

## Lesson 25 CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP

*Greater Love Hath No Man Than This, That a Man Lay Down His Life for His Friends Ye Are My Friends, if Ye Do the Things Which I Command You No Longer Do I Call You Servants; for the Servant Knoweth Not What His Lord Doeth: But I Have Called You Friends; for All Things That I Heard From My Father, I Have Made Known Unto You - John 15:13-15*

### I. Introduction

- a. In these three verses our Lord speaks of His relation to His disciples. Like a diamond under a jeweler's glass, He reveals a new aspect—that of **friendship**.
- b. He points us to His **love** from which friendship has its origin (v.13): to the obedience on our part by which it is maintained (v.14); and then to the holy intimacy to which it leads (v.15).
- c. Here we see His love toward us in its **earthly** manifestation; how He lays down His life for us. "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"
- d. Christ does indeed long to have us know the **fullness** and strength of all He is and does for us as the Vine. He is our supplier and friend.
- e. As we learn to believe this, we shall be convinced that here is something which we not only need to think and know about, but a living power, a **divine life** which we need to receive and experience within. *2 Peter 1:4 ye might be partakers of the divine nature, KJV*
- f. There is no **knowing** God but by having the divine life; this life working in us alone gives us the reassurance that our knowledge of Him is rooted in reality and not mere knowledge. *John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they know thee";*
- g. If we would know this life **experientially**, we must drink of its living stream, we must have it shed forth by the Holy Spirit in us. *John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. KJV*

### II. The Basis of Friendship

- a. One's life is the most precious thing one has; the life is all he is; the life is in a real sense, **himself**.
- b. This is the highest measure of love: when a man gives his life, he holds nothing back, he gives all he has and all that he is. This is the **basis** for our friendship that Christ tells us about.
- c. It is this that our Lord Jesus wants to make clear to us concerning His mystery **functioning** as the Vine; all that is within Him He has placed Himself at our disposal. *John 10:15 I lay down my life for the sheep. KJV*
- d. He wants us to count Him as our very own; He wants to be wholly our possession, that we may be wholly **His possession**. *1 Cor 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: KJV*
- e. He gave His life for us to possess that we might **lose** our life for Him to possess. Life for life. *Matt 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. KJV*
- f. This is what is taught by the parable of the Vine and the branch, in their wonderful identification in each other, and in their **perfect union** as friends. This is a picture of our life in Christ.

### III. Its Evidence

- a. One of the most **difficult** aspects of living the Christian life is that of learning what it means to give up one's life to Christ and then how to perform it. *Matt 16:24 If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. KJV*
- b. This is both a life-long issue and a moment by moment one. It is an imperative necessity which is evidenced in our daily lives as we face the **choice** of whether to obey His commands or not. *Rom 7:22-23 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind NIV*
- c. This truth, of the imperative necessity of obedience; doing all that Christ commands us, has often been overlooked in Christian teaching and **living**.
- d. It is much easier instead for us to focus upon the blessed hope of our **future** heavenly reward and how wonderful it is to be saved and on our way to heaven.
- e. Many modern-day Christians have fallen prey to a notion of "**easy-believism**" in which a mere profession of faith is seen as adequate to assure one's salvation. *Rom 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, KJV*
- f. The glaring **error** of those who rely upon their mere profession of faith is that they fail to consider the implications of the rest of that verse. *Rom 10:9-10 and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. KJV*
- g. These have not considered implicit obedience as a **condition** of true discipleship. True friendship with Jesus has one unmistakable characteristic: that of obedience. *John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. KJV*

- h. Many others have the secret thought that it is impossible to do the things He commands us, and that therefore it cannot be **expected** of us. These think that perhaps God will wink at their failure to obey.
- i. Those who think this way have a subtle and unconscious belief that sinning is a **necessity**. They excuse it with a smile and the statement: "I'm only human". *Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? KJV*
- j. This thinking robs both precepts and promises of their **power** and clouds and diminishes our whole relation to Christ. *Rom 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. KJV*
- k. **It is in** the furnace of the purifying fire that the believer ultimately experiences Christ's deliverance from the power of indwelling sin.
- l. The disciple is not above his Master, and as Christ **learned** obedience experientially, we too, as His friends, should anticipate that same requirement. *Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; KJV*
- m. His commands are to be done as a **proof** of friendship. The power to do them rests entirely in the personal relationship to Jesus and is ours to experience from the moment of our spiritual rebirth.
- n. Our active and willing participation in obedience to Him implies and imparts a joy and a love which make the obedience a **delight**. *Ps 119:113 I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. KJV*
- o. The liberty to claim the friendship of Jesus, the power to enjoy it, the grace to prove it in all its blessedness—all come **as we do** the things He commands us.
- p. It is as we know something of this, not by reason or imagination, but deep down in the heart and **experiential** life that we shall begin to see what ought to be our life as branches of the heavenly Vine.

#### IV. Its Intimacy

- a. The highest proof of true friendship, and one great source of its blessedness, is the intimacy that holds **nothing** back, and admits the friend to share our innermost secrets.
- b. Let us think what this means. When Christ spoke of keeping His Father's commandments, He did not mean merely what was **written** in Holy Scripture.
- c. Indeed, He was referring to those special commandments which were **communicated** to Him day by day, and from hour to hour. *John 5:20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. KJV*
- d. It is loving obedience that purifies the soul. Obedience refers not only to the commandments of the Word, but also to the **application** of the Word in our daily circumstance.
- e. As we dependently and humbly await the arrival of the next circumstance, and then faithfully obey the instant His still small voice commands, the soul becomes **fitted** for ever closer fellowship.
- f. It is then that the daily infusion of His life will become a **continual** experience: *"I have called you friends; for all things I have heard from my Father, I have made known unto you."*

#### V. Application

- a. This is the beginning and the root of that holy friendship to which Christ invites us.
- b. Great is the mystery of godliness! Let us confess our ignorance and unbelief. Let us cease from our own understanding and our own efforts to master it.
- c. Right now you possess all of Christ. To what extent does Christ possess all of you?