

Robert Pope: Missionary to Indonesia. God has no favourites. The gospel is for everyone and major paradigm shifts are possible – for parents' thoughts towards their children (e.g. Jesus' parents being amazing at Jesus); Acts 6:7 & Acts 15:5 - for 'large numbers of priests became obedient to the faith;' see Acts 10:24-34. Peter's 'Jewish only' approach was radically shifted upon the revelation that God has no favourites – loves every group. Fast forward 2000 years – the gospel is for every group – consider the shift in the Muslim thinking per the facts relevant to Robert's testimony of Indonesia. Acts 11:2 – (Jewish) 'believers' criticised Peter – No favourites still stands firm and always will. This gospel is for everyone.

The Bait of Satan: DVD Message: John Bevere.

¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:10 – (living in 'last days' context now): 'And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.' See the process:

- **Many:** vast number, majority
- **Offended**
- **Betrayal**
- **Hatred**

Proverbs 18:19 'A brother offended *is harder to win* than a strong city, and contentions *are* like the bars of a castle.' (Strong cities had walls for protection: to keep out those who are against you and to allow in only those who are for you). **Walls** – NT: strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – imaginations, reasonings, high things – *thought processes contrary to the Word of God (according to His very nature – God does not just have love, He is love). Love gives and gives; offence protects and protects and leads to betrayal.*

Betrayal seeks my benefit at the expense of one I have covenant relationship with – this is why it leads to abandonment in relationships. Note: by keeping someone out, we keep Jesus out. Betrayals lead to **hatred** (not always associated with anger, but does mean 'love less') and **THEN** (after massive offence) false prophets rise up and deceive **many** (the many, are those who are offended. Offence is therefore a breeding ground

for deception). Note: wolves in sheep's clothing – wolves travel in packs; they isolate the sheep from the flock. Proverbs 18:1 – 'A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment.' Isolation occurs in the soul.

Lawlessness: (Gk: 'anomia' – a law unto yourself – developing thoughts contrary to Scripture) **abounding, the love of many grow will grow cold.** The love here is 'agape' – not eros, storge or phileo, but the love of God, the same love that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. These scriptures are speaking of the Church but **he who endures to the end shall be saved** (Christians).

Believers set themselves up for fall, for offence with expectations. The higher the expectation (closer the person) the greater the hurt.

Two types of offended believers; those who are genuinely hurt and those who think they are genuinely hurt but have inaccurately discerned.

Deal with first type: if you have been genuinely mistreated, do you have the right to be offended?

Consider what we did to Jesus? An offended person who cannot forgive has forgotten what he/she has been forgiven of. See Peter's magnanimous question: Matthew 18:21 and Jesus' response that our forgiveness, like His, must be inexhaustible. (Parable of the unjust steward – debt owed to him was incomparably small to the debt he had been released from). We were deserving of hell.

Cannot be too proud to admit offence - love can grow cold; get dry. **Am I offended?** If so, I need help (unforgiveness leads to torment). Acts 24:16 '*This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*'

What to do:

- **Always strive (exercise) ... some** offences wound and must be treated, but if we are not in the Word, not in prayer, not in fellowship – we are not in shape and can be injured.

'Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing *can make them stumble.'
Psalm 119:165 (*nothing can offend them). Must exercise:

- Matthew 5:44 Pray for those who abuse you...

- Psalm 35:11 ¹¹ Ruthless witnesses come forward; they question me on things I know nothing about. ¹² They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. ¹³ Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting.’ **Pray for these people as if they were family.** (Emotionalism can withhold the depth of prayer – must grow bigger than this).
- Matthew 18 If you brother sins against you, **go to him.** Forgiveness occurred at the Cross. ‘Father forgive them’ – this was for generations to come. Forgiveness is due with or without apology. Create an atmosphere for the other person to want to apologise: it the goodness of God that leads men to repentance... 2 Peter 3:9. Reconciliation was/is always the goal. Mark that day for blessing – mature love loves with intensity beyond the sin that is apparent.
- Realise that offences must come Luke 17:1 (it is impossible they can’t) – we have the choice of whether we become stronger or bitter. **Offence** Gk: ‘skandalon’ is the bait on the trap (if taken leads being taken captive by Satan – ²⁶and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.’ 2 Timothy 2:26

‘Forgiveness releases waters that are tainted with bitterness’ John Bevere. It might seem legitimate to be hurt but never justifies the building of walls. If we don’t respond to conviction, we will become harder (note: not stronger): ‘Today if you hear His voice, don’t harden your hearts’ Hebrews 3:15

- Pray from the depths of the heart: (along the lines of):
 - Father in heaven, thank You for speaking with me today. Lord, I have sinned by holding unforgiveness and I understand two wrongs don’t make a right (forgive me for trying to justify my offence). I repent and I release unforgiveness. Forgive me and cleanse me. And now, Father I thank You I am clean and from my heart I choose to forgive
 - ..
 - ..
 - .. I release them in Jesus’ name. Father, forgive them, I forgive them.
 - Fill me with Your love afresh in my heart, in Jesus’ name, I thank You and praise You.’