

"THE WORDS OF THE LORD ARE PURE WORDS, LIKE SILVER TRIED IN
A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.
YOU SHALL KEEP THEM, O LORD, YOU SHALL PRESERVE THEM FROM
THIS GENERATION FOREVER." (PSALM 12: 6 & 7)

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“Friends”

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down ones life for his friends.”

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”

*“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing;
but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”
(John 15:13, 14, 15)*

The subject matter of this paper is one of eternal importance to each soul who professes to be a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ. As I take up my pen here in my study at Oak Hill, I have no outline for the message---only the subject---“Friends”---which was given this morning. May our Lord grant the grace of “hearing His voice,” both for me and for you, dear reader.

One of the most valued possessions one has in this life is that of a friend. “True friends” are rare indeed. Most of us could fill a legal pad with fellow men that we would refer to as friends. I have personally lived long enough and been active enough in various segments of society to fill more than one page of a legal pad with those that I would refer to as friends. However, of all the names that I could list, only a few, maybe three or four (outside my family), would I call “true friends.”

One of Father’s most precious gifts to His children is the gift of a “True Friend.” True friends love each other, care for each other, and they tell each other the truth, regardless of their personal flaws and circumstances surrounding them. I have said for years, that when a person comes to the end of their days, the “best” friend they will have had in life will be the one that told them the most truth. I continue to believe my statement to be true.

Friendship and truth go together like a hand in a glove--they are one. Friendship and love are also one in perfect harmony. Sadly, today’s community of professing believers and followers of Christ know little about true friendship, Agape Love, or truth. I realize that my words are strong, but they are meant to be because I believe they are true; and that the evidence at hand is irrefutable proof that our generation has fulfilled prophecy as “it is written”:

“Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves.

lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power: and from such people turn away!" (II Timothy 3:1-5)

People who are in love with themselves, lovers of money, are unholy, unloving---except for their own, who love the pleasures of life more than they do God and who have a form of godliness but are void of its' power---these will never be known as true friends of Jesus Christ. I don't know about you dear reader, but I for one, want to be known in the heavens as a true friend of the KING; I pray that that is your desire as well. If so, know this---there are conditions attached to becoming one of those who is numbered as a friend of God. Becoming a "true friend," not of man, but of God, is what this message is all about.

Each time I read and meditate on Paul's words to Timothy that I have just quoted, I am moved to repentance as I realize that I either "have been" or "am" guilty as charged. Man is by nature a self centered being; man is also quite fond of the world and the pleasures that it offers. Even those of us who count ourselves as being followers of Christ are in a constant battle with "self." In short, dear reader, your greatest enemy (and mine) is not the devil, a demon, or another man or woman; your greatest enemy is "yourself!" As it is written, so it is:

"The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." (Galatians 5:17)

For many years now, I have been saying, and say even now: "Jesus Christ, the King of all Kings and Lord of all Lords, has "many" followers, but very "few" friends." Many of us say that we are His friend, when in truth, we are not. You might think my statement is too harsh, critical or judgmental. How can one bring such a charge? What factual evidence supports such a statement? My answer---"It is written:"

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34b)

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other." (Luke 16:13)

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:37, 38)

*We are commanded as follows: "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."
(Colossians 3:2)*

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world---the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life---is not of the Father but is of the world." (I John 2:15, 16)

And, we are warned:

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”
(James 4:4)

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him---the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” (John 12:48)

The word of God measures each one of us moment by moment--- day by day---and His word qualifies us as either His friend, or a friend of the world, and thereby His enemy. May God have mercy on us all in the latter day season where “Truth has fallen in the street” (Isaiah 59:14) and man is led by the dictates of his own heart. As our Lord warned us, deception now abounds (Matthew 24:4,5,23 & 24), covering the modern-day church like a heavy wool blanket. Make no mistake about it, dear reader--- Jesus Christ has many professing followers within our ranks, but “few” true friends; The Word of God declares it so! And so it is!

To qualify as a true friend of God, one must first “believe” Him. You cannot believe God if you refuse to accept as truth, the book we refer to as the Holy Bible; when It says of Itself that It was God breathed (II Timothy 3:16), and Christ declared that It could not be broken (John 10:35), and that It would stand until heaven and earth passed away (Matthew 5:18). In I Peter verses 24 and 25 it is written:

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

Each of us chooses to either believe God, by faith, as it is written, or we choose to reject or set aside the Word of God in favor of what “self” believes. If we choose to believe Him, He counts us as His friends; if we choose not to believe Him, He counts us as wicked (Psalm 50:16 & 17) and near to being cursed (Galatians 1: 8 & 9). Yes, dear reader, God is serious about His word---His every word from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 down to the very last jot and tittle. No man or woman will ever be called a “true friend” of Jesus Christ who refuses to believe Him---“As it is written.” When we choose not to believe His word, we as much as call Him a liar. What about you? ---What about you?---Are you prepared to call God a liar?---Are you? If so, only hell awaits your arrival; If not, you have much to look forward to, as Abraham found out.

Abraham, who is referred to as the father of faith (Romans 4 and Hebrews 11) believed God’s word and was counted as righteous as he “obeyed” God’s word. Not only was he counted as righteous, but God also declared that he was His friend forever! Please listen:

“The scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.” (James 2:23)

“Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?” (II Chronicles 20:7)

Father has declared to us, through His word, that He shows no partiality between His sons and daughters (Acts 10:34—Romans 2:11—Deuteronomy 10:17—Galatians 2:6—Ephesians 6:9 and II Chronicles 19:7), no partiality at all! That being so, for God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19) every truly born-again believer and follower of Jesus Christ has the potential to be numbered among our Lord's "true" friends---forever! Our potential in the eyes of God, if we are in fact, who we say we are, is the same as was Abraham's; Praise God. That truth excites me. When all is said and done, and man comes to the end of his days, what greater honor could be bestowed upon him by God, than to be called "My friend?"

Dear reader, I ask you again: are you a friend of God? Do you believe Him as He expressed Himself through His written word? Are you willing to forsake all and follow Him? Are you willing to give up, if need be, your family and friends? Are you willing to be persecuted by those professors of Christ who refuse to believe Him? Persecution is promised all who keep His word:

"If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also." (John 15:20)

Becoming a true friend of our God will cost us something; It is written:

"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (John 15:14)

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

*"Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."
(Matthew 12:50)*

*"So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."
(Luke 14:33)*

In Luke chapter 14, verses 25 through 33 our Lord told us to count the cost before we set out to become one of His disciples—one of His true friends. Dear reader, if you are a true friend of Jesus Christ, it has cost you something. If you are His true friend, you have tasted the bitterness of persecution, both from the world and from the religious ones. If you haven't, it is highly unlikely that you are known in the heavens as His friend; and more likely that you are known as a friend of the world.

Let me ask you, have you counted the cost of becoming His friend? How do you count such a cost? By eating His word under the tutorship of His Spirit. It is really quite simple. I have attempted to share some of His word relating to friendship with Him in this paper. There is much more available for those whose hearts are united with His---for those who are hungry and thirsty for truth. From His word, we are invited to drink freely.

Whether or not we are in fact, true friends of God, depends upon: 1) our believing in Christ, 2) our believing Christ and 3) our loving Christ as evidenced by our obeying God's word. Perfection in relation to God's word is not the determining issue; Christ is the only perfect One. The determining issue for each of us is the heart's attitude toward God's word. If that attitude is anything less than that of an obedient child's toward his father's word, one thing is for certain---that one is not a friend of God, and is not soundly converted (Hebrews 8:10). Never forget:

“Many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14)

On the other hand, if our heart is in agreement with Father’s word, and our love for Him compels us to obey Him, regardless of the cost; and when we fail to obey Him, we are quick to humbly repent and seek His mercy, we can count on Him to complete His good work in us and to call us friends. It is written:

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

Finally, I ask of every reader of this paper: Are you a true friend of Jesus Christ? Do you believe Him? Do you believe the word of God is just that---the word of God? Do you love Christ and prove your love by obeying His word? If your answer is “yes” then you have every reason to believe that He considers you to be His friend. Otherwise, you are numbered among those of whom Paul writes:

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame---who set their mind on earthly things.” (Philippians 3:18 & 19)

Nothing in this life---Nothing! Is more important than Jesus Christ identifying you as a “Friend of God.” You either are, or you are not---there is no middle ground with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Your brother,

Thomas

"EVERY WORD OF GOD IS PURE; HE IS A SHIELD TO THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN HIM. DO NOT ADD TO HIS WORDS, LEST HE REBUKE YOU, AND YOU BE FOUND A LIAR." (PROVERBS 30:5 & 6)