

Friends of the King

Neil Girrard

Jesus said to His disciples, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” (Jn. 15:14)

If an ordinary man ever said to his equally ordinary friend, “You are my friend so long as you do what I tell you,” those two would not long be friends! Such a statement is inherently a contradiction to a relationship of equals. Thus this statement by Jesus implicitly links His position as the King with the relationship He has with His disciples.

Many people claim to be a disciple or even friend of Jesus but they fail to turn to Him as King (Lord, Master). This was true in His own day and caused Him to ask, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46) It is even more true in this day which is flooded with people, even so-called “Christians,” who are “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” (2 Tim. 3:4)

When a king of a realm gives a command and it is disobeyed, the crime against the king is called treason and betrayal – and the penalty is almost certain to be death. We do not like to think of our sins and disobediences and lawlessness (what is right in our own eyes – Jdgs. 21:25) as treason and betrayal – those are such ugly words! – but that is precisely what we are practicing if we do not obey Christ’s commands.

When Christ first began to preach, He said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mt. 4:17) John the Baptist had preached the same message adding “Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance” (Mt. 3:2, 8) and Paul, in his defense to King Agrippa, described his work among the Gentiles as having the intent that “they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.” (Acts 26:19-20) To the Athenians, Paul said, “God now commands *all men everywhere* to repent.” (Acts 17:30) The first and foremost command of the King is “Repent!” At the same time, however, it is widely recognized and is even common knowledge in many circles that many people in many “churches” often desperately need to repent – yet these consistently fail or refuse to do so. Because John never uses the word “repent” (Greek, *metanoeo* [3340]), some “theologians” have concocted a “gospel” that requires no repentance whatsoever but instead, these insist, we need only “believe.” Such a view is in error because it is impossible to believe in Christ as Savior without changing one’s ideas about Him and of one’s relationship to and with Him. One simply cannot believe in a Savior who is “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29) when one has no sin to be repenting of! As Jesus said elsewhere, “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Mt. 9:13) The one who refuses to obediently repent is not a friend of Jesus, is not a citizen of His kingdom and is not one entitled to claim that he is even saved!

Jesus gave another command to His disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (Jn. 13:35) John would later write that anyone who does not love his brother (fellow believer), like one who does not practice righteousness, is not of God. (1 Jn. 3:10) and goes on to say, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.” (1 Jn. 3:14) This is strong language indeed!

Jesus indicts the people of the last days by saying, “Because lawlessness [the practice of what is right in one’s own eyes] will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Mt. 24:12) This relativistic, free-spirited, self-driven philosophy and attitude is the direct opposite of a life led by the Spirit of God who causes us to love all men with the same love that God has for mankind. (1

Jn. 3:16, Jn. 3:16, etc.) Lawlessness simply has *no* fellowship (commonality, unity, likeness) with righteousness (what is right, good and true in *God's* eyes – 2 Cor. 6:14)

The “church,” like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, stands guard in front of the door to God’s kingdom and, by refusing to repent, believe *and* obey, the people neither enter in themselves nor allow anyone else to enter either. (Mt. 23:13) In spite of all the preaching, teaching, singing, praising, worshiping, experiencing of miracles, etc., the “church” is not the friend of Christ. Rather it is a counterfeit who usurps the place and function of the bride of Christ and draws the followers of Christ away from the road that leads to life and, whenever possible, back to the road that leads to destruction. (Mt. 7:13-14) When this is done for the purpose of procuring personal gratification, it is rightly called adultery – when it is done to procure money or personal comforts, it is rightly called prostitution!

Anyone can readily find God through sincerely believing in Christ Jesus. In fact, God is actively drawing all men to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) though only those whom He chooses (recognizes as truly repentant and obedient) will remain in His kingdom. (Mt. 7:21) Those who twist and distort this spiritual reality so as to excuse their own subtly lawless, disobedient and rebellious lifestyles do so to their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3:16) God, through Christ Jesus, extends the most gracious offer of redemption mankind could ever hope to receive. But it is not available to those who think that a mere form of godliness is adequate or acceptable (2 Tim. 3:5), or that preaching the gospel is a cloak for covetousness (the greedy desire for gain – 1 Ths. 2:5) – these only heap up judgment upon themselves. (2 Pet. 2:3)

The true friends of Christ are those who serve and obey Him as their only King. As Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to Him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.” (Jn. 14:23-24)

It remains the truth that Jesus “became the author (or source) of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” (Heb. 5:9) There simply is no salvation for those who use the name of Christ and the facts of the gospel to practice their own peculiar form of “Christianity” or to condone their own preferred form of unrighteousness. (2 Ths. 2:12) On the last day, all the “theologians” who were in reality traitors to and betrayers of Christ will be exposed for what they are and it will be a grand folly to suppose that Christ will look any differently upon their carnal followers than He does upon these lawless “theologians.” The command of the King that day will be, “Bring here those enemies of Mine, who did not want Me to reign over them, and slay them before Me.” (Lk. 19:27) It will do no good to protest then – just as it truly does no good now – that we are Christ’s friends. He is not at all fooled by our words when our actions and heart attitudes, which are clearly visible to Him, so clearly demonstrate our enmity against Him and His kingdom.

It is also a truth that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God (that realm where Christ is truly the King) but it was the “church” (that realm where men and their hierarchies rule) that came into being. When men began to embrace worldly authority structures, to that extent they ceased to experience the power of the kingdom of God until, in this day, the lifeless, powerless, counterfeit religion of churchianity is what most people consider the right way of following Christ and God. The devil has perpetrated his deceptions all too well.

The word God spoke to Jeremiah still stands strong and true: “You will seek me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jer. 29:13) The half-hearted and those who think to use the things of God to cover and simultaneously perpetuate the smell of their dead and

rotting flesh would do well to stop deceiving themselves and their followers into believing that they follow and worship the only true and most high GOD.

Let he who has ears hear – and repent, believe and obey!

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