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Refuse To Be Offended



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Refuse To Be Offended," Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of refusing offense to maintain healthy relationships between people. He argues that refusing offense requires wisdom, discretion, and the fruit of the spirit, including love. Gregg believes that forgiveness and restoration are crucial aspects of relationships, but trust should only be restored if repentance is present. He encourages Christians to maintain a low view of themselves and a high view of God's sovereignty by adopting an attitude of refusing offense.

Transcript

The name of the message, if I were to give it a name, actually I've debated with myself as to various names I would give this message, but it's traditionally been called Refuse To Be Offended. I first gave this message over 15 years ago at our school in Bandon, when I was directing a school there. And it happened on a night, a Friday night, that I was teaching through the life of Christ in Louvre.

And I had come to Luke chapter 17, and as I prepared in the afternoon before teaching that night, it was just really a verse-by-verse treatment through the life of Christ I was going through. But in this particular case, the 10 verses that fell to me to talk about that night seemed to me to cohere with one another in such a way as to contribute to an understanding of one topic. As I read these verses, you may not immediately see how it is that these 10 verses all speak about one topic.

And that's where I come in. I'm the teacher, right? So I'll read the verses, and then I'll tell you what these said to me, and what I have shared with others about them. Luke chapter 17, verses 1 through 10.

Then he said to the disciples, And seven times in a day returns to you, saying, I repent, you shall forgive him. And the apostles said to the Lord, increase our faith. So the Lord said, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you.

And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he

has come in from the field, come at once and sit down to eat. But will he not rather say to him, prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants.

We have done what was our duty to do. Implying we have not done anything more than what was our duty to do. We receive no special thanks or congratulations because all we did we were required to do, and it's no great sacrifice to us to do what we're required to do.

Now, what do these verses have in common? At first glance they seem to be four different discussions. He first talks in the first two verses about not offending people, and how important it is not to do so, and how much is at stake. If you offend one of these little ones, it would be better for you to have been thrown in the sea with a millstone necklace than to have that happen.

Okay, well, fair warning. We're not supposed to be offending people unnecessarily. Then he seems to have a different subject on his mind.

In verses three and four he talks about forgiving people if they sin against you. How to deal with that, how to confront them, and if they repent to forgive them. And to do it no matter how many times they do it, even seven times in one day.

And then the subject seems to change by the disciples' initiation. The disciples say, Lord, increase our faith. And so he makes a comment about the great things that are possible to accomplish through faith.

And then, seemingly without rhyme or reason, he changes the subject altogether and talks about servants. And about how little it is that servants expect to be congratulated or to be thanked for what they do, because it is in the mind of the servant that he is there to serve. And when he serves, he's not doing any exceptional thing.

Now, what do these four sections have to do with each other, if anything? I would start out by saying that Luke's gospel, more than the others, it seems to me, does occasionally throw events and sayings of Jesus together in an arrangement that doesn't seem all that connected. It seems to me like Matthew and Mark do this less than Luke does. And it's possible that these four sections I just identified are not intended to be connected the way that I think they are.

They may just be isolated cases. But to my mind, they all weave together to contribute to our understanding of one very essential matter. And the matter has to do with taking offense or being offended.

Now, let me identify what I'm talking about here. Because in the passage we read, I found the word in verse 1, offenses. That's a noun.

And in verse 2, the word offend, which is a verb, obviously very closely related to each other. The Greek word for offenses, the noun is skandalon, and the verb is skandalizo, to offend. And you may have Bibles that translate these words differently than what I read.

I think the New American Standard, for example, if anyone has that one. Anyone have the New American Standard here? Okay, you do. Probably the word offenses and the word offend are not found there, but rather the word stumbling blocks and stumble.

These words skandalon and skandalizo in the Greek can be translated stumbling blocks and stumble also. But it depends on context. In some places, they really mean to offend somebody.

In other places, they mean to stumble them so that they fall in sin. There's some reason to believe that in the first instance where he says that if you stumble, one of these ones who believe you should be thrown in the sea with a millstone necklace, that he might mean if you stumble them in the sense that they fall and cease to be believers and make them sin. And for that reason, the New American Standard and some others have translated it as stumbling blocks.

But I'm going to go with the translation as it is here. Offend is a good translation, and it has, well, frankly, it suits my purposes better to take it that way. The most important thing in the Christian life is relationship.

Our relationship with God, of course, is primary, but our relationship with people is secondary and not very far below the first. In fact, the two are very interrelated with each other. It says in 1 John, no man can love God whom he has not seen if he has not loved his brother whom he has seen.

Or Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 that if you bring your gift to the altar, that is to worship God in the temple, and you there remember that your brother has something against you, you leave your gift there and go back and make peace with your brother and then come off your gift. Obviously, Jesus is saying that before you offer your worship to God, you need to make sure that you've done all that you should do in terms of keeping your relationship with your brother proper. It's obvious that though God, when Jesus asked what the great commandment is, the first one he said was love the Lord your God with all your soul, mind, and strength.

And he said the others like it. Love your neighbors yourself. He did mention loving God first.

I do suppose that is the one that has priority. But you can't really love God without also loving his kids. He that loves him that begat loves him also who is begotten of him.

It says in 1 John 5, if you love the father, you love his children. If you love God, you love his people. And therefore, we can't separate these two.

And these are the things that are all important to God, that we love him and that we love each other. That is that our relationship with him is what it should be. And our relationship with each other is what it should be.

Now, I say all that to introduce this topic of offenses because it is my observation thus far in my life. It may be that someday I'll see more clearly and have to revise this statement. But it is my observation that there is one thing and only one thing that damages relationships between people.

Only one thing. If there are people with whom you were once in a positive relationship and you are no longer in a positive relationship with them, but rather you're in a bitter or resentful or otherwise tainted or negative relationship, there has been one thing present, I will guarantee you. Now, you might say, well, the one thing present was sin.

Obviously, it's sin that breaks up relationships. Well, yes, in a way that's true. However, a person can sin against you and you could still love them.

In fact, there's a sense in which they could even love you again if they've sinned against you. And your relationship can exist even if there has been sin. I don't recommend sin in relationships.

Sin does damage relationships, but only when it is accompanied by this other ingredient. And that is an offense. Only an offense can cause relationships to break down or deteriorate.

I've not found any exceptions to this. Sometimes there are people who you haven't seen for a long time, but the last time you saw them, you were on good terms. But you haven't seen them or heard from them for years.

And finally, they call you there in town, they want to come by, and they meet you at the door. And you realize you're not really sure what they've been doing the last five years, and they don't know about you and so forth, but still there's no offense taken. It doesn't take long after you spend an hour or two talking with them that your relationship is back up to speed and it's as if there's been no time lapse.

The relationship did not really deteriorate by the passage of time. However, if, because they have not contacted you in the past two years, you have become offended, I thought, why haven't they contacted me? They should have called. They should have written.

They have abandoned me. And if you've taken offense, then the relationship has deteriorated. Because of the offense, not because of the silence, not because of the time

gap.

Only the offense causes the relationship to deteriorate. Now, there are some people I've encountered who seem to like to be offended. It's something I do not understand.

I have never liked to be offended. As a matter of fact, I consider to be offended to be a very unpleasant state of mind. I'd rather be happy, frankly, and therefore I'd rather not be offended.

But some people seem to feel that being offended is the one thing that keeps them going. And they remember everything anyone's ever done to them, offensive. And they harbor it in their heart and they nurture a seed, a root of bitterness.

And, of course, it damages all their relationships. These are people who never really learn to forgive anybody. There are people who remember all the bad things and forget the good things.

Which, by the way, is the opposite of what a healthy mind generally does. Do you know that healthy minds typically remember the positive things and tend to, you know, drop off the unpleasant negative things. But when a mind is so structured that it tends to remember only the offenses and only the resentments and only the negative things and tends to forget the good things, that mind is not in a healthy condition.

It's certainly not in a Christian state of mind. But I, you know, I didn't learn, even though I didn't like being offended, I didn't learn until some years ago that I don't have to be offended. That I can refuse to be offended.

In other words, Jesus said it's inevitable that offenses should come. He said it's impossible that there would be no offenses. You are not going to live your life in a world where people don't do offensive things.

You live in a world where people always do offensive things. Whether it's the way they drive, the traffic around you, whether it's friends who are not sensitive to what you expect of them and they don't meet your expectations, whether it's people who actually bad mouth you or sin against you or gossip against you, all kinds of things happen. It's going to happen.

Offenses will come. Jesus said it's impossible that that would not be so. However, that's only half the picture.

People will offer you offense, but you don't have to take it. You are not required to take offense, even if people want you to. Even if people desire to make you angry, you don't have to get angry.

It is possible for you to refuse the offense when it's offered to you and to be

unoffendable. Now, I don't want to misrepresent myself here. I don't want to seem holier than thou.

I have been, on occasion, offended. But it's my fault. I didn't have to be.

I just was. The fact of the matter is I'm not very easily offended because I don't like to be offended. I'd just as soon not be.

And as soon as I learned many years ago that it's my choice to be offended or not, it was good news. It was good news to me. I'd say, oh, great, I don't enjoy being offended.

I'm glad that it's not mandatory. You know, this is optional here. But it's not only optional in the sense that I don't have to do it.

Biblically, I have to not do it. If I'm to walk as Jesus walked, I need to be not offended. Now, I'm going to go through these verses in Luke in a few minutes, but let me show you some verses elsewhere first.

If you look at Proverbs chapter 19, Proverbs 19 and verse 11, there's three verses in the book of Proverbs here in different chapters I'd like to show you, and they're all related to each other, as you'll see. They overlap each other in their terminology. And in Proverbs 19, 11, Solomon writes, the discretion of a man, that means his wisdom, a person's wisdom or his discretion, makes him slow to anger.

Now, let me just, before I read further, slow to anger. That means he's not thin-skinned. He's not touchy.

He's not, doesn't have a short fuse. It's hard to get a rise out of him. He's slow to anger.

He may eventually become angry, but he's slow. God gets angry too. The Bible talks about the wrath of God, but he's slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, it says in Psalm 103.

To be like God, we need to be slow to anger. Now, let me just say this before I read on. Taking offense is a function of anger.

If somebody does something offensive to you, if you don't get angry at any level, you don't take offense. It is only as there is anger present that there is offense present. In fact, what we call an offense or being offended is really just another name for a low grade of anger or resentment towards somebody who's done something aggravating to us or that we think they have or have neglected to do something we thought they should do for us.

But we've gotten offended. We're angry. Well, this is very relevant to our topic.

The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger. And notice the other part. And his

glory is to overlook a transgression.

It is your glory. It is to your credit. It is honorable.

It shows you have discretion and you're wise. If you do what? If you overlook a transgression. That doesn't mean overlook your transgressions.

When you do transgressions, you've got to face those squarely and repent them. You need to confess them. It's not about transgressions committed against you.

Somebody does something against you, they transgress against you. That's just the kind of thing that's likely to make you want to get offended. But it's your glory to overlook it.

It's your choice. That was such good news to me to find that out. I have the choice.

I can do an honorable thing, more honorable than the other thing. And the more honorable thing is I don't have to retaliate. I don't have to hold it against them.

I don't have to be angry or offended. I can just overlook it. I can absorb the injury and not feel badly about it.

Now, there's more to it than that, but that's a beginning. Look now at Proverbs 16, 32. We're going to work backward here and then forward again.

Proverbs 16, 32. He who is slow to anger. Ah, we saw that phrase in the verse we just read in Chapter 19.

So we see there's an overlap in subject matter between these two verses. We saw in Chapter 19, 11, the discretion of man makes him slow to anger. Now, here he is again.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes the city. Now, in the poetic parallelism of the passage, the man who's slow to anger is the same man who rules his spirit. A man who does that is more to be commended and more honorable than a man who can conquer a city.

If he can rule his spirit, and he can say, No, spirit, don't get angry, and he can subdue his anger in a godly way, that is more of an accomplishment than for a general to conquer a city or to be a mighty warrior. Okay, so again, these two verses tell us it's an honorable thing to overlook a transgression. It's a mark of discretion and greatness to be slow to anger, which is also referred to as ruling your spirit.

One other verse in Proverbs, Chapter 25 and 28. You'll see immediately this one overlaps with the other two as well. Proverbs 25, 28, Whoever has no rule over his own spirit, now there's the overlap.

We just talked about the man who rules his spirit. He's the man who's slow to anger.

Here's the man who isn't slow to anger.

Here's the man who does not rule his spirit. He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls. What is that comparison trying to communicate? In those days where cities were protected by walls from invaders, what would a city broken down without walls, what's its condition? It's vulnerable to invasion.

It has no defenses. It is destined to be ruled by outsiders. And the person who has no rule over his own city, over his own heart, is like a city broken down without walls.

That is, he is destined to be ruled by others. He won't rule himself, so others will rule him. I think about this in this connection.

It occurred to me when I was really quite young about this. When somebody had done something aggravating toward me, I don't remember what it was or who they were now, it was a long time ago, but I remember this thought pattern coming to my mind. I thought, okay, there's two possibilities here.

This person who did this aggravating thing, this injustice, this sin against me as I perceived it, that person either did it on purpose or they did not do it on purpose. I can't think of a third alternative. They meant it or they didn't mean it.

No third alternatives. Those are the two possibilities. They did something that bugged me.

Either they didn't mean to do it and they did it accidentally, it was an oversight, they were insensitive, and they totally meant no harm, or else they did mean harm and they really did want to bug me. Now I thought, what should my response be in these two cases? Let's take the scenario that they had no idea that what they did was going to bother me. Maybe I'm a little hypersensitive about something and they had no idea that what they said would kind of go against me or kind of jar me the wrong way or whatever.

Well, it would be rather small-minded of me, even if I were not a Christian, to insist on being offended by that which was done accidentally by someone else. I mean, you certainly don't want people to take offense and hold grudges against you for things you didn't even know you did. Right? I mean, I just realized that a Christian, or for that matter, even a non-Christian, should never be so small-minded that if a person didn't mean to offend you, you decide to be offended anyway.

So I thought, okay, one possibility is this person didn't intend to offend me. If that's the case, then I should simply not be offended. It would be very carnal and stupid of me to be offended and very unfair of me to be offended in that case.

The other possibility is they really did want to offend me. They really did want to get a rise out of me. They really did want to stick it to me.

What then? Well, do I want to give them what they wanted? Do I want to give them the satisfaction of knowing that they can get my goat anything they wanted? By the way, we do have goats, and they can have them any time they want them, as far as I'm concerned. But they're my wife's goats. But I'll tell you what, it was Will Rogers.

Will Rogers is not a Christian, but he was kind of a cowboy comedian philosopher, one of the most quoted guys in American folklore or whatever. Will Rogers, I think, was the one who said, I am at the mercy of any man who can make me lose my temper. Isn't that interesting? I am at the mercy of any man who can make me lose my temper.

Now, can you see immediately that that is true? I don't want to be an angry person. If I have no choice but to be angry when so-and-so decides that he wants to make me angry, then I'm in big trouble. If I don't have a rule over my own spirit, then someone else is going to control my spirit.

And why should somebody control my spirit other than me, and especially someone who's not friendly toward me? I mean, if anyone had to control my spirit besides me, I'd prefer it to be someone on my side. But why should someone who wants to aggravate me, why should I let them? Why should I give them the pleasure? Why should I surrender the rule of my spirit and say, Okay, you determine what my inner climate is going to be like for a while. I'd be totally at the mercy of that person.

I'd be like a city broken down without walls, and anyone could just walk in and have their way with my spirit. No thanks. I realized that these are the only two possibilities.

See, the person who offends me tried to or didn't try to. They knew they did or they didn't know they did. In either case, I shouldn't be offended.

If they didn't mean it, it'd be quite unfair for me to be offended. If they did mean it, it'd be quite unwise for me to be offended. And therefore, in every case, I shouldn't be offended.

No other alternatives around. Now, not being offended, however, is not a function of being apathetic. Some people, I think, even worldly people, never seem to take offense.

They're thick-skinned. You can say whatever you want, and they don't get ever upset. But I suspect it's because they're apathetic.

If you don't care about someone at all, then you hardly care what they think of you. They can insult you and say, Well, coming from you, that's a compliment. I don't care what you think about me.

Apathy is not what this is about. It's not about getting to a place where you just don't have any feelings anymore, no sensitivities, nothing bothers you in any way. This is about love.

This is about coming to the place where you're walking in the Spirit of God and the fruit of the Spirit is love, and you're walking so consistently that even you love your enemies. So that Jesus said, You don't hate your enemies. You do good to him who persecutes you.

You love him who hates you. You bless him who curses you. This is simply a description of what it means to be seamlessly loving, not only to your friends, but also to your enemies.

Now, it is this love that calls forth this refusal to take offense. It says in 1 Corinthians 13, which is a whole chapter about love, but in 1 Corinthians 13, verse 5, it says, Love is not provoked. Ever been provoked? What's the difference in that and being offended? If somebody does something to me that is potentially an offensive act, I'll either let it provoke me or not.

And if I'm provoked, what am I provoked to? To offendedness. I'm provoked to be offended. I should be unprovocable if I'm loving.

Love is not provoked. In fact, it says the same thing another way over in 1 John 2.10, where it says that he that loves his brother abides in the light, or walks in the light, and there's no occasion of stumbling in him. Now, this suggests that because I love my brother, I'm not in the dark.

I'm in the light. Therefore, if there's stumbling blocks around, I'm going to miss and I won't stumble. But the word stumbling is the same word as offense.

There's no occasion of offense in me. That is, if I'm the one who's not going to stumble because I love, it means I'm not going to be offended when I love. If I love my brother, if I love my neighbor, then there's nothing left in me to get offended.

There's no occasion of offense in me because love is not provoked. Now, get back, if you would, to Luke 17. I'm going to have to wind this up and real quickly summarize what I understand going on here.

As I said, the first four verses seem to encompass two different subjects. The first two appear to be talking about the importance of not offending other people or stumbling other people. The next two have to do with forgiving people when they sin against you.

These are not two separate subjects. This is one discussion of your need to know what to do about offenses. Now, it starts out by just saying it's impossible that no offenses should come.

He's warning his disciples about this. You're going to encounter them. There will be people who will offer you offense.

They will sin against you. They will, you know, do things that irritate you, even if maybe not technically sin, but they will offer you occasions of offense. Now, before he tells you what to do about that, he gives an aside and says, make sure you're not one of those people who give it.

He wants those disciples not to take offense, but before he gets to that, he parenthetically says, make sure that you're, by the way, not the one who's offending the other person. I want to warn you about what to do when offenses come your way, but let me just say this. The person who brings offenses is in a heap of trouble, and make sure you're not that person, and you're not in that heap, because that heap, you know, is that millstone around the neck and go in the sea.

So there's that aside there. Don't be the one who offers offense unnecessarily to others. Now, preaching the gospel is an offense to some people.

There's the offense of the cross. That's not what he's talking about. You can't help it if people are offended by your faithfulness to Christ, but we're talking about offending people the way most people get offended, by wronging them, by doing something that they recognize you did an injustice to them, you sinned against them, you did not treat them right.

Don't do that, okay? But having said that, back to this business of the offenses that are going to come your way. He says in verse 3, take heed to yourselves. Why? Because offenses are going to come to you.

It's inevitable. Offenses will be presented to you, but watch your own heart. Watch your own spirit.

Take heed to your own self. What do you do when somebody offers you offense? Now, when I talk about offering you offense, what I'm saying is they do something against you that you would be prone to maybe get angry about or offended about. What do you do? Well, he said, if your brother sins against you, which is just the kind of thing that would offend you, he says, go to him.

Talk to him about it. He says, rebuke him. The word rebuke sounds a little harsh to our ears perhaps, but we know that he didn't mean be harsh with him because it says over in Galatians 6, 1, brethren, if any of you are overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.

See, someone sins against you, it's not out of antagonism that you lash out in a rebuke. It's out of love for him and the knowledge that his sin is going to hurt him more than it's going to hurt you because you don't have to be hurt by it at all. You don't have to take offense.

But he is nonetheless doing that which earns him the millstone award and a short, a long walk on a short period. Now, that is bad for him. And because you care about your brother, even your enemy, you go to him in the spirit of meekness and you go to restore such a one, it says in Galatians 6, 1. So that's what this rebuke is.

And it says, and if he repents, you forgive him. Now, he doesn't talk about what happens if he doesn't repent. That's another scenario.

Well, that scenario is taken up, of course, in chapter 18 of Matthew. If your brother sins, you talk to him. If he doesn't take it, you go with two.

If he doesn't take it, you go with the church. If he doesn't hear the church, he's out. I mean, Jesus handles all the scenarios, you know, if he repents or if he doesn't.

If he does, which if he's a real Christian brother, ideally he will, you forgive him. Now, what if he repeats the offense after you forgive him? Well, Jesus covers that too, seven times in one day. Same offense, seven times it says I repent.

Don't you think you begin to think, yeah, you repent. I think you said that six times before. This is the seventh time you did this, you know.

Yeah, there's some repentance. I mean, there is such a thing as not being gullible about somebody's repentance. At the same time, you need to make sure that you're not carrying any offense from the previous times.

That would make you less inclined to forgive him this time if there's any evidence that he's truly repenting again at this point. You forgive him again. What Jesus is saying is this is what you do instead of getting offended.

Now, forgiveness can be offered to the person without rebuking him. But that's a different phase of forgiveness. Because Jesus said over in Mark 11 25, he says, when you stand praying, forgive if you have an offense against anyone, if you have ought against anyone.

Forgive so that your heavenly father may forgive you your trespasses. Now, when he says, when you stand there praying, forgive, it seems to me that you're praying and then suddenly you remember, oh, yeah, boy, I really have something against that guy. Well, Jesus said, forgive him.

He doesn't say go to him, rebuke him, get him to repent. He says, forgive him. Right there on the spot, instant forgiveness.

That should be possible to do if you have the love of Christ in you. But then once you do that, what's the point of rebuking him like Jesus says over in this passage? One place, he says, do it automatically, instantly. The other passage says, well, you go work it out.

Why? Because there's two aspects of forgiveness. There's the part that's in your heart and there's the part that's in the relationship. The part that's in your heart has to do with your ability to love that person.

You must be willing to love them even when they aren't interested in being loved. God so loved the world. Most of the world doesn't care.

But God loves them anyway. When the people crucified Jesus, they didn't all repent. But Jesus said, Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. Jesus, in his own heart, and Stephen, when he was being stoned, said, Father, do not lay this sin to their charge. The forgiving heart of the man who might have been offended but wasn't, he forgave instantly out of love for his enemies.

To forgive instantly and automatically is a function of your love for the person. Now, this other thing of going to them and confronting them and getting them to repent and forgiving them, that's another step, and it has to do with the restoration of the relationship. Because relationships are not built on love.

They're not based on love. The foundation of a relationship is trust. Do you know that you can have a trusting relationship with someone you don't love very much? Couples do it all the time.

They don't love each other anymore, but they still know that they made promises to each other and they're going to keep them, so they have a marriage. I mean, it would be nice if they learned to love each other again, but a marriage exists even after the love is gone because there's trust. When one breaks trust and is unfaithful, that's the end, or at least potentially the end.

It's trust that relationships are built on, not love. Your love for that person is essential because God wants you to love them and they need to be loved, but God also wants you to be able to trust them again, but you can't unless they repent. If they've stabbed you in the back and you don't know but that they might want to do it again, you're not going to turn your back to them again.

But if they stabbed you in the back and you said, hey, by the way, do you know you stabbed me in the back? Oh, my goodness, is that my knife? I'm so sorry. I was so clumsy. I didn't mean that at all.

I didn't really want to do that. I'm so sorry. Or if they say, I did mean it, but I was in a bad state of mind and I've changed.

I really believe that was the wrong thing I did. Please forgive me. If they repent, then what can you do? Well, you can turn your back on them again.

You can trust them a little more again, maybe a little less than before, but not entirely. The fact of the matter is forgiveness at one level is unilateral and unconditional. God's forgiveness for the world in that sense is unilateral.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their offenses against him, not their trespasses against him. It's a glory to God to overlook a trespass. His love for mankind is unconditional, but the relationship with mankind is conditional upon them repenting because he can't trust them if they don't trust him.

And so people aren't actually saved, don't experience the benefits of forgiveness unless they repent. Though God in his heart is disposed to forgive them all. So that's the Christian's attitude.

A person does something to me in my heart instantly. I should forgive them. I should remember that they are.

I'm no better than they are. As they have offended me, I've offended others. You know, it's probably a blind spot on their part, but even if they did on purpose, it must have been a weak moment.

They're a victim of the same enemy I'm a victim of, the devil. You know, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. It's the enemy out there.

I need to love them and see them as a fellow victim of the same enemy rather than see them as the enemy. And so I refuse to be offended. Now, it may be necessary for the sake of the relationship.

Even though I'm not offended, I may realize now I've got some new information. This person can't be trusted. I need to go to them for the sake of restoration of that and confront them and ask them to repent.

Now, I've got to wind this up, but let me just say, what about those other two past sections of Luke 17 there? There's the section about faith and there's a section about the servant attitude. What do those have to do with this subject? Well, faith, which is spoken of in verses 5 and 6, is nothing else but having a high opinion of God. Did you know that? That's all it is.

Faith isn't some kind of mystical power or substance that you've got a lot of it or a little bit of it or something. Faith just means you have a high opinion of God. You make a positive judgment of God.

He's reliable. I judge God to be reliable. That's what it says about Sarah in Hebrews 11 and 11.

It says, by faith, Sarah received strength to conceive seed when she was past age

because she judged him faithful who had promised. That's what faith is. It's judging him faithful.

If you believe God, it just means you've made a judgment of God, that you judge him to be faithful. If you don't believe God, you've made a judgment of God that he's not faithful. He that believeth not has made him a liar, it says in the first John.

You know, faith is nothing else but making a judgment of God. Do I judge him to be faithful? Well, if I do, I'm going to trust him effortlessly. I trust everybody effortlessly that I believe to be faithful.

But if I'm not so sure someone's faithful, I think they might be a little dishonest, then I don't trust them effortlessly. In fact, I can't even trust them with great effort. I'd be stupid to.

It's wrong to trust someone who's not trustworthy. Faith isn't some kind of an accomplishment. Faith is just what you have toward a person that you know is trustworthy.

It just happens. And faith is something you can't have toward someone you know is not trustworthy. Well, faith in God is making a high moral judgment of God's faithfulness.

The other passage, I'm going to tell you how that fits in here in a moment. The other passage about the servant has to do with having a low opinion of oneself. The servant in this parable is a slave.

Slaves were not very well treated in the Roman Empire, just like they weren't very well treated in this country. Slaves were badly treated. And masters often took advantage of them and made them overwork.

And they didn't consider their needs and their sensitivities that much. They didn't need to. They had the legal right to abuse these people.

But the slave, what does he think about? Does he get offended? No. He says, I've been working all day. I've served this guy.

And he doesn't even thank me. Can you believe it? He didn't even thank me for all I did. Jesus says, does that slave expect to be thanked? No, he doesn't expect to be thanked.

He knows he's a slave. He knows what he's supposed to do. He knows he's done nothing more than what's required of him.

Why should he get any special congratulations? Now, this is not a teaching about how people should treat their slaves. This is a teaching about how we should consider ourselves to be God's slaves. And once we've done everything he wants us to do, we should say, I'm an unprofitable slave.

I've only done my duty and nothing more. I don't receive any congratulations or deserve any. Nor do I have anything to gripe about.

What do I really deserve? If you're a Christian, you know what you really deserve. You deserve to go to hell. You deserve to go to hell.

Now, the only time you'll ever get offended by anybody is if you think they gave you worse than what you deserve. You ever heard of anyone get offended when someone gave them better than what they deserve? Have you ever been offended by anyone who treated you just the way you thought they should treat you? No, you don't get offended by that. You only get offended by people who treat you worse than you think you deserve to be treated.

Why else would you be offended? But can anyone treat you worse than you deserve? Yes, they can do to you something that is worse than what they ought to do to you. You may have done kindness to them and they return kindness for evil. But can you in the final analysis really end up receiving in this life a lot that's worse than what you deserve? Not if you're saved, you can't, because you deserve to go to hell.

If you're not going to hell, if you were abused every minute of every day for a hundred years and you died and went to heaven, you got better than what you deserved. Right? Because you deserve to go to hell. So, the servant doesn't talk about my rights and what I deserve, and, oh, they cheated me and they didn't treat me well and they owed me a phone call and they should have paid me on time and they didn't pay me on time.

I mean, all these things that offend. I say, well, I'm just a miserable servant. Not miserable, I'm unprofitable.

I'm just a servant. I'm not getting worse than what I deserve. In fact, I'm probably not even getting worse than what I've dished out to others if the truth were known.

Having a low opinion of oneself and a high opinion of God is the cure for being easily offended. Because if you have a high opinion of God, you see the sovereignty of God in everything. Joseph's brother sold him into slavery.

That's offensive. Potiphar's wife lied and sent him to prison for a few years. That's offensive.

Later, he had the opportunity to do something about these people. In fact, his brothers came and were at his mercy. And what did he say? They were afraid that he was going to retaliate.

Was he offended? Apparently not. He said, am I in the place of God? He says, you intended evil against me. Now, that's the kind of thing you get offended about, isn't it, when people intend evil against you? He says, well, you intended evil against me, but

God meant it for good.

He didn't see them as even significant players. He saw that God works all things together for good to those who love him. And if you have faith in that fact, then nobody else is anything more than an instrument that God uses to bring blessing ultimately to you.

The blessing may be like surgery. It may be a painful cut, but it's still something God's going to turn for good. And you could say to that person, you know, you rascal, you thought you were going to hurt me.

But you couldn't, because God, who's on my side, just used what you did to benefit me in ways I never would have thought I could be benefited. How can I be offended at what a person does when I have faith in God's sovereignty that no one can touch me unless God lets them? Nothing's going to come my way but what God permits. How can I be in possession of that faith and still be offended by what someone does to me? And how can I be in possession of a low view of myself and be offended? No, when you meet a person who's offendable, and there are some people who are eminently offendable and some who are less so, you are looking at a person who has a low view of God and a high view of themselves and of their rights and their privileges and what they should be treated like and so forth.

The Christian attitude is the opposite way. High view of God, low view of self. When you've got that right, there's hardly anything left in you that's an occasion to get a rise out of you.

Now, let me just say in closing this, that there is such a thing as getting offended on behalf of others and properly so. Jesus was offended at the money changers in the temple. They weren't doing anything to him.

They didn't even know he was there until he showed up with a whip. They weren't doing anything to him, but they were offending God. They were desecrating the temple.

That got a rise out of Jesus. There's nothing wrong with being a person that something can get a rise out of you, because Jesus can get a rise out of him. You're not supposed to be just like a slug, you know, that just kind of sits there and you can cut it to pieces and doesn't move or anything.

He just, you know, doesn't have any feelings. I mean, we are supposed to be people capable of outrage. The prophets were outraged at times.

Jesus was outraged at times. Paul appears outraged when he wrote Galatians and 2 Corinthians. There is a place for Christian outrage, but the place for it is when you can be outraged at sin in the abstract as opposed to the sin that was done against me.

The sin that's done against me, I have a special obligation to forgive and to not hold

anything against. I have an obligation not to allow my spirit to be turbulent. I have to rule my spirit, not let someone else do it.

Sin's out there. And when I hear about people molesting children, you know, I think, boy, they're lucky they're not in my presence. Not that I'm so tough, but I'd use everything I have, you know, because I'd be angry.

And Jesus, the Bible actually says Jesus looked on them with anger in Mark chapter 3, being grieved at the hardness of the hearts. Not when they were hurting him. When they were hurting him, he said, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they do. When it was other people that were hurting, he got upset. Paul, too.

Paul said when he was on trial, in 2 Timothy chapter 4, he said when he was on trial, he says, at my first trial, all my friends left. They all forsook me. He says, I pray God will not hold that against them.

But they said, Alexander the silversmith, the carpenter, he did me great harm and may God reward him according to his works. But he says, also you beware of him because he has greatly withstood our words. Now, what's the difference? Here's Paul's friends.

He's on trial for his life. Like his neck is on the block. His friends are supposed to be there.

They'll ditch him. They'll abandon him in his hour of need. He says, I pray God won't hold that against them.

He says, now that silversmith, I hope God gets him real good. May God reward him according to his deeds. Well, why? What's the difference between him and the other people? Well, he, the silversmith, has withstood our words.

This man is an opponent of the gospel. This man is resisting the kingdom of God. This man has touched me in that spot that makes my blood boil.

When people try to resist Jesus Christ and his gospel, I'm, you know, God get him. But it's one thing to say God get him and another thing to say I'm going to get him. The Bible says, give place to wrath and don't avenge yourselves.

God has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. We will never have to worry that if we don't get back at someone, that justice will not be served ultimately. But we leave justice in the hands of God.

We don't need to be, you know, sometimes there's people we would never do anything against them, but we'll punish them by being offended. Well, who's being punished by that? You're the one, you're the one who's hurt by being offended. And God is hurt

because you're not loving that person as you should.

So, love is not provoked. The person who loves his brother, there's no occasion of offense in him. It's a glory to a man to overlook transgression.

And he that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Therefore, when your brother sins against you, resolve it without offense. Resolve it by responsibly forgiving him in your heart and then gently going to him to confront him about the deal so that you can formally forgive him when he repents.

If he doesn't repent, then there's Matthew 18. That is what I believe the teaching of scriptures, and it's so central to everything. All marriages would be revolutionized if both parties would refuse to be offended.

Not out of spite, but because they simply refuse to have their love for their partner interrupted by anything their partner can do. Children and parents often get offended by each other. If you found children who refuse to be offended and parents who refuse to be offended, you'd have blissful homes.

If you had employers, employees, church members, neighbors who refuse to be offended, you'd have no breakdown of any relationships. Because offenses are the one thing present in every relationship breakdown. If Christians could learn to take no offense ever when people offer to them, then the relationships in the body of Christ would be exactly what God wants them to be and nothing less.