

Rejection vs Acceptance

As I travelled from town to town and talked to people about the Good News of the Kingdom, I encountered a variety of responses. Some were positive, but many were negative. I made many good friends, and also many good enemies. My difficulties with people did not even come close to those that our brother Paul faced¹, though, as he was whipped many times and even stoned.

The good enemies somehow magnified my view of the value of my good friends. If everyone I met became a close personal acquaintance, following my message, I would have too many relationships to cover with my ever-thinning cloak of love. Not that this would not have been a nice problem to have! But it also might interfere with the humility I need to bring myself broken and contrite before God².

Even in the midst of success and victory, we may feel ourselves to be alone. I know that David and Elijah both had to deal with this, being on their own running for their very lives^{3,4}. There were many other prophets of God in Israel around Elijah⁵, but apparently he did not know them personally. David and Elijah both turned to God in the absence of supporting friends^{6,7}. Later, as King of Israel, David had to balance between those that loved him sacrificially and those (even in his own family⁸) who did not love him at all and sought to destroy him.

I wondered more than before how deeply the Christ felt both rejection and acceptance. He was able to balance these and remain productive in His earthly ministry. His popularity rose and fell, but there was a core group that stayed beside him up until the day He was crucified (they scattered in their confusion but eventually regrouped). He had sacrificial love for all mankind, but He felt something very special about those that really loved Him (three were in the inner circle⁹, and one was mentioned as “the disciple that Jesus loved¹⁰”).

On His human side, Christ felt this magnification towards His disciples because He knew that they loved Him. But on His divine side, He communed with God in a much more complete sense, and felt an overwhelming love that totally eclipses our own responses to Him¹¹.

Even though He was accepted by His core group, He was ultimately (though temporarily) forsaken by them all when He was arrested. And on the cross, He felt the greatest disconnect of them all, and He echoed David’s plaintiff cry that God had forsaken Him¹². But this was not an issue of acceptance. It was a separation necessary for the fullness and completion of the sacrifice of the Godhead for the souls of mankind. Christ used the word “God”, representing the Godhead of which He was a vital part, rather than “Father”. He knew that His Father loved Him. And they love us with this immense sacrificial love.

Whether we consider ourselves to have many friends or few, the greatest friend¹³ that we have is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1. 2 Corinthians 11:20-28
2. Psalm 51:17
3. 1 Samuel 19:10, 1 Samuel 27:1, and 2 Samuel 15:14
4. 1 Kings 19:1-10
5. 1 Kings 19:18
6. Psalm 109
7. 1 Kings 19:4
8. remember Absalom, 2 Samuel 15-18

9. for example, Matthew 17:1, Mark 14:33
10. John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, and 21:20
11. 1 John 4:10
12. Psalm 22:1
13. see John 15:15b, also consider the song, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (words by Joseph Scriven)

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