

Trapped “*The Spirit of Offense*”

Matthew 24:10–13 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup> Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> 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

Even though I believe we live in an offended society I believe Jesus was being more specific

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

Without God we can only love with a selfish love – one that can not be given if it is not received and returned – it's natural, of the flesh

### Galatians 6:8–9 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup>For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. <sup>9</sup>And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

- We all have loved someone and in return they only gave us criticism or harsh treatment
- The problem we all have is we are trying to love with a natural love
- Because we are sowing to the flesh, we reap corruption
- When we sow the love of God, we will reap the love of God
- This is a spiritual law whether we agree or not

We may not harvest it from the same field it was sown but if we do not faint, we will reap a harvest

We should not see it as a failure when the love we give isn't returned

- It will free us to love that person even greater because we are letting our faith grow
- If more Christians realized this they wouldn't give up and become offended
- When we walk in a selfish love we are easily disappointed

Jesus felt the same rejection you and I face

- In His greatest hour of need the disciples abandoned Him
- Judas betrayed Him and Peter denied Him
- Only John followed, from afar

He released all of them. From His friends who deserted Him to the Roman guards who crucified Him

- He didn't ask them for forgiveness, He gave it

### Matthew 5:44–47 (NKJV)

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

- If we have certain expectations about certain persons, those people can let us down
- They will disappoint us to the degree that they fall short of our expectations
- The more we expect, the greater the potential offense
- If we have no expectations than we are sowing love of God by faith
- Faith always reaps a reward because there are no strings attached

## Proverbs 18:19 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> A brother offended *is harder to win* than a strong city, and contentions *are* like the bars of a castle.

- These cities of old had walls around them that kept unwelcomed inhabitants and invaders out
- The walls were the city's assurance of protection
- Those who owed taxes were not allowed in until they paid the taxes owed

We build walls around our hearts for the same reason

- We want to prevent any further wounds
- We become selective, denying entry to all who we fear will hurt us
- We filter out anyone we think owes us something
- We withhold access until they pay the price of entry
- We open our lives only to those we believe are on our side
- Yet the people who are "*on our side*" are offended as well

Instead of helping, we stack additional stones on our existing walls, making them thicker and stronger

- Eventually the walls that were meant to protect become a prison
- Not only are we cautious about who comes in but are fearful to venture outside of our fortress
- We isolate ourselves because of fear

## Proverbs 18:1 (NKJV)

A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.

## Proverbs 18:1 (NIV)

An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels.

- The focus of offended Christians is inward and introspective
- We guard our rights and personal relationships carefully
- Our energy is consumed with making sure no future injuries will occur
- We will only allow people close to us who won't hurt us

If we never risk being hurt, we cannot live in unconditional love

- Unconditional love gives others the right to hurt us

The Love of God doesn't seek its own, but hurt people become more and more self-seeking and self-contained

- In this climate the love of God waxes cold
- An offended Christian is someone who takes life but cannot release life
- We are to be a life-giving stream not a stagnant pool
- As a result, even the life that does come in becomes stagnant within the walls or prison of offense
- These walls become strongholds

## 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup>For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup> casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

- Strongholds are set patterns of reasoning through which all information is processed
- Originally built to protect now become a source of torment because they war against the knowledge of God

When we filter everything through past hurts, rejections and experiences, we find it impossible to believe or trust God

- We doubt the goodness of God
- We don't believe He means what He says

This is because we are judging Him by the standards set by man and the relationships we have experienced in our lives

Offended people will find scripture to support their position

- In doing so they are not dividing the word of God correctly
- The knowledge of God's word apart from His love is a destructive force
- It is puffed up with pride and legalism

## 1 Corinthians 8:1–3 (NKJV)

Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. <sup>2</sup> And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. <sup>3</sup> But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

- When we are puffed up we will try to justify ourselves rather than repent of unforgiveness
- This creates a perfect atmosphere for deception
- Knowledge without the love of God will always lead to deception

## Matthew 24:11 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. Jesus warns of false prophets because that is how many are deceived

- Jesus called false prophets “*sheep in wolves clothing*”  
– **Matthew 7:15**
- Wolves can be in the pulpit or in the congregation
- They are sent by the enemy to infiltrate and deceive
- They must be identified by their fruit, not their teachings or prophecies
- A minister or Christian is known by what they live not what they preach
- Wolves always go after the wounded and young
- Wolves tell you what you want to hear, not what you need to hear

## 2 Timothy 3:1–5; 4:3-4 (NKJV)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

<sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

## 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup>and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.

- Notice they have of form of godliness but no power
- They deny that the power of God can change them from being unforgiving to forgiving

They boast of being followers of Christ, yet have not allowed Him to pierce their hearts and bring forth the character of Christ

- Character, not competency, determines capacity!



## 2 Timothy 3:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

We can attend camp meetings, seminars, worship conferences and church services and grow in knowledge of scripture or learn a certain format

- Looking for the latest new revelation from GOD!
- Only to become more and more selfish and consumed with our “*successful*” lives
- Running from church to church to escape offense
- Professing Jesus as Lord, yet cannot forgive

It doesn't matter how “*up to date*” you are on revelations from seminars and podcasts, or even how many hours you study and pray, if you are offended and can't forgive you have not come to the knowledge of the truth

- You are deceived and stuck in sin
- You only confuse others with your hypocritical lifestyle
- No matter what the revelation, your fruit tells a different story
- You have become a spring spewing up bitter waters of deception not truth

You will continue to live in a cycle of deception, distrust and betrayal

## Matthew 24:10 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

- See the pattern?
- An offense leads to betrayal, and betrayal leads to deception
- Offended people build walls for protection
- Our focus is self-preservation
- This makes us capable of betrayal

When we betray we seek our own protection at the expense of someone else

- Usually someone we are in a relationship with
- The closer the relation the more severe the betrayal
- To betray someone is the ultimate abandonment of covenant

When betrayal occurs, the relationship cannot be restored unless genuine repentance follows

- Betrayal then leads to serious consequences

When you hate a brother, you are a murderer and you have no eternal life in you

## 1 John 3:15 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

No wonder in the body of Christ we see ministers taking one another to court, divorces rampant, as well as church splits common and predictable

- Ministry politics are cleverly disguised as being in the best interest of the church or someone's personal kingdom

Christians are protecting their rights, making sure they will never again be mistreated

- Aren't we better than this?

Have we forgotten who we are?

**1 Corinthians 6:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated?

Have we forgotten the words of Jesus?

**Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)**

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Have we forgotten the command of God?

**Philippians 2:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

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)

<sup>21</sup> For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: <sup>22</sup> *“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”*; <sup>23</sup> 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 death
- Let God lead you to victory!