

"THE FRIEND OF GOD"

"But thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend." Isaiah 41:8.

"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." James 2:23.

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. Christ realized all the meanings and implications of friendship. So to Him friendship was of tremendous value. In fact, friendship is one of the very best things in life. For us, it makes life rich and full, bright and joyous, tender and sweet. That is why Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, said: "My treasures are my friends."

Every person 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 in our lives. A true friend is one who unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangingly.

True friendship brings comfort. It has been said that "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." True friendship provides comradeship, also. The very word friendship suggests help and aid in distress. No friendship is worth the name which does not elevate, and contribute to nobility of conduct and to strength of character. Nothing in this world is more delightful than a true friend, who kindly receives and returns our affections, and who is faithful to us in all of our true interests. In writing about a friend, Edgar A. Guest stated:

"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."

Although it would be extremely interesting and very inspiring to discuss the general subject of friendship, that is not my real purpose in this message. Instead, I want to speak of the highest and holiest friendship that is known, namely, that which exists between the soul of a believer in Christ and God Himself. This discussion will be based upon the friendship between God and Abraham. Abraham was called "the friend of God." Much that is honorable is recorded of Abraham in the Holy Scriptures, but nothing equal to this statement. God put a very great honor upon Abraham by calling him His friend. What

greater honor could there be than this? Abraham believed in his Friend and God reckoned it to him for righteousness. How wonderful to be able to be a friend of the Almighty! Human friendship is something to be held dear. To have a friend is to have one of the sweetest gifts that life can bring. Human friendship is precious, but friendship with God is something infinitely greater. God can become as real to us as any earthly friend. In order for friendship to develop there must be frequent association of friends. Then, too, friendship cannot all be on one side. In this particular instance it is intended that we should know that while God was Abraham's friend, Abraham was God's friend. He received and returned the friendship of God.

I. The Ground of This Friendship.

Friendships are not accidents; trace them back and you will find that they are rooted in personal affinities. The friendship between God and Abraham was grounded in the following:

1. Mutual trust.

To say that we do not trust our friends is a contradiction in terms. As an expression of His affectionate confidence in Abraham God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" He was considering the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; but how could He conceal the intention from Abraham, His friend? He therefore told him of the judgment which He was about to execute on the guilty cities. Abraham believed God, and he was called the friend of God. And think of what a burden was laid on the faith of the patriarch. He was called upon to leave his home and go forth into a strange land, not knowing whither he went. Old and childless he was asked to believe, and he did believe, that God would make of him a great nation, and that through him the Messiah should come and all the nations of the earth be blessed. And between that promise and the first sign of its fulfillment there was a delay of fifty years, until the very voice of nature declared that the thing was impossible. But through all these years his faith wavered not. God had made the promise, and in patient confidence Abraham waited for its fulfillment.

Not only so, but after Isaac was born and grown to young manhood there came the command to offer him up as a burnt offering, and thus make the fulfillment of the promise impossible. In all these trials he dared to believe that God could find a way to keep His promise. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." Faith was the grace for which he was the most remarkable, and in which he particularly excelled. He always believed what God told him. True friends always believe each other. If we would be numbered among the friends of God, we must be possessors of a faith like Abraham's. Such a faith:

- (1) Justifies from sin.
- (2) Purifies the heart.
- (3) Regulates the life.

2. Mutual communion.

God and Abraham not only trusted each other implicitly, but they talked with each other. They visited with each other. Secrets were disclosed. The satisfaction of having friends is that we can talk to them, and tell them our troubles, and let them share our joys. When we are about to enter upon an enterprise we like first to consult our true friends. There is no care of the heart which we cannot and should not talk to our Heavenly Father about. It is possible to live in such close fellowship with Jesus Christ that we will not have any doubt as to what He would have us do.

Compacts were entered into between God and Abraham. On certain grand occasions we read: "The Lord made a covenant with Abram." God had intimate communion with

him. He said: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." What a glorious privilege to pour out everything that is in one's heart to God! The consciousness that one is reconciled to God, and has in Him a Father and a Friend, sheds over the mind a tranquility which excels the excitement of worldly joy.

3. Mutual service.

True friends are always ready to sacrifice for each other. We are ready to undertake hard things for those who are truly our friends. By that standard test the faith of Abraham. There came a time in the working out of God's plan that He needed someone to leave his home and his kindred and go into a strange land, and Abraham went without any hesitation. Then there came a time when the honor of God required that one should give up the well-watered valley of the Jordan, and lead his flock out in the plain where it looked as though they would all be lost; and Abraham who had the right of first choice yielded it to his ambitious nephew, Lot. That means that when business interests and the revealed will of God come into apparent conflict the will of God is to have the right of way. Still further on there came a day when God said to the patriarch, I want your son, your only son Isaac, and I want you to offer him up as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you. Without a moment's hesitation he prepared to obey the command. Abraham always tried to do what God told him. Is it any wonder then that God called him His friend?

II. The Guarantees of This Friendship.

1. Security.

"Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield." It would be difficult to imagine a life more beset with perils than that of the patriarch. He was living in the midst of strong and hostile tribes to whom he must have appeared as an invader, and to whom his great wealth must have been a perpetual temptation. And yet he remained unmolested for a hundred years or more. Abraham's God is our God, and his Friend is our Friend, and the pledge that He made to Abraham He has made to you and me.

2. Success.

When we undertake a work for God we need have no fear as to the outcome. To Abraham He said: "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."

III. The Glory of This Friendship.

To be God's friend is to possess the highest honor that heaven can bestow.

1. It means reconciliation to Him.

Whenever we look toward Him we can see a smile on His face. Our friends live in our hearts, and the heart of God is the home of His friends.

2. It guarantees likeness to Him.

A growing likeness to Him here and a perfect likeness to Him hereafter. Here,

- (1) We shall be humble in spirit.
- (2) We shall resemble Him in character.
- (3) We shall have confidence in His administration.
- (4) We shall have zeal for His honor.
- (5) We shall enjoy the society of His friends.
- (6) We shall delight to think of Him.
- (7) We shall desire to please Him.

3. Will you become His friend now?

He waits only for you to open the door and admit Him as your best Friend. Let Him in!