**SERIES: “SILENT KILLERS”**

**TITLE: BREAKING THE POWER OF OFFENSE**

**TEXT: St. Luke 7:19-23 (KJV)**

**19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. 22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.**

**INTRODUCTION**: In our age of political correctness and supersensitive people, it would seem that one has to walk an extremely thin tight rope in order to keep from offending people. It would appear that any slight move in any direction when it comes to dealing with any issue that there will be someone somewhere who will stand to declare that they have been offended. A man or a women can stand on the threshold of capturing an election and all it takes is one wrong statement or one that sounds wrong and the tables can turn immediately. An individual can be in the middle of enjoying a prosperous career and be on top of their profession and a careless remark said at the wrong time and in the wrong place can have that person fired and having to start all over again. Sports stars, preachers, news reporters and entertainers have had their careers derailed and their future clouded because someone took offense to something they did or something they said. Because this is an age in which everyone seems to be offended and even yielding to its power and affects.

And There are few places in which this is more evident and has had more of an impact than in the body of Christ, the Kingdom of God and the house of God. There are people who were in the church and are no longer involved and are sitting at home on Sundays dying because someone offended them. There are those who started out with vision, ministry and zeal who are now sitting on the bench or on the injured reserve list watching like a spectator because someone offended them. There are even preachers who functioned in their calling and place of appointment that have now been transformed into a bitter and cynical person because they were offended. There are Church workers, teachers, music directors who were and still are filled with power and promise, ability and anointing, gifts and talents who have simply thrown in the towel and waved the white flag and walked away because somewhere in the course of their assignment someone offended them. Now they sit wounded, discouraged, angry, filled with unforgiveness and bitterness never realizing that they have come under the power of an age-old trap called offense.

You see, one of the most powerful and deceptive tools and traps that the enemy is using to paralyze and limit the body of Christ, is the subtle and successful trap known as the spirit of offense. It is an effective tool because of the way it disguises itself by its ability to appear to be right and OK. It is a trap that is easy to walk into because there is such a thin line that falls between seeing what is right, understanding when one has been wronged and actually falling prey and coming under the power of the spirit of offense. Offense is in many ways like carbon monoxide. It is Colorless, tasteless, and odorless but it is extremely fatal. Many who are under the bondage of this trap are totally unaware that they are bond by it. This is because it sneaks up on you and before you know it your attitude, your mindset and eventually your behavior has been effected. We become so distracted by things that are over with that we miss the right now moment. We become Consumed by what happened yesterday that we miss what God is doing today.

According to the dictionary to offend is to create resentment, hurt feelings or displeasure. It implies causing these feelings intentionally or unintentionally by wounding his or her feelings, it implies open and deliberate disrespect. It is a negative reaction to an unpleasant situation or word. In the scripture the Greek word for offense is Skandalon-(SCANDAL) This word originally referred to the part of a hunting trap in which the bait was attached.Hence the word signifies laying a trap in someone’s way. In the New Testament it often describes an entrapment used by the enemy to bring people into captivity. When we look at these definitions they both tell us that an offense is designed to do two things.One, to cause us great pain and to wound us. Two, to cause us to be hindered in our Christian journey. However, as much as offense may wound us we must not allow it to stop us in our Christian service. We must break the power of offense.

Even the best Christian person will have to struggle with the temptations that comes with being overcome by the power of offense. Many times when we read the scripture we fail to understand that the characters in the Bible were flesh and blood just like we are. They were not super saints who popped into a nearby phone booth and flew around with capes on but were people who were at times weak and struggled like us but had a yes in their spirit and surrendered to God so they were able to be used in miraculous ways. There is no one in the pages of scripture who was used in the manner of John the Baptist in our text. Here was a man who Christ himself referred to as the greatest man in the Kingdom of God. He was the one who prepared the way for Jesus and is often referred to as the fore-runner for Christ. John the Baptist, the prophet of fire and repentance who introduced Christ to the world for when he saw Jesus he declared, behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. John the Baptist, the only man who can make the claim that he stood in the waters of baptism and baptized the very Son of God, The Savior of the World and the King of Kings. John the Baptist, a man of sacrifice that lived on a diet of Locust and Honey and was a powerful man of GOD. John the Baptist, a gifted orator who preached with such dynamic authority that people left their homes and followed him into the desert to receive a word from the Lord. John the Baptist, so powerful yet humble enough that when Jesus stepped on the scene he declared that I must decrease that He might increase. However when we come to our text we find that John is battling with being discouraged and even offended. When our chapter opens we find John is now on lockdown for the crime of preaching the gospel. He had been obedient, faithful and committed. He was even bold enough to call out a powerful King concerning his adulterous marriage, which led to his arrest. He had sacrificed and was faithful to his assignment and now after doing so he finds himself in prison and facing an imminent execution. When our story begins we find John sending a messenger to Jesus asking Him a question. Jesus are you not the Christ or shall we look for another? At the end of his answer Jesus declares that there is a blessing for those who are not offended at him. We want to explore this issue of offense through our text and see how we fall into it, how we can avoid it and how its power can be broken from over our lives.

I. **REMOVE OUR MISGUIDED EXPECTATIONS**- When it comes to this whole issue of offense, we are often taken captive by it because we fail to expect it. We somehow have convinced ourselves that when we came to Jesus we were entering into the mystical Land of No Offense where everything would go our way and everyone who is in the Kingdom will be non-offensive. Understanding Offense- One of the amazing things about church people is how surprised we are when offenses comes.

**(Luke 17:1)**

**1Then He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe *to* *him* through whom they do come! (NKJV) EXPECT IT!**

**Matthew 24:10-13**

**9Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. 10And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.**

Offense is part of our everyday lives. We cannot live without being offended or offending someone. Even Jesus offended a lot of people

 The Pharisees

**Matthew 15:12**

**12Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”**

His Hometown

**Matthew 13:55-57**

**54And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? 55“Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56“And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?” 57So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” 58Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.**

His Family

**21But when His own people heard *about* *this,* they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, “He is out of His mind.”**

**W**hen we join the church we are joining an Army

**II Timothy 2:3**

 **3Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.**

**2 Timothy 2:24 (GW)**

**24 A servant of the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, he must be kind to everyone. He must be a good teacher. He must be willing to suffer wrong.**

 The Cross

**Jesus said if any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me.**

JOHN GOT A MISCONCEPTION OF THE WAY IT WAS SUPPOSE TO BE.The Messiah concept of the Jews- they expected a political leader who would come and overthrow the Roman government.

**19And John calling *unto him* two of his disciples sent *them* to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 20When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?**

**Isaiah 55:9**

 **8For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

**Psalms 139 “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; too high, I cannot attain it.”**

**I**I. **RE-EVALUATE OUR PERSPECTIVE:** OFFENSE CAN BE A TRAP OR AN OPPORTUNITY

There are basically two categories of people who have been offended- those who have been genuinely mistreated and those who think they have been mistreated but were actually not. If one is not careful the enemy will deceive us into using offense as our badge or excuse to stay wounded and inactive. To escape from growing.

The Difference Between Offense and Being offended:

**Offense is the experience or the action but being offended is the attitude. We can’t control offense but I can control my attitude toward it. I can't stop you from pushing me down but I can control wether or not I am going to stay down.**

Choices When Offense Comes: Offense is a Choice. it is always going to be around but I have to decide what to do with it. I have two choices.

Choice 1: Accept it and receive it’s fruits (**it's a package deal**) Offense becomes a Breeding Grounds

Bitterness- unfulfilled revenge, an attitude because you can’t strike back.

Anger- You are angry because you loved them and let your guard down. We become Bitter with them but also angry at yourself because you allowed them to get that close.

The Problem Comes when we use our offense to pass blame and escape responsibility. When we make it our excuse to explain away our failure or why we gave up. It becomes our excuse for walking in disobedience.

**We begin to Look for offense- instead of coming to a ministry looking for what is right we come looking for what is wrong. Offended people often build up walls for protection. Our focus becomes self- preservation. We must be protected at all cost. This makes us capable of betrayal which is another thing we do to protect ourselves at the expense of someone else.**

**Proverbs 18:19**

**19A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city: and *their* contentions *are* like the bars of a castle.**

Frustration is there because we are trying to protect ourselves and failing to live and God is trying to be our protection and we will not let him. God is our buckler and our shield, our healer and strength.

Choice 2 Reject it and be blessed

 **23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.**

**When offenses come we often fail to realize that can either be a trap to hinder us or an test to make us strong.**

**James 1:2-4**

**2My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

**Your promotion will be determined by how we respond to offense**

**THERE IS AN ANOINTING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF OFFENSE**

**III. RELAX IN DIVINE JUSTICE**

**A pastor arranged for a gathering of the women’s auxiliary. It was to be a garden party on the church lawn, under the old oak. At the last moment, the morning of the party, Mrs. Preacher discovered she left Sister Hissyfit off the invitation list.**

**The parson called the dear sister and begged forgiveness. I’m so sorry we didn’t catch this sooner, Mrs. Hissyfit, won’t you please come to the garden party? cajoled the pastor. Beggin’ won’t help now, Preacher, said the offended Mrs. H., I’ve already prayed for rain.**

Christian Responsibility- to always love and walk in love. To even love the offensive and those who offend.While we do not love offense or being offended we must still love the offender.

**Luke 6:27-28**

 **“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.**

**“Nothing is fair in this world. You might as well get that straight right now” ― Sue Monk Kidd, The Secret Life of Bees**

**“Expecting the world to treat you fairly because you’re a good person is like expecting a bull not to attack you because you’re a vegetarian.” ― Dennis Wholey**

Jesus Warning About Offenders

**(Luke 17:1)**

**1Then He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe *to* *him* through whom they do come! (NKJV)**

Woe- cursed, denounce, disaster, calamity. So if someone purposely makes an effort to offend someone they bring a curse upon themselves.

**Romans 12:17-19**

**Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”**

**Galatians 6:7**

**Be not deceived; God is not mocked:for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**

**The Cross**

**Rev. Larry Stockstill**

**"When the power of the cross is appropriated it can shatter any bondage known to humanity, and when it's authority is recognized, it can mend any broken relationship."**

**Matthew 10:24**

**The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.**

**Everything we go through needs to be viewed through the eyes of the cross. Take our excuses through the Friday- Sunday test.**

IV **REGAIN OUR FOCUS**- the failure to keep our eyes on God instead of Man and our circumstances is one of the main areas that the enemy uses to birth offense. When our focus is man centered instead of God centered we will always be offended. People: Too many of us have an inflated view of people and that is our fault.

Genesis 2:7- Made of the Dust of the earth, the only thing we got going for us is the breath of God and the image of God.

Psalms 51:5- conceived in sin and sharpen in iniquity

Jeremiah 17:9- the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked

Isaiah 59:17-swift to evil and shed innocent blood

Proverbs 6:18 feet swift to run to evil

Romans 3:13 mouth is an open grave

**Romans 7:18**

**For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.**

**Hebrews 12:1**

**1Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

**John The Baptist Up until now was a very focused man.** He Understood his calling and his purpose. He is now in Jail and starts looking at his circumstances

 JESUS ANSWER- FOCUS

**21And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many *that were* blind he gave sight. 22Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.**

**John had to focus again to understand that his destiny was bigger than his offense.**

**Psalms 119:165**

**165Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.**

When God knows that He can trust us with offense the skies the limit. Notice what He says about John.

**28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. 29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.**

**Proverbs 19:11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.**