

The Friendship of Christ

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How many have ever heard a sermon or read an article on this subject?

How many of God's people think of Christ in this blessed relationship? Christ is the best Friend the Christian has, and it is both his privilege and duty to regard Him as such. Our scriptural support is in the following passages:

"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24), which can refer to none other than the Lord Jesus; "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Solomon 5:16). That is the language of His Spouse, the testimony of the Church, avowing this most intimate relationship. Add to these the witness of the New Testament when Christ was termed "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34).

Many and varied are the relationships in which Christ stands to a believer, and he is the loser if He is ignored in any of them. Christ is God, Lord, Head, Savior of the Church. Officially He is our Prophet, Priest, and King; personally He is our Kinsman-Redeemer, our Intercessor, our Friend. That title expresses the near union between the Lord Jesus and believers. They are as if but one soul actuated them; indeed, one and the same spirit does, for "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). "Christ stands in a nearer relation than a brother to the Church: He is her Husband, her Bosom-friend" (John Gill). "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

But even those relationships fall short of fully expressing the nearness, spiritual oneness, and indissolubleness of the union between Christ and His people. There should be the freest approaches to Him and the most intimate fellowship with Him. To deny Christ that is to ignore the fact He is our best Friend. "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." That endearing title not only expresses the near relation between Him and His redeemed but also the affection which He bears them. Nothing has, does, or can, dampen, or quench its outflow.

"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). That blessed title tells of the sympathy He bears His people in all their sufferings, temptations, and infirmities. "In all their affliction he was afflicted... in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63:9). What demonstrations of His friendship! That title also tells of His deep concern for our interests. He has our highest welfare at heart; accordingly He has promised, "I will not turn away from them, to do them good" (Jeremiah 32:40).

Consider more definitely the excellencies of our best Friend:

Christ is an ancient Friend. Old friends we prize highly. The Lord Jesus was our Friend when we were His enemies! We fell in Adam, but He did not cease to love us; rather He became the last Adam to redeem us and "lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He sent His servants to preach the Gospel unto us, but we despised it. Even when we were wandering in the ways of folly He determined to save us and watched over us. In the midst of our sinning and sporting with death, He arrested us by His grace and by His love overcame our enmity and won our hearts.

Christ is a constant Friend: One that "loveth at all times" (Proverbs 17:17). He continues to be our Friend through all the vicissitudes of life — no fair-weather friend who fails us when we need Him most. He is our Friend in the day of adversity, equally as much as in the day of prosperity. Was He not so to Peter? He is "a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1), and evidences it by His sustaining grace. Nor do our transgressions turn away His compassion from us; even then He acts as a friend. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Christ is a faithful Friend. His grace is not shown at the expense of righteousness, nor do His mercies ignore the requirements of holiness. Christ always has in view both the glory of God and the highest good of His people. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6). A real friend performs his duty by pointing out my faults. In this respect, too, Christ does "show himself friendly" (Proverbs 18:24). Often He says to each of us, "I have a few things against thee" (Revelation 2:14) — and rebukes us by His Word, convicts our conscience by His Spirit, and chastens us by His providence "that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

Christ is a powerful Friend. He is willing and able to help us. Some earthly friends may have the desire to help us in the hour of need, but lack the wherewithal: not so our heavenly Friend. *He has both the heart to assist and also the power.* He is the Possessor of “unsearchable riches,” and all that He has is at our disposal. “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (John 17:22). We have a Friend at court, for Christ uses His influence with the Father on our behalf. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Hebrews 7:25). No situation can possibly arise which is beyond the resources of Christ.

Christ is an everlasting Friend. He does not desert us in the hour of crisis. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4). Nor does death sever us from this Friend who “sticketh closer than a brother,” for we are with Him that very day in paradise. Death will have separated us from those on earth, but “absent from the body,” we shall be “present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). And in the future Christ will manifest Himself as our Friend, saying “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Since Christ is such a Friend to the Christian, what follows? Friendship should be answered with friendship! Negatively, there should be no coldness, aloofness, trepidation, hesitancy on our part; but positively, a free availing ourselves of such a privilege. We should delight ourselves in Him. Since He is a faithful Friend, we may safely tell Him the secrets of our hearts, for He will never betray our confidence. But His friendship also imposes definite obligations — to please Him and promote His cause and daily seek His counsel.

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