



Satan's Deadly Trap – Part 8
Various Scripture
GCSP – 11/07/2009

We have been dealing with the topic of offence for almost two months now. This study has freed me from many offences I did not realize still existed in my life. I have heard from many of you in how you are experiencing the same thing. This message and freedom has spread throughout the country, and the world for that matter, through Connie teaching this to many ladies in Pueblo, through many who have requested CD's of whom I have contact with on Facebook, and through many more who are listening to these messages on our website. Between Connie and I we are receiving comments every week from someone who is experiencing freedom from offence.

Through the last seven weeks together you may have gotten the impression that offence is a bad thing or a sinful thing. But that is not the case. Offence in itself is not necessarily good or bad. It can be a bad thing if you hang on to it, but it can be a good thing if you leave it in God's hands. We have only thus far been dealing with how to handle offence when it comes your way; and as we have seen in **1 Peter 3:8-9**, offence is actually the pathway to blessing when you handle it properly.

Tonight I am going to take you through several passages of Scripture that may surprise you; for we are going to see how frequently that Jesus purposely offended people. And we will see that Jesus offended strangers, acquaintances, close friends, disciples, and even family. And in the process of this study I hope to show you that you could actually at times be living a sinful life if you are not offending others.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Peter**.

1 Peter 2:6-8

Let's pray.

Quoting from Isaiah and from the Psalms, Peter makes some rather startling statements when you examine them closely. First I want you to notice that the stone is Jesus Christ. I think all of us probably recognized that or already knew that about this passage, but just in case, **verse 6** lays it out there: "**Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in HIM will not be disappointed**" (my emphasis). So we are talking about believing in Jesus Christ.

That leads us to the next discovery, and that is, what it means to believe in something. The mindset of most people when it comes to belief is simply to mentally acknowledge something as truth. Most Christians, if asked, would define believing in Jesus as acknowledging that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose again on the third day. I would dare say that as many as 70-80% of people who profess to a Christian today think that is the plan of salvation; simply believe this about Jesus and you will be saved.

Unfortunately, that is dead wrong! If that is all it takes to be saved, if that is all that belief means, then according to what James tells us, the demons are saved (**James**

2:19). Do you have any doubt that Satan and his demons acknowledge that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose again on the third day? Is there any doubt in your mind that the demons have made this mental ascent?

You may point to **John 3:16** and argue that it simply says, "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**"

And you are right. And we could go to many other verses that speak of the same thing. Beloved, the problem is not in these verses, nor is it that more than belief is required, the problem is in our definition of the word belief, or believe.

Let's read our passage again. Peter contrasts belief (**v. 6**) with disobedience (**v. 8**). We dealt with this issue last summer in the series I preached called "Sharing Christ." Believing in Jesus Christ is being obedient to Him; you cannot separate the two. Jesus cannot be your Savior if He is not also your Lord and Master. In this understanding, saving belief is obedience; unbelief is disobedience.

I guess you could say it is the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge, but only if by heart knowledge you mean obedience. The demons believe mentally but they do not believe to the point of obedience. And I am afraid it is the same for the majority of people who fill the pews on Sunday mornings throughout the world; they only have a mental or intellectual belief in Jesus Christ but not a saving belief that is accompanied by obedience.

Peter makes that distinction here for us.

Let me add that this level and understanding of belief only comes when you know the character and the love of the one to whom you are submitting. You don't willingly obey someone you don't know and love; you may grudgingly obey for a short period of time but not willingly and not for long. Love is the bottom line in our relationship with Jesus; not the love of principles or teachings but love for the person of Jesus Christ. Apart from that love, Jesus is "**a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.**"

The Israelites, whom the Lord called to be builders, rejected God's chief cornerstone. They loved their teachings and the Old Testament Scriptures and they were satisfied with their interpretations because they could be used for their own benefit and comfort. And oh beloved, is that truth from God's Word ripe for us in application today! When we get satisfied in our own personal interpretations of God's Word, to be used for our own comfort and benefit, we are on dangerous ground. You are setting yourself up for offense when you become so comfortable with your interpretation of God's Word that you are steadfastly un-teachable – and don't go applying this to other people you know right now.

Now be honest with yourself before God right now; don't raise your hand, but how many of you immediately thought of someone else in your mind when I mentioned being comfortable in your interpretation of God's Word and being un-teachable? I did when I typed these words.

Can you see why the prophet Jeremiah says, "**The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked**" (**Jeremiah 17:9** - KJV)? Make the application to your own life and let God deal with everyone you think is off base. It's tough to be critical of a Pharisee when he or she is looking at you in the mirror, isn't it? And be careful how you handle the potential offence of those words I just spoke.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **John**.

John 5:37-40

The Pharisees could not fathom the idea of being wrong in their interpretation of Scripture and they also could not fathom the idea of God desiring a loving fatherly relationship with them. They wanted rules and regulation and authority and law. They rejected the free gift of Jesus Christ and would rather earn their salvation.

Just like the words of Peter that we have already read, old Simeon lifted up the baby Jesus in the Temple and said, "**Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel**" (**Luke 2:34**).

Did you catch that? – The fall and rise of many in Israel. The fall means that many will be offended by Jesus. Many will be offended by His words. And beloved this offence reaches far beyond Israel. Jesus' words offend multitudes in the church today who claim to be born-again Christians. Because every time you question or doubt what He said you place yourself into the category of being offended by His words; you are now in the prophecy of Simeon as ones who have fallen.

Let's look at some specific instances of Jesus offending others.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew**.

Matthew 15:7-14

Jesus is showing us that offences actually purge the church; it purges the church of those who were not planted there by the Father. Some people join churches and ministry teams who were not sent by the Father to do so, or they are not of God to begin with. And He uses offence to purge them out, to send them on their way. When the truth of God is taught and preached in all of its boldness the ones who were not planted by God will be uprooted. The offence will show their true motives and heart was something other than that of God.

This is something God has had to work on in me. As a pastor, my first inclination is to appease everyone and to torture myself when someone leaves the church for whatever reason. I want to hang on to everyone. I want to personally visit and plead with them, but that is not my calling as a pastor, even though most in the church view that as a pastor's calling. My calling is to preach the truth of God's Word, and if that brings offence then God will uproot some and they will leave. My calling is to feed and nurture those of whom God has firmly planted here.

I can't be afraid of hurting someone's feelings. I can't be timid in confronting you with the truth. I can't be hesitant in proclaiming what God has given me to speak even at the risk of knowing it may well offend certain people, and that they may walk out the door

with their offering check in tow. Because if I do any of these things, I am relinquishing my God-given authority to protect and feed the sheep that God Almighty has entrusted to my care!

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Samuel**.

1 Samuel 16:1a

The prophet Samuel was a man of God who would not compromise the truth no matter the personal cost. Samuel was a friend of the king besides being the prophet of God. When King Saul sinned, God told Samuel to confront the king, and he did. Unfortunately Saul did not truly repent but was more concerned about how he looked in front of the people (**15:30**). As Samuel turned to leave, Saul desperately grabbed Samuel's robe and the corner tore off in Saul's hands. Samuel then devastated Saul with these words from God, "**The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today**" (**15:28**).

Now this may be a slight reach but I want to develop a possible application that John Bevere makes on this verse. When God tells Samuel to "**Fill your horn with oil and go**", there is a practical aspect to this and there is a symbolic aspect of this. The practical aspect is that God was now sending Samuel to the house of Jesse and he needed the oil to anoint David as the next king of Israel.

The symbolic aspect is that oil in Scripture represents the Holy Spirit and the anointing, which we saw in **1 John 2:27** meant the revealed Word of God abiding within you. Samuel was grieving over his friend and king who God had rejected, or uprooted. So symbolically, God could easily have been saying to Samuel that in order for him to continue to move in the fresh oil, or anointing of God, he had to realize and accept that God's love and judgment are perfect. If Samuel went back to Saul after God rejected him, he wouldn't have had fresh oil, and he wouldn't have been stagnant, not going anywhere.

I think the application for us is to be so close to God that we will quickly and willingly confront those God calls us to confront, and that we will not grieve over those whom God uproots, otherwise the anointing oil from God will run out and dry up. Now this does not mean we ignore people who are lax in their attendance or who need to be lovingly encouraged and built up, but when God uproots someone we must not grieve. When we do, we are choosing our relationship with men over our relationship with God.

Never once in Scripture do we see Jesus reacting to any of the people who left Him. He never once mourned over or chased after those who left. While they were with Him, He ministered to them, but if they chose to leave He let them do so with no objection. That didn't make Jesus cold or unloving, that simply shows us that Jesus was focused on obeying God's call on His life; His delight was to do the will of the Father and in doing so He would benefit multitudes rather than the few. Jesus did not chase after those who were uprooted by the Father.

Don't forfeit your anointing by chasing after those the Lord has uprooted. Pray for them and be ready to welcome them back into the fold if the time comes, but don't chase.

So Jesus offended the Pharisees.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew** again.

Matthew 13:53-58

The people of His own hometown were offended by Him. Why? – Because of His teaching. They could not believe, or obey, what He was teaching. They took offence at the fact that a kid that grew up in their village was now claiming authority over them.

I am sometimes asked if the pastor at my home church in the Chicago area ever left or retired and they asked me to come, would I? My response to them is God put me here for a reason and it is my plan to retire here if the Lord allows. But I also say that I doubt they would want me. Because God has revealed some things to me in His Word over the last ten years that would not sit well with the traditional teaching of that church and denomination. But I also would be concerned that too many in the church would view me as their friend, their relative, and the little kid that grew up here. Could they submit to me as their pastor in that regard? Obviously it can happen because the current pastor there also grew up in that church, but it would always be a concern.

In the case of Jesus, His miracle power was severely limited in His hometown because of their offence, their disbelief, their disobedience, and their refusal to submit to His authority. And again, what tremendous application for the church today; offence, disbelief, disobedience, and refusal to submit to authority is the primary reason there is a lack of miracle power in the church today.

Jesus did not compromise the truth to avoid offending, He just walked away and left them in the snare of the devil held captive to do his will.

Jesus offended the Pharisees and the people of His hometown.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Mark**.

Mark 3:21; 31-35

Jesus' family thinks He is crazy. They are embarrassed, or offended, by Him. In **John 7:5** it even says "**His brothers did not believe Him.**" Jesus was rejected by the majority of His family. They were offended.

Did Jesus drop what He was doing and run to them and appease them? – No, He actually ignores them and continues on with His ministry. Again, this does not mean Jesus was cold, unloving, or indifferent, but that He was continuing about His calling to please the Father and not to please man.

I have heard stories from many of you who God miraculously saved out of the Catholic Church and how you faced rejection and scorn from family members and friends who were offended by your conversion. And for some this rejection is a lifetime thing.

Take heart though, because Jesus did not compromise and bow to the wishes of His earthly family, they all eventually came to the knowledge of the truth as we see by them being present in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. We also have two Books in

the New Testament being written by Jesus' brothers, and James being the pastor and lead apostle of the first church at Jerusalem.

If we choose to compromise the truth we will lose the fresh oil of anointing in our lives.

Jesus offended the Pharisees, the people of His hometown, and His earthly family; but He's not done.

Turn with me to the Gospel of **John**.

John 6:60-66

Here we have disciples of Jesus becoming offended and walking away; and we are talking about multitudes of disciples. These were people who were following the Lord around the countryside and Jesus purposely offends them with the truth of God's Word. And they walk away from the King of kings and Lord of lords! And instead of calling out to them and saying, "Now wait a minute, let Me explain", He then turns to the Twelve and asks them if they want to leave too!

Jesus didn't ask people to stay, let alone beg them to stay, and He certainly would never compromise the truth to get people to stay.

So lets' see now, Pharisees offended, the people of His hometown offended, family offended, and disciples offended. Is anyone left?

Turn with me in your Bibles to another passage in the Gospel of **John**.

John 11:1-6; 21; 32

Martha and Mary are offended at Jesus. The Scripture already said that Jesus loved them, meaning they were very close friends of the Lord. And how does He respond, He waits two additional days before even going to see them in their time of need.

While Martha and Mary knew Jesus was the Son of God, they wanted Him to be their best friend who would come running at the drop of a hat. Now to their credit, they did not let their offence to grow to the point of walking away and they bowed to His authority in essence by remaining faithful to Jesus even in the midst of their offence.

Now do not take this wrong because this next statement or two can come off as sounding self-serving, but it is just to illustrate the account we are looking at and to maybe open our eyes to a principle we have maybe overlooked at times. In **Matthew 10:41**, Jesus says, "**He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.**"

The point Jesus was making is it does matter how you treat and view those who have biblical authority over you. If you treat your pastor as a buddy you will receive a buddy's reward. If you treat your pastor as the Bible says to treat a pastor you will receive a pastor's reward. Do you see the principle? It is the same as "**Give and it shall be given unto you.**" Your reward is totally up to you when dealing with those who have biblical authority over you. I'll leave it between you and God as to how to apply this.

Martha and Mary were initially dropping down to treating Jesus as their best buddy who had let them down instead of treating Him as the Son of God.

Jesus has offended just about every conceivable relationship He had because He never compromised the truth.

Let's quickly look at two more passages and then close.

Turn with me in your Bibles to another passage in the Gospel of **John**.

John 3:8

Beloved, some will not understand you as you move with the Holy Spirit. Don't allow their confusion or their less than favorable responses to you deter you from what you know in your heart is true. Don't abort the flow of the Spirit or the flow of the oil to appease the desires of men.

And lastly, turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Peter** and let's revisit a passage we looked at a few weeks ago.

1 Peter 4:1-2

That last phrase is the application for this whole message tonight: We are to no longer live "**for the lusts** (or desires) **of men, but for the will of God.**"

When you live for the will of God, you will no longer live to please men; and beloved that means you are guaranteed to be in the business of offending people. And many times those people will be ones who are very near and dear to your heart.

Don't compromise.

Let's pray.