

OpenTheo

No Offense (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the issue of being easily offended as a Christian. He cites Proverbs 19:11 as evidence that it is an honorable thing to choose to slow down your anger and overlook transgressions. Gregg argues that being easily offended can negatively impact one's own spiritual well-being, and that Christians should approach situations with love and avoid offending others. He urges his listeners to focus on serving others and not allow their temper to get in the way of doing God's work.

Transcript

And a Christian never has to be offended by anything that anyone does to them. Even the most irritating thing, even the most displeasing thing, even the most hostile and malicious thing that a person deliberately does against you, you don't have to be offended. Let me give you a lot of scripture on that, because most people think that just isn't true, but it is.

Look at, first of all, in the Old Testament, Psalm 119, and verse 165. Psalm 119, verse 165, it says, Great peace have those who love your law. Nothing shall offend them.

Or the New King James says, nothing causes them to stumble. The King James says, nothing shall offend them. And obviously, since the word in the Hebrew means exactly the same thing the Greek word *skandalizo* means, you can see that it could be translated either way.

But I believe that offend is a very good translation, and in this case, an appropriate one. If you love God's law, you'll have great peace. And a person at peace isn't offended.

A person who's agitated gets offended. A person who's tranquil isn't offended. And so, a person who loves law, nothing shall offend them.

Did you want to ask a question? No. Okay, frankly, I don't think that being irritated is itself wrong. I think being irritated is the temptation to it.

You can avoid sin, but you can't avoid irritations. That's what Jesus is saying. You can't

avoid, you cannot avoid offenses.

But there is the fact that you can avoid being offended. And there's a fine line there. It's like the line between lust and mental adultery.

It's like the line between temptation and sin. Sometimes you're not quite sure when you've passed that line. But there is a point where you have innocently been exposed to something that grates upon you.

Something that irritates you. Something that displeases you. The question of whether any resentment is going to be added to it on your part is the question of whether you're going to sin or not.

Whether you're going to be offended. No, I mean, you can't help it. If someone comes up with sandpaper and rubs it on your skin, you can't help your skin being irritated.

But your response to that irritation will determine whether you fall into sin as a result or not. That irritation itself is a temptation. And you're well to get rid of it as quickly as you can.

I mean, something can irritate you. And you can definitely put the irritation away and just say, well, you can choose to love that person and choose not to allow yourself to be irritated. But there is an initial response.

Of course, certain stimuli just raise hackles. But the question is what you do in your attitude toward that person immediately with those irritations. Let me show you some other passages here that show that the Christian does not have to become offended.

Still in the Old Testament, let me show you three different Proverbs. First of all, Proverbs 19.11. Proverbs 19.11 says, The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression. In other words, it's an honorable thing.

If somebody transgresses against you, it's an honorable thing to just overlook it. Just forgive them. Absorb the injury without getting irritated, without getting angry.

A man's wisdom, that's what discretion means. A man's wisdom will cause him to be slow to anger. Now, this is very important because we know that anger is an emotion.

And emotions sometimes come unbidden as temptations. And as I said a moment ago, there are stimuli that call forth an angry instant immediate response from us. But the question is, at what point do we choose to be angry? It's not a question of whether anger is the first thing that comes to mind when we hear something.

But do we choose to hold on to anger? Do we choose that anger is going to be our attitude toward the party in question? And when I, for instance, there are things that when I first hear them, they make me very angry. But then I think, well, wait a minute. I

don't have to be angry.

I can calm down here. I can still love this person. And I can choose not to be offended about this situation.

And that is the wise thing to do. A person's discretion will cause him to control his anger, to be slow to anger and to overlook a transgression that would ordinarily arise or cause his anger to arise. So, this proverb makes it very clear that it's an honorable and mature and wise thing for a man to just overlook it when people do things wrong to him rather than getting offended by it.

Now, of course, Jesus did say to go to your brother, but that's, I believe, a separate thing. That's how you get the relationship all the way back to what it was before. Your attitude, even before you talk to him, should be one of love.

Your attitude toward the party should be one of not wanting to be offended. And going to that brother to talk to him is a way of establishing trust again and making sure that there's nothing that remains that would prevent you from being able to function in a positive relationship with that person. But as far as your attitude, your heart toward the person, you can refuse to be offended right from the outset.

It's a wise thing to do. It's discretion. It's a glory to you to do it.

It's an honorable thing. Look over at Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 32. Proverbs 16, 32 says, He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty.

Now, the reason I connect this is because we just saw in the verse we're looking at over in chapter 19 of Proverbs that a man's discretion makes him slow to anger, which is equated with overlooking a transgression and not getting offended by overlooking it. So, slow to anger is connected with overlooking a transgression. Now, it says, He who is slow to anger is better than a mighty man.

And he who rules his spirit than he who takes the city. Now, I want you to take note. In Proverbs 16, 32, the man who rules his spirit is the man who's slow to anger.

He's the same man who in chapter 19 overlooks a transgression. It is ruling your spirit to not get offended. You see, let me show you another proverb.

Then I want to make this comment that's very pertinent to this whole subject. Proverbs 25, 28 says, Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Proverbs 25, 28.

He that has no rule over his own spirit. Chapter 16 equates that with a man who's not slow to anger. And chapter 19 would say that's the man who doesn't overlook a transgression, a man who gets offended and stays resentful and offended about it.

So, a person who doesn't rule his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls. What that image means, of course, it's easily overrun and controlled by others. Now, if you don't rule your own spirit, others will.

You'll come under the control of others. You're like a city without defenses and you can be overrun and manipulated and controlled by anybody who wants to. You've got no defenses.

Now, if somebody does something against me, inadvertently or on purpose, I am confronted with a decision. Will I allow them to get me upset or will I allow the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of gentleness and meekness and forgiveness and so forth? Love. If I can maintain control over my own spirit, I will not get offended.

If I get offended, it will be because that person has now gained control over my spirit. That person now is deciding what the condition and climate of my spirit will be by their actions. You see, what this proverb is saying is you should have rule over your own spirit.

There should be no one who can affect your spirit. Now, not too long ago, we were talking about what Jesus said is don't fear those who can kill your body and can do nothing more. He means humans.

Human beings can kill your body, but they can't do anything to your spirit. They can't, if you don't let them. And in that connection, I was talking about people who claim that their life is ruined and they're full of all kinds of mental and emotional quirks and psychological problems because of what somebody did to them at such and such a time.

I would say, no doubt, what somebody did to them at such and such a time, if their memories are accurate, may in fact be the irritations and the temptations that came to them, but it is only because they did not maintain a rule over their own spirit that that person's actions have been able to determine their present psyche, their present psychological state and spiritual state. They have not ruled their own spirit when they should have. They've gotten angry, resentful, they're offended, and they're holding it against somebody, and that's why it continues to affect them.

But the Christian is to rule his spirit. He's supposed to be invulnerable. It should be possible, Jesus said, for someone to come up and strike you insultingly on the right cheek, and instead of you lashing out as anyone would naturally want to do, you just turn the other cheek, calmly, unaffected.

Another way of putting it, and Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 13.5, love is not provoked. 1 Corinthians 13.5. 1 Corinthians 13.5 says love is not provoked, period. King James added the word easily because the translators had trouble believing that anyone could ever be unprovocable.

So the King James Version says love is not easily provoked. But it actually, in the Greek,

doesn't have the word easily. It's just love is simply not provoked.

The moment that you allow your heart and your spirit to be provoked by the actions of another, you have, at that moment, not been walking in love. Now, let me just say this. Christians, unfortunately, are defective in love in many cases, in many ways.

That doesn't make it all right. But it does mean that if you have been offended by someone, you're not really the lone ranger. I mean, Christians do have various ways in which we are defective in love.

But as Christians, we are commanded to love. And we can pretty much use it as a barometer of our own spiritual temperature, our own spiritual well-being, to know whether we have any offendedness toward anyone. All you have to do is think about the people who've done things wrong to you in the recent past, or even the distant past, and see what happens in your spirit.

Take your temperature. Is there anybody that you still hold a grudge against? Is there anyone that you're offended by? If so, you have been provoked by their actions. And they shouldn't be able to provoke you.

If you're walking in love, you're ruling your own spirit. They're not ruling it. Your neighbor can't rule your spirit for you, if your walls are up.

And, you know, I mean walls up in a positive sense. Now, of course, if you do rule your own spirit, you're going to seem to some people as if you're almost a machine. I know this.

I've heard these accusations. You have no feelings. Why? Because you don't get angry.

Sorry. I choose that. By the grace of God, I choose not to be angry.

Jesus chose not to be provoked. And as I understand, the Bible says that that's what we can choose to do. And I prefer to make that choice, thank you, because I don't like being provoked.

I don't like being offended. I don't enjoy it. I mean, first of all, I don't like it because it's wrong and sinful, and it's just the very thing I want to avoid.

It's sin in my life. I want to be more loving. And the other reason is it's just not a pleasant feeling.

I mean, even if there's no sin in it, I'd still prefer not to have those feelings of being offended. And that's just what the Scripture is teaching, is if you're walking in love, no one can make you offended. No one can provoke you.

No one can rule your spirit. You determine what your spiritual state is going to be. Of

course, when I say you do, you under God.

Obviously, no man has total rule over his own spirit without the grace of God. And I would hope that would go without saying, but since it sometimes is not, you know, people don't read that in there, I need to say it. Walking in grace, walking in the Spirit, produces a life of love.

And when you're walking in the Spirit, you will not be vulnerable to being provoked by people's mistreatment of you. They may put a stumbling block by their behavior in your path, but you can jump over it and keep walking. You don't have to stop loving them.

And so, it is a glory for you to overlook an offense, to be slow to anger. It's your discretion. It makes you a mightier person than the person who can take a city.

And if you don't have this kind of rule over your own spirit, you'll be controlled by anybody who wants to control you. And I'll show you just one other verse on this one point, and that is in 1 John chapter 2, 1 John chapter 2 and verse 10. It says, He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling, or scandalism, there's no cause for offense in him.

Now, this statement, there is no cause for offense in him, has been taken two different ways by different translators. It could mean that the man who's walking in love doesn't cause others to be offended by, I mean, he doesn't do things to people that offend him. You walk in love and people won't get offended by you.

There'll be no cause of offense in your behavior. That's how some translate it. For instance, the Today's English version translates it, There is nothing in him that will cause someone else to sin.

Obviously, meaning, they take it that if a person walks in the light, then nothing, he just won't do the kinds of things toward people that offend them and that cause them to stumble. But most translators feel that this means that if you're walking in love, in the light, you yourself will not stumble. It is your very act of walking in love that prevents you from stumbling.

Therefore, for example, in the same verse, the NIV and the New English Bible both say, there is nothing in him to make him stumble. If you love your brother, you walk in the light, and there's nothing in that person who's walking in the light that will make him stumble. See, if you stumble, it's something in you.

And the person who's walking in love doesn't have that in them to make them stumble. Jerusalem Bible translates it, He need not be afraid of stumbling. The person who walks in the light doesn't have to be afraid of stumbling.

It seems clear to me that the context is about that person himself stumbling rather than

stumbling somebody else. Because the previous verse says, in verse 9, He who says he's in the light and hates his brothers in darkness until now, he who loves his brother abides in the light, there's no cause of stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and does not know where he's going.

Now, obviously he's going to stumble around because he's in darkness. But the person who's in the light isn't going to stumble because he can see where he's going. And therefore, I think what it's saying is, if you love your brother, you're walking in the light, and you're not going to stumble.

So love, again, is the means of avoiding stumbling. Love is not provoked. Love doesn't get offended.

And the moment you get offended, you are not, at that time, walking in love. And unless you are forced by, you know, your own nature to get offended, nothing outside of you will offend you. It's your choice.

To walk in the grace of God and love, choose to love your brother or not. So when Jesus says, If your brother sins against you, take heed to your own self. Take heed to your own spirit in this.

Make sure you don't get offended. If it's the worst case scenario, where someone sins against you seven times, obviously you're going to be sorely tempted to be offended by them. Instead, however, go to them, speak to them about it.

If they repent, forgive them. Then you walk away unoffended. Better to do that, even though it's an unpleasant thing, than to live with the offense in your heart and be yourself, have your own spirit controlled by somebody else's behavior.

I don't want to give them the pleasure. You know, that sounds like the wrong attitude, in a sense, too. But this is how I've generally come to reason about things.

You know, the Bible says it's discretion or wisdom in a man that makes him slow to anger. And it's his glory to overlook an offense or a transgression. I believe it is wisdom that dictates that we don't get offended.

And here's how I've reasoned. I think it's wisdom. I think it's reasonable.

If somebody has done something to me that might irritate me or might be unpleasant to me, there's two possibilities. Or even if it was a sin against me, there's two possibilities. One is they intended it.

The other is they didn't intend to. If they didn't intend to, then why should I get offended by it? If they accidentally did something, they had no malice, there was no hostility, then why in the world should I be offended? That would make me the touchy person. I'd be

awfully touchy if I got offended when someone wasn't even deliberately trying to hurt my feelings.

And there are people that are just that touchy, but that's... you don't have to be, and it certainly is a fault in your character if you are. On the other hand, the other possibility is they did intend to hurt my feelings. They did intend to wrong me.

And in that case, I still don't want to get offended because why should I allow them to dictate my spiritual responses? If they wanted to offend me and I get offended, then they got their way and God didn't get his in my life. Why should I let them dictate my spiritual character and my spiritual responses? Therefore, as I say, if you're tempted to be offended by someone, just figure, well, they either did it on purpose or they didn't do it on purpose. If they didn't, I shouldn't be offended.

If they did, I still shouldn't be offended because that'll just give them the power over my spirit that they're seeking and I don't want them to have it. Yeah. Let me go on in the passage.

We have verses 5 and 6 next. When the apostles heard Jesus say this, they said, Lord, increase our faith. As I say, a lot of Christians don't have faith that this is true.

They just don't believe that they don't have to be offended. They have made such a habit of it. They've taken, in some cases, such a morbid pleasure in nursing a grudge that they just don't believe that they can not be offended.

And the disciples had that reaction. Lord, increase our faith. And he 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.

Now, I'm going to take that as a truth statement but intend it as a hyperbole. I mean, in a sense, if you have enough faith, anything is possible. Jesus made that statement in many occasions.

But what I understand to be saying here is this. What seems impossible to you right now, namely, to live a life totally refusing to be offended, that may seem impossible but all it requires is faith. Now, faith, as I've tried to make clear on other occasions, is a way of viewing God.

Faith isn't a thing. It's not a power. It's just a way of thinking about God.

Do you believe God tells the truth? That's faith. If you consider that God tells the truth, if you consider God is honest, if you consider that God is in control of things, that God is sovereign, that's faith. And I believe that the question of whether you get offended or not is going to be determined more, let me put it this way, is going to be determined less by your thoughts about the person who's doing the offensive thing than by your thoughts

about God and about yourself.

I think when people get offended, the principal deficiency is not so much in the way they're viewing the party that's offending them, but the way they view God and the way they view themselves. And in both cases, they are clearly not thinking in a distinctively Christian way. And we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We need to think distinctively the way that the Bible says we should. The first thing we need to get straight is our thinking about God. If you have an adequate faith in the sovereignty of God, nothing can offend you.

The worst sins committed against you will not offend you if your faith is adequate in the sovereignty of God. I can give you plenty of examples. I ought to give you a few.

But let me just say what the concept is. The concept is if you believe that God is in control of everything and that he is in control of you, of your safety, of your well-being and so forth, then anything that comes your way, even because people do nasty things to you, you can accept it from God. And instead of getting angry at the person or offended at the person, you'll just accept it from God.

Isn't that what Jesus said when Judas came up and kissed him and betrayed him in that way? What an offensive act. Somebody you've done nothing but befriend. Somebody you've taken under your wing for three years as a good friend and here he comes up and does this insulting betrayal.

And yet Jesus refused to allow Peter to retaliate. Jesus did not get ruffled. It was about the supreme insult and yet Jesus just said, well, the cup that my father has given me, shall I not drink it? He saw Judas, but beyond Judas he saw his father.

He was saying, listen, if my father didn't give me this cup, none of this could be happening to me and I should drink it. I'll take it from him. I won't take it from Judas and from these guys.

I'll take it from God. My belief in the sovereignty of my father is sufficient to say that whatever these men may do to me, they could not do if God didn't allow it. And when he stood before Pilate, Pilate said, don't you know I have the power to put you to death? And Jesus said, you would have no power unless it was given to you from above.

Jesus never saw things just on the earthly plane. He saw things in the perspective of God's sovereignty. And even those things that people did against him, he saw as, well, my father's given me this cup to drink.

My father is allowing this to happen. Pilate wouldn't have any power to do this if God didn't give him this power. And instead of looking at the people as the cause of his difficulties, he looked at his father as the cause of his difficulties.

And since he loved his father and would be willing to suffer anything if it pleased his father, he couldn't be offended. He embraced it. He drank it.

He wasn't looking forward to drinking it, but he was willing to drink it if his father wanted him to. And that's how it should be with us if we see the sovereignty of God in proper focus. I've many times pointed to Joseph's example because it's one of the best ones in the Bible.

His brothers sinned against him. They sold him to slavery. But later on he said, you intended evil against me, but God meant it for good.

It's Genesis 50 and verse 20. Genesis 50 and verse 20. Now there's a guy who had grounds to be offended.

His brothers had sold him. They'd lied about him to their father. They'd been heartless as he cried and they sold him as a slave and so forth.

That's pretty offensive treatment. But we see no bitterness. We see no resentment.

Not a thing of that in Joseph. How did he avoid getting offended? Because he said, I see God in this. You intended evil.

That's true. But God meant it for good. And how can I be angry? How can I be angry at what God wanted for my life? This was God's will for my life.

I accept it. Your abuse of me, your sins against me, this was God's will for me to experience. And I receive it from Him.

And I'm not offended by whatever tool He wanted to use. When David was driven out of Jerusalem by his own son in 2 Samuel 16, and Shimei began to curse David and accuse him falsely and so forth. Very offensive treatment.

David's own men got offended by Shimei, but David apparently didn't. In 2 Samuel 16, it says, when Shimei was cursing David and making all kinds of false accusations against David, in verse 9 it says, Abishai the son of Zeruah said to the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please let me go over and take off his head. But the king said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, Curse David.

Who then shall say, Why have you done so? And David said to Abishai and his servants, See how my son, who came from my own body, seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite. Let him alone.

Let him curse, for the Lord has ordered him. Now, David saw himself as, if you read the story, I'm sure you recall it from earlier studying it, Shimei's accusations were totally false and unjust against David. And he was kicking the guy while he was down.

David was having the worst day of his life. And the guy just comes out and hurls these insults at him. And David's men couldn't restrain their offendedness.

And David just said, Hey, God's in control here. God probably sent him to curse me. I don't want any of that spirit that you guys have.

You don't know what spirit you're up. It's not my spirit. If God sent him, I accept it.

And David clearly was not offended or did not allow himself on that occasion to be offended. Like you look at Paul's attitude in Philippians chapter 1. Paul had enemies. Even in some of the churches, there were rivals and rotten people who picked on Paul and criticized him when he wasn't there.

And when he wrote Philippians, as you know, he was in prison. And there were some of Paul's rivals that took advantage of Paul being out of circulation to go and build up their own popular support at his expense. And he said of these people in Philippians 1.15-18, he said, Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill.

The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains. This is offensive stuff they're doing. They're trying to add affliction to my chains.

They're trying to add insult to injury. But he says, But the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice. In other words, these people are trying to kick me while I'm down. But hey, God's will is being done.

Christ is being preached. That's what I want. I accept this.

And we don't see bitterness in Paul about this. In fact, the epistle to the Philippians is one of the most rejoicing letters Paul wrote. Now, therefore, an appreciation for God's sovereignty and God's purposes, if you have an adequate faith in God and His sovereignty, you will not get offended by what men do to you.

You'll see them as secondary. You'll see them as the tools in the hand of God to bring a trial to your life for your good. And you'll accept it without any resentment toward the person that God uses.

Then the other thing you have to have squared away is your attitude about yourself, your thoughts about yourself. And we come to that in verses 7 through 10. Luke 17, 7 through 10.

And which of you having a servant, or a slave is a better translation, plowing or tending

sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, come at once and sit down to eat. No, that just wasn't done. Instead, he says, but will he not rather say to him, prepare something for my supper and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink.

Now, this treatment of slaves is not something Jesus is advocating. It's just something that was understood. That's what people did.

And Jesus, this is descriptive, not prescriptive. Jesus is not teaching his disciples how to treat their slaves. He's just telling them something they already know.

A man who has a slave expects his slave to work for him all day until there's nothing more to do. So if the slave's been working out in the field all day long, he comes in at the end of a 10-hour, 12-hour day, and you know, in our society, our pampered society, we think, well, he's worthy of a little leisure. He's been working hard.

But no, the day's not over. The master hasn't eaten yet, so the slave has to feed his master. And once everything else is done, then the slave can eat.

Now, by the way, the fact that Jesus doesn't treat his slaves that way is seen in another passage in Luke. Back in chapter 12, in verse 37, Jesus said, speaking of his own second coming, and those who are faithful servants whom he finds so doing when he comes back, Luke 12, 37, Jesus said, Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you, that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

That's the kind of master Jesus is. He'll serve his own servants at the end of the day. But, as he points out in chapter 17, that's not the way masters usually treat servants.

That's not what a servant expects. A servant doesn't expect his master to serve him after a hard day or congratulate him or say, Hey, you deserve a little break today. You deserve a reward here because you've been working so hard.

The servant, he understands. He's there to serve his master until there's nothing left to do. And that's what Jesus is pointing out.

Now, in verse 9, Luke 17, 9, he says, Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. The master doesn't thank the servant, and the servant doesn't expect to be thanked. He doesn't think he's done anything exceptional.

He doesn't think he's done anything that deserves special congratulations. He's just done what a servant's required to do. Period.

And Jesus makes the application in verse 10, So likewise, when you have done all those

things which you were commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done only what it was our duty to do. Now, to say we are unprofitable servants is not to hold ourselves in high esteem, especially with reference to what we consider our rights to be.

You might have a positive image of yourself in terms of appreciating what God's done in your life. You might say, Well, praise God, I don't have that bad temper I used to have. I've overcome my drinking problem, my smoking.

I've got victory in that area. Praise God. I'm doing much better than I used to be.

And you can have a positive attitude about what God's done in your life to acknowledge every good thing that's in you in Christ Jesus, as Philemon VI says. There's nothing unhumble about that. But where low self-esteem is required is with reference to how you think about your rights.

What do you think you have the right to? That's the issue here. If you see yourself as an unprofitable servant, a slave, slaves have no rights, and you should think of yourself as if you didn't. Now, that doesn't mean we don't have any, but it means you should think of yourself as if you had none.

Now, see, I say it doesn't mean you don't have any. You do have rights. You have the right to be treated civilly, and if people don't treat you civilly, they're violating your rights.

But that's not something for you to get offended about. You should just think of yourself as if you didn't have any rights, like a slave. Well, my master never congratulated me.

You know, trade unions and labor unions today have certainly provided a different set of attitudes for modern workers. You know, if they don't get a raise, if they don't get promoted after several months or years of faithful service in their job, they feel offended by their boss. And if they, you know, if their conditions, if they don't get longer vacations after several years or whatever, they consider that they're being wronged.

Why? Because they figure they have rights to these things. And that is our attitude as human beings. We think, well, if I've just been doing the right thing, and if I've been obeying God, and I haven't done anything wrong to anyone, and someone comes along and doesn't appreciate me, these people don't appreciate me.

Well, we tend to get offended. But Jesus says, no, slaves don't get offended. They don't expect to be appreciated.

They just expect to do what they're told. That's what they're supposed to do. I've told you not to offend people.

I've told you to forgive people when they do things offensive to you. I've told you to just

trust in God. And you have to view yourself correctly, because you will not be offended unless you're proud.

Only by pride comes contention. It's the King James Version of Proverbs 13.10. Pride is the source of contention. And a proud person who thinks himself to have rights to be treated better than he's been treated, to be thought of better than he's thought of, to be spoken of better than he's been spoken of, a person who thinks he's got rights to better treatment than that which he's received, that person is susceptible to being offended all the time because people aren't always going to give you what you deserve.

And it's better to just say, well, we're just slaves, really. We're just here to serve God, and we only are expected to do what we're told. And the one thing we've been told to do is love these people, to love everybody.

And so if someone mistreats me and I love them, I'm just doing what I'm told. I don't even deserve special congratulations for that. You have to have a sufficiently high view of God and a sufficiently low view of yourself to walk in this attitude that Jesus is describing here.

You will not be offended unless you have a high view of yourself and a low view of God. Therefore, the cure for offendedness is simply that, to have a high view of God's sovereignty and accept whatever people do cheerfully from God. I rejoice in this.

Christ is preached. Sure, people are trying to rub salt in my wounds, but let them do it. God's will is being done, and I rejoice in that.

And a low view of myself. I don't deserve better than this. Who do I think I am that people should treat me good? I'm not perfect.

I've wronged people before. I've forfeited any rights that I may think I have. If I get abused, that's God's business.

That's His business. If He wants to abuse me, He's my servant. I'm His servant.

He's got the right to do that. Let me close with this one thing, and I got this after I spoke on this subject. Danny Lehman came up and closed up the meeting in Honolulu when I spoke on this, and he brought this up.

I hadn't heard this before, but I thought it was kind of funny. It's really more of a tongue-in-cheek kind of a thing, but it's also quite applicable. If you look to Philippians chapter 4, we find there were two women who were not getting along in the church.

In Philippians, we find very little wrong with the church. Paul is pretty happy with the church in Philippi. It seems to be the church he's most happy with, in fact.

You find very little in Philippians that suggests they had anything imperfect about them,

but there was one problem. A couple of women weren't getting along. We don't know much about it.

We don't have any details, but their names were Euodia and Syntyche. They're mentioned in Philippians 4 too. Paul says, I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Danny put out something I thought was quite clever. He didn't make it up. He said he got it somewhere else.

I don't know where he got it, but he heard a preacher once say, there's two kinds of people who cause friction and who don't get along with other people. One is, you are odious, like Euodia, and the other is Syntyche, like Syntyche. Actually, Syntyche can be pronounced a little bit more like Syntuchie, but he said that, and this is really fitting.

It was a fitting close to what I had to say, and so that's why I'm giving it to you now, because he pointed out that a person who is odious, a person who, you know what odious means, offensive. If you are odious, you're going to be giving offense, and if you're Syntuchie, you're going to be taking offense. And, you know, these are the two sides, the two personality traits that create offendedness.

You see, if I'm odious, you don't have to be Syntuchie. You don't have to be touchy and thin-skinned and easily offended, so that even if I'm misbehaving towards you, you don't have to get offended. On the other hand, you could, if you're Syntuchie, get offended even if I'm not odious.

It's just, these are the two defects. These are relational defects, and what God wants from us is for us to be relational replicas of Christ. Not sinning against anyone, not offending people unnecessarily, on the one hand, and not taking offense to what people do to us, even if they're trying to offend us, on the other.

And if you get this out of your life, if you get your odiousness and your touchiness out of your life, and you don't take offense, you will have an enviable life. You'll have an enviable set of relationships. And, you know, you may even be misunderstood.

I've found that sometimes, you know, I say some people get offended that you don't get riled, and that makes them even madder, especially if they're trying to rile you, and they think that you should get irritated, and you're not, that can make them very upset. But, you know, not every relationship is going to be a positive one if you're not offended. But at least you don't have to be provoked.

Paul said, if it's possible, as much as lies in you, be at peace with everyone. You can be at peace in your own heart with everyone. That won't always guarantee that they're going to be at peace with you, but it's your spirit that you have the rule over.

No one else has the rule over that. And if you surrender the rule of your spirit to another, let me put it this way, if you allow somebody's actions to offend you, then you are surrendering the rule of your spirit to another, and you are vulnerable to stumbling, and you are vulnerable to misbehavior, and having, you know, relationship problems. So that is, to my mind, an essential teaching in the Gospels about relationships.

It's, I guess, not a very commonly heard teaching, but it's extremely central to the issue of how we relate with other people and how we love people. Because love is not provoked, and he that loves walks in the light, and there's no occasion of offending, of him being offended. Okay?