

# Unprofitable Company--Sectarianism

by John Newton

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*John Newton emphasizes the importance of patience, charity, and unity among Christians despite differences and challenges in fellowship.*

**Scripture:** Romans 15:7, 1 Corinthians 13:4, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:13

**Topics:** "Christian Unity", "Loving Others"

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## Description

John Newton emphasizes the importance of showing love, patience, and charity towards others, even those with differing beliefs or prejudices, as every encounter can be a learning opportunity in God's school. He encourages bearing with narrow-minded individuals and triumphing over bigotry by practicing comprehensive candor and tenderness. Newton reflects on feeling like a 'speckled bird' among different Christian groups but finds solace in the few who love him, determined to love all who love the Lord Jesus, despite party divisions that will eventually crumble.

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## Transcript

My dear Friend,

As we are so soon to meet, as I have nothing very important to communicate, and many things occur which might demand my time; I have no other plea to offer, either to you or myself, for writing again, but because I love you.

I pity the unknown considerable minister, with whom you smoked your morning pipe. But we must take men and things as we find them: and when we fall in company with those from whom we can get little other good, it is likely we shall at least find occasion for the exercise of patience and charity towards them, and of thankfulness to him who hath made us to differ. And these are good things, though perhaps the occasion may not be pleasant. Indeed, a Christian, if in a right spirit, is always in his Lord's school, and may learn either a new lesson, or how to practise an old one, by every thing he sees or hears, provided he does not wilfully tread upon forbidden ground. If he were constrained to spend a day with the poor creatures in the common side of Newgate, though he could not talk with them of what God has done for his soul, he might be more sensible of his mercy, by the contrast he would observe around him. He might rejoice for himself, and mourn over them, and thus perhaps get as much benefit as from the best sermon he ever heard.

It is necessary, all things taken together, to have connection more or less with narrow-minded people. If they are, notwithstanding their prejudices, civil to us, they have a right to some civility from us. We may love them, though we cannot admire them, and pick something good from them, notwithstanding we see much to blame. It is perhaps the highest triumph we can obtain over bigotry, when we are able to bear with bigots themselves. For they are a set of troublesome folks, whom Mr. Self is often very forward to exclude from the comprehensive candour and tenderness which he professes to exercise towards those who differ from him.

I am glad your present home (a believer should be always at home) is pleasant; the rooms large and airy; your host and hostess kind and spiritual; and, upon the whole, all things as well as you could expect to find them, considering where you are. I could give you much such an account of my usual head-quarters in the city; but still London is London. I do not wish you to live there, for my own sake as well as yours: but if the Lord should so appoint, I believe he can make you easy there, and enable me to make a tolerable shift without you. Yet I certainly should miss you; for I have no person in this neighbourhood with whom my heart so thoroughly unites in spirituals, though there are many whom I love. But conversation with most Christians is something like going to court; where, except you are dressed exactly according to a prescribed standard, you will either not be admitted, or must expect to be heartily stared at. But you and I can meet and converse sans contrainte, in an undress, without fear of offending, or being accounted offenders, for a word out of place, and not exactly in the pink of the mode.

I know not how it is: I think my sentiments and experience are as orthodox and Calvinistical as need be; and yet I am a sort of speckled bird among my Calvinist brethren. I am a mighty good Churchman, but pass amongst such as a Dissenter in prunella. On the other hand, the Dissenters (many of them I mean) think me defective, either in understanding or in conscience, for staying where I am. Well! there is a middle party, called Methodists; but neither do my dimensions exactly fit with them. I am somehow disqualified for claiming a full brotherhood with any party. But there are a few among all parties who bear with me and love me, and with this I must be content at present. But so far as they love the Lord Jesus, I desire, and by his grace I determine (with or without their leave) to love them all. Party-walls, though stronger than the walls of Babylon, must come down in the general ruin, when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up, if no sooner.

I am, &c.

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