

**The Key to Freedom from Offense, Anger and Bitterness**  
**Pastor Deborah Oakley - GFC – June 9, 2024**

We're in the last days. How do I know? The Bible. It gives a very clear picture of what things will be like in the end times. In addition to what's going on in places like Israel – the Bible tells us what will be going on in people. For instance, 2 Timothy 3:1-5 tells us:

***There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.***

If those verses don't describe the way a lot of people live today, I don't know what does. Before you think this is only about people in the world, I know some people in the church who are ungrateful, without love and unforgiving. In fact, I think being easily offended and unforgiving are some of the big things Christians struggle with these days.

We're in a series called Greater Freedom and we've been teaching how to shut the door to the devil. So far, we've seen that we shut the door to deception through the Word. We shut the door to dishonor by honoring those in authority. We shut the door to generational curses with the blood of Christ. We shut the door to sin through repentance.

By the way - The first mention of the word sin in the Bible is found in the story of Cain killing his brother Abel. Cain was upset because God accepted Abel's offering, but not his. God tried to warn Cain in Genesis 4:7

***If you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."***

And the same is true for us. Every moment of every day, sin is crouching at our door, waiting for an open door into our lives. Either we master sin, or sin will master us. And many problems we face in our lives happen because sin let it in! We need to be set free of that.

Today my sermon is entitled The Key to Freedom – Shutting the Door to Offense, Anger and Bitterness. Each of these three things – being easily offended, easily angered and slow to forgive will open the door to the devil in our lives. We need to know how to shut those doors and give no place to the devil.

**1- Being easily offended opens the door to Satan**

In Matthew 24:6-14, Jesus was asked about the signs of the end of time. He listed things like wars and famine and pestilence and earthquakes. Then He adds this:

***Then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.***

Jesus tells us that one of the signs of the last days is not dealing with offenses properly. When someone offends us, we must go to them and work it out. If we don't, Jesus said things will get progressively worse as we move from being offended to hatred to having a hard, cold, bitter heart.

Do not minimize the danger of harboring an offense. It will cripple your walk with God. And the opportunities to get offended are practically endless and happen almost daily. In fact, Jesus said in Luke 17:1

***It is impossible that no offenses should come...***

The issue is not "if" you will be offended but what you do "when" you are offended. All of us have opportunities to be offended all the time. Maybe someone didn't follow through on something they said they'd do. Maybe someone doesn't call or text anymore. Maybe leaders make a decision you don't agree with. Maybe your family forgets your birthday or anniversary. Maybe someone gets mad and takes it out on you.

The list of ways to get offended is endless. But how you respond to offenses will determine your destiny. How you handle offenses will affect your relationships with people. How you handle offenses will affect your relationship with God. And how you handle offenses will either open or close the door to the devil in your life!

Christians should not be easily offended!

If you are easily offended – you will be hurt or upset most of the time.

If you are easily offended – you will shut people out of your life.

If you are easily offended – life is going to be miserable for you.

If you are easily offended – life is going to be miserable for those who are close to you.

If you are easily offended – Satan will have an open door into your life.

One of the most common offences we have encountered has to do with boundaries. Many years ago, there was a couple in the church that really hurt us. They made false accusations about us and left the church angry.

That wasn't as difficult to deal with as the fact that one of our very close members and friends was very close to this couple. So, even though they recognized the false accusations, they remained friends with this couple who lied about us. They set a totally different boundary than we wanted them to.

Now let me tell you, we could have been very offended. We could have said “If you choose to stay friends with this person who lied about us and hurt us...then we can’t be friends anymore.” That would have been a very bad decision. People hurt us all the time. If we expected our friends to have nothing to do with people who hurt us, they would be friendless.

And I’ll tell you now that it was love that guided their decision and ours. We loved both couples. We wanted what was God’s best for both of them. And we trusted our friends. So, instead of getting offended we chose love. And we are still close friends to this day.

The truth is we can’t dictate other peoples’ boundaries or get offended if their boundaries are different than ours. But here’s the sad thing. Many people choose offence instead of love. They expect everyone to see things their way and if they don’t, they’re done with them. Or, they’re just easily offended all the time. My brothers and sisters, this should not be! This is so important that Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24

***Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.***

Jesus is telling us that if we are having problems in our relationships we should stop worshipping until we get things right with other people. Whose responsibility is it to make sure you are right with other people? Yours. Biblically, you’re never off the hook. The ball is always in your court. If you have wronged someone, it’s your responsibility to work it out. If someone has wronged you, it’s your responsibility to work it out. Don’t wait for someone else to initiate. Do all you can to work things out. Romans 12:18 says:

***If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.***

Don’t wait for years to go to them. I’ve had people do that to me. We’ve had people say to us: “I just want you to know it has taken years, but I have forgiven you.” I said, “Forgiven me? For what?” They tell us what offended them and then say, “But I’ve forgiven you.” What do you say to that? Thanks?

When someone has no knowledge that you have harbored something against them for years, I don’t think you need to dump it on them. You can get it right between you and the Lord.

When someone offends you, you should go to them right away and say, “What you did offended me.” We would have said, “We’re so sorry. Forgive us. We never intended to hurt you.” But people who don’t do that stay bitter for years.

Do not minimize the danger of not dealing with offenses in a biblical manner. If

you don't, the door to Satan will open wider and an offense will turn into anger and bitterness. That only opens the door more.

Let me add, I'm not saying there's never a time to separate from someone. But if you are hanging on to the offense and don't have love in your heart, you might be making a wrong decision.

## **2- Being easily angered opens the door to Satan**

Ephesians 4:26-27 says:

***Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.***

I see several truths here.

- **It's possible to be angry and not sin**

Some Christians think that all anger is sinful. But it can't be – there are many Bible verses about God getting angry. And if God gets angry – anger in itself cannot be wrong.

We need to distinguish between the feeling of anger and our response to anger. Anger is just a feeling, an emotion – it's not necessarily right or wrong. How you handle your anger determines if it is right or wrong. We cannot always control the feeling of anger – but with God's help – we can overcome “losing it” and –

- **We can control our response to anger**

Ephesians 4:27 in the New Living Translation says – ***Don't sin by letting anger control you.***

We either control our anger or our anger controls us! Some people use anger to control others. Other people get out of control when they are angry. They usually try to justify themselves and excuse their anger. They say things like: “That's just the way I am, I've always been this way – that's my personality – I just can't help it.” Or “You made me lose it. It's your fault.”

The fact is – people can do things that make you mad, but you're responsible for your response. You have just responded in the flesh in an out-of-control way for so long that it seems like you have no choice anymore.

The truth is we were all born with a sinful nature. It cannot be controlled – it must be crucified. You must take your anger to the cross and die to yourself in this area. With God's help, you can control your anger. But...

- **If we don't control our anger, it will give the devil a place in our lives**

Again, Ephesians 4:26-27 says: Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

Handling anger sinfully gives the devil ground in our lives.

Handling anger righteously gives God ground in our lives.

I want to give ground to God, not Satan.

Where Satan takes ground, he destroys everything in his path.

There are people who have destroyed their marriages – their families – their jobs – their health and their lives – through uncontrolled anger.

There's a high cost to anger!

Uncontrolled anger will cause you to miss out on God's promises and blessings for your life.

Moses did not enter the Promised Land because his anger caused him to misrepresent God.

If the ax is not laid to the root of anger – it will grow – and the door will open even wider to Satan and will hurt many others.

3- Bitterness opens the door to Satan

Hebrews 12:14-15 says:

***Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.***

If we do not deal with offenses properly, it will turn into anger.

If we do not deal with anger properly, it will turn into bitterness.

And bitterness will defile everyone around us.

This is serious! Bitterness comes from unforgiveness and unforgiveness gives Satan an open door into our lives. In 2 Corinthians 2:10-11, the apostle Paul said:

***Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.***

Unforgiveness is a device of Satan – a strategy to hold us back in life. And if we choose not to forgive – it gives Satan an advantage over us! Life is hard enough as it is. I don't want to live with my enemy having an advantage over me. I want the power of God in my life and that means I must do things God's way. That includes forgiveness.

If we don't forgive our family, Satan has an open door into our homes.

If we don't forgive our co-workers, Satan has an open door at our work.  
If we don't forgive each other, Satan has an open door into our church.

We must understand that there are consequences for unforgiveness. It will affect us spiritually, emotionally and even physically. But here's the biggest consequence: Matthew 6:14-15 says:

***For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.***

Unforgiveness is serious. Jesus said we are forgiven by God based on the way we forgive others. We will be forgiven AS – just like – in the same way – to the same degree – that we forgive others.

If we forgive a little, we will be forgiven a little.

If we forgive a lot, we will be forgiven a lot.

If we forgive completely, we will be forgiven completely.

If we don't forgive at all, we will not be forgiven by God at all.

Yet, so many times we choose not to forgive others. We choose to hold offenses against them. We choose to make them pay. What we fail to realize is that we are hurting ourselves more than them. When we try to make others pay – it ends up costing us.

Unforgiveness puts us in a prison.

Unforgiveness keeps you bound to the one who wronged you.

Unforgiveness gives the one who wronged you power over you.

Why would you want to do that?

So – what's the key to freedom? What shuts the door to offense, anger and bitterness?

#### **4- The key to freedom is forgiveness.**

One reason people don't want to forgive is that they want the person who wronged them to pay for it.

Forgiveness is giving up the right to make you pay for what you did to me.

Forgiveness is giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me.

Forgiveness is giving up getting back at you for what you did to me.

So, how do we forgive? First, we must remember how much God has forgiven us. Ephesians 4:32 tells us:

***Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.***

How has Christ forgiven us? Freely you have received forgiveness – so freely forgive. You’ve been forgiven repeatedly, so forgive repeatedly. God is saying: since I forgave you, you must forgive others.

I realize that forgiveness is not easy. Forgiveness is a process that only God’s grace can accomplish in us. But we must forgive others if we want to experience forgiveness. We must forgive others if we want to shut the door to the devil.

Some of you have had terrible wrongs done to you. Someone may have played you or betrayed you – hurt you or deserted you – cheated on you or beat on you – neglected you or rejected you – used you or abused you – defied you or lied to you.

Those things hurt. But you have a choice today. You can choose to not forgive. You can hang on to the offense. But if you do, you will be choosing to stay in pain. You will also give the advantage to Satan. Or you can choose to forgive and give the advantage to God!

I remind you that God is in control and our warfare is not with flesh and blood, but with demons. You can make a list of everyone who’s hurt you and I guarantee you behind all that hurt is Satan. People are either tools in the hand of God or tools in the hand of Satan.

If we are in the hands of Jesus the carpenter, we will build people up.  
But if we are in the hands of Satan the destroyer, we tear people down!

If we are in the hands of Jesus the truth, we will bless people.  
If we are in the hands of Satan the liar, we will curse people.

If we are in the hands of Jesus the liberator, we forgive and release.  
If we are in the hands of Satan the tormenter, we will not forgive.

You see, there is supernatural power in forgiveness and there is supernatural power in unforgiveness.

Forgiveness releases the supernatural power of God in your life.  
But unforgiveness releases the supernatural power of Satan in your life.

If you forgive those who wrong you or hurt you, you release the supernatural power of God in your life to set you free and keep you free.  
But if you don’t forgive, you release the supernatural power of the Devil to bind you.

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it will change the future.  
Forgiveness may not change others, but it will change you!  
Forgiveness will shut the door to the devil and it will set you free!  
If you can’t forgive, be willing to be made willing.

Let God help you shut the door to the devil today.