

GOD'S FRIEND

“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend” (Ja. 2:23)

Everybody knows what a friend is. There is no need to consult a dictionary. There is no need to dig into Hebrew roots or Greek nouns. Everybody knows what a friend is.

When we read, for example, that Jesus was a friend to publicans and sinners we immediately understand (Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34). When we read that Paul's friends provided for his needs (Acts 27:3) we can connect with that story for we have also had friends who provided for our needs. Jesus said : **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)** This gives us insight into the close friendship between David and Jonathan for it seems that Jonathan was willing to give up his life to help David. When Pilate was warned that if he let Jesus go he would not be Caesar's friend (John 19:12), no further explanation was needed.

We can also relate to false friends. This is one reason why the story of Judas is so tragic. The people in Bible lands felt a special bond when they ate bread with someone. Lot, for example, was willing to go to great lengths to protect two strangers to whom he had extended hospitality (Gen. 19:1-13). The Psalmist sadly recorded that someone who ate bread with him lifted up his heel against him (Ps. 41:9). Jesus said that this Scripture was fulfilled in Judas (John 13:18). When Judas came to betray Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said: **“Friend, do what you came for”.** (Matt. 26:50). As we would put it today: “with friends like that, who needs enemies?”:

We are told in three different passages of Scripture that Abraham was the friend of God (2 Chron 20:7; Is. 41:8; and James 2:23). The focus of that friendship, according to the book of James, was on what Abraham did. Please consider: **“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”** (James 2:21-24)

Abraham, as you know, was not perfect. He was a sinner who needed to be saved by grace. Still, however, his actions caused God to consider him as a friend. When God called Abraham he left the comforts of city life and dwelt in tents. He moved his family and possessions wherever God called him and was obedient even to the sacrificing of his beloved son, Isaac. Every one of us would count it a privilege to have that kind of a friend, and it seems that God did too.

There are definite advantages in having friends in high places. No friendship, obviously, is more desirable or beneficial than the friendship of God. Note, for example, that when God decided to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah He said: “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?” (Gen. 18:17). The answer was “no”! Abraham was God's friend. Their relationship was so close that God confided in Abraham precisely what he was going to do. Further, Abraham was in a position to negotiate terms with God on how those wicked cities might be spared. No friendship is more important, meaningful, or significant that of God!

ARE YOU A FRIEND OF GOD? When God considers what you do, does He call you His friend? When God is about to do something, does He let you in on His plans? When you have a special prayer request, can you negotiate with God as Abraham did?

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CHANGE! Where there is life, there is hope. God is longsuffering toward us because He is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance. Start right now cultivating the friendship of God. Do what He commands! Welcome Him into every conversation for the present, and plan for the future. Make Him welcome in the good times as well as the times of trouble. When the angels write down your name in the Lamb's Book of Life, may they note beside it that you, like Abraham, are a friend of God.