



Satan's Deadly Trap – Part 11
Various Scripture
GCSP – 12/05/2009

"You owe me!"

If those words don't come out of your mouth the thoughts surely go through your mind when someone does you wrong, or causes and injury to you, or damages your property, etc.; you desire or feel entitled to compensation or retribution. After all, even God's Law says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

The criminal justice system of our land is even loosely set up according to the principle of being compensated for wrongs and injuries against you – and if the justice system doesn't get you what you feel entitled to I am sure there are plenty of lawyers who will be glad to pursue compensation on your behalf as long as they get a significant portion as well.

The bottom line is that you feel a debt is owed to you when someone mistreats or injures you in some way. And this is the premise for becoming offended and falling into the snare of the devil. Offense begins when you feel the need to get even or receive compensation, or even feel that another person needs to apologize and make things right with you.

I am not saying now and I haven't been saying throughout this series that you have not been hurt or sinned against; that's not the point. The point is in your pursuit of compensation; your desire for revenge or retribution. For when you feel you are owed something; when you think a debt needs to be satisfied, you will create in your own mind what needs to be done to make amends and you have just become judge and jury.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of James.

James 4:11-12

Let's pray.

The Bible could not be any clearer on this issue; God is the Judge, not you. God is the One who determines what is and isn't owed to you. God is the One who exacts vengeance on those who come against His children; "**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay says the Lord**" (**Romans 12:19b**). God is the One who deals with debts.

When we judge, when we exact our revenge, when we determine that someone owes us, we are pushing God off the throne and anointing ourselves as the Lawgiver and Judge. When we take the reigns we are saying that God is wrong and He doesn't know what He is doing.

According to the passage we just read, when we assume God's position we are no longer doing God's Law we are judging God's Law; and if you are judging God's Law you are judging God Himself. How arrogant does a person have to be to actually judge God?

Do you really want to be in that position? Understand that every time you take matters into your own hands, and thus take it out of God's hands, you are doing just that. You are determining what sin is.

And let me say as a side note that this is the purest definition of legalism. Legalism is picking and choosing what sin is, or at least which sins are more important to avoid; thus determining that other sins are less important to pay attention to.

Think that through for a moment. If you have the belief that the only appropriate translation of the Bible is the King James, you have made the determination that it is a sin to read any other – show me that in Scripture. If you believe that only hymns are worthy of being sung in church, you have made the determination that singing anything else in church is a sin. These beliefs and attitudes are legalism and they are judging God and His Word.

Or, if you make a hierarchy of sins and rank them in importance, you are doing the same thing. A church in a southern city had the mandate that all of their members should boycott any business in their city that hired homosexuals. Why didn't they choose to boycott all the businesses that hired liars, or gossips, or people who are arrogant? When God lists seven things that He hates in **Proverbs 6:16-19**, those last three are mentioned, not homosexuality. And don't get me wrong, homosexuality is a sin, but we have no business ranking that sin as any more grievous than others. This too is legalism and judging God and His Word.

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, and it's not you.

Look with me in the next chapter.

James 5:9-11

Do you catch what James is saying? He is telling us that when we assume the position of judge and jury after we have been offended, we are not only inciting the wrath of the Righteous Judge who is standing at the door, but we are choosing to reject the blessings of God. Job, who was the richest man of his generation, received twice as much as he originally had by enduring through the offences and by turning to and obeying God. God judged Job's friends and when Job prayed for his friends the blessings of God rained down on Job in more abundance than he could have imagined.

Do you see the depth of meaning in that phrase, "...**the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful**"? Full of compassion, full. That means He is overflowing and bursting forth with compassion, and His desire is rain His blessings down on you if you will rid yourself of offence, genuinely forgive those who have harmed you, leave it all in God's hands, and passionately pray for them.

A passage we studied several weeks ago, **Luke 6:27-28** says, "**But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**"

And you cannot pray like this: "Father, I pray for so and so even though he mistreated me. Amen." And when Jesus tells us in **Matthew 18:15** to go to your brother or sister

when they have sinned, you don't go to them and say, "I want you to know how you hurt me and all of the nasty things you did against me, but I forgive you."

Or when Paul says in **Galatians 6:1** that we should restore those that have been caught in a trespass, and the implication is the trespass was against you, you don't make big fuss about the trespass and make sure they know every minute detail of how it offended you and then say, "I hope you learned your lesson and I love you anyway."

Turn with me in your Bibles to the **Psalms**.

Psalm 35:9-14

Do you see the attitude of how your prayers should be toward those who offend you? When was the last time you fasted on behalf of your oppressors? How often do you pray for those who have offended you as you would for a close friend, or a brother, or your mother? And the implication here is that your relationship with your friend and brother and mother is a very close one, not one in which they are the ones who offended you. In other words, your prayers for your enemies should be the same as your prayers for those you love dearly.

David is pleading with God through fasting and tears that his enemies would be blessed. It's almost like asking God to give your enemy twice as much as He gives you – and that doesn't mean you pray that God would blind you in one eye.

In all seriousness, we need a heart of compassion and love for those who offend us and those who mistreat us, and those who abuse us, and slander us, and undermine us. Don't be insincere in your prayers and your actions toward them under the guise that you have forgiven them.

John Bevere shares the story of a woman who approached him after a sermon wanting to know why she was still feeling the same after forgiving her ex-husband who left her for another woman. John said that she hadn't truly forgiven him but she kept insisting that she had. John asked her to tell him the story. It turns out her husband was a pastor and ran off with a prominent woman in their congregation, claiming that God had never intended for them to be married but that this other woman was God's choice for him (which is a bunch of baloney). He also said that she was the reason his ministry was not larger than it was.

John asked her how she felt about all of this. She again reiterated that she had forgiven her husband and that she was also now remarried and had a husband that loved and provided for her, but she just wished her ex-husband would apologize. John said, "Stop right there; as long as you are waiting for an apology you have not forgiven him." This woman still believed she was owed an apology. In her mind there was still an outstanding debt. She had made the judgment on how this offence needed to be settled and that unfulfilled payment was what had kept her bound.

Her prayers for her ex-husband were probably along the lines of, "Dear Lord help him see the error of his ways and soften his heart to where he will apologize and seek forgiveness." That doesn't sound like a bad prayer on the surface, but that is a prayer of judge and jury; a prayer of how you view justice.

If Jesus had waited for us to apologize before He extended forgiveness to each of us, we would remain unforgiven still today. But Jesus forgave us at the Cross didn't He? He said, "**Father forgive them for they know not what they do.**" And beloved that wasn't just meant for the Roman soldiers and the mockers and the Pharisees, that statement was meant for all who would follow them as well; right down to you and me.

Colossians 3:12-13 says, "**So as those who have been chosen by God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.**"

Ephesians 4:32 says, "**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.**"

So if we are commanded to forgive in the same manner in which Christ forgives, that means we have to forgive before the apology; we have to forgive before forgiveness is sought; we have to forgive completely and perfectly with a heart of compassion and kindness and humility and gentleness and patience. How many people do you recall walking up to the Cross and asking Jesus to forgive them? But Jesus extended forgiveness right then and there.

Genuine forgiveness comes before it is sought, otherwise we run the risk of viewing the asking as a form of payment; saying in our own mind that you should be asking for forgiveness, which is a form of being judge and jury.

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

Hebrews 12:14-15

Bitterness is a root. Unfortunately if you wait until you have reached the point of being bitter, that root has been watered and nurtured and fertilized and cultivated. A plant that is just getting started can easily be plucked out of the ground, but a plant that has had time to grow and shoot its roots deep into the ground is not easily pulled up. This is why the verse says, "...**many be defiled.**"

When **Ephesians 4:26** tells us, "**do not let the sun go down on your anger**" it is for this very reason; the longer you allow an offence to linger the deeper the root of bitterness goes down and the harder it is to uproot.

If you do not pursue peace by releasing offences as they come, you will become defiled. Your life will be polluted by the vileness of unforgiveness, and the blessings of God will be withheld. Your peace will be gone, your joy will be gone, your security will be gone, and eventually your faith will be gone.

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

Matthew 5:38-42

Jesus just blew up the whole eye for an eye thing. Even though the Old Testament Law gave you the legal right to pursue justice (and remember, until we reach the Cross,

Jesus is teaching and preaching and living under the Old Testament Law) Jesus says you must relinquish your legal right; and not only relinquish it but to go beyond that and offer more. We need to be so far removed from avenging ourselves that we willingly risk the possibility of being taken advantage of again.

We have to make room for and give place to the only righteous and just Judge. Only He avenges righteously and only He can reward you abundantly as He did Job.

And just so you don't make a faulty application to this passage, Jesus isn't saying after you have turned the other cheek you are now allowed to seek your own justice and revenge. I've actually heard it preached that you only have two cheeks so after the second one has been slapped you are free to fight back.

This is not a passage that is teaching us to not defend ourselves when in a physical confrontation, this is a passage about offence and how to handle it. Jesus is simply teaching us to not get offended at anything and the best way to achieve this is to go the extra mile and to be kind and compassionate instead of seeking your own retribution.

Allow me to relate the account of Absalom, one of King David's sons. If you want to read it for yourself sometime it starts in **2 Samuel 13**.

Absalom was David's third son. David's first-born son was Amnon, but these two sons had different mothers. Absalom's sister was Tamar and apparently she was gorgeous because the Bible says Amnon got physically ill longing after her.

After moping around for a period of time, Amnon's cousin came to him with a plot. He told Amnon to fake being sick and when his father the king came to see him to ask him to send Tamar to come and care for him. The plot worked perfectly and when Tamar came to Amnon's house she made him some food. Amnon sent all of his servants outside of the house and asked Tamar to bring the food into his bedroom and to feed him from her own hand. Upon doing so Amnon grabbed hold of Tamar and told her to lie with him. She protested and told Amnon to ask the king for her hand in marriage and he surely would not withhold her from him – it was not uncommon for half-siblings to get married in that culture.

Amnon was so overwhelmed with lust that he would not listen and he rapes Tamar. After the dirty deed was done the Bible says that Amnon now hated Tamar with a greater hatred than he previously loved her – which is interesting and has some principles that could be preached on. So Amnon kicks her out of the house and tells her to go away, which Tamar sees as an even greater evil than the rape because of the shame she would now have to carry around for her whole life. Tamar ends up at her brother Absalom's house and she remained there.

King David hears of the incident and the Bible says he was very angry, but the king did nothing about it, and this greatly offends Absalom. And for two years Absalom allows his offence at Amnon and his offence at his father to take root and grow.

At the end of these two years Absalom hatches a plot to exact his own revenge on Amnon. Under false pretenses Absalom invites all the king's sons to a banquet to be

held in their honor. Absalom commanded his servants to wait until Amnon was drunk and then rise up against him and kill him. The servants did as they were told and Absalom then fled the scene and remained in hiding for three years.

Contact was eventually made and the king sent notice that Absalom was welcome to return home. But David refused to see Absalom for two more years after his return and the root of bitterness in Absalom's heart continued to grow; the offence against his father for not avenging Tamar was still there.

Absalom began to undermine the king and slowly won over the hearts of the people of the kingdom until he was able to raise up an army and run the king out of town. Absalom is so possessed by his bitterness and vengeance that he has sex with all of King David's concubines on the roof of the palace in the sight of all Israel. The root of bitterness is so deep that nothing can uproot it at this point.

Absalom is counseled to pursue the king and kill him, and the plan pleases Absalom.

So you now have a kingdom divided and a son at war with his father all because of an offence that was not handled properly. Eventually the king is able to gather a substantial army and the battle is on. As King David's forces begin to get the upper hand he tells the commander of his army to capture and deal gently with Absalom, but the commander has other ideas and he instead kills Absalom even though he had the opportunity to capture him unharmed.

You could rightly say that Absalom was killed by his own bitterness and unresolved offence. Here was a man with virtually unlimited potential and a possible heir to the throne who died in his prime because he refused to release the debt he felt was owed to him. Absalom ended up defiled instead for his choice to not pursue peace and leave vengeance in God's hands.

Was David wrong for not doing something about Amnon as soon as he heard about the rape? Probably, but regardless it was Absalom taking offence and then taking matters in his own hands that kept God from dealing with Amnon, and possibly even dealing with David if it was needed. Because Absalom did not leave place for God, the Lord stepped back and allowed Absalom to assume the position of judge and jury.

The way this account played out is similar to how many church splits happen. The pastor offends someone, maybe even someone in leadership and the offence grows into a root of bitterness and the pastor is undermined by the offended party. Eventually the offended party garners enough support to attempt a coup and the battle is on, and the casualties of war are the broken lives and ruined testimonies and the Spirit of God leaving the church.

This is why the writer of Hebrews warns us to be very careful to not allow the root of bitterness to spring up in our lives. You say, "I would never let things get that far out of hand." Are you that sure? Remember that the progression of unresolved offence ends with deception. I am sure that Absalom felt he was doing the right thing. He was deceived into believing that David no longer belonged on the throne because of his sins, what makes you so sure you won't reach that same point?

Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any unresolved offence in your heart. Give Him permission to dig deep and uproot any bitterness that has been growing. Evaluate those you think you have already forgiven; ask yourself if you have prayed for them like you would a close friend or a beloved brother or a cherished mother. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the debts you believe you are still owed by those who have hurt you in the past.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Let's pray.