

I. Intro

A. Text: **Prov. 18:19**

A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle. (Prov. 18:19)

B. Recap: John's Posture Toward Jesus

1. Offense toward other starts with offense toward God
2. Product of Misguided Expectations
3. Offended People Get Offended

C. The Kingdom of God will be advanced

1. God builds His Kingdom relationally
 - a. The church was birthed out of relationship
 - b. Humility Tempered By Community
 - c. Mercy Given Without Merit
 - d. Focus on "One Another"
 - i. **Rom. 12:10:** *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another.*
 - ii. **Gal. 5:13:** ¹³ *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
 - iii. **Eph. 4:1-3:** *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
 - iv. **Eph. 4:32:** ³² *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*
 - v. **Col. 3:12-13:** ¹² *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with*

one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

e. Better Together

D. Suggested Material: Steven Furtick, Allen Hood, John Bevere

1. Enemy's Agenda: Destruction
 - a. The thief cometh not, but to steal, kill and destroy (**Jn. 10:10**)
2. Strategy: Division
 - a. A house divided against itself cannot stand (**Matt. 12:25**)
 - b. The strength of the sheep is in the shepherd and in the pack.
3. Tactic: Offense

Offend (skandalizo #4625): *to reach out and trip, to ensnare, to entrap, to cause one to distrust someone who is trustworthy, to entice to sin, to cause to stumble.*

II. Body

A. Offense Creates Strongholds

A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle. (Prov. 18:19)

1. One Another Calling, but offended brother erects walls of protection.
 - a. **Rom. 12:19:** ¹⁹ *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*
 - b. It's God's place to protect and avenge.
 - c. We were called to vulnerability, accessibility and humility.
 - i. Self-protection exalts self in the rightful place of God.
 - ii. Self-protection exalts self's ability to protect above that of God.

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2. Strong city is literally a stronghold (a fortress).
 - a. Our strongholds are generally in the mind.
 - i. **1 Cor. 10:4-5:** *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty in God, pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*
 - ii. Imaginations, arguments that oppose the knowledge of God.
 3. One offense at a time, strongholds are like stones that build walls in the mind that are designed to keep the enemy out.
 - a. The problem is that we've misidentified who our enemy is.

*Strongholds don't keep the enemy out if we've misidentified who the enemy is.

- b. Strongholds are very effective for a limited time. But this isolation is deadly in the longterm.

B. Offense Starts off as Protection, but advances into a Prison

A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle. (Prov. 18:19)

1. The Bars not only keep others out, but it traps the offended in.
2. Remember that God called us to community for our survival.
3. God called us into a continuous and open flow.
 - a. **Jn. 7:38:** ³⁸ *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*
 - i. Continuous taking in accompanied, by a consistent pouring out.
 - b. Godly example of the flow of community: Sea of Galilee.
 - i. Constant flow.

c. Ungodly example of an isolated, stagnant believer: Dead Sea.

4. Offense Not Only Isolates Us From Each Other, It isolates us from the Anointing of God.

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

² It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. ³ It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing— Life forevermore. (Ps. 133:1-3)

a. Much of what God wants to do in communion with us individually, he holds back to do it corporately.

i. You love me and you can't stand your brother? (1 Jn. 4:20)

ii. You bring your gifts to the altar (hands up in adoration) and you know you wounded that brother/sister? (Matt. 5:23-24)

b. Disunity, offense stops the flow of the anointing.

c. If the Presence of God is like a river (living water), then offense is like the valve that stops the flow.

i. You didn't just cut your brother or your sister off, You've cut God off.

C. Offense Misleads Believers to be Defensive

¹⁶ "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. (Matt. 10:16)

1. The biblical animal that we are forever linked to is sheep.

a. Notoriously naive.

b. Tender and non-threatening

2. Ever noticed that Sheep don't have any defense mechanisms within themselves?

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3. Only protection for sheep is in their Shepherd and in their unity.
 - a. Called to vulnerability.
 - b. Called to a life of total dependence on another for protection.

D. Offense Produces Spiritual Vagabonds

¹² The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴ They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing (Ps. 92:12-14)

1. Not only are believers likened to sheep, but we are likened to trees/ plants.
2. God's call is for believers to be trees that are planted with a healthy and deep root system, so that much fruit will grow.
 - a. **Question:** *What happens when you constantly uproot a plant or a tree and place it in soil across town because it "looks" better on the surface?*
 - b. **Answer:** *Very possible that the tree will die from shock!*
 - i. *Nothing wrong with transplanting a tree, but it's imperative to allow the root system to develop first.*
 - c. **Question:** *What happens when believers are constantly uprooted and transplanted in soil across town simply because it looks better on the surface?*
 - d. **Answer:** *Very possible that they will suffer from shock and underdeveloped root system.*
 - i. *Nothing wrong with transplanting from one ministry to another, but it's imperative to allow your roots dig down first.*
3. If we transplant a tree (or a believer) simply because the conditions look better on the other side, we could be depriving

that tree (believer) of an opportunity to develop stability and flourish.

- a. Excessive heat and wind forces trees to send their root stems deeper in order to survive.
- b. What started off as adversity ends up being the pathway to great strength and stability.

*Those who are planted... will flourish.

A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. (Prov. 18:1)

- c. We stumble and we leave
4. The enemy would prefer to isolate you and have you running around from pillar to post (because of offense).
 - a. And before you know it, there are no roots.
 - b. And there's no fruit (although you may have an incredible gift).
5. I think we know how Jesus views trees with no fruit?

III. **Conc.**: Offense Is Deadly But Has a Cure

A. **Anonymous Quote**: *Holding on to Offense (and Unforgiveness) is like drinking a bottle of poison and waiting for the person who offended you to die.*

1. Offense is deadly, destructive, divisive and downright foolish.
2. Offense is the tactic that the enemy uses to divide and ultimately destroy.

B. But there is a cure that has 100% success rate

1. **Solution**: Forgive

Forgive: *to send away, to release, to let go.*

C. Jesus, the great Releaser, Empowers us to Release (**Lev. 16**)