

Said the Farmer to the Fruit Tree

"Tree, I see all your nice green foliage and your sturdy trunk and root system, but where is your fruit?" "You will notice, farmer, I am more firmly anchored than any tree in the orchard, and I have the most beautiful leaves to be seen anywhere. Further, no broken, sagging limbs, and no scuff marks have I from workmen's shoes on my limbs." "These might be impressive, but I planted you for the purpose of bearing fruit, not to look pretty and preserve yourself.

Suppose all my trees had your attitude! Why have you not borne fruit?" "I tried bearing fruit a few years ago. Some of the beautiful fruit I worked so hard to develop fell to the ground and was lost. The odor was terrible! Also, my limbs would bend and break in the effort, and my whole system was strained. The painful treatment, as the workmen climbed my tender limbs and snapped my branches with their rapid strokes, was simply too

Author Unknown much. To cap off the whole problem with fruit bearing, I produced the most fruit of any tree in the orchard, and I didn't get any glory. Now, under these circumstances farmer, what do you expect?" "I expect, tree, you will make beautiful logs for my fireplace!" Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity **(Matthew 7:19-23; see also John 15:1-8).**



Classes This Week

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|---|---|
| Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class at the Building | Monday 7 PM Ladies Class at Denise Davis' House |
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Sick

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|--|--|--|---|
| Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey) | Lori Holloway | Chick Wade | Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister) |
| Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters) | Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey) | Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle) | Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle) |
| Amber Moseley (Toni Herd's niece) | Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts | Joe Perry (Anna Miller's Relative) | Jerry Sandlin (Megan Lee's Grandfather) |
| Richard Call Seth Humphrey's Uncle | Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather) | Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother) | Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother) |
| Gerald White (Christopher's and Wesley's Father) | Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's) | Dale Herd (William Herd's brother) | Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box) |
| Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews) | Frank Johnson (Debbi Coleman's Uncle) | Dale Wilkes (William Herd's Uncle) | Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby) |

May Birthdays

- 1 - Barrett Gilbert
- 2 - Emily-Anne Rouse
- 3 - Paula Davis
- 9 - Andrea Cason
- 10 - Ian Norman
- 11 - Caleb George
- 11 - Scott Perkins
- 13 - Jana Hall
- 13 - Anna Grace Long
- 15 - Bryce Daniels
- 15 - Kerri Pender
- 16 - Shawna Harris
- 24 - Andy Roberts
- 26 - Fallon Hartsell
- 28 - Candy Long
- 29 - Rebekah Buchanan

News and Notes

- Chris Davis has been diagnosed with a viral infection of the heart. And is now undergoing treatment
- Tyler Claxton was in the hospital this week for ulcers.
- Let us remember Matthew Johnson, David Golden and Tim Morton in our prayers as they are deployed overseas.
- Jared Burton is beginning his treatments for his illness.
- Let us remember our expectant mothers in our prayers: Anne Morton and Jana Hall.
- Let us remember Jane Smith, Ken Sullivanne's aunt in our prayers.
- Let us remember Lori Holloway in our prayers as her condition has become more serious.

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The Auburn Beacon



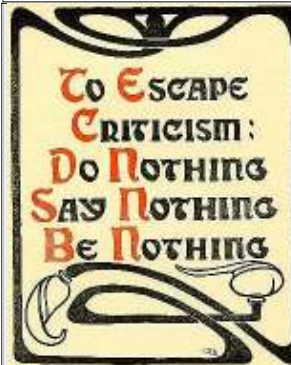
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

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Answering Criticism

By Heath Rogers



Thoughts to Ponder

If there is a person to whom you feel dislike, that is the person of whom you ought never to speak.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

The Lord tells us that when we have a problem with a brother, we are to go to that person and talk with them about it **(Matt. 18:15-17)**. We can understand the wisdom behind this instruction. It is best for the sake of peace and unity to get things worked out as quickly as possible. And sitting down and talking with someone is the best way to get things worked out. This instruction is easy to understand, but sometimes we find it hard to obey.

In this article, we want to discuss how we should respond when we are the person that a brother is coming to. What do we do when the criticism and accusations are directed toward us? Consider the following points:

Watch Out For Pride

The Scriptures never use the word pride in a good sense. John tells us that pride is one of the avenues through which Satan tempts us **(1 John 2:16)**. It is hard not to take a confrontation from a brother as a personal attack. Our pride is at stake, and our immediate reaction is to defend it. But if we do, we are opening the door for sin.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete,

Pride tells us that it is important to be right. If we are not careful it will cause us to try to justify ourselves and defeat their argument. We may even throw an attack back at them.

lacking nothing" **(James 1:2-4)**. Yes, our faith is going to be tested. And the sad fact is that sometimes our own brethren will be the ones who put us to the test. We would do well to exhibit patience when we are being confronted and challenged. According to James, patience under these circumstances is a sign of a perfect and complete Christian.

Are you sure you have to go on the defensive? Just ask yourself, "What is their demeanor? Are they sincere?" If they are, consider how hard this must be for them, listen to them patiently and be thoughtful in your reply. Remember, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" **(Prov. 15:1)**. Don't make a hard situation worse by thinking you have to defend your pride.

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Never Misuse the Scriptures

We are Christians. We believe the Bible is our guide in all matters. So when we are being challenged, we naturally want to get our Bible out and defend ourselves. We need to be careful about approaching the Bible in this way. When we open our Bible and say, "Where is that verse? It has got to be in here somewhere," what have we done? We have gone to the Bible to find a verse that will justify ourselves, not to learn the truth! The Bible should not be used this way. The Scriptures were meant to equip us for every good work, not excuse us from questionable ones (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**). If our frame of mind is not set on a search for the truth, we had best just leave our Bible alone. The Word of God must be our guide, not an afterthought.

It Is Not Important That You Be Right, But That You Be Right With God

You shouldn't fall into the trap of trying to "win the argument." If the brother challenging you is sincere, and their concern is for your soul, you shouldn't be interested in "shooting down" their charges. If they are misunderstanding you, and a discussion causes them to change their mind, you haven't won an argument, you have "gained your brother" (**Matt. 18:15**).

This goes back to pride. Pride tells us that it is important to be right. If we are not careful it will cause us to try to justify ourselves and defeat their argument. We may even throw an attack back at them. We must think differently. What matters is that we are right with God. We need to be more like Paul. His desire was to live in all good conscience before God and men (**Acts 23:1**). When he found out that he was wrong about Jesus Christ, he changed. David teaches us a good lesson as well. When Nathan convicted him of his sin, he didn't try to defend himself, he simply confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord" (**2 Sam. 12:13**).

Honest and sincere people have been wrong before. Why would it be any different for you or me? Show a willingness to consider their point of view. Admit that you could be wrong. This is not a sign of weakness. It is an attitude that makes you easier to approach. Having a humble attitude goes a long way in helping situations like this. They are not going to be willing to reason with you if they can see

that you are unwilling to reason with them.

We Need To Consider Our Brethren

Paul taught us that even when we are right, we must be willing to forgo our liberties to keep from offending a brother.

"Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died... It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak" (**Rom. 14:13-15, 21**).

"But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak... But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (**1 Cor. 8:9, 12-13**).

Let's say that Paul had done something that had offended a weak or conscientious brother. His immediate concern would not be to justify his action, but to mend the brother he had "offended," "wounded" or "grieved." Just because we have the right to do something doesn't always mean that it is the right thing to do, especially if it is having an adverse affect on another Christian. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (**Phil. 2:3-4**).

Conclusion

Talking to brethren when things aren't going right isn't always easy. The temptation is to just ignore the instructions found in **Matthew 18:15-17**. Unfortunately, many brethren have taken the easy out and now are at odds with their brethren. The Lord has told us to go, but He has also told us what to do when one comes to us. Resolving disagreements depends on how criticism is received as much as on how it is delivered. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (**Rom. 14:19**).



Too Late for Tears

By Wayne Jackson

Would it ever be too late for a Christian to repent? "Yes." "For ye know," said the Hebrews writer (**12:17**). You know about Esau and what happened with respect to the birthright and blessing. Esau's example teaches us something about the nature of irreversible consequences, and we must apply the lesson to spiritual things — the eternal inheritance.

The inspired writer appealed to the case of Esau to warn Christians about a kind of spiritual apathy he calls "profane" — a disregard for religious and holy things by someone who is familiar with them. The admonition goes out to all who are well-acquainted with the plan of God, just as Esau was acquainted with the divine promise to Abraham.

At first glance, this passage is troubling to some. It appears as if Esau repented in sincerity and could not find forgiveness. Some have speculated whether or not this passage teaches that there are some sins for which there is no forgiveness.

The passage does not address the impossibility of Esau's salvation as though he sought to repent of personal sins to God. First of all, such an idea would contradict the clear teaching of numerous passages that reveal the possibility of salvation to anyone who sincerely seeks the Lord according to his Word. Second, the view above does not fairly represent the language of the passage. The text nowhere says that Esau was lost — he may have been, or maybe he was not, but that is not the point of the passage. Neither does the passage state that God would not forgive him. The idea of his personal salvation is not the subject in the passage. Rather, the writer speaks of the irreversible nature of the blessing, once it had been bestowed on Jacob.

Consider the writer's argument. Esau made a choice. His choice set in motion a series of consequences. Although afterward he desired to inherit the blessing, he could not. The situation was irrevocable.

Having observed that this passage speaks to the patriarchal blessing spoken by Isaac, and not Esau's salvation, we ask the following study question. How is this passage intended to warn Christians?

First of all, we must remember that the inheritance was not a light thing in the household of Isaac. Even Esau himself "sought it diligently with tears" — afterwards. He had developed, however, a profane state-of-mind. He

did not consider it as valuable as he should have.

Esau was, in this first respect, like many people today. They don't have a burning desire to be in fellowship with Jesus Christ, nor do they have a passion about living with the Father throughout eternity, singing his praises. But one thing is sure: they don't want to go to hell. Such is the extent of their shallow spirituality. Esau had a minimal level of interest in the patriarchal promises, but it was certainly not enough.

Second, although Esau knew the seriousness of the inheritance, he traded instant gratification for the patriarchal birthright, and he subsequently lost the blessing. It was not a split-second, off-the-cuff, weak-moment mistake. He was a profane man, the Hebrews writer says, and lived with a low-view of the sacred promises of God. Thus, he was ripe for the temptation to "sell his birthright."

Third, when the blessing was bestowed on his brother, in patriarchal fashion, it was unalterable. Here is the point for the Christian. Esau lived on the fringe of spiritual concern. He lost out on the blessing, and it was unchangeable. If we live for the moment, with a light appreciation for the Christian inheritance and the blood that bought it, we can lose our opportunity, and there is no second chance. There is no other way, no use for tears, no chance for repentance, after death or the Judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**).

Like the foolish virgins who were unprepared at the bridegroom's arrival, sometimes it is too late to cry, "Open to us" (**Matthew 25:1-13**). Like the rich man who was sorry once he was in torment, it was too late for him to repent and warn his brethren (**Luke 16:19-31**). This kind of regret comes too late.

The message is as relevant today as it was in the first century and as it was in the days of the patriarchs. If you live with little regard for spiritual things, you will regret it — eventually. But that regret will come too late, unless you heed the lesson about Esau. Now is the time to be concerned. Therefore, keep a close eye out, says the inspired writer, lest you be like Esau.

If after reflecting on your spiritual life, you regard your sins as few and your opportunities to repent as many — watch out. You soon may be lifting up your eyes where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, shedding tears too late.

