

Are You My Friend? Really?

Ponder: True Friendship

Scripture: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:6, ESV).

I don’t like being told I’m wrong! Who does? But sometimes I need it, and I would be wise to appreciate the real friend who corrects me.

I don’t always behave as I should. My understanding of Scripture isn’t flawless. Therefore, I need correction, even if such is painful. If all you want is to keep me contented so I’ll say or do what you wish, then you will butter me up and assure me that you really love me and that all is well (even though it isn’t). In reality, though, that would make you my enemy, not my friend.

A faithful friend will tell me the truth even if it hurts. Paul did so with the Galatians, and asked, “Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? (Galatians 4:16). In fact, it was the Judaizers who proved themselves to be the Galatians’ enemies by robbing them of their liberty in Christ. Paul loved them enough to strive to reclaim them.

Solomon’s previous proverb said, “Better is open rebuke than hidden love” (27:5). Hidden love doesn’t show itself in self-sacrificing service. I doesn’t advance beyond a feeling tucked away in the heart. Particularly, in this context, it doesn’t risk losing favor with me by correcting me.

One extreme, then is to let me continue in ungodly behavior or false doctrine, saying nothing to help me back onto the right path. The other extreme involves jumping down my throat feet first. Some have the idea that rebuke must be a scorching, scathing denunciation. They suppose they are showing “love” by routinely raking folks over the coals. Did Jesus ever speak severely? Most definitely! “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matthew 23:13). But this was only after years of teaching with people who made their vile attitudes obvious; it was not His default approach to every person in any sort of error. “Harsh words stir up anger” (Proverbs 15:1b).

Listen to correction, even if it hurts. And love others enough to correct “with gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1, NKJV).

Song: “Oh Master, Let Me Walk With Thee”

Prayer: Holy Father, help us to humble ourselves before You. When someone corrects us, may we not pridefully reject it. And help us, too, not to be prideful when we must correct someone else. May everything we do be done in love as Jesus did. In His name, Amen.