

The Bait of Satan - #2

Luke 17:1 - Jesus Warns of Offenses - Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to *him* through whom they do come!

It is the Trap of Offense:

- Things that cause people to stumble are **bound to come!!!!**
 - It is one of **the enemy's** most deadly and deceptive traps.
 - Severs relationships and widens the existing breaches between us.
 - **Nothing** hurts more than a wound from a friend!
 - **Betrayal** truly hurts!
 - **Offenses** are a tool of the enemy!
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Matt 24:10-13

¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

In this chapter of Matthew,

- Jesus is giving the signs of the end of this age.
- His disciples asked,
- *"What will be the sign of Your coming?"*

Notice one of the signs of His pending the return: *"Many will be offended..."*

- **Not** a few, not some, **but many**.

First we must ask,

- "Who are these offended?"
- Are they Christians or just society in general?

We find the answer as we continue to read: **"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."**

- *The Greek word for love in this verse is agape.*

There are *several Greek words for love* in the New Testament, but **the two most common** are agape and phileo.

Phileo defines *a love found among friends*.

- It is ***an affectionate love*** that is conditional.
- **Phileo says**, “*You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours,*” or
- “*You treat me kindly, and I’ll do the same.*”

On the other hand, **Agape** is *the love God sheds abroad in the hearts of His children*.

Agape (Ancient Greek) is a Greco-Christian term referring to **love**, *“the highest form of love”*, and the **love** of God for man and of man for God.

- It is the **same love Jesus gives freely to us**.
- It is **unconditional**.
- It is **not based on performance** or even whether *it is returned*.
- It is a love that *gives even when rejected*.

Without God we can **only love** with a selfish love—

- One that **cannot be given** if it is not received and returned.
- However, **agape loves regardless of the response**.
- The **agape** is *the love Jesus shed* when **he forgive from the cross**.
- So “**the many**” Jesus refers to are Christians
- **whose agape (love) has grown cold**.

Walls of Protection

Proverbs 18:19 NKJV - **A brother offended** is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.

We construct walls when we are hurt to **safeguard our hearts** and **prevent any future wounds**.

- **We become selective**, denying entry to all **we fear will hurt us**.
- **We filter out** anyone we think **owes us** something.
- **We withhold access** until these people have *paid their debts and full*.
- **We open our lives only** to those who *we believe are on our side*.

Yet often these people who are ***“on our side”*** are **offended** as well.

- So, instead of helping, **we stack additional** stones on our existing walls.
- Without our knowing when it happens, ***these walls of protection become a prison***.
- At that point, we are not only cautious about who comes in -
- But in terror we cannot **venture outside our fortress**.

The focus of **offended Christians** is inward and introspective.

- **We guard** our rights and personal relationships carefully.
- ***Our energy is consumed*** with making sure no future injuries will occur.
- If we don't risk being hurt, we cannot give unconditional love.
- ***Unconditional love*** gives others the right to hurt us.

Love does not seek its own, but hurt people become more and more self seeking and self-contained.

- ***In this climate the love of God waxes cold***.

When we filter everything through past hurts, rejections, and experiences, **we find it impossible** to believe God.

- We cannot believe He means what he says.
- **We doubt His** goodness and faithfulness since ***we judge Him*** –
- Through the same filters we use ***to protect ourselves*** from people.

Offended people will be able to find Scripture passages to ***back their position***.

- But it is not the correct division of **God's Word**.
- The knowledge of God's Word **without love**
- ***Is a destructive force*** because it puffs up with pride.

This creates an atmosphere in which **we can be deceived**, because **knowledge without the love of God** will lead to **deception**.

Jesus warns of false prophets immediately after His statement of many being **offended**:

Matt 24:11 - ***“Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.***

Who are the many they will deceive?

The answer: Matt 24:12 ***the offended whose love has grown cold.***

False Prophets

Matthew 7:15 – NIV - True and False Prophets - “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

- Jesus calls false prophets **“Wolves in sheep’s clothing”**.
- They are **self-seeking men** who give the appearance of **being Christians** (sheep’s clothing).
- But have the inward nature of a wolf.
- **Wolves like** to hang around sheep.
- They can be found in the congregation as well as in the pulpit.
- They are sent by the enemy to infiltrate and deceive.

They must be identified by their fruits, not by their teachings or prophecies.

- Often the teaching can appear sound
- Whereas the **fruit in their lives** and ministries is not.
- A minister or a Christian is **what he lives, not what he preaches**.

Wolves always go after the wounded/young sheep, not the healthy, strong ones.

- These wolves will tell people what they want to hear
- **Not what they need to hear.**

These people don’t want sound doctrine; they want someone to tickle their ears.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 NKJV - Perilous Times and Perilous Men - 3 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **5 having a form of godliness but denying its power**. And from such people turn away!

- **Notice** that they will have a form of godliness or “Christianity, but **they will deny its power**.
- They will boast of being followers of Jesus and proclaim their “new birth” experience;

But **what they boast of has not been allowed to pierce their hearts and bring forth the nature of Christ**.

Information Generation

Paul wrote that these deceived men and women would have ***a zeal for knowledge*** but remain unchanged since ***they never apply it.***

He described them as: **2 Timothy 3:7 - NKJV- *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.***

If Paul were alive today he would grieve to see what he foretold in operation.

- He would see multitudes of men and women attending church services amassing in knowledge of ***the Scriptures.***
- He would watch them hunt for “new revelation” in order to live more selfish, successful lives.

He would see folks running from church to church to escape offense

- All of them professing the lordship of Jesus while they cannot forgive.
- Paul would cry out, ***“Repent and be free from your deception, you self-seeking generation of hypocrites!”***

Betrayal

Matthew 24:10 NKJV - And then *many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.*

If we look closely we can see a progression.

An offense leads to betrayal, and betrayal leads to hatred

As stated earlier, offended people build walls for protection.

- Our focus becomes self-preservation.
- We must be protected and safe at all costs.
- This makes us ***capable of betrayal.***

When we betray, we seek our own protection or benefit at the expense of someone else—usually someone with whom we are in relationship.

Betrayal in the kingdom of God comes when a believer seeks his own benefit or protection at the expense of another believer.

- ***Betrayal then leads to hatred*** with serious consequences.

1 John 3:15 NKJV - *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

How sad that we can find example after example of offense, betrayal, and hatred among Christians today.

It is so rampant in our homes and churches that it is considered normal behavior.

- We are too numb to grieve when we see minister taking minister to court.
- **It no longer surprises us** what Christian couples sue one another for divorce.
- ***Church splits are common*** and predictable.
- **Ministry politics** are played at an all-time high.
- It is disguised as being in the best interest of the kingdom or the church.

“Christians” are protecting their rights, making sure they are not mistreated or taken advantage of by other Christians.

- Have we forgotten the exhortation **of the new covenant?**

1 Cor. 6:7 NKJV - Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? *Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?*

CLOSE -----

Have we forgotten the words of Jesus?

Matthew 5:44 NKJV - But I say to you, *love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*

WHAT ABOUT? -

Philippians 2:3 NKJV - *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

Why don't we live by these laws of love?

Why are we so quick to betray rather than lay down our lives for one another, even at the risk of being cheated?

The reason: Our love is cold, which results in our still seeking to protect ourselves.

We can no longer confidently commit our care to God when we are trying to care for ourselves.

When Jesus was wronged, He did not wrong in return.

1 Peter 2:21-23 NKJV - ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

**²² “Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;**

²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

We must come to the place where we trust God and not flesh.

PRAISE TEAM -----

Many give lip service to God as their source, yet they live as orphans.

***They take their own lives in their hands while they confess with their mouths,
“He is my lord and God.”***

By now you can see how serious the sin of offense is.

If it is not dealt with, offense will eventually lead to death.

When you *resist the temptation* to be offended, God brings great victory.