

Don't fall in the trap like a monkey, forgive!

Jesus said "It is impossible that no offense should come..." and Woe to the world because of offenses...for offenses must come... Luke 17:1 ; Matt. 18:7

He also warned us in *Matt. 24:3-13* "take heed that no one deceives you...and then many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another... and because of lawlessness the love of many will grow cold but he who endures to the end shall be saved."

2 Timothy clearly says that one of the signs of the end time will be a lack of love,... for men will be unloving, unforgiving... Many will fall into offense, and to be offended means you have allowed yourself to be hurt, angry, resentful, and in strife with someone.

The word offense in Greek is *Skandalon*. To fully understand its meaning we first must go to its original use. *Skandalon* was a trap stick, a bait, a snare, a stumbling block placed in the way to cause one to stumble or fall. It was used by trappers to catch monkeys. The trapper would set up a cage and put inside the trap stick with bait on it. Now even though the door to the cage was open, the monkey was too smart to just walk into the cage and take the stick. He would stick his hand through the narrow bars and grabbed a hold of the trap-stick. The stick was too large to be pulled through the bars, but the monkey refused to let go of the bait.. The trapper came along and captured the monkey alive or beat it to death. If only the monkey had let go of the trap-stick, he could have escaped the snare which was set by men to capture or kill him! It is evident today that many are like that monkey. They fall into offense and refuse to let go of it.

For example, when people were asked the reason for leaving their church, a survey showed that 66% left because of offense. What they do not realize is that the offense is a set up, a trap from the devil to get them out of love, out of faith, and therefore out of the will of God. In this case, an offended Christian is no different than a monkey. Just like a monkey refusing to let go of the trap-stick, a Christian can refuse to let go of an offense; both the monkey and the Christian are opening themselves to the enemy, many end up destroyed.

Isn't it amazing that in both Mark 11:25 and James 5:16 faith and healing are closely linked to forgiveness. No wonder Jesus commanded us to walk in love "love the Lord your God & love your neighbor as yourself". Jesus' commandment is very clear (not a suggestion) because he knows that our very life and wellbeing depend on it.

The offended Christian cuts himself from the life of God. He loses his joy, and the joy of the Lord is his strength (protection, safety, refuge).

From Stumbling Block to Stepping Stone

"If you don't get BITTER you will get BETTER." I have adopted this motto all through my years of ministry and God knows the many opportunities I have had ☺.

- ❖ Naaman got offended with Elishah in 2 Kings 5 and almost lost his healing miracle.
- ❖ Saul lost his anointing and even his life because he held a grudge against David in 1 Samuel.
- ❖ In Nazareth they did not receive miracles because they were offended at Jesus. Mark 6:1-6

On the other hand we find those who chose to walk in love and received promotion and blessings from men and God.

- ❖ In Genesis, because Joseph missed many opportunities to become bitter, he became the most important person in Egypt, God used him to save the nation of Israel.
- ❖ David still honored the one who chased him down, persecuted him and wanted to kill him. We all know that David kept his heart right and became King of Israel. No wonder God called him a man after His own heart.
- ❖ The Canaanite woman in Matt. 15 received her miracle. She humbled herself and refused to get offended when Jesus called her a dog (Canaanites were reputed for being some of the vilest people).

We must remember Jesus' warning... take heed that no one deceives you. To take Heed is to discern, to perceive, to see, to understand. How? First we must realize that offense is a trap and we will get out of it by always being quick to forgive and overlook the offense. I find it is much easier when I meditate on love scriptures.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Eph. 4:32

Let's make *1 Cor. 13* our daily confession : *"I am patient and kind, I am not envious, boastful or proud, I am not rude or selfish, I am not easily offended and I keep no record of wrong, I do not rejoice when someone falls into sin, but I rejoice in the truth, I cover a multitude of sins, I hope, I believe and I pray the best for all, I never give up... therefore I will not fail!"* (Audrey's translation).