

Dependence Upon God--the Sense of Sin--Doubts

by John Newton

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of dependence on God and the dangers of self-independence, highlighting the importance of humility, prayer, and a deeper sense of zeal and compassion for souls.

Scripture: Psalm 121:2, Proverbs 3:5, Jeremiah 10:23, Lamentations 3:22, Philippians 1:6

Topics: "Dependence On God", "Indwelling Sin"

Description

John Newton reflects on the humbling realization that as humans, we are unable to direct our own steps without God's guidance and support. He acknowledges his constant need to depend on the Lord for even the smallest things, recognizing his tendency towards self-independence. Newton expresses his struggles with faith and the ongoing battle with indwelling sin, yet finds peace in knowing that God will not forsake the work He has started in him. He urges for more earnest prayers for a further outpouring of God's Spirit amidst the growing wickedness and lack of zeal for God and compassion for souls.

Transcript

Jan.- 1776

Dear Sir,

I may learn (only I am a sad dunce) by small and common incidents, as well as by some more striking and important turns in life, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. It is not for me to say, to-day or to-morrow, I will do this or that. I cannot write a letter to a friend without leave or without help; for neither opportunity nor ability are at my own disposal. It is not needful that the Lord should raise a mountain in my way, to stop my purpose; if He only withdraw a certain kind of imperceptible support, which in general I have and use without duly considering whose it is, then in a moment I feel myself unstrung and disabled, like a ship that has lost her masts, and cannot proceed till He is pleased to refit me and renew my strength. My pride and propensity to self-independence render frequent changes of this kind necessary to me, or I should soon forget what I am, and sacrifice to my own drag. Therefore, upon the whole, I am satisfied, and see it best, that I should be absolutely poor and penniless in myself, and forced to depend upon the Lord for the smallest things as well as the greatest. And if, by His blessing, my experience should at length tally with my judgment in this point, that without Him I can do nothing, then I know I shall find it easy, through Him, to do all things; for the door of His mercy is always open, and it is but ask and have.

But, alas! a secret persuasion (though contrary to repeated convictions) that I have something at home, too often prevents me going to Him for it, and then no wonder I am disappointed. The life of faith seems so simple and easy in theory, that I can point it out to others in few words; but in practice it is very difficult, and my advances are so slow, that I hardly dare say I get forward at all. It is a great thing indeed to have the spirit of a little child, so as to be habitually afraid of taking a single step without leading.

I have heard of you more than once since I heard from you, and am glad to know the Lord is still with you; I trust He has not withdrawn wholly from us. We have much call for thankfulness, and much for humiliation. Some have been removed, some are evidently ripening for glory, and now and then we have a new inquirer. But the progress of wickedness amongst the unconverted here is awful. Convictions repeatedly stifled in many, have issued in a hardness and boldness in sinning which, I believe, is seldom found but in those places where the light of the Gospel has been long resisted and abused. If my eyes suitably affected my heart, I should weep day and night upon this account; but alas! I am too indifferent. I feel a woeful defect in my zeal for God and compassion for souls. When Satan and conscience charge me with cowardice treachery, and stupidity, I know not what to reply. I am generally carried through my public work with some liberty; and because I am not put to shame before the people, I seem content and satisfied. I wish to be more thankful for what the Lord is pleased to do amongst us, but, at the same time, to be more earnest with Him for a further outpouring of His Spirit. Assist me therein with your prayers.

As to my own private experience, the enemy is not suffered to touch the foundation of my faith and hope thus far I have peace. But my conflicts and exercises, with the effects of indwelling sin, are very distressing. I cannot doubt of my state and acceptance; and yet it seems no one can have more cause for doubts and fears than myself, if such doubtings were at all encouraged by the Gospel; but I see they are not; I see that what I want and hope for, the Lord promises to do, for His own name's sake, and with a non obstante to all my vileness and perverseness; and I cannot question but He has given me (for how else could I have it?) a thirst for that communion with Him in love, and conformity to His image, of which as yet, I have experienced but very faint and imperfect beginnings. But if He has begun, I venture, upon His word, that He will not forsake the work of His own hands.

On public affairs I say but little. Many are censuring men and measures; but I would lay all the blame upon sin. It appears plain to me that the Lord has a controversy with us; and, therefore, I fear what we have yet seen is but the beginning of sorrows. I am ready to dread the event of this summer; but I remember the Lord reigns. He has His own glory and the good of His church in view, and will not be disappointed. He knows how likewise to take care of those who fear Him. I wish there were more sighing and mourning amongst professors, for the sins of the nation and the churches. But I must conclude, and am, &c

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-newton/dependence-upon-god-the-sense-of-sin-doubts/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net