

PLEASE OPEN YOUR BIBLES TO Matthew 11

The message I have for you today could very well save your life

When you became a Christian, you became Satan’s enemy.

- **His goal is to destroy you.**
- **His goal is to pull you away from knowing God’s love**
- **He is relentless**
- **He has come to kill, steal, and destroy**

The book of Acts tells as the church was growing

- **The enemy attacked from the inside out.**

READ Matthew 11: 1-6

The word for “offended”

G4624

Σκανδαλίζω skandalizō *skan-dal-id'-zo*

To “scandalize”; **from G4625**; to *entrap*, that is, *trip up* (figuratively *stumble* [transitively] or *entice* to sin, apostasy or displeasure): - (make to) offend.

v.6 **“John you will be blessed if you are not scandalized by what I am doing”**

Comes from the root word

G4625

Σκάνδαλον skandalon *skan'-dal-on*

A “scandal”; probably from a derivative of G2578; a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snare* (figuratively *cause* of displeasure or sin): - occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumbling-block.

Illustration: Stick used to hold up a box, tied to the stick is a string with a piece of bait in order to catch some animal. They grab the bait, it pulls the string...

v.6 **“John you will be blessed if you are not scandalized by what I am doing”**
-That is to be put under the box – if you don’t take the bait

John the Baptist

- **Had seen the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)**
- **Preached about the Messiah coming after him**
- **Saw what Jesus was doing (hanging with prostitutes, tax collectors, sinners)**
- **Asked, “Is this really who I preached about?”**

Many of us wonder, “Is this really what Christianity is all about?”

We find out that our perception is different than reality

Un-realistic expectations: vacations, marriages, new puppies...

Reality sets in: Vacations (it rains), Marriages (fights), Puppies (chew shoes)

This bait stick, “skandalon”, John was about to take!

- **Everything John thought Jesus would do, He didn’t**
- **Everything John though Jesus wouldn’t do, He did do**
- **John is about to take the bait & the box is about to get him!**

Proverbs 18:19 A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city;
And *such* contentions are like the bars of a castle.

I have gone to people to deal with offences and they don’t want to deal with them

- **They are under the box**
- **Root: Un-realistic expectations**

READ 2 Kings 5

Naaman the leper

- **Commander of the army of the king of Syria & a leper**
- **Wanted to be healed by the prophet Elisha**
- **Was willing to pay \$3,840, 000 to be healed.**
- **Thought that he would show up in all his regalia and be healed**
- **Fixed his mind on what a minister will/should do for him**
- **Instead he is told to dip in the river 7 times**
- **Elisha never even meets with him...sends his servant to tell him**
- **OFFENDED he leaves**
- **Exhorted to do what is required he dips 7 times and is healed**
- **Almost missed his healing because of an offense.**

“BUT I THOUGHT...” said John the Baptist
“BUT I THOUGHT...” said Naaman the leper
“BUT I THOUGHT...” we say when church doesn't go our way

When you feel the stick starting to shake, get out of there: QUICKLY!

- **Because it is difficult to get out from under the box.**

THREE REASONS PEOPLE ARE SCANDALIZED

1.) Personal Opinions

- a. Those who are the most opinionated are the most offended.**
- b. Opinions are an “I THOUGHT”**
- c. They are just preferences, but not always right.**

2.) Personal Advantage

- a. What can I get out of it**
- b. Looking for the day when I come into “glory”**
- c. Someone else's assessment of who you are**
- d. May not line up with your assessment of who you think you are**
- e. Pro 18:16** “A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men.”
- f. If you are just looking out for you, you will be under the box!**

3.) Personal Convenience

- a. Comfortable/carefully planned lifestyles**
- b. They change when we come into the Kingdom of God**
- c. Gospel requirements are not convenient**
- d. Jesus calls us to a radical lifestyle.**

- **“Personal Opinions” is the most common of the three**
- **“Personal Advantage” is the most powerful of the three**
- **“Personal Convenience” is the most subtle of the three**

THREE SYMPTOMS OF WHEN YOU ARE ABOUT TO TAKE THE BAIT

1. Disillusioned

- a. Which implies you were first illuminated about something**
- b. Ex: Marriage, new job, first home**

Question: Do you find yourself saying often. “BUT I THOUGHT”?

WATCH OUT: You're about to get under the box!

2. Disenchantment

- a. John 6:53 Jesus speaks about eating flesh and drinking blood
- b. This doesn't settle with our understanding (or the disciples!)
- c. The more you grow in the Lord you can become disenchanting.
- d. Jesus isn't doing what we think He should be doing
- e. John 6:61 But Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said unto them, **Does this cause you to stumble?**

Question: Do you feel the stick starting to tremble?

WATCH OUT: You're about to get under the box!

3. Disengagement

- a. John 6:66 From this *time* many of His disciples went back into the things behind, and walked no more with Him.
- b. When scandalized, we are tempted to get out of relationships
- c. Leave me alone: in churches, families, marriages, friends
- d. An incident trips the stick and the box comes down
- e. And people will stay under the box for years¹

Question: Do you find yourself starting to get out of relationships?

WATCH OUT: You're about to get under the box!

That Disillusionment, Disenchantment, Disengagement

- Turns to bitterness and you continue to talk about it for years!
- You end up living under the box for years!
- And it takes your life!

¹John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brothers. He who does not love *his* brother abides (remains, dwells, continues, tarries, endures) in death.

Living under the box is a life of death!

Jesus said in Matthew 18:7 "Woe to the world because of offenses! (Because of skandalon, stumbling blocks.) For offenses must come; but woe to the man to whom the offenses come"

- The bait will be there for the taking, they will come
- There will always be opportunities for us to be offended.

SOURCES FOR OFFENSES SO THAT WE CAN BE ON OUR GUARD

1. MISCONDUCT OF A LEADER OR BELIEVER WE HOLD IN HIGH ESTEEM
 - a. It is hard to start going to a new church and trust leadership
 - b. “Who can I trust?”
 - c. **BUT: We are to follow them as they follow Christ**
 - d. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,
2. PRESUMPTUOUS PROPHECY & WEIRD FORMS OF GUIDANCE
 - a. **Satan sends people who tell us things claiming they heard from God.**
 - b. **Mark 13:22** For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will give *miraculous* signs and wonders in order to seduce, if possible, even the elect.
3. PROMISED OR CLAIMED HEALINGS
 - a. I believe healing is for today and have seen God heal people
 - b. **BUT: Sometimes God doesn't heal this side of heaven**
 - c. When you find yourself asking “Why God?”
 - d. You may be setting yourself up to be scandalized,
 - e. To be under the box
4. TRIBULATIONS & PERSECUTIONS
 - a. Greater tribulations are coming to the church
 - b. We can get offended with God
 - c. I've had to watch out for the box sometimes daily
 - d. “Why are you allowing this...?”
5. TAKING UP THE OFFENSE OF OTHERS
 - a. Happens in church a lot
 - b. Talking about what that pastor, elder, brother did to you
 - c. The listeners take up your offense regarding someone else
 - d. You get it right and they are still offended
 - e. We can be a source of setting up bait for others
 - f. We must be on our guard. Go directly to the one who offended

James 3:16 For where envying and strife *are*, there *is* confusion and every foul deed.

1 Timothy 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except before two or three witnesses.

NOBODY WINS! 1Co 12:26a And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*;

PREVENTIONS & CURES:

1. BE FOREWARNED

- a. **Jesus tells us that God does permit things to come into our lives**
- b. John 16:33 I have spoken these things to you so that you might have peace in Me. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

2. PERSONAL PREPARATION & PRUNING

- a. **Pluck out the things that cause you to stumble, trip**
- b. **Stay away from things that tempt you**
- c. **Stay away from people who gossip**

3. ALLOW GOD TO BE GOD

- a. **Psalm 115:3** But our God *is* in Heaven; He has done whatever He has pleased.
- b. **God doesn't ask your permission or approval or your vote.**
- c. **Exceptions to the Bible is not the rule, but God can do whatever He wants**

4. CARING RELATIONSHIPS

- a. **Develop relationships so when you are offended, you are approachable to let people in to get you out of the box**
- b. **Other who will lift up the box**
- c. **"Come out of there...you can't afford the rent"**

5. GET GOD'S OVERVIEW

- a. **God's perspective**
- b. **Remind yourself that He is working all things together for your good**
- c. **He has delivered you and will deliver you again**
- d. **Realize that whatever we are going through;**
- e. **It is still more painful under the box**

6. DEVELOP A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD: THE BIBLE

- a. **Psalm 119:165** Great peace *is to* those who love Your Law, and *there is* no stumbling block for them.
- b. **Jer 6:17** Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Listen to the sound of the ram's horn. But they said, We will not listen... **21** Therefore so says Jehovah, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall on them; the neighbor and his friend shall perish.

c. OFFENDED: God's Word comes to get us back on track

We need to be on our guard because offenses will come.

An attack from the outside hurts, but when it comes from within it has the potential of affecting the whole church.

1Peter 5:8 Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour,

“LION’S MEAT”

What should we do when an offended person tells us about an offense that happened to them?

1. Don’t take the bait yourself!
2. We need to say to them (with love)
 - a. “Come out from under that box!”
 - b. “I don’t need to know all the details”
 - c. “Go to the one who offended you...”
 - d. “Is this really worth being trapped in bondage under a box?”

What does Jesus want us to do when we’ve been offended?

READ Matthew 18: 15-20, then 21-22, then 35

My Friends,

It’s time to make a Strategic shift from Bondage to Freedom

Time to get out from under the box!

Prayer:

Father:

- Give us grace to come out from under the box
- To clear up the offense
- So that we can grow
- Help us to set a guard so we don’t take the bait
- Help us to be watchful so that we don’t become “Lion’s Meat”

Turn to your neighbor and say:

“Watch Out For The Box!” In Jesus Name!