

OFFENCE

Are you in the penalty box?

I. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

In Mark 4:13, Jesus told His disciples, “If you understand this parable (the parable of the sower), you will understand all other parables.”

The word “parable” means “the explanation of the scriptures”. This also means anything that seems difficult in the Word of God can be understood by this particular passage of scripture. The parable of the sower is the first parable ever given by Jesus. It is a parable that teaches the character of God, the character of Satan, and the importance of man’s heart in receiving the Word of God. The sower, the seed, and the thief remain constant in this parable. The only thing that changes is the condition of the soil, which represents the condition of man’s heart. God gives. God blesses. Satan comes to steal but he can only steal what God has given. Once the seed is received into the soil, persecutions, trials, troubles, and afflictions begin. Most Christians realize that it wasn’t until they began studying God’s Word, meditating, and spending time with God that the problems began in their lives. That is when they became a threat to Satan’s kingdom. The Bible says affliction and persecution arises because of the Word’s sake. The more Word we receive, the more Satan wants to come against us. He will try to steal from your family, from your finances, and from life so that you will become discouraged. Throughout the parable of the sower, Satan tries to steal the Word and stop the progression of the Word in the believer’s life.

Mark 4

vs. 16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

vs. 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended.

The beginning of verse 17 describes a believer who had no root in himself or herself so they endured for only a short time. There are many people who receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, love the Lord, come to church and then suddenly, are gone. The root of why they left the church is offense. Persecution and affliction came and they were not prepared for it and became offended.

II. Offences in the Body of Christ

One of the main reasons Christians leave the church is offense. Many Christians today are sitting at home, not attending church, and missing the blessings of God all because they have become offended. When a person leaves a church for the right reason, because God is calling them to another church, it is a blessing. Some people are led to other

churches because God wants to use their lives to minister to another group of people. When people leave for the right reason, it is a blessing to everyone. But when a person leaves because of offense, it is always a tool of the enemy to steal the Word that has been planted in the soil of their heart.

III. Characteristics of an offence

An offense usually takes us by surprise and often involves someone with whom we are very familiar. That person may appear to turn on us and this contradicts our perception of them and challenges our confidence in them. It is important to understand that there are real offenses and perceived offenses. The majority of offenses are perceived. Maybe the person who offended us was in a bad mood and did not intend to offend us. Or maybe we misinterpreted the behavior of the person toward us.

There are also real offenses. A person may have maliciously turned against us. Maybe they lied about us. Real offenses hurt and it is often difficult to let them go. We cannot stop offenses from coming but we do not have to accept them. Offended people will cross our path but we do not have to accept their offenses. If we choose to accept any kind of offense, it will eventually lead to a root of bitterness that can destroy us.

IV. The Building Blocks of Offences

The offended person first becomes critical and then self-righteous. They begin to think more highly of themselves and begin to look down on others. Next, they lose their joy. They are no longer happy. No longer do they enjoy coming to church. Because they are critical of everything, they begin to see things that are wrong where they used to see things that were right. Before they were offended, they would think on things that were lovely and of a good report and rejoice in those good things. But joy turned to being critical, not only towards people, but towards the church.

The next thing that happens is the offended person loses true perception. Offenses are like glasses. You put them on and see the world through those offenses. Your imagination begins to run wild and you begin to believe that people are against you. This is a tactic of Satan to hinder your production and eventually destroy you.

You become like a person who has one hand tied behind your back. It seems like you are working harder and getting less accomplished and that is because you are separated from fellowship with God. Offense separates you from God's power and hinders you from accomplishing what God has called you to do.

V. Three Types of Offences

There are three types of offenses. The **first** is a **direct offense**.

This type of offense is when someone offends you. Someone may have said something or you could have wrongly perceived what they have said. A good friend could come to you with some godly counsel thinking you could receive it, but you couldn't and you become offended. This type of offense often occurs between friends.

The **second** type of offense is a **given offense**. This offense occurs when you offend another person. Usually, you did not try to offend them. You may have been trying to be honest with a friend and they became offended. Maybe you had a bad day and did or said something wrong that offended another person. The higher a person rises in leadership, the easier it becomes to unintentionally offend others. Many people who are heads of corporations begin to find themselves alone. Many of the friends they have had over the years desert them because of a wrong perception. Often the saying is true, "It is lonely at the top".

The **third** type of offense is a **borrowed offense**. The reason this type of offense is what I call "the most stupid sin", is because it had nothing to do with you. Another person offended someone and they brought that offense to you. You end up choosing to join them in their offense. It is the easiest offense to accept, but the most stupid of all! You listen to someone complain, and rather than trying to help them, you take up their cause and become offended.

Many Christians say, "You should never listen to anyone complain". But this thinking is wrong. We are called to minister not only to physically afflicted people, but to emotionally afflicted people as well. The thing we must guard against in helping others is accepting their anger or bitterness. We should turn them to the Word of God and with the compassion of the Holy Spirit, minister healing to their lives.

VI. The Gossiper

Proverbs 20 vs. 19 *He that goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flatters with his lips.*

Something about a secret wants to draw us in. It is called the flesh. One of the worst things a person can ever do is begin to spread gossip under the guise of a prayer request. You can hear a person out, listen to what they have to say, but check the attitude of the person. The Holy Spirit can reveal motives.

Proverbs 26 vs. 17 *He that passes by, and meddles with strife belonging not to him, is like one that takes a dog by the ears.*

It is not wise to grab a strange dog by the ears. Chances are great that you will be bitten. If that dog had rabies, you could get sick. If you get sick, you could eventually die. Meddling and getting involved with another person's offenses or gossip is like grabbing a strange dog by the ears. You are opening yourself up to danger and possible harm. In other words, you are involving yourself with something more powerful than you are. Often we desire to help others, but we are unable to help some people because of their attitude.

VII. Anger

Proverbs 22 vs. 24 *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:*

vs. 25 *Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare (trap) to your soul.*

The word “*snare*” is actually the word “trap”. Offenses are a trap of Satan. Angry people will be brought across our path and there are times when we can help them. Compassion can draw us to them. We may have a desire to get to the root of their anger and give them the Word of God to apply to their lives. But this verse is telling us some angry people will not want to change.

It is important not to develop a close friendship with an angry person. Even though we sometimes believe our attitude will positively affect them, in reality we will begin to see the world through their eyes of offense.

We have probably all seen someone middle-aged who has forgotten their glasses and are trying to read a menu. They borrow their spouse’s or friend’s glasses in an attempt to be able to see. They may put the glasses on and say, “Wow! How do you see through these things?” It is bad enough to borrow glasses that are not yours for only a moment, but how much worse it would be to wear them every day. The same thing happens to a person who makes friends with an angry person. Their attitude causes you to see things through their eyes, through the eyes of offense.

VIII. The Results of a Borrowed Offence

When you take another person’s offense, you usually become selfrighteous.

Then you begin to feel like it is your responsibility to “right the wrong”. At this point you step away from under God’s protection because the Bible says, “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, saith the Lord.”

You may hear something about a leader in the church or a leader in the community. You may hear something about your boss. You may get offended by what you hear and could carry anger and bitterness inside for years. But how do you know whether or not that person has repented? It would be such a waste to carry anger and bitterness when the person repented years ago for something they may have done wrong.

IX. Holding on to an Offence

There are some sick people who say they want to be healed, but when you examine a little more closely you discover they enjoy the attention they receive from being sick. If they were healed, the attention may go away. In the same way, people can hang on to offense. Many times offense is directly related to sickness and disease. There have been

people unwilling to release an offense. One minister met a man who was filled with cancer and knew that he had been carrying offense against another man. The minister told the man, "Turn loose of that offense". The man's response was, "I can't turn loose of that offense. I hate him! I hate him!"

Years ago there was a television program aired about African monkeys. There were traders that wanted to capture them and consulted with the natives. The natives built little cages with bamboo bars and a door at the front that could easily be closed once the monkey was inside. Placed inside the cage hanging from a string was a brightly colored stick that would attract the monkeys.

Everyone thought, "Sure, the monkey will go inside the cage, grab the stick, which pulls the string. The door will close and the monkey will be trapped." However, the monkeys were smarter than that; they wouldn't go through the door to grab the stick. Instead, they would reach in through the bars, grab the stick, but could not figure out how to get the stick through the bars. Once they grabbed the stick, they would never let it go. The natives would return to the cages after hours had passed because they knew the monkey would still be outside the cage holding on to the stick. Once the monkeys would see the natives, they would begin screaming in fear but would not release the stick. The natives would kill the monkeys and those monkeys would still be holding the stick in their hand.

That is exactly what happens to a person hanging on to an offense. Satan comes in and is able to destroy us because we are unwilling to release the offense. Your business may be failing, sickness may be attacking your body and you are still saying, "God, I have every right to be mad at him. I have every right to be mad at her," when you actually have no right at all. Jesus died to rid us of our offenses and it is time that we turn them over to Him.

Proverbs 29 vs. 22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgressions.

There is a progression to offense. First, you are offended. Then you become angry. Next, you begin to stir up strife. Finally, you become a furious person and your life is filled with sins, but you justify every one of them.

vs. 23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.

If you are offended, it is time to become humble in spirit and turn loose of the stick of offense.

X. WE HAVE A CHOICE

Proverbs 18 vs. 19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

A person can become so offended that it becomes almost impossible for them to change. Notice, bars are mentioned in this verse. Bars not only keep people out, they keep people in. A person can become trapped by their offenses. They become imprisoned and as time passes, they do not want to be released. Their offenses become like the bars of a great city.

Proverbs 20 vs. 3 It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will continue meddling.

We can pray all we want, “God, get this offense away from me”, but in this verse God said it is an honor for *you* to lay that offense at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, to cast the burden on Him, and release it. When you choose to release offense, the bars that the enemy intended to use to imprison your life will be removed and free you to receive the blessings God has ready to pour out upon your life.