

DON'T BUILD THIS WALL!

INTRODUCTION

US president Donald Trump has gained a reputation for saying and doing things that are truly offensive. The whole world is up in arms about the things he says. Some make fun of him, but there are far reaching consequences. One of his initiatives is a proposed wall to be built between the USA and Mexico. **(Play video clip).**

We may laugh at this of course, but it's a great example to support what I want to speak about today.

In John 10:10 it says, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

The devil hates God and he hates God's children. When God steps into someone's life, they become a new creation. Their whole life is transformed, it's beautiful to see the impact a relationship with God makes in our lives. The enemy of course will do anything he can to damage this relationship, but he is sneaky about it. He doesn't just come in and destroy, he can't, we have God's protection, so he will try to slowly deceive you and trick you with schemes to make you fall out of grace.

One of his schemes to tempt us to build walls of offense in our lives.

Offense leads to unforgiveness and bitterness, rage and anger, even murder, and if you give it a chance, it will land you right where the enemy wants. So today, let's see what we can do to be prepared so that we don't allow a wall of offense to be built in our lives.

MESSAGE

WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

People like to wear the wristbands with WWJD on them, "What would Jesus do?" Let's change that this morning to "what did Jesus say?" He said this:

Matthew 5:21-26 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Angry without a cause...

Have you ever noticed that it's the ones closest to you that you get offended with the easiest? A family member may say something with all good intention, then we take it incorrectly and go off in a huff. Our spouse may do something or... men, we may not do something and the next thing, we're in trouble with our wife and we don't even know why...

The smallest issues can cause the biggest problems! Is it possible that we are guilty of being angry without a cause?

Song of Solomon 2:15 (NKJV) Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines, For our vines have tender grapes.

We need to realise that the devil is subtle. He will lure you into his snare little by little until he has you. A little offense here, an unkind word there, a bit of resentment here, a genuine hatred there...then he has you!

The Bible teaches that the devil roams around like a roaring lion seeking who he can devour. Know that he is just waiting to pounce, causing an offense. He particularly wants to destroy marriage and family relationships because they are part of God's plan.

Jesus said this in Matthew 19" **Matthew 19:5-6** (NKJV)... 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

The church is also a target, remember, Paul compares the marriage relationship to the relationship between Christ and the church. If God has planted you here, the enemy is going to do his best to make you feel offended here.

We need to be careful not to be angry without a cause!

And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council.

"Raca" was an Arabic term of reproach used by the Jews in the time of Christ. The word "raca" is sometimes translated as, "useless", it was even rendered "cursed" or "empty headed". Jesus warned that speaking to someone like that would place them on dangerous ground.

Whatever it meant, it was an insult. Let me give you some modern-day equivalents:

"You stupid idiot", "you good for nothing piece of rubbish", "imbecile", etc.

But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Jesus placed even more emphasis on calling someone a fool. Hell fire there speaks of "Gehenna", it was a place where the people burned all their rubbish. The fire burned continually, it never went out. It represents eternal damnation in the pit of hell, and when we start speaking about people in this manner, we risk spending eternity in hell.

What about you and I, when someone offends us, what do we call them. I'm sure for some people, the words are not nearly as mild as "idiot", or "fool" Do we realise how seriously God takes it when we choose to take offense?

A PROGRESSION OF SIN

Sin is always a progression. James puts it simply:

James 1:14-17 (NKJV) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Here's an example of how offense becomes full blown sin that leads to death: Offense – anger – resentment – bitterness – unforgiveness and finally hatred (murder in our hearts).

A MISTAKE THAT BUILDS WALLS

Jesus warned that offense had to be dealt with so that it would not get in the way of our relationship with God:

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

1 Samuel 15:22 (NKJV) 22 So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

God is much more interested in our obedience than in our sacrifice! He told us to love one another. He told us to forgive one another.

If I am not right with my brother, I won't be right with my God!

When we come to church and worship God with offense, unforgiveness and hatred in our hearts we only fool ourselves, God can't bless us. We need to do

what we pray in the Lord's prayer, and forgive those who have trespassed against us so that our Heavenly Father can forgive us.

Paul warned us not to let anger control us. **Ephesians 4:26-27** (NLT) And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

The enemy can't have his way with you unless you allow him to. When we go to sleep angry, we wake up angry, and then we are ready to become more angry. Now we are no longer under the control of the Holy Spirit, we are under control of our anger, and the devil has a foothold!

Start building the wall

IF I DON'T DEAL WITH OFFENSE QUICKLY, IT WILL LEAD TO ME BEING IMPRISONED BY THAT OFFENSE.

Matthew 5:25-26 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

I believe these are the same people who started out by calling the other "fool". Now, undealt with, the offense is going to result in a prison term behind a wall of separation:

- Separation from the one who we are offended by.
- Eventual separation from God.

Use the boards and create an example of how the wall of sin is built up

BREAK DOWN THE WALL!

2 Corinthians 5:18 (NKJV) Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of Reconciliation,

The wall of offense is broken down by following the example of Jesus Christ.

- He reconciled us to the Father through His own shed blood.
- He didn't put Himself first.
- He loved those who were going to kill Him and He died for them.

We were made free when Father God forgave us.

- We free ourselves and we free those who have offended us when we are willing to forgive as our heavenly Father was.

But you will say, "I'm tired of forgiving them" and God's word reminds us:

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven".

That's for each offense!

Jesus followed that statement with the parable of the debtor and concluded it like this:

Matthew 18:32-34 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Isn't that the same outcome as those who were going to court in Matthew 5?

We need to forgive! God's word teaches that mercy begets mercy. If I show mercy, I will receive it.

CONCLUSION

Not taking offense and not being caught up in unforgiveness **is enabled by having a transformed heart**. When we received Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we received mercy way beyond what we will ever need to give. We became a new person.

If we are unable to let go of offense, if we are unable to forgive, then we possibly don't have the transformed heart that we should have and we need to re-look at our decision to follow Jesus. The blessing this morning is this:

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let us spend some time at the altar this morning asking the Lord to tear down the walls of offense and unforgiveness that we have allowed to be built in our lives. Free people, free people, This morning as we come, we can be free and we can make others free as we let go, drop our issues and forgive.