

I. THE PROMISES

- A. The promises of Matthew 24:14, Malachi 1:11, Isaiah 42:
1. the Gospel will be preached to every people group as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come (see Matt. 24:14).
 2. the incense of worship will arise from believers all across the earth before God's throne, day and night, before Jesus returns (see Mal. 1:11; Is. 42:10-13).
 3. Every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will have redeemed ones represented before God's throne in heaven before Jesus returns (Rev. 5:8).
- B. Understanding God's end-time plan cannot be divorced from understanding and agreeing with the perfect leadership of Christ in our lives. Only as we lean into this "rudder" of Jesus' perfect leadership in our lives, do we learn to love Jesus without offense.
1. Jesus is the crucial subject at the end of the age.

II. UNDERSTANDING JESUS' PERFECT LEADERSHIP

- A. One of the primary foundations the Kingdom of God is centered around is the truth that Jesus' leadership is good. In other words, Jesus always and only uses His power according to perfect love and perfect wisdom. It cannot be improved upon.
- B. In every circumstance Jesus desires to preserve us and supernaturally work in us according to the Father's will for our own good.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior..." -Jude v. 24-25

- C. The Father is fully *able* to keep and present us. His ability ("*Dunamai*") speaks of the combination of His **power** and **willingness**. In other words, God is not only powerful to keep and preserve us, but His heart is willing that we might be presented faultless before the Father in Christ.
- D. This was Jesus' desire in His priestly prayer in John 17.
- E. The revelation of Jesus' perfect leadership produces confidence and trust with gratitude in our hearts. Sacrificial affection-based obedience is not an issue when we are motivated by gratitude.
- F. If the Devil can minimize our gratitude then our love for God and one another will be undermined. The accusation of the enemy to us is: "You are not getting what you deserve." In reality, we are getting far better than we deserve. The enemy seeks to get us to accuse Jesus' leadership in this way and give a foothold to offense.

- G. The two-fold fight of wholehearted love:
 - 1. Encountering the wholehearted love of the Godhead for us
 - 2. Responding in wholehearted love for Him

III. LOVING JESUS WITHOUT OFFENSE

- A. The residual effects of offense gathers in our hearts over many unperceived issues. Many become offended at Jesus' leadership through both dynamics of what He does and what He does not do (or what He allows).
- B. This issue will be clearly seen at the end of the age through God's righteous judgments.
- C. Jesus vindicated John for his intentionality in overcoming offense at His leadership.

2 John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" 4 Jesus answered ... "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 the blind see and the lame walk [Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1]; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." (Mt. 11:2-6)

- 1. John most likely knew that he was going to die, but John's disciples did not know this. John was waiting his whole life for Jesus' manifestation in the earth (Isa. 40:3-5; Matt. 3:3; Jn. 1:23).
 - 2. John, acting as a shepherd, was most likely asking the question because he was concerned about his disciples. Would they really follow Jesus or be offended at His leadership through the crisis of John's death?
 - 3. The way John's disciples handled and processed this crisis in their lives would determine how they would relate to Jesus in the future.
- D. Jesus said we are blessed if offense doesn't enter our hearts towards Himself. If we get offended at Jesus we cannot grow in love.
- E. The same reality that causes us to overcome offense in the way He leads us individually is the same truth and reality that we will use when we speak about Jesus and His end-time purposes.

IV. SPIRITUAL VIOLENCE IN WHOLEHEARTED LOVE

- A. Jesus commended John for his unwavering commitment to overcome offense in his life at the Lord's leading.

7 Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind [wavering under pressure]? ... A man clothed in soft garments [seeking comfort]? ... 11 Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist ... 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers [allows] violence, and the violent take it by force. (Mt. 11:7-12)

- B. Overcoming offense require intentional "spiritual violence" (radical obedience) on our part. It is not enough to simply "ignore our way" through offense, we must intentionally operate in the opposite spirit by agreeing with the truth about God.
- C. We are empowered by the Spirit to operate with "spiritual violence" in an opposite spirit as we encounter Jesus' *ability* and *willingness* to bring us to maturity. Obedience is the "arena" in which we demonstrate our love for God.
 - 1. David's prayer was to be cleansed from unforeseen areas of compromise in his heart.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. (Ps. 19:12,13)

- D. Jesus will often offend the mind to reveal the heart. Through the emotional torrents of promotion and blessing, trial and struggle, Jesus wants to bring our offense to the surface so that our hearts are wide open.

15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple ... poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables ... 19 Jesus answered ... "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" (Jn. 2:15-20)

- E. The main way God raises up forerunners who declare Jesus' leadership to the nations is in the "furnace of struggle" in their own lives discovering His *good* leadership.
 - 1. God was preparing David to be King through David's response to God's leadership through the struggles in his life and the response of his heart as he ministered to the Lord.
- F. The Devil's stones of accusation is that we cannot trust Jesus in this "furnace of struggle".
- G. Through adverse circumstances, the challenges of personal weakness, in rejection and in favor, David's song and confession was that "***the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever...***" (Ps. 100:5)

V. OUR CONFESSION IN TIME AND ETERNITY

- A. The confession that “**the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever**” has been the confession of God’s people throughout the ages.
 - 1. This confession was the anthem at the establishment of the Tabernacle of David and Solomon’s Temple (1 Chron. 16:34; 2 Chron. 5:13; 2 Chron. 7:3; Ezra 3:11)
 - 2. This confession will be the song the Church sings when God releases His redemptive judgments in the end-times. (Rev. 15:3, 16:7)
 - 3. This confession will be sung forever into eternity.

- B. Agreeing with Jesus' leadership requires intentional confession. First, we set our minds on it, then our hearts will follow (Col. 3:1-4).

- C. The three revelations that causes the Church to overcome in the Great Tribulation (Rev. 12:11) will be evident in the Church by the Spirit revealing the worth of Christ prior to that Day:
 - 1. **The blood of the Lamb**
 - 2. **The word of their testimony**
 - 3. **They did not love their lives unto death**

- D. The goal of life is not self-preservation, but voluntarily embracing the leadership of Christ until the day we stand before Him. When we reach the end there will be little to celebrate if all we have done is to cross the finish line. May we follow the Lamb wherever He goes!