

ARE YOU A FRIEND OF CHRIST?

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." John 15:14-15.

One of the most inspiring words in the human language is that of "friend." In most of us it awakens tender thoughts and precious memories. No term of designation is more intimate than that of "friend." In the company of a true friend there is expressed confidence, equality, enjoyment and liberty. Friends are a great asset in life. One is rich if he has worthy and true friends, but he is exceedingly poor if he does not have any friends. As Aristotle said, "Without friends none would choose to live, although he possessed all other good things."

Friendship is the relationship of two souls that are inspired by mutual respect, confidence and love, and by a desire and purpose to live for the welfare of each other. Friendship is beautiful to perceive and wonderful to enjoy. Mutual interest and reciprocal love constitute the basis of friendship. My friend loves me to the forgetfulness of himself, and I love him to the forgetfulness of myself. He is constantly seeking my interests and I am always seeking his.

Friendship always involves reciprocal relations. There are always two parties to a friendship. In the light of the old saying, "It takes two to have a quarrel," it is to be remembered that it also takes two to make a friendship. Only when love meets and answers love is a friendship formed.

One of the earliest scriptural records is the story of a broken friendship. It is a sad story, as is every story of a broken friendship. In the beginning God made man to be His friend. Day after day they met and talked with each other. There was an exchange of mind with them because they were friends. The purpose of the creation of man was fulfilled in that happy friendship. This friendship was broken when man sinned.

Surely there is not any title that excels in dignity the one which was worn by Abraham. He was called, "The Friend of God." Oh, what an appellation! It is truly gracious of the Lord Jesus Christ to call us "friends." The highest possible honor is to be a friend of Christ. Are you really and truly a friend of Christ?

Friendship with Christ has a separating influence in our lives. If we are really His friends, it is certain that we shall arouse the enmity of the ungodly. Friendship with Christ also has a sanctifying influence in our lives. Since we tend to become like the earthly friends with whom we associate, it is even more true that real Christians, through association with Christ, become more like Him, Who is the best of all friends. Lord Brooke was so delighted with the friendship of Sir Philip Sidney that he requested the following epitaph for his own tombstone: "Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney." Spurgeon remarked that, while there was great beauty in such a feeling, it is a very small thing compared with being able to say, "Here lies a friend of Jesus Christ."

John has the supreme distinction, and the everlasting honor, of having been our Lord's most intimate friend on this earth. What a favorable and exalted light that casts on John's character, on the qualities of His mind and on the disposition of His heart! The foundation of all friendship is laid in likeness of nature, character, mind, tastes, pursuits and occupation. What a tribute then to John, the man whom Christ loved most and made His best friend! What a close and intimate friend of his Master John proved to be!

In our text Christ does not speak to us about His being our friend, but about our being His friends. Being friends of Christ has a condition attached to it which makes us stop and think. He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

What are some of the evidences that one is a friend of Christ?

I. Trust In Him As Saviour.

Unless you are trusting in Christ as your personal Saviour you cannot be His friend. Have you accepted Him as your Saviour? Have you definitely and unreservedly committed yourself to Him? Can you say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day?" All you need to have done for you, the adequate and atoning Saviour will do for you, if you will trust Him. Are you fully trusting Him as your Saviour?

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, Ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me!

All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

Are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation? Can you truly say

"On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

II. Love For Him As Master.

If you are really the friend of Christ, then you will love Him. Oh, how great is this matter of loving Christ! If you are really His friend, you will love Him to the point that you will yield yourself to Him, without reserve, bowing before Him in your heart. Friendship can only exist in connection with sincere affection. If Christ is your friend, He will appear most valuable and desirable. His commands will all appear attractive to you. His service will be your highest privilege.

Do you love Christ? As you think of what He has done for you and for all humanity, does your heart stir with a strange outgoing of love toward Him and for Him? If you do not love Him, you are not His friend. Regardless of what your pretension or profession may be, you are not really the friend of Christ unless you love Him.

III. Obedience To Him As Lord.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." A loved one dwells in the heart, in the memory, in the imagination, and in the anticipations. My reasons for thinking of Christ and valuing Him are many. He has done everything for me. He stands connected with every joy of my life. With every affection of my heart, my Saviour should be united. Gratitude and reverence should combine to form my remembrance of Him. How can I be His friend, if I never think of Him? How can I be truly His friend, if I am ashamed or unwilling to speak of Him?

Constancy is another attribute of a friend of Christ. A true friend loveth at all times. I ought never to speak of what I must bear or suffer for Christ, as if I felt it was a burden. I can never suffer anything for Him in comparison with what He suffered for me. I should count it a privilege to be permitted to suffer anything for His glory.

Fidelity is an important attribute of a friend, also. The Saviour's interest and honor should be very dear to us. Here is a great climaxing test that keeps on saying to us: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If we love Him, we will keep His commandments. A Christian wants to obey Christ. True friends are eager to know what they can do to please the objects of their love. This certainly applies to the friends of Christ. We cannot be friends of Christ unless we are willing to yield hearty and loyal service to Him.

Obedience to Christ must be active. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Some think it is quite sufficient if they avoid what He forbids. Abstinence from evil is not enough to prove friendship. Moreover, the obedience which Christ expects from us is continuous. He does not say, "If you sometimes do what I command you -- if you do it on Sundays, for instance, that will suffice." Our obedience to Him must be full and complete. He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." A true friend of Christ does not pick and choose which precept he will keep and which he will neglect, for this is self-will and not obedience. One proves his love for Christ by doing the smaller things for Him as well as the larger ones. Those who refuse to obey Christ are not His friends.

Christ wants your friendship. Are you a friend of Christ? Have you trusted Him as your Saviour? Do you truly love Him because of Who He is, and what He is, and what He has done, and what He is doing, and what He proposes to do for you and others? Do you really want to do whatever He bids you to do? Christ wants your friendship; your friendship expressed in trust in Him, love for Him and obedience to Him. Are you a friend of Christ?