

CHRIST THE BEST FRIEND

"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Prov. 18:24.

One writer has said, "there are three sorts of friends. The first is like a torch we meet in a dark street; the second is like a candle in a lantern; the third is like a link that offers itself to a stumbling passenger. The torch is the sweet-lipped friend, which lends us a flash of compliment for the time, but quickly leaves us to our former darkness. The overtaken lantern is the true friend, which, though it promises but a faint light, yet it goes along with us to our journey's end. The offered link is the mercenary friend whose service has a servile relation to our bounty."

That the above title is a very appropriate metaphor of Christ was exemplified throughout His mission upon earth, and, since His return to the Father, multiplied millions have found in Him a sympathetic, loving, compassionate Friend. His conduct was so gracious, and His Spirit so benign and condescending, that even His enemies proclaimed Him "A friend of publicans and sinners." In this they rightly set Him forth as it was His delight and the joy of His heart to exhibit the fulness of His love and mercy to the wretched, sinful, depraved sons and daughters of men.

Christ's Friendship Was Most Marvelously Displayed When Man Heeded the Tempter and Fell

Christ beheld our first parents in their guilty, fallen, self-ruined, lost condition. The sentence of death had already been passed. Man was absolutely without excuse, though he blamed it upon the woman. The woman was without excuse though she blamed it upon the serpent. There was no reason why the death sentence should not be immediately executed; but there was One whose heart was touched and whose bowels of compassion were moved, and whose plea for mercy was heeded.

But how could deliverance be brought about? How could fallen man be reclaimed? Who was capable to make intervention. There was but One who could intervene. One who could make atonement, One who could redeem. Christ became our surety. He purchased our redemption. But in order to do this He had to clothe Himself with our nature. "He gave Himself as the voluntary victim to bear, in His own body, our sins upon the tree. He left glory, and riches, and praises, and honor and divine blessedness, and became abased, and vilified, and poor, and subject to scorn, and malice, and hatred, and, above all, died a malefactor's death, to secure riches, and bliss, and honor, and eternal life for mankind." Through this marvelous intervention of Christ, the Best Friend, we are recipients of His mercy, pardon and adoption into the divine family and obtain holiness of heart, and are made heirs of life eternal.

Some Characteristics of Christ's Friendship

His friendship was displayed by His marvelous and amazing condescension.

Had an angel offered to pay the penalty due to man's disobedience and sin it would have been wonderful, but when Christ, the eternal, the omnipotent, the omniscient One offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice the angelic hosts were awed into silence, and upon His advent to earth an angel announced His coming to the shepherds, "and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid;" but the angel "said unto them, Fear not for behold I bring you

good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Then the angelic hosts of heaven could no longer contain their exuberant joy and they burst forth in a mighty acclaim of praise which reverberated through earth and heaven saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

His friendship was displayed by His wonderful manifestations of love and sympathy for all.

His love was a boundless fathomless ocean. His pity and compassion knew no bounds. He considered not Himself, but a sin blighted, lost and ruined race. His life was one of sacrifice and service.

His friendship was unbounded and limitless.

Earthly friendships are mutable but His is immutable. Earthly friends may be a great distance from us, but the Best Friend is ever within our reach. The resources of earthly friends may become exhausted, but He has an inexhaustible supply. Earthly friends might become indisposed to help, but this Best Friend, never. Earthly friends might be powerless to cope with our adversaries or free us from the grasp of our enemies, but this Friend is an almighty one whose ability is unlimited and whose love is changeless. Other friends are but mortal; this Friend is immortal hence possesses unlimited resources and ability to give aid. He will be our best Friend through the pilgrimage of life, our companion and solace in death and our everlasting portion in heaven.—The Holiness Era.

GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS

Holiness expresses the perfection of God's moral excellence, and surrounds Him with glory, whether in a temple on earth, or in the greater and more perfect tabernacle of heaven. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Every approach to God must be in holy reverence. Throughout the entire Scriptures it is revealed that God's holiness is that which marks Him off and separates Him from every creature. Only too often, the idea of separation is overlooked, yet this is the very core of the Scripture teaching concerning God's holiness.

Sanctification has to do with cleansing and purification. Holiness seems to be everywhere displayed to the creature against a background of sin. This great truth was revealed and kept alive by every token and symbol in the Jewish economy. Righteousness is God's word in the court, but holiness becomes His house forever. His house is His sanctuary, where He withdraws Himself and takes refuge from all unholiness, surrounding Himself with the awe of His presence which forbids the approach of sin. Holiness admits of no fellowship with evil. It eternally repels and condemns it. Our God is a consuming fire. The glory which filled the temple revealed the unholiness of those who approached it. Hence the Divine holiness is the standard of goodness and the eternal condemnation of sin. The prophet must have his lips touched and his heart purged before he could join in the worship of the heavenly hosts, or properly execute his commission from God.

But the paradox of redemption lies in this, that the very holiness which separates God from sinful men becomes the bond of union between Himself and the entirely sanctified. And so God bids the unholy draw near that

they may be sanctified and enter into the full covenant relation purchased for them by Jesus Christ. But how is this work accomplished—by the divine rays of His holiness shining upon them? Assuredly not. Sanctification is wrought by the Spirit through the cleansing blood of Jesus. Without the shedding of blood there is no escape from the old covenant of sin and death. We cannot therefore assent to that form of teaching which makes holiness to consist in a communication of goodness apart from the cleansing from sin wrought by the Spirit through faith in the all-cleansing blood of Jesus.—Herald of Holiness.

DID JESUS CHRIST TEACH THE TWO WORKS OF GRACE?

A lady at the close of a camp meeting service came to this writer and asked, "Since you say so much about the subject of a clean heart, why did not Jesus say something about it?" We replied, "That was what he was continually talking about." We go farther than that, and say that he was constantly talking about the two works of grace which we call justification and entire sanctification. It is a pity that so many do not know how much Jesus said on the matter.

He told his disciples that they, the children of God, would be helped by their Father in Heaven to receive the Holy Ghost as they, the earthly children, are helped in the matter of food by their parents if they properly asked for it; for that is the meaning of the passage, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him." They had become his children, and now he is willing to give the Holy Spirit to his children—not sinners. That is the force of the illustration. In the feet washing of John 13 he said that he who is washed, that is, has the bath of regeneration, only needs the second washing of the feet, symbolizing entire sanctification as the best commentators admit. In the next chapter he says of the Holy Spirit that was already with them, that he should be in them, showing that the Holy Spirit was to come as an abiding guest.

In the same address John 15 he says, "I am the vine and ye are the branches;" showing that they were already the children of God, and that they were to be purged from sin (every branch in me that beareth fruit he cleanseth). In Chapter 16 he says that another Comforter should come to them—the Spirit of truth. They already had Jesus as a Comforter, but the Holy Ghost should come as another Comforter.

In chapter 17 he prays for them and says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," and yet he prays that they might be sanctified through his word. He says, as he prays for this, "I have kept them." Surely, Jesus taught the two works of grace, especially in this, his prayer, just before he went to the cross.

Young Christian! Do get this matter settled at once. Remember God's rule: all for all. Give Him all; He will give you all. Consecration avails nothing unless it means presenting yourself as a living sacrifice to do nothing but the will of God. The vow of entire obedience is the entrance fee for him who would be enrolled by no assistant teacher, but by Christ Himself, in the school of obedience.—Andrew Murray.