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THE PRISON OF OFFENSE

Proverbs 18:19 says, ***“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.”*** Again Proverbs 18:21 says ***“Death and Life are in the power of the tongue.”*** James 3:5 says, ***“that the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth.”*** Verse 8 of the same chapter says, ***“the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”***

In my own life I have found that my mouth is my best asset, and also my worse liability. The things I mean to say I don't say, and I say the things that I shouldn't. Just like the apostle Paul, it makes me feel like a wretched man, and who will deliver me from this body of death.

So often, we, as Christians, get offended. Little things set us off, and we get hurt or offended. Then we disassociate ourselves from the body of Christ, which is just exactly what Satan wants us to do. If we aren't careful, we will be drawn away by offense and then we are the perfect target for Satan. The scripture that says a brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and the contentions are like the bars of a castle, speaks of a dungeon. No one could get through to a person who has been offended, because he has locked himself away from others.

In Mark chapter 4 we learn about the parable of the soils. In verses 16-17 we see that the seed (or the Word) is sown on stony ground, and this person after hearing the word, immediately received it with gladness; but had no root in themselves, and so endures but for a time. Afterward, when affliction or persecution arise for the word's sake, ***immediately they are offended***. The problem here seems to arise that they have no root in themselves. This indicates that they did not have enough of the Word to penetrate deep enough into the soil of their heart to take root. This person has very little knowledge of what the Bible says, so when problems come, they endure for a while, but then get offended because nothing “happened” the way they expected. This kind of person has a shallow relationship with Jesus. They have a little head knowledge of the Bible but have not learned enough to keep them on track with its truths. Then, when something doesn't agree with what they believe to be right, they get offended, and are robbed even of the good Word that was sown.

Don't think for a minute that I am free of this problem any more than you are. When I was very young in the Lord, I asked a preacher how to deal with an unsaved loved one. His response was so harsh and cold. He said “Get in the word! Get in the word!” I was crushed. I had a general idea of the Bible at that time but didn't know where to begin. I needed someone to guide me. He was correct in telling me to get in the word, but his cold, harsh words cut me deeply. It is not what we say sometimes my friends, it is how we say it.

What is the answer to this problem? We must be quick to forgive when something happens like this, or we will never get the victory in our life. This doesn't happen over night either. It is a choice we make, and it has to be made every day of our lives. We choose what we say, and we

choose how we react to what others say to us. Yes, a brother offended is harder to win than a strong city. So, we must try to keep from offending others but not give in to offense when it comes our way. We must learn James 1:19 which says, ***“let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”***

Finally, we as teachers and leaders in the Church must be like II Timothy 2:24-26 which says, ***“And the servant of the Lord must not strive (be quarrelsome), but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”*** Let’s not let Satan imprison us by offenses!