

Crossroads Community Church

It was a foggy morning indeed but the Son was shining as we gathered together to pray and worship. We remember those in our midst suffering with cancer and heart disease, we pray for their strength and peace until healing comes. Bob and the team lead uplifting praises and today's message was brought to us through a teaching of John Bevere helping us understand and overcome offenses.

Let us read Matthew 24:9-12 (NKJV); ?Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.? In this scripture Jesus is speaking to the church of believers about the end times. He is forewarning that some would take offense. When a person is offended, they automatically turn to self-protection mode, they build emotional walls around themselves to shut people out for self-preservation,(Proverbs 18:19). Human thought processes and reasoning seek to justify the need to build walls so as to not get hurt but it is not God's way. As spiritual beings we are in a spiritual war, the fight takes place in our souls hence the wise thing to do is to anchor ourselves in God's word rooted in His loving nature, when we shut people out the first person we leave out is Jesus,(2Corinthians 10:3-5).

Jesus also warns that when we are offended we are vulnerable to being deceived by false prophets, (in our case today it is every wave of human thought) an offended heart is a breeding ground for deception. Have you ever heard of the term ?A wolf in sheep's clothing?? It perfectly represents the spirit behind deceivers. Wolves travel in packs and they isolate a weak sheep to set up their attack, when in our own selfishness and protective mode we isolate ourselves from others we are prey for deceivers, (Proverbs 18:1).

Hatred is the absence of love and God's love covers a multitude of sins(Luke 17:1) so why is it that having received God's love and forgiveness we still get offended? We have unrealistic expectations setting ourselves up to be offended and because we are human we still have that natural bent of human reasoning and justification. There are two kinds of hurt people, #1 those who think they have been mistreated #2 those who genuinely have been mistreated, situations where we would think they have every right to feel offended however if we want to walk with God we need to think and react differently. Some may retort, ?But you don't know what they have done to me!? I'd say you don't really know what you've done to Jesus. One who wallows in self-pity and remains offended and doesn't forgive is a person who has forgotten what Jesus has forgiven them of. In Matthew 18:21 Jesus gives a teaching on the inexhaustible measure of God's forgiveness when Peter asks Him if he should forgive a brother , seven times Jesus quickly tells him not seven but seventy times seven. He goes on to teach the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35; We need to realize how great a debt we owed God, a debt Jesus didn't owe but He paid it because we couldn't.

It is true, some offenses may be easily forgiven but there will be some that wound and will need time and prayer to heal. There is good news, there is a way to avoid being offended. If we are spiritually weak we are more susceptible to taking offense much like an athlete out of shape is prone to injury, if we are well trained as an athlete we will less likely become offended. Reading His word, spending time in prayer, praising and worshiping Him and fellowship with God's family are all Godly practices that help us grow strong in our faith and love for one another and we will live at peace,(Psalm 119:165). Jesus wants us to pray for those who hurt us, the more we do it the more we will grow our character in love and forgiveness. We need to create an atmosphere of forgiveness one that is not critical but of humility and love which allows hearts to be open to apology forgiveness and reconciliation of both parties. God loves reconciliation, just as He reconciled us to Himself through His Son we ought to seek reconciliation with each other,(Matthew 5:44, Psalm 35:11-13,)

Beloved friends keeping offense is a trap of the devil, he uses it to hold us captive to bitterness, unforgiveness and hatred, let us be holy as God is holy and do as He would do. Yes what has been done to us may be wrong but it does not justify giving into the sin of resentment , Today if you hear His voice don't let your hearts be hardened, bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Asherey Shalom!

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