

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 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*

- *Agape* is the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts – Its unconditional
- Not based on performance or whether it is returned

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

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

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

Romans 12:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

When a person wrongs you, you can fall into the trap of believing that someone owes us something

- We want them to pay for the pain they have caused
- Our court system exists to avenge wronged or injured parties
- When a person harms or is wrongfully treated by another that person must stand trial for what they have done
- If they are found guilty they must pay what is owed
- This is not the way of righteousness

Romans 12:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord.

- We are not to avenge ourselves
- When we refuse to forgive we are seeking revenge
- We will not forgive until the debt is paid in full
- Only we can determine the acceptable compensation
- We set ourselves up as the judge and jury

James 4:12; 5:9 (NKJV)

¹² There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.
Who are you to judge another?

James 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

- God is the Judge
- He will pass righteous judgement

If someone has done wrong and genuinely repents, Jesus' work at Calvary erases the debt

If justice was truly to be served everyone of us would be condemned to death by the highest court in the land

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

- Jesus eliminates any gray areas for grudges

In fact, we are supposed to be so far removed from avenging ourselves that we are willing to open ourselves up to being wronged again – **Matthew 5:38-42**

- Remember the unforgiving servant – **Matthew 18**

As we talked about last week, Jesus likened the condition of our heart to that of soil

- We are admonished to be rooted and grounded in the love of God
- The seed of God's word is to take root in our hearts and grow
- Eventually it should produce fruit
- Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

Understand that ground will only produce what is planted in it

- If we plant the seed of debt, unforgiveness, and offense another root will spring up
- A root of bitterness
- The fruit of that bitterness is that many will be defiled

Hebrews 12:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled

- Could this be the same many mentioned in our opening text?
- Bitterness is a root

If roots are nursed, watered, protected, fed, and given attention they increase in depth and strength – **Colossians 2:7**

After Saul's death David ascended to the throne in Israel

- He strengthened the nation
- Enjoyed military and financial success
- He held the throne securely

He married many wives who bore him children, including Amnon, his oldest, and Absalom, his third-born son

Amnon deceives his half sister Tamar and rapes her

- She was also Absalom's sister
- After he rapes her the Bible says he despised her and had her removed from his sight

He had disgraced a virgin royal princess, devastating her and condemning her to a life of shame

Without saying anything to his brother, Absalom takes Tamar into his own home and provides for her

- He hated Amnon for what he had done

Absalom expected his father to punish his half brother

- Even though king David was outraged he took no course of action
- Absalom was devastated at his father's lack of justice

Tamar, who was once wore the royal robes reserved for the king's virgin daughters; now lived in seclusion, unable to marry because she was no longer a virgin

After two years, Absalom's hatred for Amnon birthed a plot to murder him

- Absalom then fled to Geshur
- His revenge against Amnon was accomplished
- Yet the offense he carried against his father burned stronger and stronger

Absalom's thoughts were poisoned with bitterness

- He became an expert critic of David's weaknesses
- He was quick to point out his father's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband
- The Bible paints Absalom as an expert at appearances
- Even when David called him to return to Jerusalem, he never talked to him

Out of his critical attitude he drew anyone to himself that was discontent or had any offense against king David

- He would lament that things would be different if he was king
- He slowly stole the hearts of Israel
- Was he really concerned with the people or only seeking a way to overthrow his father David?

David finally had to flee Jerusalem for his life

It looked like Absalom would establish his own kingdom, but he was killed as he pursued David

A man with so much potential died in his prime because of a vendetta built on bitterness and offense

How to Escape the Trap

Acts 24:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ This *being* so, I myself always **strive** to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

- It takes effort to stay free of offense
- Strive – KJV – Exercise – “*to take pains, endeavor, exercise by training or discipline.*”
- If we exercise our bodies regularly we are less prone to injury
- The same is true spiritually

If we condition ourselves to handle offense there will be no injury or permanent damage

The first step in healing and freedom is to recognize your hurt

- Often pride doesn't want us to admit that we were hurt and offended
- If we can't admit the offense we will not be open to the voice of the Lord and His correction
- Fasting and prayer will help you die to self

Isaiah 58:6 (NKJV)

⁶ “*Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the **oppressed** go free, And that you break every yoke?*”

1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And above all things have fervent love for one another, for *“love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

- It's easy to love people who can do no wrong in your eyes
- Its another thing to love someone when you can see their faults
- Especially if you've been a victim of them

The Love of God will mature and strengthen you

As you overcome difficult hardships and obstacles, you will be stronger and more compassionate

- You will fall more in love with Jesus

If you don't come out of a hard ship loving Jesus and people more, including those who the offense came through, you are probably not recovered

- Recovery is a choice

Maturity in Christ will always come through hardships

- Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered
- Peter learned obedience by the things he suffered
- Paul learned obedience by the things he suffered
- What about you?
- What have you learned?
- Or are you hard, callused, cold, bitter, and resentful?
- If you are you didn't learned obedience

Acts 14:22 (NKJV)

²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

- Paul didn't promise them a life of ease
- He didn't promise them success according to the world's standards

If they were going to finish the course with joy, they were going to have to endure much hardship and tribulation

1 Peter 4:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

- Are you going to live God's way or just flow with the current?
- When you do it God's way you will have resistance and tribulation
- The question is are you going to live life like the rest of the world, or a self-denied life for Christ?
- Jesus said that if we lose our life for His sake we would find life – **Matthew 10:39**

Matthew 5:21–24 (NKJV)

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not murder*, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘*Raca!*’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘*You fool!*’ shall be in danger of hell fire. ²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

- In God’s eyes murder is not limited to the one who commits it
- What you are in your heart is what you really are
- Jesus highlights the severity of holding on to a bitter offense
- He says that when we do we are an “*empty headed fool*”
- Calling someone a fool in Jesus’ day was not a light gesture
- A fool was someone who says there was no God
 - **Psalm 14:1**
- This is the equivalent to telling someone to go to hell and mean it

Jesus was saying that not dealing with anger could lead to hatred and that hatred not dealt with would put them in danger of hell

- You were to make reconciliation a top priority
- We should reach out to someone who is offended at us

Jesus is exhorting us to reconcile even if the offense is not our fault

- We must be willing to apologize if necessary

The other party has the same obligation in receiving the apology and letting go of offense

Romans 14:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

James 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

- Godly wisdom is willing to yield
- It is not stiff-necked and stubborn when it comes to personal conflict
- A person submitted to godly wisdom is not afraid to yield to another person's viewpoint
- As long as it doesn't violate truth

Matthew 18:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'* ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

- Each of these steps have the same goal – Reconciliation
- Most people take their offenses to everyone else before they go to the one who is offended
- We do this because we have failed to deal with our own hearts
- We feel justified in telling our side of the story
- It strengthens our cause if we can get others to agree with us
- This type of behavior is only selfishness

Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

- There are times when others refuse to be at peace with us
- This is a two-way street – As much as depends on you
- We are to do everything we can towards reconciliation
- If they don't receive your apology and explanation you are to let them go

Matthew 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.