

Fellowship With Christ and Friends Contrasted

by John Newton

John Newton emphasizes the importance of intimacy with God and the need for delicate and circumspect relationships with others, highlighting the power of love and forgiveness in maintaining relationships.

Scripture: Proverbs 19:11, Micah 7:18, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:14, 1 Peter 4:8

Topics: "Christian Unity", "Gods Mercy"

Description

John Newton preaches about the importance of not judging others' circumstances hastily, emphasizing the need for delicacy and circumspection in maintaining relationships and avoiding offense. He reflects on the inconsistency in our behavior towards God compared to our loved ones, highlighting God's infinite mercy and forgiveness towards His people. Newton also discusses the unity of spirit that transcends doctrinal differences, focusing on the essential knowledge of Jesus as the Savior for true heart unity, rather than engaging in divisive controversies.

Transcript

1775.

I am satisfied with your answer to my question: we are not proper judges of each other's circumstances; and I am in some measure weaned from judging hastily, that what would not be convenient for me must therefore necessarily be wrong for another. However, my solicitude for your welfare made me venture to drop a hint, as I was persuaded you would take it in good part. Indeed all situations and circumstances (supposing them not sinful in themselves, and that we are lawfully placed in them) are nearly alike. In London, I am in a crowd; in the country, I am sure there is a crowd to me. To what purpose do I boast of retirement, when I am pestered by a legion in every place? How often, when I am what I call alone, may my mind be compared to a puppet-show, a fair, a Newgate, or any of those scenes where folly, noise, and wickedness most abound? On the contrary, sometimes I have enjoyed sweet recollection and composure where I could have hardly expected it. But still, though the power be all of the Lord, and we of ourselves can do nothing, it is both our duty and our wisdom to be attentive to the use of appointed means on the one hand, and, on the other, watchful against those things which we find by experience have a tendency to damp our fervour, or to dissipate our spirits.

A comfortable intimacy with a fellow-worm cannot be maintained without a certain delicacy and circumspection, a studiousness in improving opportunities of pleasing, and in avoiding what is known to be offensive. For though love will make large allowances for involuntary mistakes, it cannot easily brook a

slight. We act thus as it were by instinct towards those whom we dearly love, and to whom we feel ourselves greatly obliged: and happy are they who are most influenced by this sentiment in their walk before the Lord. But, alas! here we are chargeable with such inconsistencies as we should be greatly ashamed of in common life. And well it is for us that the Lord's thoughts and ways are above ours, and that he is infinite in mercy as well as in power; for surely our dearest friends would have been weary of us, and have renounced us long ago, had we behaved to them as we have too often done to him. He is God and not man, and therefore he still waits to be gracious, though we have too often trifled with him. Surely we may well say with the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!" His tenderness and forbearance towards his own people (whose sins, being committed against love, and light and experience, are more aggravated than others) is astonishing indeed. But, oh! may the times past suffice to have grieved his Spirit; and may we be enabled from henceforth to serve him with a single eye and a simple heart, to be faithful to every intimation of his will, and to make him our All in all!

Mr. **** has been here, and I have been with him at **** since his return, We seem glad to be together when we can. When I am with him, I feel quite at home and at ease, and can tell him (so far as I dare tell a creature) all that is in my heart; a plain proof, that union of spirit depends no more upon an exact uniformity of sentiment, than on a uniformity of prayers: for in some points of doctrine we differ considerably; but I trust I agree with him in the views I have of the excellency, suitableness, and sufficiency of the Saviour, and of his right to reign without a rival in the hearts of his redeemed people. An experimental knowledge of Jesus, as the deliverer from sin and wrath, and the author of eternal life and salvation to all who are enabled to believe, is a sufficient ground for union of heart: in this point, all who are taught of God are of one mind. But an eager fighting for or against those points which are usually made the subjects of controversy, tends to nourish pride and evil tempers in ourselves, and to alienate our hearts from those we hope to spend an eternity with. In heaven we shall neither be Dissenters, Moravians, nor Methodists; neither Calvinists nor Arminians; but followers of the Lamb, and children of the kingdom. There we shall hear the voice of war no more.

We are still favoured with health and many temporal blessings. My spiritual walk is not so smooth as my outward path: in public, I am mercifully supported; in secret, I most sensibly feel my own vileness and weakness: but through all the Lord is gracious.

I am, &c.

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