

# FRIENDS OF GOD

By: Phillip Hayes

*"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" [Isaiah 41:8].*

God is speaking by the mouth of His prophet Isaiah. We find men throughout the Bible that served God and walked with Him in various ways. However, we only find one that God specifically called him friend and that is Abraham.

In the New Testament, James refers to this same passage in his general epistle to the church of Jesus Christ that had been scattered by the great persecution during that era.

*"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 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 2:17-24].*

I thank God for this great man of God that penned these verses under inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He reveals why Abraham was a friend of God!

He reveals that faith is not just a religious term or something we claim to have, but rather, faith is an agent that produces works. Many confessing Christians claim to have faith but you would never know it by the way they live. James said, his faith produces something! He lets us know that we might say we have faith, but if nothing is produced by it, then your faith is dead. In other words, you cannot have faith without the evidence of faith being manifested in your life! However, if you really have faith, it will bear fruit and the evidence of that fruit will be plainly seen. *"Faith without works is dead".*

James continues by saying Abraham was justified by his works but it was because of his faith that he was able to please God. His faith empowered him to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. His obedience to God pleased God! This is how Abraham obtained righteousness and became God's friend!

The Apostle Paul in his comments on faith refers to Abraham as the father of us all and the father of faith. (See Romans 4:11;12;16). I hope you see what the scripture is revealing! The fruit of your faith is works.

I don't know about you, but I want to be God's friend. As a servant of God, I want very much to hear Him say to me, "Well done thou good and faithful servant". But to hear Him

refer to me as His friend? How awesome that would be! Is it possible that you or I could achieve this kind of remarkable relationship with the Creator of all things?! I not only believe it's possible, I believe God wants to be our friend!

Many times, I have preached and written about the importance of faith. I have taught and preached strongly in my meetings that without faith, it is impossible to please God. (See Hebrews 11:6). I shared a Trumpet Messenger not long ago about faith and just released a Special Edition Booklet titled, "Why Faith Must Be Preached". I outlined pages of verses teaching how important faith is. Now we see plainly that God called Abraham friend because of Abraham's faith in Him. What about you my friend, do you have genuine faith in God that produces works? Does He call you friend?

Let's dig a little deeper to find how we can have this special relationship with God. We can be God's friend but we must have faith.

Jesus said we could be His friend. Not only did He say we could be His friend; He let us know how we can!

*"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should*

*remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another" [John 15:12-17].*

Jesus said, we can be God's friend by obeying Him! Isn't that the same way Abraham became God's friend? Absolutely! Our Lord's great love for us compelled Him to lay down His life for us, His friends. You see, His faith empowered Him to lay down His life for us. Should we not lay down our lives for Him?

I believe most everyone would agree that obedience to God may require a sacrifice. This was true with Abraham. His faith empowered him to willingly obey God and sacrifice his son Isaac. I hope you see the correlation of faith, obedience and sacrifice that transpired in this awesome event.

Therefore, to be a friend of God these same actions must take place in our relationship with God. God still requires a sacrifice! As a New Testament Christian, you might think that all you must do is simply believe in Jesus to be saved. However, there is a sacrifice the New Testament demands of all believers. Have you obeyed the command?

Here is the sacrifice God requires of all of us: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" [Romans 12:1-2].*

God requires you to sacrifice your body to Him! Notice, God doesn't want your old sinful man. He will only accept your body as a holy living sacrifice. He further commands us not to be conformed or fashioned to this world but be transformed by renewing our minds. I must ask again, Have you obeyed and offered your sacrifice to God?

The sacrifice God requires us can only be obeyed if we have faith! Our faith will help us obey this great commandment! Yes it will! Remember, it was Abraham's faith that gave him the will to obey God and sacrifice Isaac! We must obey God and sacrifice our bodies to Him. We are the temples of the Living God.

You see, God is already my friend. He has blessed me so very much! He forgave me of all my sins! He saved me! He washed me in the precious Blood of His Son and filled me with His Holy Spirit. He has blessed me when I didn't deserve it. He has been a friend to me for over fifty years. I want to be a friend to Him and serve Him with all my heart, don't you?

During my lifetime, I could probably name what real friends I have had on one hand. Possibly you think a friend is an acquaintance you may have met on an occasion? Maybe you think all those people you have on your Facebook account are your friends? I hate to be a bearer of bad news, but those chance acquaintances and Facebook friends are not your friends!

Jesus died for us because He chose us to be His friend! True friends would do anything for one another, even die for one another if necessary. The few real friends I have had

would do anything they could for me, and I would do the same for them. God has proven His friendship to me over and over. If we are to be God's friend, we must have the same commitment!

In some of my meetings, I would ask the audience, "Do you believe God loves you?" Most everyone in the audience would smile and shout out "Amen" to my question. I would then say, "I have another question for you, 'Does God like you?' You would be surprised as to how quiet it would get! No smiles were displayed and no "Amens" were uttered! Usually most everyone just looked at me with a puzzled expression of their faces. Why would there be such a totally different response to the words "love" and "like"? You would think the word "love" is more powerful and intimate than the word "like"! If God loved you, why would He not like you?!

I think the answer to the response is this. The scripture says "For God so loved the world . . ." Within our carnal mind we might possibly think, since God loves the world, then He must love me. The reason we might be reluctant to say God likes us is because we know we are doing things that God would definitely not like! Therefore the negative response!

Think about it. Does God really like you? What would God's testimony be of you? We know His testimony of His Son Jesus was, *"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* [Matthew 3:17]. Certainly God not only loved His only begotten Son, He also liked Him!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you knew God not only loved you, He was also well pleased with you?! I think this should be the goal of every Christian. I know God loves me and I want Him to also like me; to be well pleased with me. How about you?

If God loved the world (mankind) in its evil sinful condition, how much more do you think He loves those that have accepted His Son's Glorious Gospel and have been born again?! Yes! There is no doubt, God loves us; but for Him to like us, we must dedicate our lives to pleasing Him.

The book of Proverbs gives us a glimpse of God's friendship. *"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother"* [Proverbs 18:24]. He has certainly been much closer to me than any of my brothers.

Just as God has proven to us that He is our friend, we must prove to Him that we will be a friend to Him.

It starts with the sacrifice He requires of us. The sacrifice of giving our bodies holy and acceptable to Him will also help us to be obedient in all He requires of us.

In the epistle of James we find the following verses that at first glance might seem troubling to some. However, when you consider your relationship as a friend of God it makes perfect sense and gives us more insight how to be His friend.

*"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever*

*therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" [James 4:4-8].*

I don't think any reasonable person would want to be an enemy to God! "The world" in this passage would include the inhabitants of the world and the "adorning" or things of the world. This is why James includes pride and lust in these verses. The Apostle John stated it this way, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" [1John 2:15-16].*

These scriptures are extremely critical if you desire to please the Father and be His friend! We must come out from the world and be the separated people God has called us to be. If we fail to do this we become friends of the world and enemies of God. This is why the modern "Prosperity Gospel" you hear today is corrupting many Christians relationship with God. Adhering to such false teachings is causing many to become enemies of God!

Carnal desires for the things and pleasures of this world can defeat the purpose of God in a Christians life. Resist the temptations that surround; give yourself to God, serve Him,



and His blessings will follow you all the days of your life. He is your friend and He will bless you! You do not need some carnal preacher's blessing plan scheme to enrich yourself! Your greed and lust will be your downfall. God's Word tell us to be content with what we have. Find contentment! It's the greatest blessing of all!

I sincerely hope you want to be a friend to God. I hope you have made up your mind to obey the Lord and sacrifice to Him what He requires of us all. God may be asking some of you to do more for Him. As I was writing this message several thoughts came to me. These thoughts were a question that I believe came from the Lord. "Who will?" is the question.

My message is about "God's Friends" therefore I will share with you what I believe the Lord was asking me.

The Lord is asking His friends, "Who will go for me, who will declare for me. Who will stand for me?"

As I searched the scriptures I found the following passages that clearly reveal what God is asking of many in this generation.

First, "Who will go for me?": *"And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" [Isaiah 6:7-8].*

Dear friend, has the Lord laid His hand upon you? Has He taken away your sins and anointed you to work for Him? If He has, He is asking you as His friend, "Will you go for me?"

Secondly, "Who Will Declare His generation?": *"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken" [Isaiah 53:8].* (Also see Acts 8:33). The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is the message! It is the message of an Everlasting Kingdom that cannot be shaken. We are the generation of Jesus Christ born by His Spirit and baptized into His body. Who will declare it?

Thirdly, "Who will stand for me?": *"Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" [Psalms 94:16].*

We are living in a generation of compromisers! The Word of God has been watered down and perverted until there is no difference in the redeemed and the lost. Any preaching of holiness and separation from the world is scorned and laughed at. The old time preachers warned us of what we are witnessing. "You can't tell the church from the world!"

Is God speaking to you? Is He asking you to go and stand for Him? Are you one of His anointed ones that has been holding back out of fear of what others might say or think? Will you be a friend to Him and obey His Voice today?

"Ask not what God can do for you; but rather, ask what you can do for God".