

Text: Various

Title: Do you want to be friends with God?

Truth: The Christian *is* a friend of God.

Date/Location: December 18, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Do you have friends in high places?

I ran into a verse in John 15 recently that fascinated me, so I studied a little bit about it to see if I could understand it better. Here it is:

John 15:15 “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.

My thoughts started out with the idea of being a friend with God as contrasted with being a slave or servant of God. But that led to other passages which speak of someone as a friend of God. And that then led to what it means to be a slave of God. What is the Lord saying in John 15:15? It seems unarguable from other passages that a Christian is a bondservant, or more simply, a servant, of God.

The apostles and associates saw themselves as Christ’s servants (Rom. 1:1, James 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1, Jude 1:1, Revelation 1:1). We are “unprofitable servants” (Luke 17:10).

But the Lord Jesus makes it plain that His disciples are *not* slaves, or better, not *merely* slaves. I am going to lay down the assumption that this applies to us as well, not just the apostles because they have a super-privileged place. Somehow, both slave and friend are true descriptions of our relationship to God.

I. Abraham was the Friend of God

2 Chronicles 20:7 Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?

Isaiah 41:8-10

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of **Abraham, my friend**;
⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "**You are my servant**,
I have chosen you and not cast you off";
¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

James 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

Indeed, we are servants. But friends also. Listen to:

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

John 3:29 John the Baptist was the "friend" of the bridegroom.

II. Need to Speak on the Subject

- A. This is significant, I think, because in the recent years I have seen a bit of an overemphasis on the idea of the Christian as a slave.
- B. Books and sermons have been preached that speak about that concept. I see the necessity of speaking on the topic because human nature tends toward antinomianism, self-autonomy, and thus ignores the fact that Lord does in fact mean *Lord*, or more plainly, *master*. People simply do not want to humble themselves and acknowledge that Christ is their boss and that they need to be obedient to Him.
- C. But we can overemphasize being God's slave. The Bible reveals other ways in which the Christian is related to God—"softer" ways but no less important.
- D. Take note of this: our relationship with God is multi-faceted. We are subjects, yes. Servants, yes. But we are also sheep (John 10).

We are followers. Disciples. Members of His body. His bride. Objects of His care and provision. Co-laborers.

III. How do We Know Our Friendship Status with God?

Christians trust Christ and rejoice that Jesus died for them to remove their sins as an issue in their relationship with God. But beside the fact that Jesus laid down his life for his *friends*, how do we know if we are a friend of God and what that means?

- A. **John 15:14** “You are my Friends if you do whatever I command you.” So, a mark of a friend of Christ is that he keeps Christ’s commands. This demonstrates love—“If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15, also 14:21, 15:10; 1 John 5:2-3). Love and friendship of God go together!
- B. Another way that we can test our friendship with God is to ask if we are more friendly with the world than with God. **James 4:4** “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”
- C. The friendship status is proven by how the Lord made known to the apostles the things disclosed by God the Father. This makes the friendship not just a mystical feeling, but a relationship proven by objective truth, the revelation of God in Christ. We have that completed revelation now in Scripture. It is as complete as it is going to get, at least until the Lord Jesus returns and unfolds yet more for us. So, there is a strong connection between the relational status of the believer with His God and the revelatory information disclosed by God to that believer. This reminds me of **Amos 3:7**, which in turn reminds me that we are just about as privileged as the prophet bards of old.
- D. Explaining that a bit more: A standard slave is not “in” on the plans and internal operations of the master. He implements the master’s orders, but he does not necessarily know what is coming next, or the big picture, or his reasoning, or things like that. Christians, on the other hand, we are more like adult sons, or the wife of the master. We are not in charge, but we are close to the person who is in charge. We have a seriously close walk with that Person. At

the same time, we serve that Person, we are humble before Him, we love Him, and He loves us.

Conclusion

The partial conclusion that I've drawn from thinking about this question of friend versus servant is that we need to be careful not to make our relationship with Jesus be too "slavish" to the detriment of other facets of our relationship. Indeed, we do have a *relationship* with the Master. He considers us His *friends*, and we can consider Him our friend as well, without being flippant about it. We should not be indifferent to this idea because it is precious, important, powerful. We need to see ourselves in the full light of what God has told us our relationship with Him is, not just part of that light.

It is a huge privilege to be able to rightly think of ourselves as friends of Christ—very close friends, not merely acquaintances. We are "in" on His plans. We know what He is doing because He has told us. We are not in the dark on things.

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