

“Living Free from Offense” 2 Samuel 16: 5-14 Sunday 9 AM

Who among us has not known what it is to become the target of someone’s intentional attempts to verbally wound us? Whereas the old children’s saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” may be popular, it could not be farther from the truth. The impact of someone’s verbal assault against us can potentially remain in our memories for decades. Our identities can take severe blows and become misshapen if we put stock in foul things spoken over our lives. Satan traffics in accusation and, if we do not walk in the Spirit, we might become one who speaks his words over others, or one who believe what others have spoken wickedly over us. This message teaches us from the life of King David what it means to overcome days of slander and shaming. It is impossible to always dodge the sinful words of others against us, but it is entirely possible to live free from having perpetually offended hearts. David helps us to see how this refusal of living offended looks in live action.

I. David Became the Target of Someone’s Spite (5-8)

A. Personal attack found him (5) - “When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually.”

David had long ago replaced King Saul in Israel. David, showing mercy, did not destroy all of Saul’s relatives. Years later, in one of the worst seasons of David’s reign, his own son, Absalom, rebelled against David and temporarily took his throne. While David was forced to evacuate the palace, he entered a time of humiliation, heartbreak and loss. It was at this time that a man named Shimei, a distant relative of Saul, arose and began to intentionally heap scorn upon David as he was beginning his time as a fugitive from his own throne. Shimei followed close by David and his entourage and began to assault him verbally with insults, provocation and accusation. How difficult it would have been to endure this treatment in the midst of all the other painful realities that David was being forced to deal with. Shimei’s treatment of David is the perfect example of what it means to “kick a man when he is down.”

B. Public shaming occurred (6) - “And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.”

Did you ever wonder how the phrase “throwing stones” became connected to the practice of insulting someone? Well, here is your answer. Shimei was literally throwing rocks at David and his group, but he was also launching verbal missiles against the displaced King of Israel. Adding to the pain was the reality that this was all happening publicly in the midst of high-positioned and well-respected leaders in Israel. David, the former mightiest man in the land was now leaving like a rejected exile. Everyone heard David’s name being trashed. It is likely that more than just Shimei’s voice was being heard railing against the king. The atmosphere was filled with shame for God’s chosen leader. Not only did David here what was being launched at him, everyone else heard it also. His shame was publicized through the actions of Shimei.

C. Provoking challenges were released (7) - “And Shimei said as he cursed, “Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man!”

David was a skilled warrior who had proven countless times that he was well-able to crush an enemy. One can only imagine how his blood might have boiled as he heard vile Shimei declared him, the one whom God said had a heart like His, to be a worthless man. David was actually suffering due to the actions of his son, Absalom. Shimei was releasing his pent-up rage against the king, motivated by years of resentment that his family was no longer the royal family and David’s family was. David could have snapped Shimei’s neck in a moment of time. He was being slandered, shamed and publicly accused. A lesser man would have silenced that voice with the power of his hands. David resisted retaliation and defense in the hour of his provocation.

D. Preposterous accusations were aired (8) - “The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood.”

Perhaps this is the heaviest kind of attack and accusation: **when your attacker invokes the name of your God against you in your worst season.** David had to hear words that misrepresented the entire situation, twisting the facts in order to unjustly assign God’s displeasure to David’s situation. This is the essence of Satanic accusation. When pain finds the believer, the enemy immediately

accuses God to us, seeking to get us to believe that God has abandoned us and made us his enemy. He tells David that he is getting what he deserves from God. Equally, Satan delights in accusing our own consciences that we have done something wrong to incur the trouble that lands upon us. The enemy is a feverish liar and he will often motivate religiously-spirited people who will invoke God's name over our days of difficulty. It is essential for us to walk in holiness before God. One of the practical reasons is that, when trouble comes, we can do an immediate inventory of our hearts and know with a certainty that there is nothing there which might incur the discipline of the Lord. David understood that Shimei's preposterous accusations were not true. Still, the strong of those words must have been deep.

II. David Denied His Flesh & Trusted God (9-12)

A. He had encouragement to get even (9) - “Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head!”

David's loyal friend and servant, Abishai, encouraged David to silence Shimei. David would not even need to get his own hands dirty – Abishai volunteered to defend David's honor by killing the accuser on the spot. Abishai noted that Shimei was a man of no reputation – a dead dog. Abishai reminded David that he was the king of Israel who would be well within his rights to execute Shimei. Frequently, in your own season of being unjustly opposed, there will be voices in your life which encourage you to get even. Vengeance is a strong temptation. Well-meaning friends will sometimes speak foolish counsel to you, seeking to motivate you to take matters into your own hands and defend your own honor. David must have felt the pull of this offer from his friend. A heart that loved justice was beating in David's chest. What would he do with the encouragement to get even?

B. He had no desire to get even (10-11) - “But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’” 11 And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to...”

We should not be surprised that David firmly declines Abishai's offer.

He tells his friend that he was leaning on the Lord, and remaining obedient to what the sovereign God of Israel was allowing to happen to him. He could completely rest in the reality that God was completely capable of muzzling Shimei. God had not chosen to do so, therefore David humbled himself and looked for God to bring the good which He intended out from the evil that Shimei intended. Additionally, David was dealing with a far greater pain than the hateful words of a man that meant nothing to him. David was feeling the pain of the betrayal and rebellion of his own son, Absalom. David reasoned that, if God could allow Absalom to betray David, how much more should David be willing to accept the spite of Shimei?

C. He knew the Lord was his defense (12) - “It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done to me, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing today.”

Here is the lesson that all of us must hold to when we undergo our own season of being mistreated and misrepresented by others. Believers must abide with Jesus and view their mistreatment from others as an opportunity to partner with Jesus in His sufferings (Philippians 3:10). A maturing Christian will seek to find the gold from Heaven in the attacks from Hell. David understood that this was a test of his own willingness to welcome God to be his lone defense. His words communicate that David was choosing to endure the mistreatment without retaliating. He was confident that God could even bless him for humbling himself and allowing Shimei to continue in his verbal assault. David does not say a single word to Shimei as the little man continued to attack him and throw rocks at him. Like Jesus, David remained silent before his accuser. He rested in the confidence that God would vindicate him. This is an essential test for all of us to pass. We may have all the facts on our side. We may have the right motivations for what we are doing. We might be seeking the honor of Christ in all that we put our hands to. Even if all these things are true, we should not consider ourselves to be immune to personal attacks. We must refuse retaliation. We must wait on the Lord and welcome Him to be our strong defense at the time of his choosing.

III. David Endured the Pain & Passed the Test (13-14)

A. Sometimes circumstances get worse before they get better (13) - “So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust.”

A good lesson rests here in this little verse. We notice that David responded perfectly to the attack, yet the attack did not cease. David did the right thing, but God did not stop the verbal attack on his character. As David continued to leave the area, fleeing the plans of his son, Absalom, Shimei followed the whole way, barking accusation at the loyal man of God. Doing the right thing before the Lord is the appropriate response, even if it has no practical impact on the situation you are enduring. Rocks, dust and enraged verbal assaults pummeled David. The unjust attack did not come to an end, even though David was honoring God in his response.

B. Though some may curse us, some will stand by us (14a) - “And the king, and all the people who were with him...”

I love this footnote – all the people who were with him. While it is true that David was experiencing great loss, betrayal by his own son, and attacks on his character, he was not alone. He had a few who were willing to identify with him in his hour of shame. How good of God to reveal our truest friends when others distance themselves. David had God with him, but he also had some brothers and sisters who stayed by his side.

C. God gives refreshing pools in seasons of attack (14b) - “...arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.”

The weight of what was happening hit David and his companions hard. They were wearied. Not only was the escape from Absalom intense, the actual traveling was physically exhausting. These exiles were weary to the bone. When they all arrived at the Jordan River, they found the space and resources to refresh themselves. Shimei's voice had faded. They were at a safe distance from Absalom's evil intents. Significantly, there was water to refresh their tired bodies. God provided David a page of refreshment in a chapter of discouragement. God never promises to keep us from experiencing difficulty, mistreatment or misrepresentation. Life is full of pain and challenges. Yet, for all who are in Christ, there is much refreshment. Sometimes it is just you and the Lord. Sometimes it looks like your

enemy is winning. In all of this, we press in to Jesus and allow the One who suffered the greatest of injustice to become our defense.

When receiving difficult, hurtful words we should do the following before responding:

- **Consider the source: mules kick, pigs oink. If the character of the person who is doing the speaking is less than honorable, you may be able to dismiss the great majority of what was said.**
- **Take time to discover whether anything that WAS said might be true and learn from it. In a box of rotten apples there may very well be one or two which are edible.**
- **Discipline yourself not to react emotionally, be unwilling to match the verbal assault with one of your own.**
- **Develop a thick skin while continuing to keep a sensitive heart. Chances are, you will go through this again.**
- **Remember that there have been times when we have spoken an unkind word and needed forgiveness. Be quick to give the offender the forgiveness which is asked for.**
- **In mercy, don't keep records when one has spoken against you. God's grace keeps no records of wrongs done to Him by His children. We must do the same to those who have wronged us.**

11:15 NOTES BELOW

**“Releasing Those Who Wronged You”
Matthew 18:21-35 11:15AM**

There is something so crucial in the Christian life that we cannot afford to ignore it, minimize it or deny it. The issue of God’s call for us to forgive those who have wronged us is a Kingdom non-negotiable. The glories attached to the lives of those who live in a posture of non-offense and proactive forgiveness are immeasurable. The other side of the equation presents a life of unforgiveness, bitterness and offense which is accompanied by various levels of inner disturbance or even torment. No teaching of Jesus presents these two potentials more clearly than his parable in Matthew 18. If we are to live the abundant life that Jesus has purchased for us, the gate to enter it includes an ongoing commitment to forgive everyone for everything. To refuse to do so connects us with one of the most cryptic promises Jesus ever released during his earthly ministry. A life of forgiving others promises joy, love, freedom and power. For the one who chooses not to forgive others, there is only the expectation of emptiness, frustration and deep spiritual conflict. This message calls us all to release those who have wronged us.

I. A Common Concern Among Us (21-22)

A. Peter’s calculating mind (21) – “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

Just a short time before, Jesus had instructed His followers on the non-negotiable call for us to live in a willingness to forgive those who wrong us. He even imparted a process that is to be employed when wrongs are committed. He told the offended party to go privately to the offender to initiate forgiveness and restoration. If the offender is unwilling to repent, then a witness (or two witnesses) is to be invited in to strengthen the call to come to agreement about the wrongdoing. If there is still no repentance, the larger group of believers is to be welcomed to join in the call for repentance. When that is not received, the unrepentant party is to be disfellowshipped. Jesus was very clear about His expectation for there to be an ongoing commitment to unity, humility, forgiveness and restoration. It was after this that Peter asks his question above. Peter wants to know how many times he was expected to forgive someone who repeatedly wrongs him. He magnanimously suggests that seven attempts would be enough. He is literally seeking to calculate the extent that he was required to go in order to pursue in grace those who might wrong him. He would receive and answer from Jesus that he did not expect.

B. Jesus' relentless heart (22) – “Jesus said to him, I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

Peter thought he was being spiritual in suggesting that he might be willing to forgive the same person who wronged him up to seven times. Jesus is about to blow Peter's mind by revealing the Kingdom call to unceasing forgiveness of those who wrong us. By using the “seventy-seven times” or, in other translations, “seventy times seven”, Jesus is teaching Peter to never keep count of how many wrongs have been done to him or how many times he has forgiven someone. Peter was thinking logically, Jesus was responding spiritually. Peter was seeking limits to grace, Jesus was asking him to employ limitless grace. While no details are given by Jesus, the expression of his heart is clear: **His followers are always to retain a posture of gracious forgiveness to all who wrong us.** Our flesh wants to offer a hundred protests to this Kingdom principle, but none of them are valid. Jesus wants our hearts completely free of offense. He calls us into a realm of abiding in Him that results in His lavish forgiveness of offenders to become our own. Peter needed to let go of his internal calculator and bend his knees in dependence upon the One who empowers our ability to forgive those who wrong us.

II. A Revelation of Immeasurable Grace (23-27)

A. We begin with an impossible debt (23-25) - "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made."

The stunned look on Peter's face and the faces of the others might have prompted Jesus to offer the parable that follows. He knows that He is stretching them beyond their own abilities when He calls them to live in perpetual forgiveness. The parable begins with a man who owes his king an astronomical amount of money. When the king began to call his accounts to be paid in full, the helpless man who owed him so much money had no ability to pay off his debt. Since there was no ability to repay what was owed, the king enacted hard justice on the man and decreed that the man and his entire family, with all their possessions, to be sold as slaves. They were to remain that way until the debt was fully paid – an event that could never occur due to the vast amount owed.

B. Our ignorant desperation (26) – “So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.”

This man felt the weight of the judgment upon him. Foolishly, he promised to repay it all if the king would just be patient. Scholars tell us that the amount this man owed would be at a level of 200,000 years of an average annual salary. His desperation brought forth a hollow promise that he could never fulfill. He ignorantly believed he had the ability to solve the disaster on his own. His posture was that of a broken man on his knees, begging for mercy.

C. The glorious scandal of mercy (27) – “And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.”

Amazingly, the king completely forgave the debt and set the man and his family free to enjoy a second chance at life. What a merciful king! The measure of **a talent** in this parable was worth about **6,000 denarii**. More significantly, 10,000 (a myriad) was the highest Greek numeral, and a talent the largest unit of currency, so that **10,000 talents was the largest easily described debt**. For comparison, the combined annual tribute of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea around this time was only 600 talents, and one denarius was a day's wages, so that 10,000 talents would be about 200,000 years' wages. Jesus intentionally pictured the debt as utterly impossible to ever be paid by the man. He was doomed on his own. The only hope he had was for the king to release him completely from the debt. Imagine the man's shock when the king did exactly that. This is a beautiful picture of our own salvation. Sin's cost is more than any of us can pay back. We are judged by the King as being sinners without hope, dead in our trespasses. We cannot work it off on our own. We cannot pay God back for our crimes against Him. King Jesus, in mercy, eats our debt. He takes upon Himself the full cost. He then sets us free from the penalty of death and brings us out of our enslavement and makes us children of God. This is the essence of our salvation: Christ the King pays the immeasurable debt that we owed. He then sets us completely free.

III. An Illustration of Gospel Amnesia (28-33)

A. An unavoidable reality for those forgiven (28a) – “But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii...”

You can almost hear the gasp in Jesus' audience when he reveals this shocking response from the man who had just been mercifully loosed from all that he owed the king. The man who was previously on his knees begging now exits his pardon and immediately goes out and demands without mercy that he be repaid a small debt that he is owed by someone else. How could this man do such a thing? Everyone listening would immediately see the heartless treason from the one who had just been forgiven so much. Unfortunately, this response of the pardoned man pictures a reality for many Christians. We, who have been extravagantly pardoned of all that we owe God, have the potential to refuse others who need us to forgive them. Our sins against God are represented by the immeasurable debt of the man who was forgiven and freed by the king. The sins of others against us are represented by the comparatively small debt owed to the man who had been granted his freedom. The shock can be summed up with the question, "How could anyone who had been forgiven so much withhold forgiveness from someone who owed him comparatively little?" For Christians to refuse to forgive those who wrong us is to suffer from Gospel amnesia. We forget the debt that Jesus removed from us at His own expense. When we do that, we are sadly positioned to withhold forgiveness from those who have failed us. This is an illegal move in the kingdom of God and Jesus is about to throw a flag to stop the game.

B. A failure to release what was received (28b-30) - "...and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt."

Note the rage and violence that the man employs. There is zero mercy. This man asks for the exact thing that the forgiven man had earlier asked his king. Interestingly, the man begging here could have actually paid off the debt if he had been granted patience. It was a manageable sum. Yet the man who had been forgiven the enormous amount by his king refused to give any grace or mercy to the one who owed him. In the end, the second man was cast into debtor's prison by the first man. We can all see the *wrongness* of what the forgiven man did. He would end up regretting his refusal to free the one who needed his mercy.

C. A clear exposing of Kingdom inequity (31-33) – "When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I

forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

The unforgiving man's fellow servants observed this injustice, they reported it to the king. The king now released justice upon the one who had formerly received mercy. The expectation of the king was that the one who had received mercy and forgiveness should extend it to others. He interrogates the man who appears before the king the second time. He tells him what he should have done as one who had been lavishly forgiven and freed. The king's indignation is undeniable. He is furious with them unforgiveness in the man. He took it as a slight to his own royal position. The teaching is clear from Jesus: those who have been forgiven must be *forgivers*.

IV. The Cryptic Warning for Us to Consider (35)

A. The parable ends (34) – “And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.”

The man is incarcerated because of his lack of mercy and forgiveness. The Greek word translated jailers here is more intense in the original language. It describes a cruel jailer who inflicts pain and torment upon his prisoners. Jesus ends the parable with an uncomfortable picture of a man who had been free and forgiven being brought under the hand of one who would torment him for his lack of giving what he had freely received. This is intense. The experience of many Christians is that, when they will not fully release and forgive those who have wronged them, they end up living day to day with some sense of inner torment. Fear, insecurity, isolation, anger, depression and confusion can afflict those who have been freely forgiven by God for their sins. God commands and expects His children to forgive as we have been forgiven (**Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13**). A refusal to do so exposes a heart that is not fully enlightened to the extent of God's grace which we have received. We underestimate the debt we owed God that He has removed from off of us in His mercy. When we live with an unwillingness to extend even a lesser level of forgiveness to those who have wronged us, we are suffering from Gospel amnesia. We are just like the unforgiving man in the parable and, as he was, we will experience some level of confinement and affliction in our souls. When we release those who have wronged us, we grow in our spirits in Christlikeness and experience freedom, joy, peace, love and victory. The man in the parable failed this calling. We cannot afford to do the same.

B. The reality continues (35) – “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Let's not try to dilute what Jesus says here. He says that the Father will operate in the same manner that the king operated in the parable. Any attempt to make this final statement say anything less than what it says is to misrepresent the intention of Jesus and to tamper with the Word. Plainly, Jesus states that, in some undefined manner, God will turn us over to some form of inner torment if we refuse to extend forgiveness to others after we have received such lavish forgiveness from Him. May we all examine our hearts to see if there are any pockets of offense, any hidden corners of bitterness or any bold refusals to give complete forgiveness to those who have incurred a debt with us. We must let them go. We must pardon them. In doing so, we exit a potential life-sentence among the tormenters. We choose to go free.