

I. Introduction:

- A. Let's start with an hypothetical.
1. An acquaintance of yours knows that you are a Christian.
 2. You have spoken to this person about Christ a time or two, but there hasn't been much response.
 3. Then one day he comes to you with a troubled face, telling you that he has a spiritual question.
 4. At this you get a little excited. *"What is it?"*
 5. And the reply is: *"What must I do to be a friend of Jesus?"*
- B. *"A friend of Jesus?"* How do you experts in Biblical evangelism feel about *"becoming a friend of Jesus?"*
1. To be honest I have had a bit of a problem with the idea in the past.
 2. And from time to time I've even pointed out the word *"friend"* in some of our hymns.
 3. In this case, maybe you think – What audacity!
 4. You say to yourself, *"I don't hear anything in this that hints of repentance – or even conviction for sin."*
 5. What temerity to think that some wretched sinner can come along & decide to become *"a friend of Jesus."*
 6. It sounds like all this person wants is what he might get from our Saviour.
 7. He might also say, *"I would like to be a friend of Bill Gates or Donald Trump."*
 8. Who does this guy think he is?
- C. Perhaps we should ask the person what he means by *"friendship with Jesus."*
1. What is it to you to be anyone's friend? What is **your** definition of friendship in general?
 2. The dictionary defines a *"friend"* as *"a person whom one knows and with whom one has a bond of mutual affection."*
 3. Does this inquirer think that by sharing **his** affection with Christ, he is going to impress the eternal God?
 4. And as far as that goes, how do so many people make friends these days?
 - a. Don't they click on the proper button on their computers? Now they have a new friend.
 - b. Does this person want Christ to *"like"* him?
- D. Last week I mentioned that many **North American INDIANS** had been prepared for the gospel prior to the arrival of the first missionaries.
1. Some of you looked at me a little dubiously.
 2. Ella Deloria, a Dakota Sioux, a linguist and anthropologist, wrote: *"because [Christianity's] social message was already partially familiar, there was a sound foundation for the structure of Dakota Christianity."*
 3. The Dakotas, Nez Perce and some other tribes practiced such things as open hospitality, proper care for widows and orphans and the sharing of food.
 4. They also believed in special revelation, and they recognized the existence of the human spirit.
 5. They prayed; they believed in moral living; they loved to sing, etc.
 6. I know these things aren't a part of the gospel, but some are a part of the effects of the Gospel – Bible Christianity.
 7. In some cases, when Indians saw these things in Christians, they were drawn to the missionary message.
- E. Henry Roe Cloud grew up in a wigwam on the banks of the Missouri River in Nebraska.
1. In the early 1890s he went to a government school which was taught by missionaries.
 2. After a couple of years, a Sunday School teacher directly asked him *"what would YOU do with Jesus."*
 3. He replied, *"I would like to be his FRIEND."*
 4. The missionary counseled with him, and determined that he had genuine faith in our Lord and Saviour.
 5. Later, when Roe Cloud could explain things better he declared – to him *"friendship was a meaning-full and very formal act. So I understood that when I took Jesus that night to be my friend, we were to stand by each other through this life and through the 'land of the setting sun.' He was to defend me, and I was to defend Him."*
 6. Roe Cloud became what the Indians called a *"preaching listener"* for which he was ridiculed & persecuted.

II. And with that we come to this morning's theme – What is it to be a friend of Christ or a friend of God?

- A. Only one man in the Bible is directly called *"God's friend,"* and it was the Lord who first said it.
1. In **Isaiah 41:8** speaking to His nation, God said, *"Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."*
 2. This blessed position – enjoyed by Abraham – is repeated several times.
 3. King Jehoshaphat, while led by the Holy Spirit, publically prayed in **II Chronicles 20** – *"O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?"*
 4. In the New Testament **James** said the same thing – *"The scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, & it was imputed unto him for righteousness: & he was called the FRIEND of God" – 2:23.*
- B. Abraham is the **only** person in the Bible to be called *"the friend of God."*
1. **But** – *"LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his FRIEND" – Exodus 33:11.*
 2. & in our opening scriptures the Lord Jesus spoke to us through His disciples about His friendship with us.
 3. Also in **John 11** before one of Christ's most notable miracles, He said to His disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep"* – referring raising Lazarus from death.
- C. The Lord Jesus was often defamed by His enemies.
1. But have you noticed that He rarely replied to their slander? There is one major exception.
 2. In **Matthew 8** and **Luke 15**, the Jews murmured against Christ, because He associated with people whom the religious crowd considered *"sinners."*
 3. In the scripture which I asked Bro. Roberts to read, Jesus replied – *"The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a FRIEND of publicans and sinners."*
 4. One of the few times that Christ replied to specific attacks was when they called him *"a friend of sinners."*
 5. In **Luke 19**, Jesus chose to spend the afternoon with a Roman tax collector named **Zacchaeus**.
 - a. Tax collectors were called *"publicans"* in those days.
 - b. When the Jews saw Christ with the publican Zacchaeus *"they all murmured saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a SINNER."*
 - c. To that Jesus eventually replied, *"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."*
- D. In the light of these things does Henry Roe Cloud's statement of sound bad? *"I would like to be His friend."*
1. In the context of the native's way of thinking, he was referring to salvation and the new birth?
 2. In *"friendship"* he was speaking of discipleship and much, much more.
- E. Something to keep in mind is that in each of these people, it was **God's choice** to make them His friends.
1. God chose Abram when he was just an idolater living in the city of Ur in the Chaldees.
 - a. God said, *"Come follow me – unto a land that I will shew thee."*
 2. And that in essence was what the Saviour said to the disciples, before eventually calling them His *"friends."*
 3. **Moses** was a reluctant friend of God, but Jehovah was persistent.
 4. And those publicans and other sinners, like Zacchaeus, would not have dared to approach the Lord Jesus.
 - a. Zacchaeus was sitting in a big tree, hiding behind the leaves, only hoping to catch a glimpse of Christ.
 - b. It was Jesus who said, *"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house."*
 5. Ultimately, it is the choice of God that any man becomes His friend.
- F. But let's lay that aside for a while as we go on.
1. As I was trying to come up with an outline to follow this morning, I jotted down the words *"responsibilities"* and *"privileges."*
 2. This special relationship of *"friendship"* with Christ, comes with **responsibilities** as well as **joys**.

3. But as I tried to develop those thoughts, they seemed to blend into one. See if you don't agree.

III. Consider some of the RESPONSIBILITIES of friendship.

A. But first let me ask: What is the difference between an *"acquaintance"* and a *"friend?"*

1. Isn't one differences expressed in the word *"love"?*
2. While we may periodically **enjoy** and **appreciate** our **acquaintances**, we may not really love them.
 - a. We may have some **affection** towards them, but acquaintances come and go.
 - b. Sometimes we hardly miss them, but friends leave a hole in our heart when they are absent.
3. Someone asked me the other day who was my **best** friend. Without hesitation my answer was *"my wife."*
4. Judy is my best friend in this world, and why? It is due to the special love between us.

B. But there is a parallel to that in the spiritual realm – an infinitely higher parallel – the love and friendship of the Lord Jesus.

1. *"God (the Triune God) commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* – **Romans 5:8**.
2. *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"* – **John 15:13**.
3. In one sense Christ died for us when we were His enemies – rebellious sinners.
4. But the view from His own heart was that His sacrifice was for people whom He chose to love and befriend – like Zachaeus or Abraham.
5. **Proverbs 18:24** says *"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly."*
6. There has never been a more friendly act than the **sacrifice** which Christ made of Himself for His friends.
7. And furthermore, it could be argued that to Christ, they were His friends before He made that sacrifice.
8. He chose to love them before the foundation of the earth.

C. Without digging too deeply, what are the characteristics of love – what are the characteristics of friendship?

1. **Proverbs 17:17** says, *"a friend loveth at ALL times...."*
 - a. What did Henry Roe Cloud say about his friendship with Jesus?
 - b. *"When I took Jesus that night to be my friend, we were to stand by each other through this life and through the 'land of the setting sun.' He was to defend me and I was to defend Him."*
2. I can assure you that in Christ Jesus *"there is a friend that sticketh CLOSER than a brother"* – to finish that statement in **Proverbs 18:24**.

D. And with that kind of relationship, a natural outflow is **TRUST**.

1. It might be argued that trust precedes friendship, but I'll just say that they go hand-in-hand.
2. The God, Jehovah, told the man He called *"friend"* to leave the Chaldeas to go to an unfamiliar land.
3. Abraham trusted the One who gave the order and invitation, and they became friends.
4. At first Moses was not very trusting, but by the time they spoke to one another *"as a man speaketh to his friend,"* Moses had total confidence in the Lord and His word.
5. He had **FAITH** in God.
6. In other words, faith is a key element in friendship – no matter whether we are talking about earthly friends or heavenly friends.
7. Is **YOUR faith** in the Lord? Whether it is or isn't helps to determine if you are friends.

E. What are some other characteristic responsibilities of friendship?

1. Friends **DELIGHT** in each other; the **joy** of one automatically **reverberates** in the heart of the other.
2. And not only is there an echo between them, they actually create joy like a spontaneous chemical reaction.
3. After her last Minieres attack, Judy has started driving car again, for which I thank the Lord.
4. But when she has been gone for half an hour for some reason, my heart still leaps when I hear her voice again.
5. It is somewhat different, but when I am studying the Word of God, like preparing this message, and I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit in my heart, I get excited – there is a thrill.
6. Does the presence of the Lord ever give **YOU** a thrill?

7. Are you sure that you are friends?

F. Friends **love to GIVE** to each other.

1. It doesn't have to be much – it doesn't have to be large – and it doesn't have to be regular.
2. It might merely be the gift of themselves – or their time.
3. I didn't give Judy a Valentines Day gift, but I told her that I'd give her something special today – and I have.
4. But what I have given to Judy, and what you may have recently given to your friend, is nothing compared to what our divine Friend has given.
5. **John 15:13** again – *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his FRIENDS.”*
6. That is what our Saviour has given – His life – not in a general way, but specifically to His friends.

G. Earlier, I referred to **John 11** where the Lord Jesus said, *“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”*

1. In Lazarus we see that great gift in restoring to the man life.
2. The man was dead, but because of Christ's love, He visited the tomb and called Lazarus to come out.
3. The friendship of Christ means **resurrection** – life – but it means **eternal life** as well.

H. An entirely different message on this same subject could be developed around the love story of Boaz & Ruth.

1. Boaz is a picture, sometimes called *“a type,”* of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Ruth was a heathen foreign woman without much hope in the world – destitute, widowed, friendless.
3. Like Henry Roe Cloud, she just hung around the people of God, hoping for the best.
4. But then Boaz spoke to her in a *“friendly”* way, in **Ruth 2:11**, and she was brought into the family of God.

I. **DEFENSE** is another responsibility of friendship, as that Dakota brother has said.

1. *“When I took Jesus that night to be my friend, we were to stand by each other through this life....*
2. *He was to defend me and I was to defend Him.”*

J. Looking for thoughts on this subject I found a sermon outline on *“Friendship”* in a set of books called *“Handfuls on Purpose”* – a title taken from the Book of Ruth.

1. It said, *“What are the essentials to true friendship with God?”*
2. This question is answered by noting what are the requirements for **earthly** friendship.
3. **Confidence**. There can be no real friendship without confidence, trust. This is its foundation.
 - a. Confidence is the child of knowledge. The more we know of our friends, the more we trust them.
 - b. Faith is the beginning of friendship with God.
4. **Love**. Confidence alone will not make an ideal friendship. Love is essential.
 - a. This is essential to friendship, true friendship with God.
5. **Frankness**. Friends have frank, familiar intercourse one with another.
 - a. A little girl defined a friend as one who knows all about you, and yet loves you in spite of that.
 - b. A friendship that cannot bear the truth is of no value. Friendship with God welcomes the truth.
6. **Consideration**. Friends delight to meet each other's wishes. They consider each other in every sense. We, if friends of God, will give Him every consideration.
7. **Sacrifice**. Even going to the point of real sacrifice in so doing. And, of course, real friends love to give presents to each other.
8. **Loyalty**. True friends will stand up for each other, especially when absent the one from the other.
9. **Perpetuity**. A true friendship is not for a time, but will stand the passage of the years.”

d. Getting back to my own outline – what are some of the privileges of friendship?

I. How about **communion or communication**.

1. My best friend and I can share just about anything.
2. The only things which I don't talk over with my wife are the confidences which you share with me.
3. But I do have another Friend with whom I might speak of those things.
4. The Lord is someone whom I trust to keep all the secrets of my heart; I have total confidence in Him.

5. & the more He becomes a Friend to you, the more you will freely put yourself into His hands & His control.
6. The greater your friendship with Christ, the more time you will spend in prayer.
7. What a privilege it is to pray to a Friend who is omnipotent – capable of moving the world to meet our needs.

B. But remember that with that Friendship comes the **reciprocal aspect**.

1. Communion with the Lord means that we are willing to listen to Him.
2. No one should say he is a friend of God, if he is unwilling to read His word or to pray.
3. No one can call himself a friend of God if he will not attend to the Lord's house and to hear God's word which the Lord has laid on their mutual friend – the pastor of that church.
4. God has ordained that it is through the preaching of the Word that the Friendship of Christ is to be communicated to man.

C. Another privilege between friends can be seen in the **POWER** they have **over each other**.

1. Abraham, the man whom God willingly called "*friend*," may have felt that he risked that friendship when he spoke with God about Lot and the city of Sodom.
2. The Lord, out of friendship, revealed to Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom for her horrendous sins – sins which are growing in popularity and acceptance today.
3. Abraham chose to step in and argue for the life of his nephew who foolishly lived in that wicked city.
 - a. *"And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"*
 - b. *Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?"*
 - c. *"Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And (the Lord) said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it."*
 - d. *"And (Abraham) said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."*
4. That night God sent his angel into Sodom and virtually pulled Lot to safety before destroying the city.
5. I will not profess to understand, but God's friends have power or influence with Him – through prayer.

d. And conversely, it goes without saying, that despite our friendship, God has authority and power over us.

1. But it is not necessarily the power of a King, a dictator or despot – although it could be.
2. The Lord should have power over us as a beloved Friend.
3. So when this Friend speaks, the love which links us, replies and responds.
4. Call it "*obedience*" if you like, but it is different from the obedience of a servant – this is the obedience of love.

E. And this takes us back to where we began this morning – **John 15**.

1. *"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you (making you and calling you my "friends"): continue ye in my love (that is, behave as my friends).*
2. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love (and friendship); even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*
3. *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*
4. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. (Be friends to one another.)*
5. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*
6. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (Don't call yourselves my friends, if you don't listen to what I teach you).*
7. *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.*
8. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you (to be my friends), that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he*

may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

- F. Friday as I was working, Judy came up into my study, and we chatted about several things for a while.
1. Then she asked me about the theme of this message, and I just said, *“The Friendship of Jesus.”*
 2. After a couple of minutes I mentioned that I wasn’t sure how to bring my thoughts to a conclusion.
 3. To that she something like: *“Friendship should never come to a conclusion.”*
 4. That indeed should be the conclusion of the message – there is no conclusion.
 5. Do you remember the last point in the outline from *“Handfuls?”* – *“Perpetuity. A true friendship is not for a time, but will stand the passage of the years”* – or in this case – the passage of eternity.
 6. If God has chosen you to be His friend, then you will be His friend throughout eternity.
 7. **Romans 8** – *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*
 - a. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*
 - b. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*
 - c. *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

V. Conclusion:

- A. The question for us this morning is: *“Are YOU a friend of God?”*
1. I’m not asking whether or not you **think** of yourself as **worthy** of friendship with God.
 2. You are **NOT worthy**. No one is worthy. That is not the question.
 3. I don’t think that Henry Roe Cloud was implying that he was worthy.
 4. In another form the question is: *“Have you been born again? Are you a child of God and thus a friend of the Lord.”*
 5. If Christ calls you *“friend”* then you are a friend indeed.
 6. The only problem, as Christians, is whether we are **good** friends to the Lord or **not good** friends.
 7. Christ Jesus said, *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”*
- B. So what is the condition of your heart this morning?
1. Is it humble and submissive to Christ? Or is it filled with pride and arrogant rebellion?
 2. Is your life, and your eternity, based on trust in the Lord, or are you trusting yourself and your religion?
 3. Are **YOU** a friend of God?