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# GODLY COMPANIONS

**Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)**

*“I am a companion of all that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”*

—Psalm 119:63

IN the above verse we have a description of God’s people according to the course of their lives and conduct. They are a people marked by two things: fear and submission, the latter being the fruit of the former. Regenerated souls obey God conscientiously out of reverence to His majesty and goodness, and from a due regard of His will as made known in His Word. The same description is given of them in Acts 10:35, “In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.” It is a filial fear which is awed by God’s greatness and is careful not to offend Him, which is constrained by His love and is anxious to please Him. Such are the only ones fit to be a Christian’s “companions.”

A “companion” is, properly speaking, one whom I choose to walk and converse with in a way of friendship. Inasmuch as the companions we select is an optional matter, it is largely true that a person may be known by the company he or she keeps; hence the old adage, “Birds of a feather flock together.” Scripture asks the searching question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). A Christian, before his conversion, was controlled by the Prince of darkness and walked according to the course of this world (Eph 2:2-3), and therefore did he seek and enjoy the company of worldlings. But when he was born again the new nature within him prompted new tastes and desires, and so he seeks a new company, delighting only in the saints of God. Alas, that we do not always continue as we began.

The Christian is to have good will toward all with whom he comes in contact, desiring and seeking their best interests (Gal 6:10), but he is not to be yoked to (2Co 6:14) nor have any fellowship with (Eph 5:11) those who are unbelievers, nor is he to delight in or have complacency toward those who despise his Master. “Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?” (2Ch 19:2). Would you knowingly take a viper into your bosom? “The wicked is an abomination unto the righteous” (Pro 29:27). So said David, “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Psa 139:21-22). That holy man could not be confederate with such.

Evil company is to be sedulously avoided by the Christian lest he become defiled by them. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Pro 13:20). Nor is it only the openly lawless and criminal who are to be shunned, but even, yea especially, those professing to be Christians yet who do not live the life of Christians. It is this latter class particularly against which the real child of God needs to be most on his guard: namely, those who say one thing and do another; those whose talk is pious, but whose walk differs little or nothing from the non-professor. The Word of God is plain and positive on this point: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2Ti 3:5). This is not merely good advice, but a divine command which we disregard at our peril.

In selecting your “companions,” let not a pleasing personality deceive you. The devil himself often poses as “an angel of light,” and sometimes his wolfish agents disguise themselves in “sheep’s clothing” (Mat 7:15). Be most careful in seeing to it that what draws you toward and makes you desire the companionship of Christian friends is their love and likeness to Christ and not their love and likeness to you. Shun as you would a deadly plague those who are not awed by the fear of God, i.e., a trembling lest they offend Him. Let not the devil persuade you that you are too well established in the

faith to be injured by intimacy with worldly “Christians.” “Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). Rather “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2Ti 2:22).

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33). The Greek word here for “communications” properly means “a bringing together, companionships.” And evil companionships “corrupt.” All evil is contagious and association with evildoers, whether they be “church members” or open infidels, has a defiling and debasing effect upon the true child of God. Mark well how the Holy Spirit has prefaced this warning: “be not deceived.” Evidently there is a real danger of God’s people imagining that they can play with fire without getting burned. Not so; God has not promised to protect us when we fly in the face of his danger signals. Observe too the next verse which is inseparably connected with the one to which we have directed attention. “Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak [this] to your shame” (1Co 15:34). The word “awake” signifies to arouse as from a torpor or state of lethargy. It is a call to shake off the delusive spell that a Christian may company with Christ-less companions without being contaminated by them. “And sin not” in this respect. To cultivate friendship with religious worldlings is *sin*, for such “have not the knowledge of God”: they have no experimental acquaintance with Him, His fear is not on them, His authority has no weight with them. “I speak [this] to your shame.” The child of God ought to be abashed and filled with confusion that he needs such a word as this.

“I am a companion of all that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.” Such are the only “companions” worth having, the only ones who will give you any encouragement to continue pressing forward along the “Narrow Way.” It is not those who merely pretend to “believe” God’s precepts, or profess to “stand for” them, but those who actually “keep” them. But where are such to be found these days? Ah, where indeed. They are but “few” in number (Mat 7:14) one here and one there. Yea, so very “few” are they that we are constrained to cry, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12:1).

It is indeed solemn to read the words that immediately follow the last-quoted scripture and find how aptly they apply to and how accurately they describe the multitude of godless professing “Christians” all around us: “they speak vanity every one with his neighbour, with flattering lips, with a double heart do they speak” (v. 2). Note three things about them. First, they “speak vanity” or “emptiness.” Their words are like bubbles, there is nothing edifying about them. It cannot be otherwise for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Mat 12:34). Their poor hearts are empty (Mat 12:44). So their speech is empty too. Second, they have “flattering lips,” which is the reason why they are so popular with the ungodly. They will seek to puff you up with a sense of their own importance, pretend to admire the “much light” you have, and tell you it is your duty to “give it out to others.” Third, they have a “double heart.” They are (vainly) seeking to serve two masters: (cf. 2Ki 17:32-33).

“I am a companion of all that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.” There is a very real sense in which this is true even where there is no outward contact with such. Faithfulness to God, obedience to His Word, keeping His precepts, companying only with those who do so, turning away from everybody else, has always involved a lonely path. It was thus with Enoch (Jude 14). It was thus with Abraham (Isa 51:2). It was thus with Paul (2Ti 1:15). It is the same today. Every city in the land is filled with “churches,” “missions,” “Gospel halls,” “Bible institutes,” etc., but where are those who give plain evidence that they are living in this world as “strangers and pilgrims” and as such abstaining “from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1Pe 2:11)?

But thank God, though the path of faithfulness to Him be a lonely one, it brings me into spiritual fellowship with those who have gone before. We are to walk by faith and not by sight, and faith perceives that walking with Christ “outside the camp” (Heb 13:13) necessarily brings into communion with “all” His redeemed, be they on earth or be they in heaven. Thus the apostle John in his lonely exile on Patmos referred to himself as “your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:9). Yes, Christian reader, for a little while it means companionship “in tribulation,” but, praise God it will not mean enduring the throes of the swiftly-approaching portion of Christ-less professors left behind when Christ comes for His own (2Th 2:10-12). For a little while it means companionship in “the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,” soon it will be in the kingdom and glory of Christ. May divine mercy so enable us to live now that in that Day we shall receive His “Well done.” ❧