

What Does The Bible Mean By Being Offended?

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Some time ago in one of the Bible classes we covered the Biblical meaning of being offended. We had a lot of good discussion that day. It was a real eye (and mind) opener for some. One brother who has been in the church for many years said he had never heard this matter explained before. It is easy to read words in the Bible and assume they mean what they do in everyday life. This can easily lead to mistaken views about important topics. As such, Bible class teachers some times need to explain the scriptural usage of these words. Such is certainly the case with the word "offended." A few people encouraged me to write an article on this topic so they could study it further. And so, here is the article somewhat belatedly.

The passage we were discussing was **Luke 17:1-2**. It may be profitable to read the relevant verses from a few different translations to get a broader view:

KJV: "THEN SAID HE UNTO THE DISCIPLES, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE BUT THAT OFFENCES WILL COME: BUT WOE UNTO HIM, THROUGH WHOM THEY COME! IT WERE BETTER FOR HIM THAT A MILLSTONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK, AND HE CAST INTO THE SEA, THAN THAT HE SHOULD OFFEND ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES."

ASV: "AND HE SAID UNTO HIS DISCIPLES, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE BUT THAT OCCASIONS OF STUMBLING SHOULD COME; BUT WOE UNTO HIM, THROUGH WHOM THEY COME! IT WERE WELL FOR HIM IF A MILLSTONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK, AND HE WERE THROWN INTO THE SEA, RATHER THAN THAT HE SHOULD CAUSE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES TO STUMBLE."

ESV "AND HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, "TEMPTATIONS TO SIN ARE SURE TO COME, BUT WOE TO THE ONE THROUGH WHOM THEY COME! IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR HIM IF A MILLSTONE WERE HUNG AROUND HIS NECK AND HE WERE CAST INTO THE SEA THAN THAT HE SHOULD CAUSE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES TO SIN."

The English Standard Version (ESV) has notes on these two verses. The expression "TEMPTATIONS TO SIN" in verse one is literally *stumbling blocks* and "one] ... TO SIN" in the second verse literally means *to stumble*. So, the idea of offenses is intimately connected to the commission of sin.

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Normally, when we think about being offended, we have in mind something that someone did that we did not like or upset our feelings. However, what the Lord had in mind was that which entices a person to commit sin. This is why Jesus gave His strong statement in **Luke 17:1-2**. Encouraging a “LITTLE ONE” (i.e., brother or sister in Christ) to sin is a very serious matter. Thus, when a brother sins against us we are reminded to “rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.” (**Luke 17:3b,4**; NKJV). Just because someone did something that may have upset you, it does not necessarily mean that he offended you in the Biblical meaning of the word.