

100. Being a friend of the King

November 19, 2017

I heard a definition of 'friend' by someone: "A friend is someone who comes in when the rest of the world goes out." In other words, when the chips are down, a true friend sticks by you. That reminds me of an opposite word for that definition – a 'fair-weather friend.' This is a friend who is only a friend when circumstances are pleasant or profitable for oneself. At the first sign of trouble, these disloyal friends will drop their relationship with you. Like Judas Iscariot.

Most of us have many acquaintances but very few friends. Even a devoted friend may fail us when we need him most. But not with Jesus. Our friendship to each other and to the Lord is not perfect, but His friendship with us is PERFECT.

In this portion of Scripture Jesus wants us to learn about the qualifications and privileges of being a friend of the King.

A. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

The verb 'love' in Greek is "agapao", of course, we get our English word 'agape' from this. The Greek verb tense is present which indicates ongoing action. In other words, you can translate it in English like this, "you keep on loving one another as I have loved you." What Jesus wants us to have is not a sporadic, impulsive outburst of emotion, rather, it should be a sustained, intense, and committed action of the will.

The love Jesus talks about is NOT an occasional love, rather it is a decision to continually seek the highest good of others. Its decision to love others is not based on humanism or from pure lustful idea of Hollywood, but in heaven. We should not love others according to how much we can get as a "return-on-investment", rather on the basis of the example Jesus set for us.

Listen, our world loves you when you are young and beautiful; but God still loves you when you are old and not so attractive. Our world loves you when you are famous and a celebrity; but God still loves you when you are unknown and a complete nobody. Our world loves you when you are rich and powerful; but God still loves you when you are penniless and weak. Our world loves the extraordinary; but God still loves the ordinary – people like you and me.

Briefly I am going to talk about love between husband and wife as a side note at no extra charge. If you are married, or you are planning to get married, or someday hopefully get married, then listen up. If you are in none of those categories, still listen up.

Please get rid of any idea of love that you've been hearing and learning from the world. Once that lovey dovey feeling is gone, people start to think about how to bail out of their marriages. That is why we have such a high divorce rate in this country. Christians are no different. Do you know what the Lord says about divorce?

Malachi 2:16 "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

The condition of divorce that the Lord allows is very limited and listed in 1 Corinthians 7 – adultery or unbelieving spouse wants a divorce first.

People's idea of "I no longer love my spouse," or "We fell out of love" is not a ground for a biblical divorce. The reason for the high rate of divorce among Christians is that these people don't take the Word of God as their final authority. They want what they want over God's.

If you are looking for a way to end your marriage or just barely making it in your marriage, because you don't have any other option yet, you need to repent. The marriage oath you made at your wedding ceremony in the presence of God and other witnesses is still valid and you need to commit to love one another. Love that our God teaches us is a decision and commitment to love your spouse, not some fly-by-night feelings.

You may say, "You don't know my husband," or "If you had a wife like mine, you'd do the same." No, it still is not a biblical ground for a divorce to God. We need to stop doing what we want, rather do what God wants if we call Him as our Lord. That is being obedient to Him and it is an expression of our love for Him.

Listen, if you previously have divorced without a biblical reason and repented from it, the Lord has forgiven you. Do not feel condemned. But take heed what the Lord is speaking to you now so that you won't repeat it again.

Now back to today's study. Up until this time, Scripture has taught us to love our neighbors as ourselves. But now Jesus gives His disciples and us a new commandment based on a different point of comparison – we ought to love one another just as Christ has loved us. That means unconditionally.

Jesus still loves us in our unbelief; He still loves us in our pettiness; He still loves us in our lack of willingness to follow Him; He still loves us in our disobedience. Jesus could continually love the disciples and still loves us because He continually abides in the Father.

We cannot love one another unless we put aside any uncomfortable feeling, grudge, or anger toward our brothers and sisters. You may say, "That person hurt my feelings deeply." Oh, I don't doubt that. But you need to forgive that person, it is mandatory as a Christian.

As long as we do not forgive others' sins against us, our God will not forgive our sins. For me, I need His forgiveness all the time, so I need to forgive others for whatever they've done to me.

Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

If you are holding a grudge against someone in this church or somewhere else, I strongly urge you to contact them and let them know that you forgive them. Then move on. It is good for your spiritual health.

B. BEING GOD'S FRIENDS THROUGH OBEDIENCE

John 15:13-14 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Now Jesus is taking disciples to the whole new level of friendship.

Jesus Christ offers His friendship to us. The question is whether we really want to be friends of God. He cannot merely be our friend without a response on our part. A friendship, obviously, is made up of two people committing themselves to one another. I can extend friendship to you, but until you return it to me, I cannot legitimately say that we have a friendship. That would be awkward, don't you think?

Jesus demonstrated His willingness to have a friendship with us by what He did for us. He showed us how dedicated He was to us when He died for our sins on the cross so that we may have eternal life in heaven.

One of the greatest privileges we have as God's friends is that of learning to know Him better and "getting in on" His secrets. Each of us is as close to God as we choose to be. We can do this by drawing near to Him through learning His Word, the Bible, enjoying His intimacy with us, and obeying His commandments.

Allow me to make an example from the Book of Genesis:

In Genesis 18, our Lord Jesus and two angels came to visit Abraham as they were on their way to investigate and to judge the sin of Sodom. Even though Abraham was nearly 100 years old, he ignored his siesta time, greeted the visitors, saw to their comfort, and fed them a lovely meal.

This old man hastened and ran and had his servants to get the meal ready quickly. During the meal time Abraham didn't sit and eat with them. Like a true servant, he stood nearby, ready to do their bidding.

In the last half of chapter 18, the atmosphere changes. And Abraham is quietly standing still, conversing with the Lord. He is still a servant, but now he is being a friend. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" the Lord asked. As a friend of God, Abraham was shared with God's secrets.

True friends of Jesus obey Him continually. In other words, we are constantly obedient—not perfect, but trying. And if we fail, then we repent and get up and try again.

This obedience should not be too hard because of whom we are obedient to. This is Jesus asking for our obedience. That changes everything, because we love Him. When we are in love with God, obedience will not be a duty; it will be a delight.

There is a flip side of being a friend of God through obedience. What would happen if we choose to be disobedient to Him and embrace what the carnal world offers?

James 4:4 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.

You really do not want to be an enemy of God. Some unbelievers would say, "I am not against God. I am neutral." By choosing to be neutral and not for God, they make themselves be the enemies of God.

Matthew 12:30a He who is not with Me is against Me

C. FROM THE ENEMY OF GOD TO THE FRIENDS OF GOD

John 15:15 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.

What a spiritual promotion we can have – from the enemies of God when we were not born-again Christians, to the servants of God; and to the friends of God!

The courts of eastern kings held an elite group of men called “friends of the king.” They had unrestricted access to the monarch. Having the right even to come into the king’s bedchamber or eat with the king in his kitchen, they often met with him informally before he saw his political, economic, or military advisors. Though they were not the king’s cabinet members, but they had the power and privilege of his cabinet. You can say that they were the king’s kitchen cabinet.

Think about the incredible offer Jesus gives – to be no longer slaves, but His friends. It is not like the special class people of the Mormons or the Jehovah’s Witness which is not attainable. Simply and habitually be obedient to the Lord, you will be invited to be His friend. The Lord never offered this to any of the angels in heaven. Incredible, but true!!!

Our God wants you to be in His plans and secrets that are hidden to those who are disobedient to Him. He only reveals it to His friends. Are you seeking God’s direction for your life? He wants to speak to you – even more than you want to be spoken to.

D. YOU DIDN’T CHOOSE ME, BUT I DID

John 15:16-17 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another.

By the sovereign grace and mercy of God, He, through His infinite foreknowledge, predestined people’s lives according to their own decisions to follow Him or not. Salvation is not something we can earn, rather receive as a gift from the Lord. Because of this incredible privilege, we have a responsibility to produce our spiritual fruit that brings glory to our Lord.

How do people know that you are a Christian? They can’t see your heart. They can’t see your faith, but they can see the results of it.

Matthew 7:20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

The only way someone can determine whether you are a follower of Jesus is not merely by your verbal declaration of Him, but by the evidence they see in your life. And that evidence should be spiritual fruit.

Fruit doesn’t grow overnight. We bear fruit by walking in communion with Jesus, by staying close to Him. And spiritual fruit is a result of that relationship. What we really need today is to bear spiritual fruit in our lives so that others can say, “Now there is a follower of Jesus Christ.”

This study began in the vineyard and ended in the throne room! The next study will take us to the battlefield where we experience the hatred of the lost world. If we are not abiding as branches and obeying as friends, we will never be able to face the opposition of this world. If we do not love one another, how can we ever hope to

love lost men and women in the world? If we are not marching together as the friends of the King, we will never present a united front to the enemy.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Each of us is as close to God as we choose to be.

2) As a branch of the Vine, we are pruned by God the Father; as friends of God, we are invited by God the Son; as the servants of God, we are instructed by God the Spirit through His Word.