



Satan's Deadly Trap – Part 2
Various Scripture
GCSP – 09/26/2009

Are you hungry tonight? Have you prepared your heart to learn from God's Word? Have you given the Holy Spirit permission and free reign to do as He pleases with you this evening?

Just in case you have been holding back any, let's pray before we get started.

Last week, as I told you, God temporarily interrupted my series on the Ten Commandments and had me immediately deal with this important issue concerning offences in our lives. I am not sure how long this temporary diversion will last but I will say that the more I study through this topic the more engrossed and excited I am becoming.

I am engrossed in the subject because the Holy Spirit is revealing His Word to me in some fresh and spectacular ways and I am excited because the application of His Word can literally free us from the trap and the sin of being offended. And if we can reach that plateau, the potential growth for our spiritual lives individually and corporately are as limitless as God.

I am coming to realize that offences in our lives are at the root and core of what holds us back time and time again – and I discussed with you last week we often do not even realize that offences from our past are still eating away at our lives like a hidden cancer.

So allow me to do a quick review, expand on a few of the points from last week, and then look into the issue of being offended by a brother or sister in the physical and spiritual sense.

We saw last week in **Luke 17:1-5** that the disciples were taken aback at two statements from Jesus. The first was that "**It is impossible that no offences should come.**" Jesus told them and He is telling us that as long as our lungs are breathing and our hearts are beating we will be offended on a regular and ongoing basis.

The second shocking statement that Jesus made was, "**Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times saying, 'I repent,' forgive him.**" Jesus makes it clear that when we are offended by a brother or sister in Christ that it is our responsibility and the command of Scripture to approach and lovingly confront that person one-on-one; and that forgiveness is the goal. And even if this person repeatedly and continually offends you, forgiveness is the goal.

The disciples realize that humanly speaking this is impossible so they cry out in desperation, "**Increase our faith!**" And some of you may be saying the same thing.

How many of you know that God will never give you a command unless He also gives you the ability and the resources to obey? You will never be faced with any command of

Scripture that you cannot obey. God will always supply everything you need; you just need to trust Him and obey.

The best example of this principle is in the area of giving. God commands us to give in faith and He will supply. The biblical principle is give and you will get. But the converse of that principle is you won't get if you don't give. God is teaching us to trust Him in our giving and He is teaching us to trust Him in our confronting and our forgiving. He will supply if we trust and obey – He will not supply if we do not trust and obey.

Let me make distinction here before we move on. If you have a concern about the direction of our church, then by all means approach any of the men on our leadership board and tell them about your concern so we can discuss it. But, if you have a problem with an individual or with something that someone said or did, your biblical responsibility is to first go to that person one-on-one, not the board.

I then discussed how the majority of the offences in your life will come from those who are close to you. The reason being is that we have much higher expectations on those who are close to us.

When President Obama does something else that offends me today and the next day and the next day, I get angry but I don't get shattered because my expectations for him are so very low. I have higher expectations for casual friends, even higher expectations for family and Christian brothers and sisters in this church, even higher expectations for my wife, and in most people's case, even higher expectations for their pastor.

The higher the expectations you have, the greater the opportunity for major offences to come into your life. President Obama could do the exact same thing to you that a brother or sister in Christ does to you and your capacity for offence will be vastly different; or God forbid Connie or I do something to offend you.

We then saw in **Matthew 24:10-12** that there is a progression that follows an offence. Offence, if left unchecked will lead to betrayal; and betrayal, if left unchecked will lead to hatred; and we saw that this progression is among brothers and sisters in Christ.

And let me quickly add to the Bible's definition of hatred. The Bible says in **2 Samuel 13:22**, "**But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.**" According to this verse, hatred is expressed by simply ignoring his brother.

Are you beginning to see the serious nature of offence?

Jesus then goes on to say that once offence reaches the hatred stage, "**false prophets will arise and mislead many**"; meaning that once you have allowed offence to progress in your life you will set yourself up to easily be deceived. And don't gloss over or miss this: When offence is not handled properly you will be deceived. You won't be able to see things from the perspective of truth. You will only see what Satan wants you to see because Satan is the father of lies.

And there are two major categories of offence, those who have been treated unjustly and those who think they have been treated unjustly. And those who only think they have been treated unjustly are more than likely already in a pattern of holding onto offences and this deception is now a stronghold in their lives. And pride will keep you from dealing with the truth of the matter in either case.

And lastly, we saw in **2 Timothy 2:24-26** that we are in "**the snare of the devil**" and that we are "**held captive by him to do his will**" when we allow offence to linger in our hearts; it is Satan's deadly trap. Offence is a tool of Satan to bring you into his captivity; and as long as you are wallowing in self-pity and focused on yourself in the midst of an offence, you are indeed held captive by Satan and you are doing his will! And the verse also says we need to "**come to (our) senses and escape.**"

Now folks let me preface this next statement with, I do not look at the offences that come into mine and Connie's life as any more real or any more prevalent, but being in the ministry we are ripe for, and many times the target of, offences. It is our natural human tendency to want to discuss each offence, and to look at it from every angle, and to try to figure out what caused it, and to analyze how wrong this is, etc., etc. But at some point in the discussion, after we have prayed and asked God to reveal any wrong-doing on our part, and after we have followed through on any scriptural principles we need to follow, one or both of us come to our senses and say, "Let it go!"

The longer you hold on the longer you are not coming to your senses, and the longer you will be in Satan's trap.

In the bush country of Australia, monkeys are trapped and killed for various reasons. The trappers have discovered the easiest, although most brutal way to kill the monkeys is with baseball bats. And they have found a way to get the monkeys to stay in one place long enough to let them walk up to them and club them to death.

The trappers simply tightly fasten a small cage-like container to a tree and place a banana inside. The opening of the cage is so small that the monkey must flatten out his or her hand to be able to reach inside. But once they grab the banana their hand is now in a fist and will not fit through the opening. Even when they see the danger of the trapper approaching with baseball bat in hand, the monkey will not let go of the banana. They are free at any time to escape before getting their skulls crushed by that bat but they refuse to let go of the banana.

And our reaction is, "How ridiculous to give up your life because you won't let go of a banana." Yet how long do we hold onto offences, knowing the turmoil it creates in our own life and the damage it does to our relationships? How many times has Satan taken a baseball bat to your relationships because you refuse to let go, because you refuse to come to your senses and escape from his trap?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Genesis**.

Genesis 37:1-20

Allow me to summarize the rest of the account for you instead of reading the next twelve and a half chapters – but hang onto that last phrase, “**Then let us see what will become of his dreams.**”

Instead of killing Joseph, one of Joseph’s brothers, Reuben, suggests they throw him in a pit and think things through first. While they were eating lunch they saw a traveling caravan of Ishmaelites that was heading to do business in Egypt and decided to sell Joseph to them as a slave. Upon arrival in Egypt, the Ishmaelites in turn sell Joseph to a man named Potiphar to be his household slave.

Now think this through for a moment. Joseph went from being the favorite son of a wealthy man to being a slave in a foreign country with no hope of being rescued. His brothers hated him and his father thinks he’s dead. Joseph now faces a life of slavery. If he is given a wife, she will also be a slave, and any children they have will be born into slavery for the rest of their lives as well.

Do you think Joseph had a right to be offended at his brothers?

The Bible says that the Lord was with Joseph and he immediately makes the best of his situation by being the most obedient and profitable slave in Potiphar’s household. Joseph is so good that even as a teenage boy he is put in charge of everything. Joseph is now basically the executive assistant to Potiphar, and God blesses Potiphar and everything he engages in on account of Joseph.

But there is trouble brewing. Potiphar’s wife is bored or neglected or both and she has the hots for this strapping teenaged young man. So every day she does her best to seduce Joseph. At every opportunity she calls for Joseph to come to bed with her but he refuses. He even has the proper motivation for his refusal by proclaiming to her, “**How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?**”

This doesn’t stop her advances as she tries to wear Joseph down day after day, until one day they are alone in the house and she literally grabs hold of the garment Joseph is wearing and tells him to lie with her. Her grip is so tight the only option Joseph has is to remove himself from the garment and run away naked.

Potiphar’s wife is now angry and embarrassed and cries rape. A slave’s word against the wife of a nobleman is no contest and Joseph is thrown into prison. The prison’s of Egypt in that time period was typically more like a dungeon; often an old cistern that may only be four feet high. It would have dark, damp, filthy, and miserable. And **Psalm 105:17-18** tells us that Joseph was in fetters and irons, meaning his feet were in chains and he likely had his neck and hands in chains as well.

Let’s stop for a moment: What has Joseph done wrong so far to deserve what has become of his life? Maybe you could say he had a little pride as a young teenaged boy because of how his father treated him in comparison to his other brothers, and maybe he was a little arrogant in how he expressed his dreams to his brothers, but he obeyed his father by going to find his brothers and was sold into slavery. He then obeys the commands of God by avoiding adultery with Potiphar’s wife and is now in chains in a putrid smelling dungeon.

I ask you again, do you think Joseph had a right to be offended; but now, not only at his brothers but also at God? It seems the more Joseph obeys God the worse his situation becomes.

Well, even in the dungeon the Bible says the Lord is with Joseph and the captain of the prison puts Joseph in charge of the entire prison. It even says that the captain doesn't even bother to supervise anything under Joseph's charge because he trusts him that much.

Time passes and two of Pharaoh's servants, his cupbearer and his baker, do something to offend Pharaoh and they find themselves with Joseph in the dungeon. The captain puts them under Joseph's authority and the Bible says they were there for an extended period of time while Pharaoh cooled off. At one point both of these men have perplexing dreams and Joseph, with God's intervention, is able to interpret their dreams.

Joseph tells the cupbearer that in three days Pharaoh was going to restore him to his position and forgive his offence. Joseph asks that he put in a good word for him when this comes to pass. Joseph then tells the baker that in three days Pharaoh will hang him. Both interpretations come true and the cupbearer completely forgets Joseph – for two more years.

Pharaoh has a disturbing dream at this point and no one in all of Egypt is able to interpret the dream. The cupbearer then recalls what Joseph did for him and relates the story to Pharaoh. Pharaoh calls for his servants to fetch Joseph from the dungeon, and after they clean him up, give him a clean shave and put some new clothes on him, Joseph appears before Pharaoh.

God once again gives Joseph the proper interpretation and Pharaoh is so pleased he makes him second in command over the entire kingdom. Joseph is such a lofty position that all the people of Egypt must bow when in his presence. Joseph is now 30-years old, approximately 14-years since he was brought to Egypt as a slave, and 14-years since he has seen his father or his brothers.

Seven more years pass, and just as Pharaoh's dream depicted, the crops are plentiful and robust. Under Joseph's wise leadership more than enough grain has been stored to survive the seven years of famine that are about to begin.

Year eight begins. It has now been 22-years since Joseph has seen his father or his brothers. The famine is affecting Jacob and his family so he sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain. Not recognizing him, the same ten brothers who sold Joseph into slavery now bow before him – just like his dream said over twenty years ago.

Remember the phrase I told you to hang onto from **chapter 37**? - **"Then let us see what will become of his dreams."**

Joseph had the power and authority, and humanly speaking the right, to exact his vengeance upon his brothers. As a matter of fact, he could have had them executed on

the spot with a simple command from his lips, or had them thrown in the same dungeon he had to endure for so many years.

22-years; think back to where you were and what has changed in your life since 1987. Now imagine that in 1987 you were taken out of this country and were forced to be a slave in a foreign land because of something your brothers or sisters did to you. How many grandchildren would you have missed? How many nieces and nephews would not even know your name? How many close friends and relatives passed away?

Now imagine the person or persons that did this to you are in front of you and in your hand, so to speak. If you had held onto that offence through the years you would right now be swimming in deception. Satan would be influencing your thoughts by telling you that God has placed them in your hands to mete out your revenge. 22-years of hatred, 22-years of planning and scheming, 22-years of malice are about to explode.

But Joseph doesn't do that. Yes, he has a little fun with them and strikes the fear of God into them while they still do not know who he is, but he instead puts a plan in motion to be able to see his younger brother Benjamin, and eventually be able to see his father again. Apart from this plan, it is likely his brothers would have been too fearful to reveal to their father that Joseph was alive and well.

But back to that phrase his brothers had uttered 22-years ago - "**Then let us see what will become of his dreams.**" Beloved, no man, no woman, no child, and no demon, can ever thwart God's plan for your life. Joseph had a vision from God as a teenager and no matter how bleak things got at times, that plan for Joseph's life was fulfilled.

Let me repeat this: No man, no woman, no child, and no demon, can ever thwart God's plan for your life. But, you can; you are the only one who can short-circuit what God desires for your life. You can forfeit the blessings of God in your life. You can choose your own way and walk away God's way. You can hold onto the banana and let Satan keep you in captivity and bash and batter your relationships and dreams.

There are two kinds of offences that come into your life: there are offences in where you have genuinely been mistreated and hurt, and there are offences where you only believe you have been mistreated and hurt.

Many of you have been serving the Lord fervently and have found yourself in a difficult life situation because of being mistreated by evil people or carnal Christians. The truth of the matter is you have indeed been treated unjustly. The question you have to wrestle with is: Do you now have the right to be offended?

For just a moment, I want you to consider an offence that you grabbed on to. It may have happened recently, it may have been several years ago, or it may even have been several decades ago. Now I want you to ask yourself if you are still hanging on to it; are you still hanging onto that banana?

And before you answer, if that person who offended you was sitting right next to you in this room, would you be glad or would you be mad? Could you have a great

conversation with them or would you have a smile plastered on your face and have to talk through gritted teeth? That's a good test.

What about this one: Have you found yourself identifying with Joseph a time or two during this sermon? Were you able to nod your head a time or two when you were in obedience to God's Word but everything in your life seemed to be going wrong?

Charles Stanley said, *"Adversity is not simply a tool. It is God's most effective tool for the advancement of our spiritual lives. The circumstances and events that we see as setbacks are oftentimes the very things that launch us into periods of intense spiritual growth. Once we begin to understand this, and accept it as a spiritual fact of life, adversity becomes easier to bear."*

Billy Graham said, *"Even if we may not always understand why God allows certain things to happen to us, we can know He is able to bring good out of evil, and triumph out of suffering."*

Turn with me in your Bibles ahead several chapters in the Book of **Genesis**.

Genesis 45:1-8; 50:19-21

All of us have at times suffered unjustly. All of us have at times been offended and have every right from a human perspective to hold a grudge or withhold fellowship or friendship. All of us have people we can bring to mind right now that we have determined to never trust again. All of us have had to work through bitterness, anger, hatred, and feelings of vengeance.

I would have to imagine that Joseph had those kinds of feelings at some point in his life, but since nothing of the sort is recorded in Scripture we have to come to the conclusion that he did not hold onto these feelings. Joseph did not give place for the devil to come in and deceive him; Joseph let go of the banana very early on in each instance of unwarranted offence. And because of this we see time and time again in the account of his life, **"and the Lord was with Joseph and He blessed him."**

Henry Ward Beecher said, *"The little troubles and worries of life may be as stumbling blocks in our way, or we may make them stepping stones to a nobler character and to Heaven. Troubles are often the tools by which God fashions us for better things."*

John Bevere said, *"God hates complaining, and you should treat complaining like poison because that is exactly what it is. Do you know what complaining says to God? It says, 'God I do not like what You are doing in my life right now, and if I were You, I would do it differently.' Complaining is rebellion and a lack of the fear of the Lord."*

With heads bowed and eyes closed, I want you to consider some instances in your life. First, I want you to recall a time where God used adversity or offence in your life to strengthen you. You may not have looked at like this before but you are stronger when you properly come through a trial or offence – and let me state that you will not be the same after an offence. You will either be stronger or you will be in captivity, but you won't be the same.

Now consider this: Do you think Satan had any clue when he worked through Judas, Pontius Pilate, the Pharisees, and the Roman soldiers to accomplish the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Can you see how God used this ultimate offence against Christ and turned it into the ultimate victory because Jesus did not strike back and seek His own vengeance? Do you understand that Satan can be humiliated and defeated in the same way when you choose to leave your offences in God's hands as well?

Let's pray.