” – The Greek word He used is, *Agape*

- The two most common words translated as love in the new testament are *Phileo* and *Agape*
- *Phileo* is brotherly love. You scratch my back I’ll scratch yours
- *Agape* is the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts
- Its unconditional
- Not based on performance or whether or not it is returned

An offended Christian is one who takes in life but, because of fear, cannot release it

Why are we so quick to betray rather than lay our lives down for one another?

- Because our love has grown cold
- We are still seeking to protect ourselves

“We can no longer confidently commit our care to God when we are trying to care for ourselves.” – John Bevere

1 Peter 2:21–23 (NKJV)

²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² *“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”*; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

- When Jesus was wronged He didn't retaliate
- He committed His soul to God
- He allowed God to be His judge
- We are to follow in His footsteps

Many of us give lip service saying God is our source, yet we live as orphans

We must come to the place where we trust God and not flesh

- The sin of offense is serious business

If it is not dealt with, offense will eventually lead to a life of isolation, bitterness and betrayal

Betrayal and offense most often come through a fellow believer that we are close to

Psalm 55:12–14 (NLT)

¹² It is not an enemy who taunts me— I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me— I could have hidden from them. ¹³ Instead, it is you—my equal, my companion and close friend. ¹⁴ What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God. They are those we sit with and sing along side of

- We spend holidays and social functions with them
- We share an office or workplace with them
- We grow up with them, confide in them, and sleep next to them
- The closer the relationship the more severe the offense
- Perhaps the one delivering the sermon

The Greek word offend is where we get our word trap from. More specifically, the part of the trap where you place the bait

- As we have discussed, offense is a tool of the enemy to bring people into captivity

When we live in constant quarrels and opposition we fall into a trap where the devil holds us prisoner to do his will

2 Timothy 2:24–26 (NKJV)

²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

- We can divide all offended people into two categories
- Those who have been treated unjustly
- Those who believe they have been treated unjustly
- People in the second category believe with all of their heart that they have been mistreated
- Often their conclusions are drawn from incomplete or inaccurate information
- If the information is accurate their conclusion is distorted
- Either way they hurt, and their understanding is darkened
- They judge by assumption, appearance and hearsay

Pride causes you to view yourself as a victim

- Your attitude becomes, *“I was mistreated and misjudged; therefore, I am justified in my behavior.”*

Because you believe you are innocent or falsely accused you hold back forgiveness

- Though your true heart condition is hidden from you it is not hidden from God
- Just because you were mistreated does not give you permission to hold on to an offense

The Cure:

Revelation 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

- They have mistaken their financial strength for spiritual strength
- Pride hid their true condition
- This is how many of us live
- We think because an area of our lives is ok we are spiritually healthy
- We convince ourselves that we are not hurt

The first key in breaking free of deception is to buy true riches

Revelation 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

- Refined gold is soft and pliable
- Free from corrosion and other substances
- It is when it becomes mixed with other metals that it becomes hard, less pliable and more corrosive
- The higher the level of foreign metals the harder it becomes
- The lower the level the softer and more flexible
- A pure heart is like fine gold – soft and pliable

Hebrews 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called “*Today*,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

- If we don’t deal with an offense it will produce more fruit of sin
- Bitterness anger and resentment
- This reduces or removes tenderness, creating a loss of sensitivity
- We are hindered in our ability to hear God’s voice
- Our accuracy is darkened
- This is the perfect setting for deception

The first step in refining gold is grinding it into powder and mixing it with flux

- The mixture is then placed in a furnace and melted by intense heat
- The alloys and impurities are drawn to the flux and rise to the surface

The impurities or dross, (such as copper, iron and zinc, combined with flux) is then removed revealing a purer metal

Isaiah 48:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

And Again:

1 Peter 1:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ

- God refines us with trials, afflictions, and tribulations

The heat separates the impurities such as unforgiveness, strife, bitterness, anger, and envy from the character of God in our lives

- Sin easily hides where there is no heat or trials and afflictions

In a time of success, even a wicked man would seem kind and generous

- Jesus said anoint your eyes so you can see
- See what? – your condition
- When we are jealous and blame others, we can't see our condition
- We struggle to remove the speck in others and miss the plank in our eye
- You will only repent when you stop blaming other people for your condition

Romans 5:3–5 (NKJV)

³ And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- It is the revelation of truth that brings freedom
- There can be no revelation apart from the love of God
- When the Spirit of God shows us our sin, He does it in such a way that it seems separate from us
- This brings conviction not condemnation

God uses difficult situations to produce godly character

As we are refined, we become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading

Romans 8:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

- The word used here is the Greek word most often used to refer to mature sons
- It is a different word then would be used for babies or immature sons
- It is mature sons and daughters that are led by the Spirit of God

Suffering teaches us obedience to the Spirit of God

Hebrews 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ though He (*Jesus*) was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

- Physical growth is a function of time
- Spiritual growth is a function of obedience

1 Peter 4:1 (NKJV)

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin

- A person who is free from sin is a perfectly obedient child of God

If Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered then you and I learn obedience through the difficult circumstance we face

- A mature person is one who chooses God's way, not his own

Our knowledge of scripture is not the key, our obedience is

This is why we have people in the church for 20, 30, years or more, that can quote scripture but are still in spiritual diapers

- If all we do is learn the word of God but never obey, we never mature because of disobedience

We never come to the knowledge of the truth if we never apply it – **2 Timothy 3:7**

- Truth must be allowed to have its way in our lives if we are going to grow and mature
- If all we do is seek to protect ourselves when facing difficult situations, we will never mature spiritually

There is a false sense of self protection in harboring an offense

When we continue to blame others we never have to face our role, our immaturity, or our own sin because we focus on the faults of the offender

- Therefore, God’s attempt to develop character in you by this opposition is abandoned
- The offended person will avoid the source of offense and eventually flee
- Becoming a spiritual vagabond, floating from relationship to relationship, church to church

Isaiah 55:12 (NKJV)

¹² “For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

- God intends to lead us through joy and peace
- When God releases you through peace you won’t have to justify your departure to others

We preserve the sins of other people when we pick up an offense and harbor resentment

If we leave a relationship or church resentful and embittered, we will enter into the next relationship or church with the same attitude

Parable of settlers moving west, meeting a wise man who stood on the hill of the new western town

- As they were moving from the east he was the first person they came in contact with
- They asked, *“What are the people in the town like?”*
- He asked them, *“What were the people like in the last town you lived?”*
- They stated, *“They were rude gossips who took advantage of innocent people. It was filled with thieves and liars.”*
- He replied, *“This town is the same as the one you left.”*

The next group had a *“Wonderful”* attitude and his response was appropriate to what they said about the last town they lived in

- The way you leave a relationship or church is the way you’ll enter you next church or relationship

John 20:23 (NKJV)

23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

- You will not only deal with the hurts in the new relationship but that of the former as well

Many times, God will allow people to run from situations He desires them to face if they are set on running from them in their hearts

1 Kings 18-19

- Elijah had just executed the Prophets of Baal and Asherah
- The men who had led the nation into idolatry and eaten at Jezebel's table
- When Jezebel heard she threatened to kill Elijah
- God told Elijah to confront her, but instead he ran
- He was so discouraged he prayed that he could die
- He was in no condition to fulfill his assignment
- God sent an angel to feed him and allowed him to run for forty days and nights to Mount Horeb
- When he arrived the first thing God asks him was, *“What are you doing here Elijah.”*
- Why would God ask him that?
- God fed him and gave him the strength for the journey, He knew why he was there
- Elijah has an encounter with God and confesses that he is tired and ready to give up fighting Jezebel

God releases him and raises up Hazael, Jehu and Elisha to do the job

If we are so set in our hearts not to face difficult situations, God will actually release us even though it's not His perfect will