

Offense

Prayer

Good Morning,

I have an amazing book that I have been reading called: The Bait of Satan by John Bevere. I will be borrowing some of his teachings from time to time so if they seem familiar... I have made them my own. I have embraced these concepts because they have resonated with me and caused me to reflect on the subject of offense, which is a major source of discord in the church today. I believe that I will likely be teaching a class on the subject in the near future, but for today, I feel strongly lead to give you an introduction to some key concepts.

Offense... My first question goes to the relevance of the subject this morning... Has anyone of you ever been offended?

What does the word "offense" mean in the context of interpersonal relationships?

Let's start with a working definition:

It is an annoyance or resentment brought about by a perceived insult to or disregard for oneself or one's standards or principles.

Okay it happens if we resent someone for what we believe is an insult or something that goes against what we believe is right.

Let's see what Merriam Webster has to say on the subject:

- 1a: an act of stumbling
- b: a cause or occasion of sin : stumbling block
- 2: something that outrages the moral or physical senses
- 3a: the act of attacking : assault
- b: the means or method of attacking or of attempting to score
- c: the offensive team or members of a team playing offensive positions
- d: scoring ability
- 4a: the act of displeasing or affronting
- b: the state of being insulted or morally outraged <takes offense at the slightest criticism>
- 5a: a breach of a moral or social code : sin, misdeed
- b: an infraction of law; especially : misdemeanor

If we throw away the irrelevant pieces our definition still seems to work with some interesting added things... There is the act of stumbling, the act of attacking, the act of a moral infraction shows up...

Is this the same as what offense means in God's word?

Let's go to the Strong's Concordance in Ecclesiastes 10:4

h2399. חַטָּה *hêt* ' ; from 2398;

a crime or its penalty:— fault, x grievously, offence, (punishment of) sin.

AV (33)- sin 30, faults 1, grievously 1, offences

- A. SIN
- B. Guilt for SIN
- C. Punishment for SIN

So the bible says that an offense is SIN... Humm let's keep digging. Jesus talks about offense in Matthew 18:6,7

g4625. σκάνδαλον *skandalon*; ("scandal;" probably from a derivative of 2578; a trap- stick (bent sapling), i. e. snare (figuratively, cause of displeasure or sin): occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumbling block.

AV (15)- offence 9, stumbling block 3, occasion of stumbling 1, occasion to fall 1, thing that offends 1;

The movable stick or trigger of a trap, a trap stick a trap, snare any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall, (a stumbling block, occasion of stumbling)

i. e. a rock which is a cause of stumbling fig. applied to Jesus Christ, whose person and career were so contrary to the expectations of the Jews concerning the Messiah, that they rejected him and by their obstinacy made shipwreck of their salvation any person or thing by which one is (entrapped) drawn into error or sin.

So to sum up in the context of relationships with each other... Biblically Offense is a:

- Sin
- Trap
- Stumbling Block
- Snare

Let's look at giving offense in the context of relationships to others. Turn with me to Matthew 18:6,7 NKJV

Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung

around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against YOU, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.

What can we take away from these four verses of scripture?

- We need to be careful not to give offense as it could cause a brother or sister, a child or even a new Christian to stumble and fall into sin.
- God takes giving offense seriously
- He says that if the offense is against you specifically you bring the offense to the person's attention.
 - If they respond favorably forgive them, if they don't forgive them anyway.
- If the person repeats the offense keep on forgiving them
- We must NOT take up the offense or share the offense with others for them to take up the offense on our behalf as it would cause them to stumble into sin.

NOTE: This is not a license to go around the church correcting every sin you see. This scripture specifically states that correction is allowed when the sin is against YOU... It is so unfortunate that the "against you" has been left out on some of the more recent paraphrase translations of the Word of God.

If in your perception the church is going awry in theology, doctrine etc... bring the issue to your Pastor or his designates, as the pastor is the overseer of the spiritual direction of the church. He will approach it diligently in prayer. I know this because I am he...

The caution here is "Do not take up offense."

Now we see in Matthew 24:10-13 Jesus says that as the end of the age approaches and his church is under the pressure of persecution the following occurs...

...And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Let's look at what it means exactly in this context.

- To offend, to entice to sin to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey.
- To cause a brother or sister to fall away as a result of offense.

- To perceive in another something that I disapprove of which stops me from respecting that another's authority
- To take offense because someone's actions have cause you to become annoyed or indignant.

Now we are told in 2 Timothy 2:24-26

...And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

And now we come to the crux of the matter... Offense is a trap. It is a snare of the enemy to destroy your relationships. It causes division.

How often have we seen one brother or sister turn against another brother or sister? How often have we seen a leader crucified because of a mistake? How often have we seen churches split?

My friends fore warned is fore armed. We are in a spiritual battle as we move forward with what the Lord wants done here in Salmo. One of the Adversary's greatest traps is the trap of offense. Unfortunately, some people don't even recognize it when they have fallen into it.

The trap of offense is subtle...

Did you know that there is a progression when taking offense?
Offense leads to betrayal and betrayal to hate...

Remember Matthew 24:10 where it says: *"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another."*

Kind of opposed to the objectives that the God of Love has established for his church, isn't it?

So when a brother or sister is takes up the offense in opposition to God's will, those individuals find in themselves a stronghold, which will cause division. Turn with me to Proverbs 18:19,20. It says: *"A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle."*

It is for this reason that I have had Carol, and Jesus bless her servant's heart, in here teaching on strongholds. We don't need to put up walls between each other... we need to tear them down!

At this point I believe that we have established that offense builds strongholds, barriers and walls between one person and another...

God has told us:

- Not to take offense
- Not to give offense
- To respect lines of duly appointed authority
- Offense is a trap of Satan

Why has he said this?

He doesn't want us to fall into the trap of the enemy. He is the God of Love and he desires a culture of Honor.

What do you do when you feel offended?

If you feel offended... Look inside and ask yourself why? Is it because of a difference of opinion? If so, you need to recognize that disagreeing is not an offense. A disagreement isn't causing a person to stumble and fall into sin. But, if when you look inside, you see yourself taking up an offense remember the words of Jesus – "You shall forgive him."

So why as Christians do we still take and give offense?

I believe it is because we have not brought our thoughts into captivity and obedience to what God has told us to do. I base my belief on 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

Bringing our thoughts into captivity to Jesus quite simply pulls down strongholds.

I would like to share with you a small insight that I have picked up in my walk with Jesus and in my daily relationships with people in general...

The person who can hurt you the most, is the person who is closest too you.

The enemy knows this and so he will do everything in his power to create an offense between you and that person. Don't fall for Satan's bait... He hates relationships, he hates marriages; he hates friendships. Why? The answer is simple... We are stronger together!

Be vigilant and protect your relationships.

1 John 2:9-11

He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Pay special attention to what John says here:

He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

This morning there is more than a mandate for our culture of honor it is the commandment of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39:

Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets

Note it doesn’t say “May”, “Might”, or “Can” it says you “SHALL”... It is a commandment!

In Proverbs 18:1 it tells us that: “*A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment*” and in 1 John 3:15 we further read: “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

This makes offense a pretty serious topic and God has made some very firm statements about it.

I mentioned this last week, but I will reemphasize it today because it is so vital and relevant. When we speak to each other, do we first run it through the filter of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 first?

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things

Not taking offense can sometimes be hard, not giving offense may even be harder, but we need to be careful and thoughtful in our communication with each other. We want to speak life not death. We all need to bring our thoughts captive to Christ.

So... I have described the problem and some of what God says about it. Here are some things to consider with offenses:

- Talk to God about it in prayer
- Pray for healing to your wounded spirit
- Don't try to spread your offense to others
- When you do share your heart with others use 1 Cor. 13:4-7 and if you haven't memorized that there is a simply acronym "THINK" that will help
 - **T** – Is what I am going to share True?
 - **H** – is what I am going to share Helpful and will it build our culture of Honor?
 - **I** – is what I am going to share Inspiring, will it motivate or encourage
 - **N** – is what I am going to share Necessary or am I gossiping?
 - **K** – Are the words I am going to share kind and showing the Love of
 - Christ?

In conclusion, I want to share what I work on everyday and in all my relationships:

- Don't get offended
- Don't take up another persons offence
- Forgive to the best of your ability and pray for greater capacity for grace
- Forgive the past and try to embrace the present with a positive expectation of the future

Finally, I leave you with this scripture from the writing of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians: *"...be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."* (Eph. 4:32)