

the lunatic fringe

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"Every reform movement has a lunatic fringe."  
Theodore Roosevelt, 1913.

## Offensive God

Recently, I have had a revelation about God that many may feel is quite radical. That revelation is that GOD IS AN OFFENSIVE GOD. God intentionally offends his people. "Offend" is a word that strikes a nerve in that it is usually reserved to have a negative meaning. I will stand by my statement. God will allow His people to be offended by Him.

Imagine the despair Abraham must have felt when God told him to sacrifice Isaac. This was the son God had promised. This was the beginning of a nation. God offended Abraham's mind to reveal his heart. God knew Abraham's heart, but He wanted Abraham to see it as well. The Hebrews wander to Egypt looking for food. They stay too long and become slaves. God frees His people. In the process of becoming free they witness each of the plagues and the Red Sea. Yet, in Exodus 16:2,3 they ask Moses if he had brought them into the wilderness to die. It is my opinion that when they asked Moses that question, they were actually asking God. God offended the Hebrews' minds, and their hearts were revealed.

2 And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 And the sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Exodus 16:2,3

Jonah is also an excellent example. He is given the order to go to Nineveh. He fails to go that direction and ends up in the belly of a whale. God allows him to live and to preach at Nineveh. Nineveh Repents, and in Jonah chapter 4, Jonah is offended at God. His heart is revealed.

1 But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. 2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. 3 "Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." 4 And the Lord said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

Jonah 4:1-4

John chapter two describes some experiences Jesus had. In verses I -II we find Him as the life of the party as He turns water into wine. In verses 12-22 we find Him making a whip and cleaning out His Father's House. The Pharisee's are obviously offended. They ask, "What right have you to do this?" Jesus responds with the answer, "Tear this building down and I will rebuild it in three days!" The Pharisee's were obviously offended. Remember, the Pharisees were not necessarily the pagans; they were the ones who kept the law. They were essentially the church. The disciples knew this. I wonder if they were offended at Jesus? They had only known Him for less than two chapters. Maybe, they weren't offended but I wonder if they had rather they had not left the wedding. As far as explanations, according to verse 22, even they did not understand what Jesus meant by three days.

18 The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

John 2:18-22

John chapter six also presents a similar scenario. It begins with the excitement of the 5000 being fed, then we find the fear of the stormy winds and water, and then in verse 53 Jesus begins about the people eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Many misunderstood. In verse 61 Jesus specifically asks, "Does this offend you?" One group deserted because of the offense. At least 12 stayed even though probably offended. All hearts were revealed.

53 Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. 58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever." 59 These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. 60 Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?"

John 6:53-61

It was actually prophesied by Simeon at the temple in Luke 2:34,35 "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that that the hearts will be revealed..."

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed-- 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul-- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Luke 2:34,35

Acts chapter two finds the disciples preaching to a large group of people at Pentecost. Let's begin by looking at this group of people. Verse 5 describes the group as being GOD-FEARING JEWS from every nation. For all purposes, they were the church of the day. Peter essentially began preaching of a new church, whose head was Jesus. The group was offended by this teaching. Some left. Some stayed. Many were saved. All hearts were revealed.

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

Acts 2:5-6, 12-13

Throughout the Gospels those whose hearts were tender to what God was saying and doing were graced by God's interventions. They were able to rejoice, even when God violated social norms. The reason for this is that when the minds of the righteous are boggled by God, they run to Him for understanding. However, the rebellious will use the same miracle or action by God to justify their desire to dismiss God's will in favor of their own will. It is important to note that the righteous remain teachable even when they don't understand. Just as the disciples had to walk with Jesus until his purposes became clear. The righteous are not worried about God damaging their reputations. They recognize that if they have a "damageable" reputation, it was given by God.

Skandalizo is the Greek word for "offended" that is often used in the New Testament. It is translated to mean "to cause one displeasure at a thing; to make indignant; to be displeased"

| VERSE   | KEYWORD        | CONTEXT                                 |
|---|----------------|---|
| Matthew 11:6<br>6 "And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."   | "stumbling"    | Jesus about John the Baptist            |
| Matthew 13:21<br>21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.  | "falls away"   | The Parable of the Sower                |
| Matthew 13:53-57<br>53 And it came about that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. 54 And coming to His home town He began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they became astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom, and these miraculous powers? 55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, and in his own household." | "took offense" | A prophet without honor                 |
| Matthew 15:12<br>12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"   | "offended"     | Pharisee's reaction to clean vs unclean |
| Matthew 26:31-35<br>31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be SCATTERED.' 32 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." 33   | "fall away"    | Peter's denial predicted                |

But Peter answered and said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." 34 Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times." 35 Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too.

John 16:1-4 "stumbling" Jesus warns the disciples of persecution  
1 "These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. 2 "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. 3 "And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me. 4 "But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

## **Offensive Kingdom**

Jesus went about preaching, "The Kingdom of God is at hand!" This message of His Father's Kingdom very much offended the church of His day. Through Jesus God births a kingdom that was very offensive. Through the Father Jesus preached and demonstrated this offensive Kingdom.

\* The Kingdom was birthed in an offensive place.

And you, Bethlehem, Land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah....

Matthew 2:6

\* The Kingdom was endorsed by a rebel of the system.

"You (Pharisees) brood of vipers ..."

Matthew 3:7

\* The Kingdom catered to offensive people.

And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

Matthew 4:18

\* The Kingdom operated under an offensive economy.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:19-20

\* The Kingdom maintained offensive standards.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of the My Father who is in heaven. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord' did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And I will declare to them, "I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

Matthew 7:21-23

\* The Kingdom requires offensive costs.

And a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead."

Matthew 8:19-22

## **Offended People**

The word "offended" stirs up many emotions. We instantly remember times when friends, family, or even ourselves were wronged by someone. We hurt with others as many of us have also felt the pain of being offended. We may also think of some people who are too easily offended. Instantly we remember the frustrating emotions that we felt as they once again over reacted. I believe there are a significant number of offended/offensive people that are going to make a major impact on the church as we know it.

Who are these "offended/offensive" people? Who "offended" them? Who did they "offend"?" They were the church. They were offended by the church. They offended the church. They will be the church. The church as we know it is a cut-throat atmosphere. Pastors are routinely fired for having an opinion that differs with the congregation. In many congregations the pastor only has the authority that the congregation has given him. Therefore, he must answer to them before he answers to God. Every "spiritual word" that a person is given is filtered not by the heart and nature of God but by the personal preferences of the congregation. Sins are never forgotten, and possibly never forgiven. This has left many wounded believers.

## **Offensive Church**

If we want to pursue the things of God in this age, we must get ready to not understand what He is doing. In those moments of not understanding, be sure and run to Him and not away from Him. Because I believe the Church, as we know it, is going to be offended primarily in these following areas:

First, He will offend our system of promotion and selection. We have created a system of control that keeps certain people down, and others up. One way this is done is "The Experience Factor." While the fact that people need to be disciplined and equipped is valid, it's not always the way God

has done or will do it. The disciples learned as they went. They had less than three years experience before Jesus left them. It was a matter of days after Paul's Damascus Road experience and his first sermon. Should Paul have been better trained? Should he have taken six months to prove himself? Or, should he have been sent out to turn the world upside down for Jesus? We do need to equip and we do need to train, however, we need to listen to God each and every time.

Second, He will offend our theologies. He will show us the differences between His truths and our opinions. He will reveal His nature and we will have to adapt to that revelation of Him. The question we must ask is this: "Will we be offended, if it is not what we expected?"

Dress codes, length of services, musical tastes, and all those other touchy subjects are going to be targets. God knows which buttons to push and HE WILL PUSH THEM. He will offend us to expose our hearts. Are our hearts "self-focused" or "God-focused" If we are scared of ministering to the poor, chances are you'll find yourself in a soup kitchen. If you refuse to worship with believers with other skin colors, then God may upset your surroundings. He will turn up the fire to produce a pure and spotless bride.

Throughout the New Testament God has warned us against deception in last days. Many will be deceived and will fall away. One such example is Matthew 24: 10 where once again "skandalizo" is used.

"At that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another."

Matthew 24: 10

I have an idea that there will be many people who have made their church the way they like it. They have fashioned God into an easily marketable God. One day they will be surprised because in the snap of a finger, God will change their rules. They will find God to be bigger than they ever imagined. Their minds will be offended and their hearts will be revealed. It will be a priority for all seekers of God to recognize when the Lord is allowing their mind to be offended, and to respond correctly. We do not need to respond to the situation as we see it. We do not need to react as though God agrees with us every time. We need to be of a mind set that recognizes the fact that God is once again changing the rules. Just as he did in the New Testament, he is taking His church back.

I believe God will also alter the composition of His church. As mentioned earlier there is an "offended people", a lunatic fringe that is being trained in the wilderness. This people will emerge from the desert as an offensive people. They will look like, act like, think like men like Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist. They will not "fit in" with religion's church. They will be a people of vision, a people who have spent time with God in the wilderness. They have been shown their limitations as they have wrestled with God. As they emerge their training will be complete and their new marching orders will be received. As Nehemiah did, they will be rebuild the walls.

The church, as we know it, defines its sanctuary by constructing four walls. However, in addition to these "physical" walls the church has also constructed "imaginary" walls. They may be walls of theology, walls of opinion, walls of preference, walls of normalcy, etc... The problem with these walls are that many were constructed and ordained by men rather than God. Therefore, many churches have defined their identities on something "man-inspired." We never had a right to build

those walls or "define ourselves." I believe God will use this "lunatic fringe" as He did Joshua in knocking those walls down. Then he will use that "fringe" as He did Nehemiah and rebuild those walls according to His plan. This process will cause discomfort as any major change will cause people to become nervous. The church, as we know it, fears change, but change is coming. It will be God-ordained. Its outcome may first offend us, but if we respond correctly a pure, spotless bride will emerge.

### Why "Lunatic Fringe?"

God has called us to be different. His path toward holiness and our desire to spend time in God's chambers separates us from ever being "normal." The world will deem us extremists. The Church, as we know it, will label us fanatics. If you have tasted the things of God and if you hunger for more, then you are guilty as charged. You are part of a remnant, a lunatic fringe, that God will use to build His Church.