

# GLORY & BLESSING FROM OFFENCES

*By John Gagliardi*



Because we are human, and because we live surrounded by other humans, we can be very sure of one thing – there will be no shortage of occasions in our lives to become upset and resentful because of other people. The Bible calls occasions such as these “offences”.

Jesus Himself says, “Offences must come” (Matthew 18: 7), and that “it is impossible that no offences should come” (Luke 17: 1). The devil uses offences as a way of sowing discord and unhappiness among Christians, reducing their effectiveness and productivity.

More often than not, offences come from the very people we are close to, or hold in high esteem – family members, friends, our boss, cell group leader, or even our pastor. Pride, another weapon of the devil, can often prevent us from recognizing and dealing with the offence, and we can go on for long periods outwardly radiating the joy of Christian fellowship, but inwardly burning and seething with anger and resentment.

Renowned writer and speaker John Bevere has written a book called “The Bait of Satan”, which is all about offences. He says offended people produce a crop of “much fruit – such as hurt, anger, outrage, jealousy, resentment, strife, bitterness, hatred and envy.” There are times when it seems we should pray for a crop failure!

He goes on to list some of the consequences of offences as being insults, attacks, wounding, division, separation, broken relationships, betrayal and backsliding. Jesus Himself says in Matthew 24: 10-13 that “then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another ... lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”

All because of offences! Whether the offence is real or imagined, justified or unjustified, it is still a major cause of negative feelings and debilitating powerlessness. It is a truism that a person’s perception is his reality – if he thinks he is offended, than he is offended.

John Bevere calls offences the “bait” of Satan for a very good reason – the word translated “offences” in verses such as Matthew 18: 7 and Luke 17: 1 above, is the Greek word “skandalon” meaning a “trap stick”. The “skandalon” is the trigger in the trap on which the bait is placed, so that when the bait is taken, the “skandalon” causes the trap to snap shut, capturing the victim.

It is also translated as a “stumbling block, trap, snare, cause of displeasure or sin.” Spiros Zodhiates in a lexical aid in “The Complete Word Study New Testament”, says: “... ‘Skandalon’ always denotes the enticement, or occasion, leading to conduct which brings with it the ruin of the person in question.”

So when we are talking about offences among Christians, we are talking about serious stuff! But the good news is that in God, there always is Good News.

One of my favorite Scriptures is Genesis 50: 20, where Joseph tells his brothers who had sold him into slavery, “you meant it for evil, but God turned it to good”. God has a habit of turning curses into blessings, and that applies in the area of offences as well.

Peter says in 1 Peter 3: 8 and 9: “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, courteous; not returning evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you may inherit a blessing.”

John Bevere, in a recent conference in Australia, made the point that when you bless your enemies, you yourself will be blessed. He said: “We have to handle unfair treatment correctly, because there are blessings if we do. God will vindicate us – so whenever we are unfairly treated, we are put in a position for God to bless us.”

Proverbs 18: 19 says that a brother offended is harder to win than a strong city – but Solomon in his inspired wisdom also says that discretion makes a man slow to anger, and “his glory is to overlook a transgression” (Proverbs 19: 11). It is to our “glory” to overlook a transgression or offence.

“Offences will come” ... but it is a glory to us if we handle them correctly, and God is able to turn the curse of the offence into a blessing. The key is to handle the offence with the grace that comes from love and humility.

“Love suffers long and is kind ... bears all things, believes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...” (1 Corinthians 13: 4, 7, 8). Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4: 8). “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5: 5).

Love and humility, operating in the power of Christ, open up to us a very powerful ministry - the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5: 18). To “reconcile”, from the Greek “apokatallasso”, or “katallasso”, means simply to bring back together again after an estrangement, to settle differences.

If you believe you have been offended, it is not so easy in your own strength to forgive and overlook the transgression – you have no doubt been hurt, maybe you feel deeply betrayed – reconciliation is the last thing you feel like in the natural! You only have to see the one who offended you, and your heart starts to beat faster, your fists clench, your blood pressure goes up, and your mind fills with thoughts of sweet revenge.

But God says vengeance is His, and His alone - He will repay, not us (Romans 12: 19). God says that if we don’t forgive, we won’t be forgiven (Matthew 6: 14 and 15). God says, “Repay no one evil for evil ... If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12: 17, 18, 21).

Notice that in Romans 12: 18 above, the verse says, “...If it is possible, as much as depends on you”. This means that even after you have done everything you can, it is not always possible to achieve reconciliation with someone else. Reconciliation is not to be achieved at the expense of your integrity or Christian principles.

If the other party remains recalcitrant, all you can do is to continue to pray, but then move on and let God’s grace do the rest. The key is that in your heart, you know you have acted in love and true forgiveness. The rest is up to God in His love and supreme wisdom.

John Bevere concludes: "If we keep the love of God as our motivation, we will not fail. Love never fails. When we love others the way Jesus loves us, we will be free even if the other person chooses not to be reconciled to us.

"The love of God is the key to freedom from the baited trap of offence. This must be an abounding love, a love that continuously grows and is strengthened in our hearts ... when we walk in this kind of love, we cannot be seduced into taking the bait of Satan."