

“Offences Will Come”

“Then saith He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones,” Luke 17:1-2. cf. Also Matthew 18:6-9.

To offend “signifies to put a snare or a stumblingblock in the way...” (**Vine’s Expository dictionary of New Testament Words**, p. 130). To offend is to cause to stumble or to sin. Obviously, in view of the tragic consequences of sin committed by the offended, coupled with the condition of the offender, it is unfortunate, indeed, when one is made to offend. It is apparent that every sincere child of God must be concerned about his influence upon every other child of God, and take care so as to avoid giving offence. This necessitates the giving up of sinful or questionable practices, and the use of discretion even in optional things that are right within themselves, but not commanded. For example, in the eating of meats, Christians are at “*liberty*” to eat or abstain from eating, but in their exercise of this “*liberty*,” they are to “*take heed lest*” they become “*a stumbling block to them that are weak.*” Paul was so concerned for the “*weak brother*” that he stated: “*wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend (“stumble,” NKJV), I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, let I make my brother to offend,*” I Cor. 8:13. This principle holds true in other things right within themselves but which are not mandatory.

However, the sin committed when people become offended is not always attributable to the one doing the offending. Those offended should always reason within themselves to determine just **why** they became offended. Sometimes the fault lies with them! For example, Christ “*did no sin,*” I Peter 2:22, but He offended many! On one occasion after He spoke to the scribes and Pharisees, His disciples “*said unto Him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were **offended**, after they heard this saying,*” Matt. 15:12. What He spoke was the truth. Should Jesus have retracted the truth so as to appease the Pharisees? Preaching “*Christ crucified*” was to “*the Jews a stumblingblock,*” I Cor. 1:23, but could first century preachers afford to change the biblical message in order to please those who were offended by it? In one verse, Peter wrote of Christ as being “*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence,*” and he mentioned those “*which stumble at the word, being disobedient,*” I Peter 2:8. Hence, occasionally people become offended; not because the offender did wrong, but because he did right!

When brother A is sinned “*against*” by brother B, then brother A (the one sinned against) should “*go and tell*” brother B “*his fault*” in order to gain his brother, Matt. 18:15-17. When brother A learns that brother B “*hath aught against him*” (implying trespasses on the part of brother A), then brother A should go and “*first be reconciled*” to brother B, even before he attempts to worship God! Matt. 5:23-24. When either brother A or brother B is offended because of the truth, he should: (1) Cease doing that which truth condemns; (2) repent of having done that which truth condemns; (3) confess wherein he has erred, I John 1:9; Jas. 5:16, and (4) pray to God for forgiveness, Acts 2:21-22.

Kind reader, if you have been offended (sinned against) by a brother or sister in

Christ, your duty is stated in the Scriptures cited in the preceding paragraph. If you have sinned against another brother, your duty is listed in the preceding scriptures. In matters of this nature, the Lord's instructions are plain and simple. Yet so often these instructions are ignored by both parties to the offence, and that to the spiritual detriment of both parties, and to the local church of which they are members! For shame!

**** Bobby Witherington

Building Up the Local Church

Some churches grow both numerically and spiritually; some do not. None, to my knowledge, make the amount of proper growth that could (and should) be made. Frequently, in the absence of growth, many excuses are offered; most of which fail to really pin point the real reason, or reasons. But let us disregard the excuses and observe ways by which acceptable growth is made possible. Listed in the following paragraphs are seven ways in which nearly every member may contribute to the building up of the local church.

1. **Study** your Bible daily, 2 Tim. 2:15. With *"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,"* Eph. 1:18, you are less likely to be *"tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,"* Eph. 4:14. Like Israel of old, God's people are yet being *"destroyed for lack of know-ledge,"* Hos. 4:6. Proper growth is based upon proper understanding, which is only made possible by diligent and regular study.

2. **Attend** every service of the church. *"The manner of some,"* Heb. 10:25, is to forsake the various assemblies, which adversely affects the ones guilty, and causes others to consider the worship of God and the study of His word as being of little importance. Also *"forsaking the assembling of yourselves together"* shows disrespect for the local church because it could not exist if all assemblies were abolished. Too, it shows that the guilty parties aren't really interested in provoking one another *"unto love and good works,"* Heb. 10:24.

3. **"Pray without ceasing,"** I Thess. 5:17. Have we forgotten the fact that *"the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,"* James 5:16? Pray for the elders, deacons, teachers, song leaders, preacher, the sick, the weak, and for all.

4. **Call, write, or visit** those who were absent from previous services. They may be sick and need to know of our concern. They may be unfaithful and need to be strengthened. *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,"* Gal. 6:1.

5. **Visit, write, call,** or in some way, contact visitors from the area. They have shown an interest in us. We need to show an interest in them. A non-visiting church is a non-growing church. Remember that "personal work" is just that; it is personal, and it is work. It involves you and me!

6. **Be cheerful and optimistic!** *"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones,"* Prov. 17:22. No person is pessimistic alone — he shares his pessimism with others. No person is optimistic alone — he shares his optimism with others. Which feeling would you want to see permeate the church? Do we not know that *"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace....,"* Gal. 5:22?

7. **Live** like a Christian ought to live! Christians are a *"chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,"* who must *"abstain from fleshly lusts which war*

against the soul,” I Peter 2:9,11. Don’t give the “there-are-too-many-hypocrites-in-the-church” excuse makers a cloak to cover up their own sins. Strive to “*be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,*” shining as “*lights in the world,*” Phil. 2:15.

Let all the saints at the Seffner church of Christ realize that the task of building up this congregation is an **every member** responsibility. May we each so labor and so live that it could be said of us: “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Seffner and Florida, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything!” cf. I Thess. 1:8.

—Bobby Witherington
