

## FRIENDSHIP

"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant has thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." II Samuel 1:26.

A friend is one who is intimately known, respected, esteemed, and loved by another. Friendship is the mutual attachment of two persons who are thus known and loved. Jeremy Taylor said, "By friendship, I mean the greatest love, and the greatest usefulness, and the most open communication, and the noblest sufferings, and the most exemplary faithfulness, and the severest truth, and the heartiest counsel, and the greatest union of mind of which brave men and women are capable." Christ realized all the meanings and implications of friendship. So to Him friendship was of tremendous value. In fact, one of the very best things in life is friendship. It makes life for us rich and full, bright and joyous, tender and sweet.

### I. The Reality Of Friendship.

Cicero has well said, "Friendship is the only thing in the world concerning the usefulness of which all mankind are agreed." Friendship is the greatest boon of human circumstances. To know that it is a reality, we have only to consider:---

#### 1. Our own experience

When we turn to our own personal experience we know how true, how positively true, this great fact is for every one of us has friends. Friendship makes life for us really worth living.

#### 2. Our observation of others

When we look at the lives of those about us, and note the friendships that exist between them, it abundantly proves to us the reality of friendship.

#### 3. Our study of biography

In this great branch of literature, the reality of friendship is revealed in a great way. We have examples enough when we mention Johnson and Boswell, Scott and Lockhart, Tennyson and Arthur Hallam. When Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning asked Charles Kingsley once, "Tell me the secret of your life that I may make mine beautiful too." His simple answer was, "I have a friend!" That was the secret---that made all the difference. Napoleon said, "A faithful friend is the true image of Deity." Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, said, "My treasures are my friends." A brief study of biography would reveal to one the truthfulness of what Plautus said, "Nothing is there more friendly to a man than a friend in need."

#### 4. Our study of the Bible

There are not a great many friendships which have left an abiding record in human memories. The world's later ages do not furnish, so readily as the earlier ages, examples of a friendship between men heroic enough in force and beauty to make a mark on a human mind. Still, friendship remains a great good among human goods, and it is well that we should know the secret of it, and by what care and art it can be engendered and preserved and heightened. Therefore, it will not be amiss to look in the Bible at two pictures which reveal the reality of friendship in an unusual way.

##### (1) The friendship of Jonathan for David.

When the youthful David appeared before Saul after his duel with Goliath, he attracted the notice and won the admiration and love of the king's eldest son, Jonathan. As David told his story with the winning modesty of a boy who has done a really brave thing as a matter of course and dislikes talking about it, we read that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him

as his own soul." It was a sudden friendship. Jonathan's friendship for David:--

a. Seems to have originated in admiration

David was one of those Divinely favored personalities who irresistibly attracts every one whom it touches in such a way that no one is able to withstand its charm. The chivalrous nature of Jonathan fell at once under the spell of the heroic youth, introduced to him under circumstances so remarkable and so romantic. They had natural affinities---youth, courage, and faith in God.

b. Was very warm. Text. It was no mere formal business connection.

c. Was cemented and confirmed by pledges and compacts. I Sam. 18:3-4; 20:16-17; 20:41-42

d. Was disinterested

Jonathan was heir-apparent to the throne, but David had been anointed king by Samuel. The kingdom was to be taken from the house of Saul, and given to the house of David. Very naturally, the young prince Jonathan might have felt first envy, and then hatred of David, who was to supplant him; but instead of that, he said to him one day, very touchingly, "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." There was no jealousy in his heart; he was content to be second where David was first. 23:17 He meant to be his friend, and his helper, taking joy in seeing David wear the crown which might have adorned his own brow.

e. Was shown by practical services

He interceded with his father repeatedly for David, and exposed himself thereby to death from his father's rage. He warned David of his father's deadly purpose. He visited his friend after he was banished from the court and when he was being pursued by his relentless enemy.

f. Was associated with strict loyalty to his father

Jonathan had a difficult part to play but he played it well. He was loving and devoted to Saul. At the same time he maintained a warm friendship with David whose life Saul sought to take. Jonathan clung to David through good and evil report. When Saul had turned against David and was hunting him as a quail on the mountains, then it was Jonathan's loyalty and courage that kept David from despairing. Jonathan was loyal to the core.

g. Was reciprocated by David

These two souls were knit together in their desires and motives as the warp and woof of a web. The knitting together shows that the affection of David responded in full measure to the love of Jonathan, so that the vital interests of the one were intertwined with the vital interests of the other. When Saul and Jonathan were both slain on one battlefield, David united their memories in his elegy. "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided." David said, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

The friendship of Jonathan and David embraced all that enters into ordinary friendship,--- appreciation, love, confidence, tenderness, and fidelity.

(2) The friendship of Jesus for us.

Christ Jesus stands in the historic category of friendship. Nothing less than friendship could authorize John's description of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." His friendship for us is wonderful indeed, in its condescension, its spontaneity, its disinterestedness, its sacrifices, its services, and its bestowments. And His friendship for us never ends. He shows His friendship for us in His forgiveness of us. His forgiveness is as full as it is free, and as free as it is full. However, our Master felt drawn to some more than to others, even though He loved all. He said, "Ye are My friends if ye do the things which I command thee." To belong to that privileged group, to be accounted one of Christ's friends is a signal honor, carrying with it privilege and power. But it is also a position of responsibility. Friendship means mutual love and service. Christ is a faithful friend in every hour of need and time of distress.

## II. The Reasons For Friendship.

### 1. Our need of it

Every man needs faithful friends. It matters not in what condition man is found, whether in riches or in poverty, whether ignorant and rude or highly civilized and educated, he needs the friendship of one or more of his fellow creatures. Friendship is a necessity of our lives.

## 2. Other's need of it

In addition to supplementing the deficiencies of our own lives, friendship enables us share whatever excellencies we may have with others who realize their deficiencies. If others are to be happy they must have friends too. Plautus said, "Nothing is there more friendly to a man than a friend in need." Another has said, "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

## 3. The will of the Lord

The Lord wants us to have friends and be friends. Emerson said, "The only reward of virtue is virtue, the only way to have a friend is to be one." If one desires to know the sweets of real friendship, he must be prepared to be himself a real friend. If there is to be a genuine friendship, there must be mutual confidences, and a mutual recognition of excellencies. There is no friendship as firm and enduring as that which is based upon doing the will of the Lord, who said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

# III. The Recipe For Friendship.

## 1. Openness of mind

A true friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangingly.

## 2. Frequency of contact

A momentary contact sometimes does, as if by instinct, suggest or even create a tie, but that must be kept in good repair or it will evaporate. This need not always mean meeting in an external way or in the flesh, it may be of the mind and of the spirit. But, forgetfulness is fatal to friendship.

## 3. Willingness to sympathize

All men are more or less dependent. The desire for friendship arises in part from the need of sympathy. Human sympathy is an immense help in enabling one to meet the difficulties, bear the trials, and do the work of a genuine Christian. In other words, friendship seems as necessary an element of a comfortable existence in this world as fire or water.

## 4. Readiness to aid

A true friend is one who loves us for what we are and is willing to help us for our own sakes. A true friend is ready and willing to help us in time of need. He will not try to put us off with just a little <sup>chief</sup> sympathy.

## 5. Doing things together

This cements friendship more than almost anything else. Even to play together makes friends. Still more to work together, strive together, sacrifice together, and suffer together makes friends who are inseparable. Doing things together implies the union of hearts and hands, comradeship in the common aims of life, mutual interest and service. However, fidelity is an absolute necessity in a true friend.

# IV. The Rewards Of Friendship.

1. It brings comfort

We need sympathy, and therefore we crave for friendship. We cannot live a self-centered life without feeling that we are missing the true glory of life. A friend may play the part of a confessor and bring the relief, the satisfaction of heart, and the moral strength which belong to that character. "No recipe openeth a heart but a true friend; to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil confession."

2. It gives counsel

While friendship is balm to the wounded heart, it may also be light to the darkened understanding, and that not merely because a friend can give honest and wise counsel, but also because the mere act of talking to him clears up mental confusions and gives clearness and consistency to thought. It gives satisfaction of the mind.

3. It provides comradeship

A friend is the best of all comrades in the work and warfare of life, the most serviceable, the most trustworthy, and the least likely to be deluded by irrelevant considerations. Comradeship is one of the finest facts, and one of the strongest forces in life. Comradeship is a great help to us in the difficulties of life. The very word friendship suggests help and aid in distress. No friendship is worth the name which does not elevate, and does not contribute to nobility of conduct and to strength of character. It should give a new zest to duty, and a new inspiration to all that is good. Nothing is more delightful in this world than a true friend, who is wise and good, who kindly receives and returns our affections, and who is faithful to us in all of our true interests. Make all the friends you can. You are rich in proportion to the number of true and faithful friends that you have.

A FRIEND

-----Edgar A. Guest

"A friend is one who stands to share  
Your every touch of grief and care.  
He comes by chance, but stays by choice,  
Your praises he is quick to voice.

No grievous fault or passing whim  
Can make an enemy of him.  
And though your need be great or small,  
His strength is yours throughout it all.

No matter where your path may turn,  
Your welfare is his chief concern.  
No matter what your dream may be,  
He prays your triumph soon to see.

There is no wish your tongue can tell,  
But what it is your friend's as well.  
The life of him who has a friend,  
Is double-guarded to the end."