

# A Minister Should Not to Be Too Sensitive

by J.C. Philpot

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*A minister should not be too sensitive, as it can lead to feelings of hurt and offense, and make it difficult to maintain friendships and relationships.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 19:11, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:2, 2 Timothy 2:24, 1 Peter 3:15

**Topics:** "Ministerial Conduct", "Christian Leadership"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot emphasizes the importance for ministers not to be overly sensitive, as it can lead to being easily wounded by neglect and unkindness, causing rifts in friendships and making enmities irreconcilable. He acknowledges the challenges of dealing with both friends and foes, urging ministers to be firm, faithful, and forgiving, following the example of Jesus who endured much contradiction and betrayal. Philpot highlights the need for a balanced approach, combining sensitiveness with affection, boldness with gentleness, and faithfulness with contention for the faith without compromising the spirit of the gospel.

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## Transcript

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Mr. Isbell, both as a man and as a minister, was much beloved by his friends and those to whom his ministry had been blessed. He was naturally of a highly sensitive disposition; and if this made him acutely feel neglect and unkindness, it was compensated by a proportionate warmth of affection when it met with a suitable return from friends. It was this kindness, this amiability, this willingness to oblige which endeared him to his friends more than falls to the lot of many ministers. And yet this sensitive, affectionate disposition, which we cannot but admire, had, in his case, as in others similarly gifted, attendant inconveniences.

A minister should not to be too sensitive. If he is to feel every slight, and be deeply wounded by every arrow, directly or indirectly aimed at him, he is on the continual fret. His friends dare hardly speak lest they should hurt his mind, and his enemies are glad that he has a mind which they can so easily hurt; and thus friendships are cooled or lost, and enmities made irreconcilable. We have often thought that if we were as sensitive as our departed friend Isbell was, and felt as acutely as he did the scourge of the tongue and pen, we must have sunk long ago under the missiles thrown at us from every side. Whether our skin be naturally more tough, or has become hardened by war, we will not say; but this we know, that if our mind

were as tender as our body, and we felt the cold blasts from the mouth of man as we feel the cold blasts from the mouth of the wintry east wind, we would not be fit to hold the helm, or even stand on the deck of the ship which we are now steering through the eddying waves.

It was not that he was deficient in faithfulness, for he was a remarkably bold speaker, and never truckled to any man, in public or in private. Nor did he show his feelings by warmth of temper; but an unkind word from a friend, which some would no more regard than a passing breath of wind, wounded him to the quick. We may often admire what we do not envy. Warm, sensitive, acute feelings are very beautiful, but not very desirable. A word, a look, some unintentional neglect, an unanswered letter, a hasty remark, a tart reply, so wounds your sensitive friend, as he so broods over it, that, perhaps, it costs you his friendship for life. And as this sensitiveness often costs him his friends, so it lays him open to the attack of enemies.

We speak thus, not to disparage the dead, but as a word of counsel to the living. Brother ministers, we have all much to bear with from friends and foes. Our blessed Lord had to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, and was forsaken by his disciples and friends. But he has left us an example how to act that we should walk in his steps. If, then, one who has had to bear much from friend and foe may give you counsel, he would say, "Be not too sensitive. Be firm, be faithful; but bear with your friends, and bear from your enemies. We have found the benefit of both."

But if our friend and brother Isbell was too sensitive, it was well balanced in his case by affection; and there was this advantage, that while he chiefly suffered from the one, his friends benefited by the other. He had also a very forgiving spirit, and was thus, if soon offended, easily conciliated; nor could he do enough for his friends, and especially those of them to whom his ministry had been blessed, and who for the most part were as much attached to him as he to them. Our dispositions are often well balanced and mutually corrected. Sensitiveness without affection makes a man a selfish wretch; balanced and corrected by affection, it gives warmth to friendship, though it will sometimes turn it into partiality. On every side are extremes, snares, and dangers.

Sensitiveness without taking offence,

affection without partiality,

boldness without bitterness,

gentleness without giving way,

cautiousness without cowardice,

faithfulness without fury, and

contention for the faith without compromise of the spirit of the gospel--how desirable, yet how rare are such qualifications for a servant of Christ.

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