

“OFFENCES WILL COME”

Bobby Witherington

“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 stumbling block 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, lest 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 stumbling block,*” 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!