

“THE TRANSFORMING FRIENDSHIP”

(Philippians 3:10 a)

“That I may know Him”

In a book that exposes a great man’s great heart, the Apostle Paul is now permitting us to go with him into the innermost sanctuary of that heart, into the Holy of Holies of his very being. He is revealing to us the supreme passion of his life. He is letting us know what is his one great ambition. *“That I may know Christ!”* Of course, the working premise of this ambition is that Christ does not live way back in the remote centuries of a very distant past, but that he is alive and available today. Jesus is where you are, and you may meet Him and cultivate relationship with Him anytime and in any place.

Paul gave his greatest personal testimony when he said, “I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day (II Timothy 1:12). To *know* a *person* is much more than to merely know *about* that person. Knowing *about* Jesus has a measure of *value*, but only knowing *Him* in continual personal relationship has *vitality*. To know His *gifts* is good, but this is *far more*. To know His *blessings* is good, but this is *far more*. To know His *comforts* is good, but this is *far more*.

No true Christian can be put off by a *doctrine about* Christ, or by the *Book about* Christ, as crucially important as these benefits may be. No Christian can be satisfied with a hearsay or second-hand knowledge of Christ. The true Christian presses through all of these things like the vestibules of a building, passing from one to another, to stand in the Loving Presence of Christ Himself. John Greenleaf Whittier said it best in these lines:

“No fable old, no mythic lore
No dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact, stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years;

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He,
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.”

When Paul wrote the words of our text, he had already been a Christian for over thirty years! His longing was to know the mind and heart and love and friendship of Christ in an ever-enlarging degree. We say that Columbus discovered America, but not all of America is even *yet* discovered. Even if Columbus knew he had discovered a continent, he could have no idea of the vastness of that continent that would need exploration and continuing discovery. And so it is with our exploration of the infinite Person of Jesus.

Paul also knew that this knowing of Christ had a high price-tag attached to it. In verses 7 and 8, he said, “What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” Author Oscar Wilde once referred to “a man who knows the *price* of everything and the *value* of nothing.” But Paul is a man who *paid the price* of knowing Christ because he knew the incredible *value* of knowing Christ. In fact, He decided on life’s greatest value, Jesus, *at any price*, because he recognized that the Value is always greater than the price. The value is so great that the price is not even considered.

The typical Christian vocabulary is replete with such terms as “accepting Christ,” “believing in Christ,” “trusting Christ,” and “knowing Christ.” But what does “knowing Christ” mean? Many relational metaphors could be used: teacher-disciple; master-slave; father-son; commanding officer-soldier; coach-athlete; king-subject; bridegroom-bride, etc. Each relationship presents a marvelous dimension of the Christian life, but there is one which contains the richest dimensions of all. That is the relationship of *friend and friend*. The Weymouth Translation of Romans 6:23 says, “God’s free gift is the Life of the Ages bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Of course, the gift is Eternal Life, but it can be best understood as the gift of the everlasting personal friendship of Jesus with the believing heart. In fact, Jesus Himself defined Eternal Life in these words, “This is life eternal, that they may *know Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” So Eternal Life could be defined as *knowing God through friendship with Jesus Christ*. In this sense, Christianity is the acceptance of the gift of the friendship of Jesus. “That I may know Him” is simply the expression of desire for a deeper friendship with Jesus. So we are examining today “The Transforming Friendship,” the friendship between a sensitive and spiritual Christian and the Great Friend, Jesus.

I. THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP

First, we will consider the *gift* of this transforming friendship.

1. A Gracious Gift

Friendship between Jesus and any human being is an absolute gift of grace provided solely out of the gracious goodwill of Jesus Himself. Jesus said, “*I have called you my friends.*” The giver of the friendship is Christ Himself. No sinner could establish this friendship without the Divine initiative and permission of Jesus. Paul South said, “A true friend is the gift of God, and only He who made hearts can unite them.” This is certainly true. Jesus as a True Friend is a gift of God, and His friendship is certainly a gratuity from God.

This allows us to see our only proper attitude toward Him. The proper attitude to a good gift is acceptance. If a man offers me a million dollars I do not knock him down to get it. I don’t have to struggle to come into possession of it. I simply take it and go home before he changes his mind! Nor do I say to him, “I am sorry but I can’t take this until I can understand the intellectual basis on which it is given.” I put the money in the bank and am content to leave the intellectual basis until a later time. Now, I may never actually see the money. It may simply be placed in the bank in my name. However, if I trust the donor I go and draw checks on it and find

them honored. The central experience of the Christian life is a gift which I cannot see, but which is certainly real, and mine, because I draw checks on it regularly and find them honored by God every day.

If God were unwilling to give this gift, all our striving would not make Him give it. And if He is willing to give it, there is nothing to strive for or against, except our own doubts that such a friendship is possible, and that it may be ours for the taking. With regard to “the intellectual basis” on which the gift is given, the truth is that the greatest difficulty in the matter is not intellectual at all, but the difficulty of being loyal to the Friend. And *the loyalty doesn't break down through doubt, but through selfishness*. We don't refuse other gifts simply because we don't understand them. Some years ago, a dear friend gave me a desktop computer. Recently, another dear friend “upgraded” the computer I presently own. I assure you that I do not understand these machines, but also assure you that I did not refuse the gifts of these friends because I do not understand the mechanics of the machine. Incidentally, I am told that they are now making a computer that is so much like a human being that when it makes a mistake, it blames another computer! I heard about a skunk that fell into a computer — and came out a *stinking know-it-all!* Let's see, where was I . . . Any simpleton can receive a gift. Friendship with Jesus is a gracious gift of God — and it requires a ready receiver.

The March 16, 1985, edition of *TV Guide* told the story of Lauren Tewes, an actress who was making over a million dollars a year as the co-star of the top-rated television series, *Love Boat*. Talent, beauty, and personality combined to make Lauren Tewes one of the most recognized people in the world. But despite the glamor that surrounded her public image, her private life became a struggle for self-worth from her first days on the set of *Love Boat*. Studio executives criticized her mercilessly. “I felt so insecure,” she said, “I spent a lot of time trying to please people who demanded that I change myself. The public told me I was a star, but I felt like nothing.”

In the attempt to escape her prison of insecurity, Lauren sought refuge in the euphoria of cocaine. But this drug eventually stole everything from her, including the last remaining shreds of her self-worth. She was fired from the series and forced to begin a long, slow struggle to rebuild her career from scratch. Only seven years after she attained television stardom, her career, her money, and her home were gone — traded for cocaine.

One morning after a sleepless night, feeling worthless and totally alone, she turned on the television and fell into bed. The screen flickered to life, and a kindly man in a red cardigan sweater smiled and said, “*I'll be your friend. Will you be mine?*” The parents and children of the 1960s and later will recognize the man as Fred Rogers, the host of Public Broadcasting's *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*. Fred Rogers is an ordained Presbyterian minister with the special charge to “serve children and their families through the media,” and he has been gently and lovingly ministering to children on public TV for years.

When Lauren Tewes heard Mr. Rogers offer and question, “*I'll be your friend. Will you be mine?*” she broke down in tears and answered aloud, “*Yes! Yes, I will!*” She later said, “I resolved at that point to get my life together. I was totally collapsed, and *Mr. Rogers saved my life — with an offer of friendship.*”

In much the same manner, but in a far worse sense, man was totally collapsed through sin, and facing eternal destruction. But “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (establishing peace and friendship between Himself and the world). Jesus died, rose again, ascended to Heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to re-present His Case to your heart. As a part of the arrangement, He says, “*I will be your Friend. Will you be Mine?*” What a transformation will occur in your life if you will answer as Lauren Tewes answered Mr. Rogers, “*Yes! Yes, I will*”

2. A Price Paid

Another dimension of this friendship is that a high *price* was *paid* to make it possible. We must not speak glibly about this friendship, as if it were easy and automatic. No, there was a massive barrier between God and man which prohibited such a friendship as long as the barrier stood. Man’s sin stood like an impenetrable wall shutting man out from God. Sin was the breach of an Original Friendship between man and God. Sin broke that friendship (fellowship) with God. And the breach was obvious in both parties. Man became God’s enemy through sin, and *God became man’s enemy*, as well. Because of sin, men are “out of sync” with God, and become “haters of God” (Romans 1:30). And God is not passive with regard to sin; He always reacts *against* it. Psalm 5:4 says, “Thou are not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee.” Indeed, “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:5). *God must hate sin because He is totally in favor of its opposite.* And because every sinner is identified with his sin until he is shaken by the power of God in conversion, the reaction of God against sin determines His treatment of the sinner. *God hates the perversion* so much that He cannot allow it in His Holy Presence (Habakkuk 1:13) — but God still *loves the person!* One commentator said, “This was a problem worthy of a god, and God solved it like the God that He is.” This is the very heart of the Gospel of Christ: “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; and much more, being now reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). “The death of His Son” — this was the price that was paid to make this transforming friendship possible.

When the Bible tells us that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,” and that we are “saved by grace through faith, and that is not of ourselves, but it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast,” we might simplify it by saying that salvation is God’s gift through friendship with Jesus Christ.

II. THE GROWTH OF FRIENDSHIP

Second, we will consider the *growth* of this transforming friendship. One great British Christian said, “A man must keep his friendships in constant repair.” This is certainly true of the greatest friendship of all. The Bible says, “A man who would have friends must show himself friendly.” This simply means that if you want to draw on the bank account of personal friendship, you must make regular deposits of congeniality and relationship. The person who *is* a friend will always *have* a friend. And this is certainly true of the greatest friendship of all.

“One there is, above all others, Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother’s; Costly, free, and knows no end.

They who *once His kindness prove* Find it to be everlasting love.”

Note in the above lines that friendship must be tried, and then it will be tested and proved. Involvement and investment are big factors in a friendship. A person may “stumble into” a friendship, or “stumble upon” a new friend, but then comes the building of the relationship into a rock-ribbed friendship. This will always involve trial and error, successes and failures, laughter and tears, but a true friendship will grow stronger with every new venture.

Henry Ford once said, “Your best friend is the person who brings out the best in you.” In the Presence of Jesus, men in the Gospels found a “higher, better self” emerging out of the ruins of their sinful natures. Jesus lifted men’s hearts with His friendship. He saw the *ideal* person while looking at the *real* person, the *potential* person while looking at the *actual* person. But the question is, how does the real give way to the ideal? How does the potential person become the actual person?

1. The Law of Observation and Identification

The first “law of friendship” which we will examine could be called *the law of observation and identification*. Stated simply, this law means that you become best friends with the person you observe most closely and “hang around with” most consistently.

One of the greatest golfers in the history of the game was Bobby Jones. When Bobby Jones was a little boy, his family lived near the East Lake golf course in Atlanta, Georgia, and every afternoon after school he followed the club pro around the course, watching him play. He came to admire the golf game of this man, and he watched him ever more closely. When Bobby began to play the game of golf, his golf swing was the perfect imitation or replication of the golf swing of the club pro. It is a law of life that *we become like what we live with and look at*. Is it any accident that the word, “behold,” occurs so many times and in so many settings in the Bible? Is it any accident that Jesus used the word so often, and it was used in addressing our attention to Him so often? I think not. Indeed, the only way this friendship can transform our lives is through observation of Jesus and identification with Him.

We can even go so far as to say that no one has ever properly “beheld” Jesus and truly identified with Him by faith *without* being transformed. Robert Coleman said, “No one can look very long upon Immanuel’s face and remain the same,” and he was right. At the end of a period of convalescence while recovering from a serious illness, the great Christian missionary E. Stanley Jones wrote, “I have spent these months looking into the face of Jesus with an unobstructed gaze, and what I see is beautiful.” He was simply practicing the first law of a growing friendship, the law of observation and identification.

2. The Law of Association

The second “law” of friendship could be called *the law of association*. This law simply means that the friends who are most real to you are those with whom you associate most.

A young man went away from home to serve in the United States military. While he was away, he faithfully wrote a letter to his girl friend every single day. At the end of a year of receiving daily letters from him, *she married the postman!* That is the law of association.

When I was a teenager, I had a friend who lived next door. I saw him practically every day, and sometimes I saw him several times a day. We became almost inseparable companions. We ran around together. We fished together. We went to and from school together. We played together and worked together. I felt very close to him. The mutual influence that we had on each other was very real. But then I moved away. Because we were both poor writers, we didn't correspond with each other. After visiting back and forth a few times, we slowly lost contact. Today, we only remember each other from a far away place and a time long ago. Both the friendship and its failure are examples of the law of association. This law says that if two persons are to be real to each other, they must take time to be together.

If I wanted to practice the law of association in building a friendship, there are several practical things I might do. First, I would spend a lot of time *talking with my friend privately and personally*. One cannot spend extended periods in private conversation without opening windows of friendship. Apply this to your friendship with Jesus. How much time do you spend in secret prayer? Jesus said, "When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to the Father who is in secret." How often do you converse with God? Someone said, "Prayer is simply holding open house for God." Thus, face to face contact is made, and a person to person association is built. In time, a friend becomes another self. In friendship with Jesus, He becomes your "other self." Aristotle spoke of a true friend as one soul in two bodies. Though the Bible says it differently, this is what union with Christ, or friendship with Jesus in its deepest sense, means.

Stanley Jones, the great missionary to India, was once visiting Copenhagen, Denmark. During his stay in Copenhagen, he visited the Church of Our Lady. While there, he viewed the famous statue created by the Danish sculptor, Thorvaldsen. He was walking silently down the aisle of the church to leave the building after viewing the statue when he was approached by a church custodian. In broken English, the man asked Dr. Jones, "Sir, did you see the Master's face?" and he gestured back to the statue. "Why, no," Jones replied, "you can't *see* His face; it is bowed to the ground." "Ah, but that's the point," said the custodian, "if you would see the Master's face, you must first kneel at His feet." If you would see Jesus and become best friends with Him, you must spend much time talking with Him personally.

Second, I would *spend a lot of time talking with his friends*. This is a second practical step to be taken in practicing the law of association. People who are friends of Jesus help us to know Him better. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

In the great account of the "Emmaus Road walk" of two disciples on the evening of the resurrection of Christ, the Bible contains this enlightening verse: "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, *Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them*" (Luke 24:15). This is precisely what happens when two friends of Jesus are in proper

relationship with Him, in proper relationship with each other, and are humbly discussing the things of God. “Jesus Himself draws near, and goes with them.” Dear Christian, spend a lot of time in rich fellowship with the friends of Jesus talking about Him. The law of association will operate and you will know Christ better. If we would know Him better, we must develop companionship with the right kind of Christians.

Third, I would *read a good book about Him*. This is a third practical step to be taken in practicing the law of association. Even so, if I want to know Jesus better, I must make much of His Book. God’s best gift to the world is His Son. His second best gift to the world is the Bible. No one can ignore the Bible and improve his friendship with Jesus.

If I wanted to know George Washington better, what might I do? I would go to the local library in my community and get a book about him and sit down and read it. In fact, I know many of the great characters of history far better than I know many of my own neighbors — because of the law of association. I have read good books about many people from the past, and though I have never seen any of them, I have gotten to “know” them quite well. Never underestimate the power of a good book if you want to get to know someone better.

Henry Ward Beecher wrote, “I never knew my mother. She died when I was only four years of age. But one day I was reading over a lot of letters that my mother wrote to my father, and I found the letters that she wrote from the day they met until their love was one. When I read these letters, I think I understood my mother.” You and I have never seen Jesus in the flesh, but we have an incredible volume of “letters” which expose His heart to us.

Gutson Borglum, the great sculptor, wrote about his technique in these words: “I studied every known photograph of the subject. I read every book about him I could find. I looked up many who had seen him, and talked with them. Then I had my own mental picture and reproduced it.” Here again is the law of association.

Pastor Charles E. Jefferson said, “I feel as though I know Paul better than any man who ever lived. I made Paul my daily companion. I read his letters over and over again. I read everything I could find which has been written about Paul; I have thought about him, and talked about him, so now I feel as if I know Paul better than I know any other man who ever lived.”

George W. Truett, perhaps the greatest statesman ever to emerge from Baptist ranks, said, “If men are rooted and grounded in a knowledge of the Bible, they will go out against any sin, against any foe, against any difficulty, and they will overcome, for the Bible is a signboard pointing us to Christ.”

How much time did you spend yesterday with the world and its affairs by means of your newspaper or television? And how much, by comparison, did you spend with God in the pages of His Book?

This is the law of association. If you want to know Jesus better, talk with Him privately and personally, talk with His friends, and read a good book about Him. These are practical ways to use the law of association.

3. The Law of Expression

There is a third law of friendship which is as fundamental as the others. It could be called the *law of expression*. This law means that friendship feeds on any outward expression that is given to it. If I express myself positively and practically toward another person, I get to know that person better by means of that expression. Let me suggest some practical ways to improve a friendship by means of the law of expression.

First, *follow* the friend. This is the practical side of the law of identification which I mentioned earlier. Identify with the friend in consistent association and activity. Over and over, Jesus said, "Follow me." No one can hope to be the friend of Jesus if he does not heed this admonition and take advantage of this invitation. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. He who *follows after Me* shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." In John 10:27, He supplied two "tests of friendship" when He said, "My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, and *they follow me*." You improve your friendship with any person when you follow him.

Second, express yourself in some act of *practical service*. Genuine friendship thrives on deeds more than words. You can express your friendship in words, and you *ought* to, but the words will become hollow unless sometimes you let your *actions* speak as well as your words. The gift you sent on Mother's Day has drawn you closer to your mother. The cake you baked for your neighbor who was entertaining guests has strengthened the neighborly association. The food you fixed and sent to your sick friend, the visit you paid to the hospital, the note of encouragement you sent to the distant friend — these expressions of friendship have brought you closer to your friend. Christian, *how long has it been since you went out of your way to do something for God?*

I Corinthians 3:9 says that "we are laborers together with God." However, it is obvious that laborers *labor*. It is astounding to see how many Christians only read the Bible occasionally, pray occasionally, go to church (occasionally!), and then wonder why their relationship with Christ is not more real and vital. The *abiding* life of John 15 is an *active* life; the more aggressive the *action*, the more *vital* the life.

Daniel 11:31 gives us an acid test of this friendship. It says, "The people who know their God shall be strong, and *shall do great exploits*." Aggressive practical service for your friend is one of the great tests of genuine friendship.

The idle Christian is always in trouble spiritually. Idleness explains a thousand *doubts* and a thousand *defeats*. Even John the Baptist, the bold prophet who uncompromisingly called wicked King Herod to repent of his sin, when he was put in jail, and had a period of enforced inactivity, fell into doubt and depression through idleness (Matthew 11:2-3). Let your love for Christ begin to speak the language of deeds and you will soon have an enlarged relationship with Him.

Third, *talk about your friend* to someone else. Tell somebody what you think of him, and your relationship with him will grow. We are so constructed as human beings that no thought, no

feeling, no impulse is fully ours until we have expressed it. And the more frequent the expression, the more complete the possession. This can be tested in any relationship. Just speak of your love to your parents or your children, and that love becomes more real. Tell somebody what you think of Jesus. Tell them how much you love Him. Describe Him to them, and your love for Him will grow.

These, then, are the “laws” by which friendship operates and grows. If they are practiced in your friendship with Jesus, it will be kept in good repair, and will grow.

III. THE GAIN OF FRIENDSHIP

When Elizabeth Barrett Browning was asked the secret of her life, she simply replied, “I had a friend.” Anyone who knows Mrs. Browning’s story can well guess that she was referring to her relationship with her loving husband, Robert, who was instrumental in bringing Elizabeth out of a tragic home background and instilling in her self-worth that enabled her to become what she likely would never have been otherwise. Whatever Mrs. Browning meant by her testimony, any genuine Christian would happily give the same testimony as the “secret” of his life. “*I had a Friend!*” No greater gain in life can be had than the gain that comes through a personal friendship with the glorious Son of God.

History records that Sir Philip Sidney, poet, philosopher, and soldier of the sixteenth century, fell in battle on the field of Zutphen in the year 1586. In his great distress he called for a drink of water; but as he was putting the cup to his lips, he saw near him another dying man whose eyes were fixed longingly on the cup. Lowering his hand, Sidney handed him the cup, declaring weakly, “Your necessity is greater than mine.” Many acts like that made his name famous for kindness and grace. So it was not strange that a knight of that time requested that this epitaph be put above his grave: “Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney.” Any sensitive and genuine Christian might want these words on his tombstone: “Here lies the friend of Jesus Christ. *I was one who was befriended by Him, and transformed by the friendship!*”

What have I gained by this friendship? What power has come to me through it?

1. The Power of Example

A Christian’s friendship with Jesus brings into his life an incredible power of *example*. No one will ever be able to testify that Jesus Christ set a bad example for Him to follow! Though Jesus has given me infinitely more than a good example, it is certainly true that He has “left me an example, that I should follow His steps” (I Peter 2:22).

2. The Power of Experience

Any friendship will inevitably mean the transfer of some power, some influence, some experience. The two friends will tend to become like one another, and both will be stronger than before. This will occur whether the strength be that of evil or of good. One nature feeds on another, and the nourishment received is the greatest in a true friendship. Normally, the weaker

of the two feeds on the stronger, so that the weaker becomes stronger through the communication of personality that occurs in the friendship.

You might think of the two friends as two highly charged electric terminals, and the “spark” of power passes from the *higher* to the *lower*, or from the *positive* to the *negative*. Many people are “attracted” to Jesus Christ; many people “admire” Him. But this attraction, this admiration, bring no real gain to an individual’s life. In fact, it is likely that no human being can help being attracted to Jesus when He really sees Him. But true power flows only through a solid friendship with Him.

One of the great experiences that comes through this friendship is the experience of consolidation. A believer’s friendship with Jesus will run through every part of his life just as a thread runs through a necklace of beads and unites them. That thread will give to even the smallest bead an important place, a significant meaning, and a great value. Even so, this transforming friendship will focus a life into a unit and rescue it from division and waste. To follow the analogy negatively, without this friendship, the experiences of life are scattered as loose beads on a living room floor. But this friendship is like the thread that gathers up all the loose beads and makes them all part of one great whole. This friendship gives meaning and blessing to every experience of life.

Another of the great blessings of this friendship is its duration. A verse in Proverbs says that “a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Some people make “fair-weather friends,” the kind who are not “born for adversity.” Adversity is often the wind that separates the chaff of flattery from the grain of real friendship.

The Shadow once said to the Body: “Who is a friend like me? I follow you wherever you go. In sunlight or in moonlight I never forsake you.” “True,” replied the Body. “You go with me in sunlight and in moonlight. But where are you when neither sun nor moon shines upon me?” The friendship of Jesus does not rise and fall like the tide. It is not probated on our performance. It endures through all circumstances and threats.

3. The Power of Expulsion

One of the greatest gains of this transforming friendship with Jesus is the power of *expulsion* which it brings into the Christian’s life. When this friendship has been firmly established, a lot of lesser issues are automatically settled. A lot of questions are answered, a lot of temptations are overcome, a lot of problems are resolved — by this friendship. This friendship throws the entire bias of the believer’s life into an elevated course, and prevents him from wasting himself on a lower one.

“In sin I long had found delight, Unawed by shame and fear,
Till a new object struck my sight, And stopped my wild career.”

One of the most popular hymns ever written is entitled, “What a Friend We Have In Jesus.” I am quite happy and comfortable when singing it. Jesus Christ has proven His friendship to me again and again. However, it occurs to me that we are usually singing of a one-

sided relationship. We are singing of *His* friendship with *us*, but not necessarily of *our* friendship with *Him*. I found that when I turned the words around and tried to sing, “What a friend I am to Jesus,” I was hardly comfortable at all. I felt that the acclamation of the *first* title had become an *accusation* if I turned the words around. Then I read in the Book of James that “Abraham was called the friend of God,” and my appreciation for Abraham immediately grew. What could be more glorious than to be a friend of God? A friend of Jesus? Remember, I am a friend of Jesus only because I have been befriended *by* Him, but *how balanced is the friendship?*

Most parents can remember a time when one of their children, when small, brought into the house some neighborhood child (and it *might* have been an *urchin* or a *derelict*) and announced proudly, “This is my friend.” I’m sure that Jesus makes such a presentation of me — and will reaffirm it One Day in Heaven — but the question lingers, How good a friend am *I* to *Him*? Is anyone in your community able to say about you, “That person is a friend of Jesus”?

Many years ago, a great little Scottish book was published, entitled, Men of the Knotted Heart. It is the story of outstanding Christian Scotsmen who were bound together by a common hot-hearted relationship with Jesus Christ. The truly fascinating thing about it is that the title is the Hebrew idiom for “friendship.” Christian, *is your heart intertwined, knotted, with the heart of Jesus?* If so, then you are His friend.

We have a denomination in Christendom who are called “Friends.” I am not willing to relinquish or concede the title to them. *I want to be a friend — a **best** friend — of Jesus.*