



Satan's Deadly Trap – Part 4
Various Scripture
GCSP – 10/10/2009

Clearly hearing the voice of the Lord and fully understanding God's will in any given situation is a mystery to many, if not most, Christians. The reason for this is two-fold: Most Christians do not know the Word of God as they should, and most rely much too heavily upon reacting to their current circumstances. In both cases we are leaning on worldly wisdom instead of God's wisdom.

When you are ignorant on what Scripture has to say about any topic, the Holy Spirit is in essence limited to the extent of what He can bring to the forefront of your mind when you need it. Your well is dry, so to speak, for you to draw from.

When you quickly just react to your current circumstances, the natural, carnal person takes over; your thinking is governed by the flesh instead of by the Holy Spirit.

I have used this example before but it is a good one to remember. There is a vast difference between reacting to a situation and responding to a situation. If you were given some medication from a doctor, and upon your next visit the doctor said your body was reacting to the medicine, that's a bad thing. On the other hand if the doctor said your body was responding to the medicine, that's a good thing.

It's the same way for us when our circumstances are not to our liking; we have the choice of responding or reacting. The natural person will react according to natural, worldly wisdom. The Spirit-led person will respond according to what God's Word has to say about the situation. And the end result will be diametrically opposed to each other depending upon your choice of reacting or responding to your circumstances.

In last week's sermon, David had a choice on two separate occasions on whether to react or respond. King Saul was pursuing David with 3,000 of his finest soldiers for the sole purpose of killing him. The first opportunity for David to react or respond, King Saul came into a cave in which David and his men were hiding. Unarmed and in a vulnerable position, David could have easily killed the king, and humanly speaking been justified in doing so. The second opportunity had King Saul and all of his army put into a deep sleep by the Lord. David and a companion had an open opportunity to once again kill the one who was trying to kill them.

The reaction in both cases would have been to kill his enemy (and as a side note, your enemy is the one who has offended you; and I'll follow up on this more in a moment). The response would have been to leave it in God's capable hands. Both times David chose to respond. David said, "**Far be it from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord's anointed**" (**1 Samuel 24:6**). And again he said, "**The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed**" (**1 Samuel 26:11a**).

King Saul was establishing his kingdom by his ways. I believe in both instances God was testing David to see if he would choose to allow God to establish his kingdom.

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

Romans 12:14-21

Let's pray.

This sermon series is based on **Luke 17:1a** where Jesus says, "**It is impossible that no offences should come**" (NKJV). We have seen that the majority of the offences in your life will come from those who are close to you, simply because you have a much higher expectation from them.

We have seen 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. Once hatred has taken root you will have given place to rampant deception in your life. You will now be in "**the snare of the devil**" and you will be "**held captive by him to do his will.**"

I gave you the vivid illustration of how they capture and kill monkeys in the bush country of Australia; 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 but they refuse to let go of the banana – just like many of us will not let go of an offence.

We saw last week in **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** that we erect strongholds, or fortresses, in our minds every time we hold onto an offence. And in the context of that passage a stronghold is anything that is raised up against the knowledge of God. Every time we allow the philosophies and wisdom of the world to dictate our lives in contrast to God's wisdom, we are erecting a stronghold in our minds for the enemy to further combat the things of God.

The application for our current study is every time we allow an offence to linger in our hearts and every time we hold unforgiveness for any length of time, we are erecting a stronghold for Satan's use in our life.

Our current passage shows us how to avoid strongholds in this regard. If we follow the principles and commands God outlines for us here, we will not only avoid building strongholds, we will destroy and tear down any that are currently erected in our hearts. We will escape or free ourselves from Satan's deadly trap.

v. 14

How do you bless someone who has persecuted you, someone who has offended you? How do you know when you have obeyed this command; and it is a command, beloved.

This is not a suggestion or a recommendation for your consideration; it is a command of the Lord for you to **bleed those who persecute you**.

Jesus expands on this concept in the Gospel of **Luke**. So hold you place in **Romans** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Luke**.

Luke 6:27-36

We have all heard and read this passage many times before. I don't know about you, but reading this again in the context of being offended and how I am supposed to respond to the offences in my life, this is a little uncomfortable, if not downright convicting! God is continuing to reveal to me how many offences in my life are actually long standing strongholds still today – and these are offences that I would have sworn to you a month ago that I had dealt with and forgiven.

I'm just going to cherry pick a few points from this passage instead of doing a verse-by-verse exposition – this could be another sermon or two on its own.

In **verse 27**, Jesus speaks of **your enemies** and **those who hate you**. Allow me to once again make sure you understand that in the context of our topic and the Scriptures, your enemy is the one who has offended you. I know we do not necessarily consider a brother or sister in Christ as an enemy, but when an offence is in between the two of you, you are enemies in that regard.

Jesus tells us to **love your enemies** and to **do good** to them. And then in **verse 28** He goes on to tell us to **pray for those who mistreat you**. Here's a three-pronged test for you to know if you have truly forgiven those who have offended you:

1. Do you love them? And before you ask, the Greek word Jesus uses is *agape*, meaning do you love them with the same unconditional love Jesus loved you with when He hung on the Cross in your place?
2. Do you go out of your way to do good to those who have mistreated you? Or do you just tolerate their existence and cordially acknowledge them when you come into contact with them?
3. Do you pray for them? Are your offenders, your enemies, a part of your daily prayer life? Do you plead for God to bless their lives abundantly? Do you ask the Lord to protect them and use them and to cause the windows of heaven's blessing to open up and fall upon them?

Did you pass the test? Yeah, I didn't think so – neither did I. I have rarely if ever prayed for those who offended me at my previous church – until this past few weeks.

And beloved, again, this is not a suggestion or a recommendation for us to consider; this is a command from the Lord. Do you want to tear down and destroy the strongholds in your life that are blocking and thwarting God's working and blessing in your life, and in the process making you miserable whether you know it or not? Then beloved, you must be obedient in the way you respond to your enemies; those who have offended you.

I have a feeling we will come back to this passage at some point during this series, but for now let's turn back to **Romans 12**.

v. 15

Have you ever viewed this verse in the context of dealing with those who have offended you? That is exactly what the primary context is; we are to rejoice with those who offend us when they rejoice, and we are to weep with those who have offended us when they weep.

What do we usually do when our enemies or offenders rejoice? We get bitter don't we? We wonder how in the world they deserve anything good happening in their lives. The last thing on our minds is to rejoice with them or thank the Lord for His graciousness and blessing in their lives.

What do we usually do when our enemies or offenders are weeping? We don't run to their side and comfort them, I'll tell you that much. And while we may not go so far as to verbally express our satisfaction, on the inside we are reveling in the fact that they got what they deserved.

Am I off base here? Rejoice with your offenders and weep with them. When you can honestly and genuinely do this, you will not only be obedient to God's command, you will be becoming more and more like Christ.

v. 16

How easy is it for you to become spiritually arrogant and spiritually superior in your own mind toward those who have offended you? How easy is it for you to think and even state sometimes that you are beyond this person or that person, or that you won't come down to that level, etc? Beloved when we think in that way, even if your offender is in sin for the way they treated you, you have come down to their level by sinning yourself! Your attitude of spiritual superiority is sin in and of itself.

Again, keeping this verse in the context of being offended, when you begin to consider yourself on a higher spiritual plane than that of your offender, you are **wise in your own estimation**, and that's a dangerous place to be. That's a position of pride. That's aligning yourself with the sin of Satan.

We must always approach every situation we come up against with a spirit of humility. Yes, you had better be growing in spiritual maturity on a day-by-day basis, and yes, you should avoid being involved with sin and potentially sinful situations, but don't do so from a position of pride and arrogance and superiority. There is a huge difference between avoiding sin and placing yourself above others.

v. 17

Does this verse say, "**Never pay back evil for evil to anyone**, except...? Is there at least an exception for someone who knowingly and viciously mistreated you? What about the person who wants nothing less than to humiliate you? What about the person who has an unrelenting vendetta against you for some reason, whether known or unknown?

And once again, in the context of being offended, and understanding that it is a sin to withhold forgiveness, your act of unforgiveness is indeed paying back evil for evil. You don't have to do an evil act back at your offender to be in violation of this command, you simply have to withhold forgiveness; for any length of time.

And when the next phrase says, "**Respect what is right in the sight of all men**" that is not saying to respect the righteousness of the world, but it is saying to do what is right in plain view of all men. You should never do your righteous deeds from the standpoint of, "Look at me everybody", but at the same time Scripture is clear that your acts of righteousness can and will be an encouragement to others if handled properly in a public setting.

For example, if you need to make things right with someone, don't allow the fact that you are in a church service to stop you from going to that person. Don't concern yourself with what others may or may not be thinking of you if you walk up front for prayer during the invitation or go to your brother or sister. Yes, you can take care of private and personal sins where you stand, but I am afraid that often people stay glued to the floor during the invitation time for fear of what others might think; again, pride in action.

v. 18

God knows that there will be times in our life where we find it impossible to handle or contain our feelings toward some people, but this should be a rare exception not the norm for your life. This verse is not to be used as an easy out for you to quote every time you come across someone who offends you – "Oh, this is just someone in my life that it is simply not possible for me to be at peace with."

If this is a common occurrence then try to make yourself a list of those who have offended you that you are at peace with and compare it to the list of those you find it impossible to be at peace with. The list of those you are at peace with should be huge compared to the ones you are not at peace with; if not, then you are abusing the intent of this verse and living in deception brought on by offence.

v. 19

"(Typically don't) **take your own revenge...**" Is that what it says? No, it says, "**Never take your own revenge.**" Never, is pretty clear; never, doesn't leave any room for exceptions; never, closes the door on taking matters into your own hands.

And here's the point, besides being in direct violation to a command of God, when you take your own revenge you are crowding God out of the picture. When you choose to exact your own vengeance you are assuming God's position in the equation and pushing Him out of the way. So let me ask you a question, which do you think is better, God's wrath or yours? Who do you think is more capable of achieving perfect justice and judgment, you or God?

Vengeance does not belong to us in any situation; vengeance belongs to the Lord and to Him alone! And the Lord promises that He will repay; He will deal with the matter and the person in His timing and His perfect way.

Wow, think about where your life could be if the very first response to an offence you immediately prayed, "Lord, I am turning this over to You right this very moment and I am leaving it in Your capable hands to deal with in Your way and in Your timing." Do you believe that would have an effect on your life? Can you imagine how many more of the Lord's blessings would come into your life if you weren't living in the snare of the devil and being held captive by him to do his will?

v. 20

This goes back to the passage we read in **Luke** – do good to those who have offended you. The burning coals thing has been misinterpreted in my mind – some look at this as your good deeds will in some way exact your revenge, but that goes totally against what we just read. It simply means that your genuine and compassionate good works done on behalf of your offender will help lead them in the way of righteousness. In ancient times, those who were genuinely repentant would actually place a pan of coals on their head while walking around.

But I don't want you to get hung up on that, because your motivation should only be to obey God's Word and leave the other person's actions or response to God.

v. 21

Your response to offences determines if you will be overcome by evil or if you will be the overcomer God enables you to be.

Let's look at a specific account in Scripture that will add a little more clarity for us before we close tonight. Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of Genesis.

Genesis 4:3-14

Cain gets offended, and although we do not get many details or even the time frame that this took place in. the account we have is boom, boom, boom, but I am sure there were some days and maybe even weeks in the completion of this account. But you see the progression of offence, betrayal, hatred, and deception.

Cain is actually offended at God but he takes it out on his goody-two-shoes brother. He gets offended, he betrays his brother, and then he hates his brother (and remember Jesus says hatred and murder are the same thing – **Matthew 5:21-26**).

The deception comes in the form of having a persecution complex. **Verse 14** shows us this as Cain is now living under the belief that everyone is now out to get him. And Cain becomes a vagrant and a wanderer because of this persecution complex.

People who hold onto offences are spiritual vagrants. They wander from relationship to relationship, or from job to job, or from church to church, or a combination of all three. Some relationships need to be severed, some jobs need to be quit, and some churches need to be left; but not over an offence you won't let go of.

Now I don't want you to miss any applications this has for you, but for just a moment think about the people who have passed through your life that have hopped from relationship to relationship, or job to job, or church to church. I guarantee you they

have this persecution complex due to offences in their life. I guarantee you they believe everyone and their aunt is the primary cause of the problems in their life.

And one last point. The Bible tells us the Lord is the one who adds people to His church in **Acts 2:47**. The Bible then tells us that "**God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired**" (**1 Corinthians 12:18**). Now how does that fit in with the practice we see today of people hopping from church to church at the drop of a hat? Obviously if a church is teaching heresy it needs to be left, but how often is the reason for leaving an offence? Until those offences are properly dealt with, these folks are destined, or shall I say cursed, to be spiritual vagrants and wanderers.

Don't allow the stronghold of offence to rule and reign your life.

Let's pray.