

Weekly Encouragement

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Not Offended (Part 1 of 2)

By Rev. Peter Eng



"Why didn't I see that?" I would ask, incredulous at my own spiritual blinkers.

I take some comfort that even great servants of God suffer from this malady. "Among those born of women none is greater than John." ([Lk 7:28](#)). Jesus considers John the greatest prophet up to that point in time. Even this great prophet holds a view of Messiah that needs correcting.

John is a child of his time. It is inconceivable that Jesus should be anything other than the Savior of Israel. Jesus, the Messiah, shall amplify King David. Messiah shall drive out the Romans, the sycophant Jewish rulers, the corrupt priesthood under the Sadducees, teach the people the truth, and restore a golden age for Israel.

"Jesus, why aren't you doing something more to deliver Israel?" We can imagine John's nagging concerns. "And by the way, I am rotting here in prison. Your forerunner, remember?"

Perhaps John begins to wonder if he got the right person as Messiah. So he sends his disciples to inquire of Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Jesus points to the miracles he did in fulfillment of prophecy, and said, "*Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.*"

We understand the world "offend" to mean some emotional injury or annoyance. The use of "offend" here is archaic, and not as we normally understand the word. The archaic meaning in English came from the Latin *offendere* and French *offense* meaning "to strike." This meaning is still preserved in modern English such as in a game when someone plays offense. The team offense strikes at the opposing team. It is in this context that we ought to understand the word "offend."

We may render it, "Blessed is the one who is not struck down by his expectations of me." The NIV translates "*Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.*" Falling away depicts the result of the offensive action.

Jesus is pronouncing a blessing on those

who are not struck down / offended by who he is.

I wonder if we have the same problem as John the Baptist. I wonder if we sometimes harbor a wrong view of Jesus and become offended that Jesus does not conform to our view of him.

Obama said, "I serve as a blank screen on which people of vastly different political stripes project their own views." (*Audacity of Hope*) Obama actively cultivates this blank screen so Americans project their hopes and aspirations on him and vote for him. That is the skill of a politician in winning votes.

Jesus does not depend on our votes. He does not correct us every time we have a wrong view of him. But when we ask him, he gently and firmly tells us who he is, as much as our understanding can bear, so we do not project wrong expectations on him. He understood John's wrong assumptions but did not rebuke John. Instead, he frames it as a blessing for those who would look at him correctly.

There are two possible groups of believers. The first group accepts Jesus as Messiah, but would not change their view from a political to a spiritual Savior. These fall away. The second group accepts Jesus as Messiah, but when their assumptions are corrected, they accepted correction. They are blessed.

Imagine a small pile of gravel. Let's say, it is about a cubic meter in volume. You want to add to the pile, but you don't want to increase the base. So you carefully pile more gravel on top until the angle becomes a steep 60° instead of the normal 45°. But there comes a point in time when you have to choose whether to want to stop adding gravel or increase the base.

The Kingdom of God is like that pile of gravel. John cannot keep adding to it without enlarging the base. John's Kingdom of God is limited to Israel. Jesus' Kingdom of God is the world. John's Messiah is the Savior of Israel. But Jesus is the Savior of the world. John's base is self-limiting. Jesus' base is much wider.

If we have wrong expectations of Jesus, he cannot conform to our wrong expectations. We need to change our view of him as he reveals himself to us. *"Blessed is the one who does not fall away on account of me."*

Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.

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Rev. Peter Eng is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.