

## LIMITED LOYALTY

Hebrews 12:3 ... "For consider him [Jesus] who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls..."

Loyalty is the act of being faithful to a friend, spouse, employer, leader, or nation even under difficult circumstances. If a friend says something unkind to you when he or she is not feeling well, is discouraged, or upset you will probably forgive and remain loyal to that friend because that is not his or her normal behavior. If your employer asks you to do a task you do not like, you should do what is asked and demonstrate your loyalty (unless the request is immoral or unlawful). In our relationship with God we will occasionally disappoint him. He loves us anyway and waits for us to return to his embrace so that he can help us correct that problem. If we reject God's instruction, we are demonstrating disloyalty, and also sinful rebellion.

You may not reject God entirely, but you may reject some of what he represents. For instance, you may agree with God that murder is wrong, but you believe that helping the poor is unreasonable. You agree with God not to steal, but you feel that small lies are not a big problem. These are examples of limited loyalty; you believe in some of God's expectations, but not all.

Today's verse reminds us that Jesus was hated by many for the truth he spoke and his devotion to the Father. As a believer, you may have friends who are disappointed when you demonstrate greater loyalty to God than to them. That might become evident if you spend more time with your family than with them, or you choose to attend church instead of going to the beach, or a Bible study instead of a night drinking. If your faith is weak or you value your friendships more than your relationship with Christ, your loyalty to God may weaken, which can have painful – even eternal – consequences. It is important to remember that your loyalty to friends is very temporary and demands compromises. Your loyalty to God has huge benefits and results in an eternal reward.

Evaluate your friendships. Are they helping you cultivate and deepen your relationship with God, or are they pulling you in another direction? Good friends care about your eternal future, not your temporary happiness; they want the best for you, not what is best only for them. Truly good friends want your relationship with God to be more important than your relationship with them, and are most happy when you honor God. Just as importantly, how do you as a believer relate to your friends who lack a close relationship with God? Are they learning about Christ from you, or do they see you as someone who will not bug them about spiritual matters? True friendship is based on what you give, not what you receive. Are your friends receiving from you a knowledge of your Savior?

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