

Yes Please

Getting Over Offense

December 4, 2022

Today we're learning to take the grace that God gives to transform the way that each of us lives. Because there's only *one* real roadblock to receiving; and to move it, we gotta answer *this*: **Does God ever offend you?** Well, have you heard the way He talks?! It can feel like every time you open the Bible, God's got a new burn for humanity that really cuts us to the core.



Remember *this* dis we heard last week:

The heart is deceitful above *all* things and *beyond* cure. – Jeremiah 17:9 NIV

Ouch! All things, *huh?* Incurable, *huh?* That's gotta be like a *figure* of speech, it can't be *that* bad, right Paul? ...*Paul?*

[Sorry buddy, but:] As it is written [about humans]: "There is *no one* righteous, not even *one*; there is *no one* who understands ... All have turned away, they have *together* become worthless; there is *no one* who does good, not even *one*. Their *throats* are open graves; their *tongues* practice deceit... Their *feet* are swift to shed blood; ... and the way of *peace* they do not know." - Romans 3:10-18 NIV

Okay, okay – *that's enough!* You're starting to hurt our feelings. But *why?* This is just a collection of statements, *right?* "Well, **it's the judgment in the words that hurts; that's what offends me.**" Okay then buckle up, I got three *more* judgments that should really fire you up:

Back to the Future is the best movie ever made, people should be nicer to each other, and I could stand to lose some weight. *Everybody fuming?!* No? That's because there's a subtle difference between *disagreeable* and *offensive*. And it's not just *judgment*, it's who wears the robe.

Disagreeable statements are tolerable because we get to sit in the judge's seat; even when *we're* being judged. So whether it's *movies*, *manners*, or *me*, the truth and consequences are in my hands. **Offensive statements are intolerable because someone else gets to sit in the judge's seat;** specifically when *we're* being judged. And then, *all* truth and consequences are *out* of our hands.

We're still *in control* when someone else judges *another*, they judge *themselves*, *you* judge them, or *you* judge you; but we lose control and **things go from disagreeable to offensive when they judge you.** And that's what makes a lot of religions and philosophies so *palatable*, they either let you *stay* in the judge's seat or steer clear of judging you altogether. Which is why:

The message of the cross [aka "the offense of the cross" Gal 5:11] is foolishness to *those* who are perishing, but to *us* who are being saved it is the power of God ... but we *preach* Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles – 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23

Therefore, to you who *believe*, [Jesus is] precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected [Christ] has *become* the chief cornerstone," [through His work on the cross] and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." – 1 Peter 2:7-8 NKJ



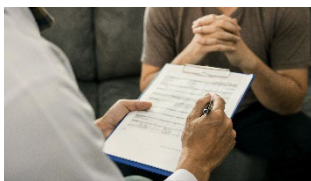
God's solution to the human predicament isn't just *disagreeable*, but *profoundly offensive* because it means that *intolerable* judgment of us – by someone *other* than *ourselves*. Because **if we need Jesus on the cross we're not just imperfect, but inferior**. It means we're *guilty*, and in *need of grace*! And that's *infuriating*! Cuz it completely undermines the power we pretend to have. First consider the guilt; **Jesus dying for us on the cross means we did something wrong**. Cuz if *He* was paying a penalty meant for *us*, *we were* the guilty party. But with the verdict already *rendered*, we're robbed of any *power* in the judgment. It's like a *friend* paying *your* parking ticket even though *you* wanted to go argue your innocence. *You can't*. The case is *closed*, the court doesn't care, and the record will *always* show *you* at *fault* and your *friend* as the *fixer*. And now consider that grace; **Jesus dying for us on the cross means we couldn't make things right**. Because if *we were* in need of *His* grace, the solution was beyond *our* ability. It's *Him* judging *us* as too weak to solve our own problem! And with the penalty already paid in *full*, we're robbed of any *power* in the *solution*. The court doesn't want any more money for your parking tickets because your *friend* took on the debt.

So now, we're stuck! Because **if we pay or thank them, we'll just be agreeing that we're needy and guilty; weak and wrong!** And like Bruce said last week, "No thanks" to that! So we'll not only withhold our gratitude, but work harder to *flaunt* and *flex* our fake muscles to convince ourselves and everyone else, *we have no* need for help. We haven't done anything wrong and don't owe nobody nuttin'! So everybody can just keep their judgments to themselves!

But, for the sake of argument, **what if all the offensive statements and claims of the Bible were true about us?** What if "There is no one righteous, not even one" and we conceded, as Paul did:

Like *the rest*, we were *by nature* deserving of wrath. - Ephesians 2:3 NIV

Well, **if we agree with a judge other than us, then at least we're sharing the bench**. And remember, us judging ourselves *isn't* offensive. As a matter of fact, **if being wrong and weak is judged true by you, it's not offensive, it's constructive!**



It's like receiving a doctor's diagnosis; we can be *upset* or *angry* – but we don't take *offense* – because we know what they said about us is true. And because we trust their judgment above our own on certain matters, we know to agree with things *we don't* see. Like the way it takes the *bad* news in our test results serve a *good* purpose in planning our treatment.

[Well] The law was brought in so that the *trespass* might *increase*. But where sin *increased*, *grace* increased all the *more*, so that, just as sin [the bad news in our test results] reigned in death, so also *grace* [our treatment plan] might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [And cure us!] - Romans 5:20-21 NIV

In the same way it takes our *diagnosis* to reveal the treatment that can save our lives, **our guilt reveals the grace that can save our souls!** So, all we have to do is give God the *authority* to make judgments about *us* – the same way we do with doctors. Which means, **we have to develop a trust for His judgments of us.** Because if we can see why we should agree with God – then we could admit *guilt*, and accept *grace*, and **Jesus on the cross won't offend us, it'll mend us.**



So **can you see your guilt?** My youngest daughter used to sneak snacks when she was a buck-toothed toddler. And one day I opened the fridge and found a Costco block of cheese with two long grooves carved it. I called her in and had her smile to do some forensic investigation. And after a perfect match, I asked, “Did you eat some cheese?” “Oh, no daddy, not me.” So I yelled to the whole house, “Everybody, be on the lookout for a 30 pound rat!” And she skipped away like a smooth criminal. *That's us!* The evidence of our guilt is so staggeringly obvious that it's laughable to think otherwise! And here's why: **sin just means missing the mark!**

Therefore, guilt is shown in every dart thrown outside the *bullseye*. **We're guilty of sin if we're imperfect.** All that's being asked is for us to **admit that our actions are in conflict with our best self.** Have you ever made a single mistake? *Then you're guilty of imperfection!* That's it! And why the big *deal*? Well... everything *else* was perfect until *we* came along. So, even *one* tiny mistake ruins *that* label for all creation. In the same way a single speck of dust makes a cleanroom *unclean*:

Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just *one* point is guilty of breaking *all* of it. – James 2:10 NIV



And c'mon, *look at your cheese!* We know we're imperfect; so the question is, can we get perfect *back*? And do *we* do it? Or, like Christ on the cross *implies*, **can you see you are in need of God's grace?** Now when *I* was a bucktoothed child, I once made a mess that I was determined to clean up before my parents saw. And believing I knew how mom did it, I grabbed the ammonia and bleach and went to work. And not only did I make a bigger mess, but I accidentally made mustard gas and nearly killed myself with the fumes! *That's us too!* **We'll convince ourselves we can clean up our lives even if it kills us!** But we don't know what we *don't know!*

It's *vital* to know that we *don't* know how to do what it takes to save ourselves. **We need to admit our need is beyond our ability.** Since the beginning of time, humanity as worked to *understand* and *preserve* our lives. And what do we have to show for all our effort? *More* questions and the *same* mortality! Because of the same self-sufficient stubbornness at work:

The people of Israel, who pursued the *law* as the way of righteousness, have *not* attained their goal. *Why not?* Because they pursued it *not* by faith but as if it were by *works*. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. [The need for God's grace] – Romans 9:32-33 NIV

Listen, deep down we *all* know we can't save *ourselves*. Because we've *all* experienced what it's like to live life solely under our *own* power; it's *confusing, overwhelming*, and always ends in *death!* In fact, even if you go your whole life convinced of *your* self-sufficiency, look at how God designed those *last* few years to *prove* to you, you're *wrong* and *weak!* And that's Him being kind because **we're saved by surrender!** **God's plan for *this* place is to get us to *give up*** because *that's* the single step that pushes us to stop *pretending*, admit our *problem*, and receive our *treatment*.

If we claim to be *without* sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we *confess* our sins, He is *faithful and just* and will forgive us our sins and purify us from *all* unrighteousness [aka restore perfection]. - 1 John 1:8-9 NIV



So, despite how I lived in my 20s, the truth is **you don't beat disease by avoiding the doctor you beat it by letting him treat you!** And that means trusting what he sees and agreeing to what he says you need! And if you're offended at all by the diagnosis, that just means you're still trying to play judge and pretend *you* have power! But **we're too self-centered to wear the robe and not self-sufficient enough to save ourselves!** I think John Stott nailed the summary of our situation:



“The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man.”



That's the story so far, and if you can concede to agree with *this* diagnosis, you can start to see the good news in the treatment!



You see, at *just* the right time, when we were still *powerless*, Christ *died* for the ungodly. [Do you get that?!] - Romans 5:6 NIV

That should be the sugar that helps the medicine go down! Because the *right* time was when we were powerless sinners; aka *weak* and *wrong!* And do you see what that means? If we *did* do something wrong, and we *couldn't* make things right, and it took Christ *crucified* to solve the problem, *we're burying the lead!* **The real story isn't about how awful we are, but how valuable!**

God, Himself, was willing to do *whatever* it took to save *us* – which means **there's something else we can't see about us and our future, that is so valuable the only human who ever didn't have to die – chose to die – because saving us was worth it!** And that's not *offensive* that's *encouraging, empowering, and exciting!* That's *constructive!* Because the more you see where you went wrong, the more you see your value soar! So, when you look at the cross, don't take offense at the massive debt of your guilt, take heart at the massive price paid for you! And when God offers to pay your bill, take Him up on it with a *“Yes please!”* instead of *“No thanks.”*