

# OFFENSE

By Steve Stutzman

Let's start with the story line. Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon, ostensibly to vacation. This was a hard days walk from Capernaum, 35-40 miles. He went with the disciples, and entered a (beach)house, and didn't want anybody to know it. Tyre and Sidon were port cities. They lay within the boundaries God had granted to Israel, but as far as I can find, never actually became Israeli cities. By this time, they were Roman cities with primarily Greek, Roman, and Canaanite folk. Jesus went there to get away from the crowds. But, a woman found him, we don't know how. She was distressed, and cried after him for help. Jesus completely ignored her. Whatever else Jesus was trying to communicate to anyone around Him, this was an obvious slight. In any language, any culture, ignoring someone completely who is talking directly to you, on purpose, is some degree of insult. I realize, this may not fit your concept of Jesus.... But I am just reading here, not making things up. Follow this to the end, it may just make sense yet. Finally, the disciples became annoyed, and asked Jesus to do something about her. Jesus' reply was directed straight at the womans race. Perhaps no people, ever, have been more racist than the Israeli, and more specifically, the Jew. Racism is not an American invention. Very probably, no one race has suffered as extensively, over a longer period of time, for their race, than the Jew. When God separated His people from the nations around them, they took it seriously. Coming out of Egypt, still smarting from 300 plus years of slavery, the national racial identity intensified. Then, God brought them into Canaan, and instructed them to KILL most other races. (There are reasons for this, that went far beyond race. We are not looking at that now.) Israel emerged from the scene with a pretty clear notion of their superiority, if not in real life, then at least as they perceived God to see them. This concept sustained them in some hard times, but it also trapped them in their own stupidity from time to time. It pretty much got Israel destroyed and scattered among the nations. Then the Jews got stubborn in it, and got taken to Babylon. They maintained their racial identity, even tho it threatened to annihilate them all. They took it with them back to Judea. By the time Jesus appeared on the scene, their superior notion had once again trapped them in a position of lies. (see Jn8:31-44) Jesus ran into this notion all the time, and was very familiar with it. The Temple itself, in Jerusalem, where God was worshipped, had a court, probably on the southern side, where other races might approach God for worship. They were not allowed in the inner courts, a place reserved only for Jews. Jesus later enters this area that was reserved for Gentiles, and finds it full of commerce. He fashions a whip, then very calmly explodes on the place, overturning the tables, driving out the animals and the vendors. "My house shall be called a house of prayer" was the vendetta, and He seemed especially upset that the place reserved for other races had been compromised. So two things seem to me to be obvious: Racism, and 'racial superiority' was pretty deeply ingrained in the culture.....and..... Jesus saw way beyond it all. (For further confirmation of this, see' the woman at the well' in John 4. The "Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans". That is called racism. See Jesus' answer to it.) However, in ministry, Jesus' approach was selective. There are reasons for this, also, that we will not go into, but the fact He was selective is not disputable. *Mt 10:5 ¶ These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles,*

*and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Some have suggested that this shows some racism from Christ. That is foolishness. Again, there are reasons for all this that I would be happy to elaborate on, just not here, now. Back to the story line: A woman is crying to Jesus, and He first ignores her completely, then comments with what can only be taken as a racial slur. “I came to the house of Israel.” You don’t fit in to that race, you are a dog. WHY would He do this? The woman now comes directly to Him and worships. I don’t know for sure what this means, but in my mind, it seems she came and “fell at His feet”. There, she clearly accepts the status of her race, yet requests that still, as a doggy, she might still have some crumbs? Something went off inside the Christ of the Eternals, and He declared, *“For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.”* Offense. I believe the whole scene was Jesus probing the woman, to see if she carried an offense. He ignored her, and she was not offended, but believed. Then came the insult, yet still there was no offense. Because there was no offense, her daughter was healed, her request was granted. We live in a time of offense. Everyone walks around with a chip on their shoulder, waiting to be offended. Every slight we perceive becomes something that sets us off, and we grump off in a huff. Families won’t talk, people leave churches, churches divide, marriages split, lawsuits take place, riots happen. Cries of being wronged fill the air. I do not know of a solitary group of people in the US that don’t feel they are being seriously wronged by some other group. Clever politicians, church leaders, and demagogues exploit our sense of offense, dividing people to create a following for themselves. Harsh words are spoken, positions of defense are entrenched, and sound-bites intended to explode like grenades in other’s trenches are employed. Offense deepens. We all know the folks who are hurt by everything; they didn’t find out about the playdate at the park; their children were not included; they were treated badly at the store; they changed churches again because the preacher didn’t shake their hand. People walk on eggshells around them, trying not to set them off again. It is as if they had a sign on their forehead, “offend me”. The Bible actually addresses this spirit of offense quite a lot. Jesus reserved the harshest judgment He spoke, for those who “offend a little one”. (Lk 17:2) Offending, wounding, destroying little ones (think, molestation?) often creates in them a sense of offense, and they become the easily offended later in life. Paul said if something he did, like eating a BLT sandwich, offended his brother, he would eat no meat as long as the world stands.... to avoid offense. (1 Cor.8:13) Western Christianity, in its rugged individualism, has almost completely lost track of the carefulness not to offend, and we need to take a hard look at what it is costing us. *1Co 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:* However Jesus was not afraid to move straight ahead in truth, even when the offense of man caused him to turn away. In fact, He expected it. We should also, to some extent. *Joh 15:18 ¶ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.* At one point, Jesus’ teaching so offended folks that many of them left and quit following, miracles or no miracles. Jesus turns to the disciples, and asks if they are also leaving. He then ends the conversation by telling them one of them is a devil. (Jn 6:60-71) Regardless of what anyone else does, carrying an offense, taking up offense, is a personal choice. **ONE MAN’S FREEDOM IS NEVER DEPENDENT ON ANOTHER MAN’S DECISION.** Jesus was betrayed, then beaten publicly, stripped, bloodied, and hung on a cross, all the while hearing personal mockery and racial slurs flung at him by all those around Him..... without offense....only forgiveness flowing out of Him. That record stands as a standard of grace, insisting that grace is available for you and I also to go far

beyond this childish notion of petty offense, and overcome with forgiveness. Yet deep within, emotions arise. Deep, hidden feelings of having been wronged stir inside, and ignite into passionate explosions. We justify the feelings, trying to prove to ourselves and each other, that they are legitimate, and we deserve to have them. Those feelings, because they are so real, we believe to be truth. They are not. They are lies. We beg for freedom, for grace, for redemption, for healing. But we beg for it, from a position of offense, anchored by lies. Jesus does not enter our realm of lies. He is the TRUTH, and has no affinity with lies. When He shows up in our world, like He did to Saul of Tarsus, His first approach is to lift us from our lies and offense, to His Truth, His reality. If we refuse to release our offense, His healing is stayed. Christ prodded the woman at Tyre, to see if she carried offense. She didn't. Do I? Do you? Psalm 119:165 is a verse that measures how much we love the law, and the ways of God, by how much we are offended. Not being offended is a choice, but it is first of all a choice to love the law, and the ways of God. ( He is right, BTW) Despising of God's ways produces culture of offense, wars, and fightings. "Blessed are those who are not offended in me." If you struggle with offense, take a moment to pray through this prayer. Pray it out loud, with your words.... And allow the reality of it to sink into your spirit:

Dear Father God in heaven, I come to you in Jesus Name, the One Who forgives me so perfectly. Father, I have not forgiven perfectly. I have carried offense. Today I bring to you this spirit of offense. I repent of being offended. I repent of carrying grudges against\_\_\_\_\_. I choose this day to forgive, and I lay this offense down at the foot of the cross. I renounce the spirit of offense in my life, and in my generations. Whatever is deep within me, that still feels like it needs to be vindicated over events from before my time, I renounce through the blood of Jesus, and I put it under the blood of the cross. I separate myself from the spirit of offense through the blood of Christ. I ask that a sincere love for the law and ways of an Eternal Creator God, be birthed in me and grow continually, in Jesus Name. In the Name of Jesus, I take authority over that spirit of offense, and I command it to leave me. Get out, release my emotions, and never come back. I shut the door of my life against that spirit, and seal it with the blood of forgiveness. Thank You Father for the cross, and the way of freedom you bring me through it. In Jesus Name ...Amen. Blessings.  
Walk free.