



UNOFFENDABLE

(Supplement lesson to WK5 Lesson 21 and Inner Healing)

AN IMMATURE CHRISTIAN IS HARD TO PLEASE AND EASY TO OFFEND

Read Matthew 24:10-13, Luke 17:1-4

How to become Un-offendable - by Francis Frangipane

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

God has a new heart for us that cannot be offended, an "un-offendable" heart. Possessing an un-offendable heart is not an option or a luxury; it's not a little thing. An offended heart is in danger of becoming a "heart of stone."

Consider: Jesus warns that, as we near the end of the age, most people will be offended to such a degree that they fall away from the faith. Listen carefully to His warning:

"Then many will be offended, and will betray one another, and will hate one another . . . and because lawlessness (sin) will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:10-12 NKJV).

"Many" will "be offended." The result? The love of "many" will grow cold. My prayer is that we will hear His words with holy fear.

When we allow an offense to remain in our hearts, it causes serious spiritual consequences. In the above verse Jesus named three dangerous results: betrayal, hatred and cold love. When we are offended with someone, even someone we care for, we must go to them. *If we do not talk to them, we will begin to talk about them.* We betray that relationship, whispering maliciously behind their back to others, exposing their weaknesses and sins. We may mask our betrayal by saying we are just looking for advice or counsel, but when we look back, we see we have spoken negatively to far too many people. Our real goal was not to get spiritual help for ourselves but to seek revenge toward the one who offended us. How is such action not a manifestation of hatred? For an offended soul, cold love, betrayal and hatred are a walk into darkness.

People don't stumble over boulders; they stumble over stones, relatively small things. It may be that the personality of someone in authority bothers us, and soon we are offended. Or, a friend or family member fails to meet our expectations, and we take an offense into our soul. If we will "endure to the end," we will have to confront the things that bother us.

When Jesus warns that we need endurance, He is saying that it is easier to begin the race than finish it. Between now and the day you die, there will be major times of offense that you will need to overcome. You might be in such a time right now. Do not minimize the danger of harboring an offense!

No one plans on falling away; no one ever says, "Today, I think I'll try to develop a hardened heart of stone." Such things enter our souls through stealth. It is only naiveté that assumes it couldn't happen to

us. I know many people who consistently become offended about one thing or another. Instead of dealing with the offenses, praying about them and turning the issue over to God, they carry the offense in their soul until its weight disables their walk with God. You may be doing fine today, but I guarantee you, tomorrow something will happen that will inevitably disappoint or wound you; some injustice will strike you, demanding you retaliate in the flesh. Will you find more love, and hence, continue your growth toward Christlikeness? Or will you allow that offense to consume your spiritual life?

The Root of Offense: An offense can strike at our virtues or sins, our values or our pride. It can penetrate and wound any dimension of the soul, both good and evil. I once brought a series of messages about gossip. Most people saw their sin and repented, but a core group of gossips were greatly offended and ultimately left the church. When the Holy Spirit exposes sin in someone's soul, if we refuse the opportunity to repent, we often become offended at the person who brought the teaching. Instead of humbling our hearts, we are outraged at the person who exposed us. Truthfully, most of the time, I have no idea who specifically needs to hear what I'm teaching, but God knows.

Paul told Timothy to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" (see 2 Tim. 4:2). He didn't say, "exhort, exhort, exhort," but exhortation is what we receive in most churches. Certainly, we need to be encouraged, but there are also times, beloved, when we need to be reprovved and rebuked. Today, there are preachers who are afraid to preach truth for fear people will react and leave the church. The end result is a church of easily offended people who cannot grow beyond their inability to accept correction.

People don't change by exhortation alone. There are areas in all of us that need to be confronted and disciplined. The pastor who refuses to discipline and correct those in sin is in disobedience to God. He is unable to lead people into any truly transforming changes in their lives; they will not "endure to the end" if they cannot be corrected (see Matt. 24).

We need to become a people who say, "Lord, show me what needs to change in me." I'm talking about growing up. A wise man will receive a rebuke and he will prosper. But a fool rejects his father's discipline (see Prov. 15:5).

Personal Offense: It is often our pride that suffers offense most easily. Pride leads us to expect more than we deserve. Pride is a form of self-worship. God must destroy our pride, and to do so, He will allow offenses to expose what we lack in humility. It is not wrong to expect encouragement for our good works, but we cannot be offended when it doesn't happen in the timing we are expecting.

Years ago when I was a young pastor, I attended a conference where the main leader decided to personally greet each minister and spouse. He greeted the couple on our right and then turned to his staff to ask a question. A moment later he returned, but passed us by and went to the couple on our left. Everyone around us saw we were bypassed. We were embarrassed and offended. But my wife wisely observed that we could allow this thing to hurt us or we could see it as an investment in sensitivity toward other people's feelings. The offense taught us how others feel when they are ignored. Do you see this? You must make that offense become an opportunity to become more Christ like.

The occasions for taking offense are practically endless. Indeed, we are daily given the opportunity to either be offended by something or to possess an unoffendable heart. The Lord's promise is that He's given us a new heart - a soft, entreat-able heart that can be filled with His Spirit and abound with His love.

Lord, forgive me for being so easily offended and for carrying offenses. Father, my heart is foolish and weak. Grant me the unoffendable heart of Jesus Christ. Amen.