

THE TEST OF FRIENDSHIP
JOHN 15:13

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Gravitation it might be said, is the law of the infinite; it cannot be seen neither can it be understood or comprehended by finite wisdom. It is always in operation. The vast universe with its planets, suns, moons, worlds, and glittering stars is being governed, and kept in harmony by this great law. Remove the law of gravitation, and the material elements, wherein all things in the universe are made would lose their perpetual motion: the giant Light which runs its unwearied course would roam in forbidden paths, the moon would wander from its beaten way, the stars and planets would be thrown into disorder and confusion, seasons would become unknown, the winds would cease, clouds would yield no rain, vegetation and foliage would wither and die; springs, streams, and rivers would cease to be, all life would become extinct, heaven and earth would become defeated; and at last the great universe would sink back into chaos.

There is operative in the great human family a law which is as important for the harmony, unity, and the welfare of humanity as the law of gravitation in the physical or inanimate realm, this law or power may be called friendship.

We may think of friendship as casting her mantle over hamlets, towns, cities, and even countries; creating the spirit of peace, unity, and patriotism, and welding all together in an unbreakable chain. Yet when we think of friendship we think of it in a more specific relation. There is a group friendship; it is found among laborers on the one hand, and capitalists on the other, it is found among the professional group, the social or society group, and many others; yet instead of this group friendship bringing the harmony, unity, and happiness to humanity as a whole; it has become the mother, or creator of wars, divisions, strife, and bloodshed. We are not, and cannot be satisfied with this group friendship. The world is made up of individuals. There is a law that binds individuals together, as there is a law that binds the electron to the atom, and that binds one atom to the other. There is placed in the breast of every individual a longing for true friendship. For a kind, sympathetic, a patient, and a faithful friend. One that will prove a true friend in the hour of grief, of sorrow, of loss, and of misfortune. A friend to whom we can bring the burdens and anguish of a broken heart.

The world is controlled by individuals. Individuals are largely controlled by friends. Friendship molds and shapes our character. To have a great character, we must have a great friend. Our idiosyncrasies, and natural proclivities are largely developed by our friendships. The reason there are so many lawless people today is that there are so many friendless. They are like wandering stars drifting through the darkness of night. They have broken with the great law which should bind them to their fellow man. They are out of harmony, their own lives are being destroyed, and they are endangering the lives of others. To have a better world, we must have a better, yea the true spirit of friendship. To have the true spirit, man must become acquainted with, and possess the Spirit of man's greatest friend, Christ.

Since the dawn of creation there have been times when men have stood abandoned, destitute, hapless, and disconsolate. David the great king and prophet, in the lone confines of his mountain cave, cried: "I look to my right hand, and behold, there was no man that would know me: ter in neighboring retreats. Democracy for which

millions fought and died has become paralyzed. Refuge failed me, and no man cared for my soul. I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. Jesus portrayed the poor deserted, and desolate Prodigal: He would fain have filled his belly with husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. Christ was not exempted. Before his ministry he spent forty days and nights in the wilderness. He was without food, and without human companions. Satan tempted Him severely. Wild beasts and angels were his only associates. Yet as he emerged unscathed, and went back among society, we hear him say: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head". In that hour for which he came, and of which prophets foretold, the flock was scattered and Christ stood alone. He stood alone and friendless in Pilot's Judgment Hall. He was alone and friendless to bear the shame, the reproach, and the ignominy of the cross. With thorn pricked brow, with nail pierced hands and feet, with spear torn side, and with a broken heart over those he came to save; I hear him cry in the anguish of his broken heart, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

Jesus walked the lonely road amid the flickering torches of malice and hate, envy and suspicion, greed and avarice, deception and jealousy, sham and hypocrisy, tradition and superstition that he might proclaim liberty to the captive, open the prison to them that are bound, and become the great emancipator and friend of man. It was Christ who sent the Nobleman back to his home with a lighter step, a lighter heart, a brighter path, a clearer vision, and an established faith. It was Christ, who with that tender touch, gave peace and quietness to the fevered brow. Christ cleansed the leper, freed the Demoniac, gave sight to the blind, and caused the dumb tongue to give him praise. It was Christ who broke the seal of death; gave Lazarus back to his sorrowing sisters; and the young man back to his heartbroken, widowed mother. Christ forgave, and befriended the poor unfortunate woman, as she bowed under the scorn and taunting accusation of those legalists. Christ moved with compassion, fed the multitude, and with his blessing and benediction sent them back to their respective homes. Christ stilled the raging waves of Galilee, quieted the fears and apprehensions of those toiling disciples, giving them joy and peace in their darkest hour. Christ gave the true test of friendship when he spoke those immortal words: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you. I call you not servants but friends."

Men have made friends with unrighteous mammon, and filthy lucre. They have heaped unto themselves riches; gold and silver, stocks and bonds have become their efficiency. Under its influence and intoxication they have cried like one of old, "Soul take thine ease." And like the toll of death in the hour of merriment, came a voice, "Thou fool this day thy soul is required of thee". The foundations of the great political, social, commercial, economical, structures were smitten and became a tangled twisted heap of wreckage. Men rose, as Samson of old, to realize that they were shorn of their strength; their great fortunes were gone; and their greed and gain, their ungodly and selfish aspiration and ambitions became but ashes, dross, and illusion. Great kingdoms crumbled; and kings like scurrying rats, left thrones to find protection and shelter if not dead and embalmed; while dictators have arisen to hold the scepter. The wealthy move

with fear, not knowing the hour when they or their children will be offered as a sacrifice upon the altar of ransom. For sixteen years nations have been striving through conference to narrow the breach, and heal the wound that has been caused by the destruction and carnage of the Great World War. Yet men who have their fingers upon the pulse of international affairs of state, claim that the nations are better equipped today, for war than they were in 1914. The hearts of men are failing them, they know not what an hour may bring forth. The old world is like an airship that has gone into a tailspin; the aviators of state working at the controls, are somewhat puzzled, not knowing how to right her. She is like a ship without a rudder, drifting in the darkness and blackness of night, amid hidden shoals, and treacherous rocks, with the captains of state standing helpless upon the bridge. The old world is sick, and fast becoming paralyzed. Many a physician has been called; they have diagnosed her case, and found many complications. They are not sure as to the cause of her trouble, and as yet have been unable to prescribe a remedy.

In a recent statement, Rt. Hon. Lloyd George said, "Nations have no idea where they can find friends upon which they may rely in the event of trouble." The world has forgotten God. The world has forgotten to consult the Great Physician. The Church has lost faith. Humanity has lost confidence. The Leaders of State have lost courage. Christ said, "If I be lifted I will draw all men unto me". Christ is the Great Magnet, that potent force, that spiritual gravitation that can bring the world out of confusion, and chaos, back to harmony. At the close of the fifteenth century the nations of Western Europe professed the faith of the Catholic Church, and yielded to her spiritual obedience. The Catholic Church practically controlled both State and Church. Darkness was dense, the people were restless and dissatisfied, yet saw no hope of a new or brighter dawn. In that hour God found a Martin Luther: a man with strong, unyielding, unquenchable faith; a man of fervent, persistent prayer; a man of noble ability; a man of clear vision; a man of undaunted courage; a man of singleness of heart, mind, and purpose; a man God could trust at any time, in any place, with any task. Luther lifted Christ above the tangled skein, and intricate web of a mere ecclesiasticism. He moved out against a hostile world, the potent forces of State and Church, and the malignant powers of Hell. He hid behind the cross, and held Christ up as Man's redeemer, savior, and friend. He not only launched a great spiritual reformation that kindled hope, revived faith, and gave spiritual life and victory to thousands, if not millions; he became the great factor in molding and shaping the nations of his day. In the former half of the eighteenth century, the spiritual life in England had become deplorable. Infidelity had made its inroads. The church had become dead. The higher clergy had become negligent, and spent their time in pleasure. People became calloused and indifferent. Drunkenness became prevalent among the high and the low. The nation's mind was turned to material pursuits; and gave but little thought or care for things ideal or spiritual. In this hour, under the holy anointing of God, the Wesleys came forth to stand in the gap, and to make up the hedge. It is believed that the Wesleys did more to mold and shape the destiny of England, and give her prominence than any other factor. God has not changed. Christ is ever the same. Redemption's plan has not been altered. The Holy Spirit is true to his office work. It is the church that has

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