

*He remembers the dear friends of his childhood
and wonders where they have gone. Where,
now, is their affection? What removed it from
his life—design, or neglect? Was there a de-
liberate parting of ways, or did that affection
simply dissipate in the heady fog of adulthood?*



Friends

Cheap Friendship

PERHAPS IT IS OF HIS DOING. He has always set a high standard for his use of the term “friend.” At odds with the easy familiarity of modern society, he has reserved that high word for individuals specifically dear to him. Knowing the name of the clerk at his local pharmacy does not make her his friend. Saying “Good morning!” to the same persons every Sunday morning does not make them his friends.

He has discovered that most people, in addition to subscribing to a diminished meaning of the word for each other, apply the same cheapened use of the word “friend” to their relationship with Jesus. They have reduced their friendship with Him—and, sadly, the Lord’s friendship with them—to the world’s low estimation. But with each passing year of his walk with Jesus, he is learning that it is better to raise the standards of the world with heaven, than to lower heaven with the standards of the world.

He prefers to be the kind of friend that Jesus is to him.

A Remarkable Person

The young man now understands that knowing Jesus—not just knowing *of* Him, or knowing *about* Him—is like trying to see the last star in the universe. Like sanctification itself, knowing

Knowing Him

Jesus is not an event, but a never-ending process. One does not graduate from the school of “Knowing Jesus,” thus armed with and assured of complete and exhaustible knowledge of Him, for the learning never ends.

So long as one walks the earth, one does not leave this school.

The “young” man has now become a man, and he has already concluded that everything he learns about Jesus simply opens a door that reveals more doors.

He has learned that his Lord Jesus is quite a remarkable person. Everything of God, yet the only member of the Godhead to have experienced the earthiness of flesh, he can rightly refer to Jesus as a person. This means that Jesus is his brother, an experienced advocate, a true friend.

Following

The man is now old enough to understand that to take the name “Christian” means to be a “*follower* of Christ.” He does not go before Jesus, leading Him, for He has already paved the way. Neither does he walk alongside Jesus, shoulder-to-shoulder as an equal, for though He is his brother, He is still very God. No, he understands now that he follows *close behind* Jesus, keeping Him in full view, observing His ways and—as much as flesh can—imitating His life.

And this defines his friendship with Jesus. It cannot be as the world would define it. His friendship with Jesus is too deep, too miraculous, too frightening, too wonderful to be compared to anything between soil-bound inhabitants of this fallen world.

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

John 15:13-15

Still, he is troubled by the possibility that his friendship with Jesus will go the way of those of his childhood. Will it fade away from disuse? Will he lose track of the best Friend he has ever known? After a time, will he forget his Friend’s face?

Will he ever lose this Friend’s affection?

Half Perfect

The better qualities of a friend too often become corrupted in our relationships with others. I have seen it not only in my closest friends, but also in myself. Initial diplomacy and artificial manners are offensive when displayed late in a relationship. Honesty is admirable, but few like to live with the unceasing woes of someone who carries transparency to the extreme. And there is little to recommend a friend for whom the sweetest sound is the sound of his own voice. Because humans are imperfect, friendships between them are imperfect—and I can expect no better.

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me,
Then I could bear it;
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted
himself against me,
Then I could hide myself from him.
But it is you, a man my equal,
My companion and my familiar friend.

Psalms 55:12-13

Friendship with my Lord Jesus is different, for in it at least half of the relationship is perfect. Jesus doesn’t stop being polite, but He never displays any of the artifice so common to us. I can be agreeable for effect, or to gain someone’s favor, but Jesus is agreeable because that is who He is. Neither is He self-centered, enamored with Himself.

So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

John 8:28-29

My sense of comfort in Jesus’ presence is based on the knowledge that His honesty is authentic, and based on truth. Likewise, His judgments are sound. Like most people, I don’t mind occasional discipline, but I mind very much being either patronized or abused. I know that Jesus will never chastise me unless I really deserve it—and when He does, it will be for my good.

Let the righteous strike me;
It shall be a kindness.
And let him rebuke me;
It shall be as excellent oil;
Let my head not refuse it.

Psalms 141:5a NKJV

A Remarkable Friendship

Jesus’ friendship with me is unlike anything I will ever know.

God’s love tells us that He is friendly and His Word assures us that He is our friend and wants us to be His friends. No man with a trace of humility would first think that he is a friend of God; but the idea did not originate with men. Abraham would never have said, “I am God’s friend,” but God Himself said that Abraham was His friend. The disciples might well have hesitated to claim friendship with Christ, but Christ said to them, “Ye are my friends.” Modesty may demur at so rash a thought, but audacious faith dares to believe the Word and claim friendship with God. We do God more honor by believing what He said about Himself and having the courage to come boldly to the throne of grace than by hiding in self-conscious humility among the trees of the garden.

A.W. Tozer

Man-to-man friendship is shallow and broad, and very often is born out of selfish motives. It is easily broken, or forgotten, for the same reason.

God-to-man friendship—expressed through the sacrificial and attendant love of Christ Jesus—is deep and narrow. It was born before Adam out of motives utterly unselfish, and it was proved on the cross. Once established, this friendship cannot be broken, and can be forgotten only by man.

The Lord Jesus—attendant in my life, walking with and before me every day in the here and now—is the physical embodiment of this remarkable friendship.

He came to me first. He initiated the friendship. It was *His* idea.

How could I ever forget that?

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