

- **In His parable in Matthew 18 (after 18:7!) Jesus emphasizes the consequences of unforgiveness:**
- Talent = 75 lb, 10,000 talents = 375 tons, gold (today) = \$375/oz, one servant owed \$4.5 billion!
- Denarius = labourers daily wage, 100 denarii = 100 x \$40 (today), other servant owed \$4000.
- One servant owed one-third of a year's wage; the other owed more than he could earn in a lifetime.
- The unforgiving servant was turned over to torturers (experiencing pain of body and mind) and had to pay the original impossible debt (forfeiting salvation). Jesus said the same happens to believers!

Matthew 6:14-15 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*



Faith

Under Fire



The Life of Joseph

A Midweek Bible Study Series

Part One – You Meant It For Evil

Genesis 37:19-20 ¹⁹*And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. ²⁰Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.*

- **JOSEPH'S STORY:** He did nothing wrong, but was persecuted and hated by his own brothers to the point that they sold him into slavery!
- The Bible teaches that believers will have various kinds of problems here on earth.
 - **John 16:33 (NLT)** *Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*
- Some of these trials will be regular problems that are common to the whole human family.
 - **Matthew 5:45 (NLT)** *For [God] gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too.*
- Other problems are specific to Christians, attacks sent from the enemy to discourage us.
 - **1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)** *Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour.*
- But the problems that we find hardest to understand, cope with, and overcome are problems that have to do with our BRETHREN!
 - **Psalms 55:12-14** ¹²*For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: ¹³But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. ¹⁴We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*

- The Bible calls this type of problem an OFFENSE. The Greek word "skandalon" means "a stumbling block," "something that causes one to fall," "something contrary to expectations that brings disappointment," or "the trigger of a trap."
 - **Luke 17:1** *Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!*
- OFFENSE is like the bait in a trap – it is harmless unless we feed on it. But it is deadly when it is consumed!
- It is a fact of human nature that the closer the relationship, the more severe the offense (most vicious legal cases – divorces). That is why problems among brethren can be so severe!
- Jesus said it is IMPOSSIBLE to live in this life and not have the opportunity to be offended! The question is not "Will you encounter this trap?" but "How will you respond to it?"
- One of the signs of the end time is that many will be offended!
 - **Matthew 24:10-13** *¹⁰And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ¹²And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*
- Notice that Jesus warns of false prophets immediately after His prophecy of many being offended. He called false prophets "wolves" (Matthew 7:15) because they prey on wounded and young sheep, not strong and healthy ones. False prophets tell people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. Offended people are easy prey!
- Strong cities of ancient times had WALLS around them as their assurance of protection. They kept unwelcome inhabitants and invaders out; all entrants were screened. Those owing taxes were not allowed in until they paid. Those considered a threat to the city's health or safety were kept out.
 - **Proverbs 18:19** *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their 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 in full.
- EVENTUALLY, OUR WALLS OF PROTECTION BECOME A PRISON. At that point, we are not only cautious about who comes in, but so in terror of future injuries that we cannot venture outside our fortress.
- If left unchecked, offense will turn into bitterness.
 - **Hebrews 12:15** *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*
- If roots are nursed, watered, protected, fed and given attention, they increase in depth and strength.
- If not dealt with quickly, roots are hard to pull up. As the offense grows, many people are corrupted.
- Francis Frangipane: "Bitterness is unfulfilled revenge."
- IMAGINE HOW DIFFERENT JOSEPH'S STORY WOULD HAVE BEEN IF HE HAD YIELDED TO THE SIN OF OFFENSE! But Joseph refused to let another's sin affect his relationship with God!
- Joseph lost all his INHERITANCE and FREEDOM, but still had the right to choose his RESPONSE. He chose to FORGIVE!
- If Joseph had been offended he would later have killed his brothers – when he could have REHEARSED his offence, he chose to REVERSE it!
- **Joseph's perspective: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20)**
- Joseph let God settle the balances, instead of trying to do it himself!
- During his trials, Joseph could not see that his offenses were preparing him to rule and would result in his family's salvation!
- If Joseph had yielded to bitterness and killed his brothers, we would not be saved! (Judah was the ancestor of Jesus Christ!)
- FORGIVENESS is the only cure for OFFENSE. When we forgive, we release the power of God to bring good out of a bad situation!
 - **Romans 8:28** *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*
- We often assign blame – "If it weren't for _____, then I _____." **My disappointment is their fault."**
- But absolutely no man or devil can get you out of the will of God! Only you can thwart the will of God in your life – by getting offended!