

The Offender and the Offended

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We human beings are cruel at our worst and faulty even at our best. Since this is true, we sometimes offend our fellow man. Even two people who love each other deeply will sometimes offend each other. Most of us are sensitive creatures. This causes us to be offended by the words and deeds of others. Since we are all in the position at times of being either offenders or the offended, we will do well to consider how we might avoid as many offenses as possible.

- **First, consider the offender.** We probably offend people by our words more often than by our deeds. Because this is so we have the forceful warning by James about proper use of the tongue:

The tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue . . . therewith bless we the Lord and Father, and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God; out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing; My brethren, these things ought not so to be (Jam. 3:6, 9-10).

How we need to watch our words! Most offenses caused by our words will be avoided if we will be “swift to hear, slow to speak” (Jam. 1:19). The person who “always says what he thinks,” regardless of who is hurt by it, soon gains an unenviable reputation as a “smart alec” who feels compelled to voice an opinion on every subject. Frankly, I keep my distance from such whenever possible. Contrast this person with the model Paul sets before us:

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one (Col. 4:6).

- **Now consider the offended.** The most common excuse I have heard through the years for people who quit some good work they were doing in the church, or who quit the church altogether, is, “Someone offended me.” Often the person who offended them is totally unaware of the offense and would be quick to apologize if they were aware, even though no offense was intended. Often, the one offended was a bit too sensitive and misinterpreted the words spoken. How many people ever stay away from a party or ball game because they were offended? How is it we can company with people who curse, drink, blow smoke in our faces and still associate with them? Then the same brother can hear just one word from a Godly saint that offends him, and he gets so terribly offended he quits the church! If we are that easily offended, we don’t have much chance of reaching Heaven. Let’s grow up and quit blaming others for our sins.

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