

The Trap of Offense

2 Timothy 2:24-26

Intro

A pastor in Tulsa, Oklahoma was preaching when a man went to the front of the platform and punched him in the face. Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty, of Victory Christian Church continued his sermon even though the blow had opened a cut above his eye that would later require two stitches. Church members subdued the attacker, and police arrested 50-year-old Steven Rogers. Pastor Daugherty, however, did not press any charges. In fact, he prayed for his assailant during the church service, and visited him in jail a few days later. Daugherty did not give himself over to being offended nor did he hold a grudge against his attacker.

Are you easily offended? Many in our society get easily offended. One example is "road rage." One driver gets offended with another, and what began as a minor altercation can escalate into a major conflict. How sad that we find example after example of offense, rage, and hatred among believers today. It no longer surprises us when Christian couples sue one another for divorce. Church splits are common and predictable. And at times it's common in the homes and churches that it is considered normal behavior. But that's not God's way.

Offense comes from those closest to you

Psalm 55:12-14, *"If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God as we walked about among the worshippers."* Only those you sometimes care about can hurt you. You expect more from them – after all, you've given yourself to them and you trust them. When that trust is broken it is difficult not to get offended and to carry resentment for a long, long time.

Meaning of Offense

In Luke 17:1 we read about Jesus speaking to his disciples, *"It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!"* (NKJV)

The New Testament word for offense is: *skandala* or *skandalon*. It means the bait of a trap. It also means that which triggers or sets off trouble. It came to mean any stumbling-block placed in a person's way to make the person fall, or to fall into a trap. Offense is a tool of Satan to bring people into captivity and cause harm. Offense is the bait of Satan that he sets up to trap people in offense, resentment and hatred.

In 2 Timothy 2:24-26 we read, *"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."*

People who quarrel or are in opposition fall into the trap and are held prisoner to do the devil's will and work. Sometimes they don't even know it. This is dangerous because it destroys relationships.

John Bevere in his book, *The Bait of Satan*, says that one of Satan's most deceptive tactics is something all Christians have encountered: *offense*. While offense itself is not deadly, he believes if we allow it to grow in our hearts, it can be harmful and produce much fruit like anger, outrage, jealousy, resentment, strife, bitterness, retaliation etc. Satan's bent is on destroying relationships and to have us harbour resentment and hate against people. This is very destructive.

Proverbs 19:11 says, "*A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.*" This verse tells us that the honorable thing for us to do in conflicting situations is to overlook the offense. If you want to defuse a tense situation, refuse to become offended. Yes, you may have been wronged. And your feelings might have been hurt. But if you are a believer, a mature believer, God Himself has promised to be your Vindicator. He will deal with those who treat you unfairly. Psalm 135:14 teaches, "*For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.*" Your job is to handle situations like these God's way, not the world's way. Psalm 119:165 says, "*Great peace have they who love your law; nothing shall offend them or make them stumble.*" If we are lovers and doers of God's Word, we will walk in peace and we will not be easily offended.

The Problem with Pride

Pride is the number one cause of offense. When our pride is hurt we want to retaliate, get even, be resentful and carry a grudge.

One way that Satan keeps a person offended is to appeal to a person's pride.

- Pride keeps us from dealing with the truth sometimes.
- It distorts our vision and perception.
- It dims our understanding.
- It hardens our heart – lack of love.
- It keeps us from repentance and a change of heart.
- It causes us to see ourselves as the victim.
- Because we believe we are innocent, we hold back forgiveness.

Be Offense Free

As a disciple of Christ we must learn never to give or cause an offense. Jesus said that the world will constantly offend us, but we as His followers must never offend.

In Matthew 18:7-9 he says, "*Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 'If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.'* ⁹*And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.'*"

Jesus was so strict about the manner that he said even an eye, hand or foot must be cut off rather than to offend someone else, no matter how painful to yourself.

We must face reality, that offenses will always come our way. Also we must understand that along the way we will offend others. The Gospel itself is offense to many and if I preach and share it

faithfully I will most certainly irk some people. But that is not the offensiveness Jesus is talking about. He is talking about the offense that comes from an evil mind and from evil intentions.

Proverbs 18:19 says, “*An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city.*” Is there someone in your life, like a family member, who gets offended easily, and whom you have to be careful every time you meet them? People like that can be difficult to get along with because when they take offense, they refuse to listen to reason or to make amends. We may not always be able to avoid offending these people, but there are a couple of things we can do. We can pray for them, and we can refuse to become offended ourselves.

The reason that being offended or taking offense is displeasing to God is that it's destructive to relationships. It divides people and causes conflict. It can break up families, friendships, and even churches. It's one of Satan's most valuable weapons against God's people, and as believers, we are to be aware of his tactics so that we won't become his victims (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Proverbs 17:9 says, “*Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*” Every time we forgive an offense, we are preserving our relationships and slamming the door in the devil's face. Most of all, we are pleasing and glorifying God who deserves our very best!

Conclusion

By the grace of God we must never take offense, as Jesus himself did not - regardless of how evil the intention or source of the offense. We must never attribute to an evil person's action a malicious cause, but rather turn the situation over to God and say, Lord You are the judge in the matter. Thus vengeance is safely given to Him. The offense free life is a discipline for the true follower of Christ, yet Jesus who exemplified it perfectly on earth will not fail to continue that good work within us.

Jesus Christ is our perfect example. In 1 Peter 2:23 we read, “*And while being reviled, He did not revile in return, while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.*”

Jesus has set us an example to follow and to apply in our lives. Let's follow in His footsteps and live a life that honours Him and glorifies Him.

Don't take the bait of Satan, which is offense. You will encounter offense and it's up to you how you're going to let it affect you and your relationship with God. Stay free from offense and escape the victim mentality. Follow Jesus' example and He will give you power to be free from offense.