

LAMPLIGHTER

OCTOBER 2008

THEME: JESUS SAID... “HE is a Friend”

JOHN 20:30, 31

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

(John 15:15 NIV)

Dear Friend of Jesus,

Author and teacher, Dr. Howard Hendricks tells the story of a young man who strayed from the Lord but was finally brought back by the help of a friend who really loved him. When there was full repentance and restoration, Dr. Hendricks asked this Christian how it felt to be away from the Lord. The young man said it seemed like he was out at sea, struggling in deep water, and all his friends were on the shore hurling biblical accusations at him about justice, penalty, and wrong. “But, there was one Christian Brother who actually swam out to get me and would not let me go. I fought him, but he pushed aside my fighting, grasped onto me, put a life jacket around me, and took me to shore. By the grace of God, he was the reason I was restored. He would not let me go.”

In other words, one might say that he would not give up on him. All too often we have felt a sense of betrayal. Others have let us down. We perceived them as friends, but when things grew difficult they were gone and could not be found. At first they appeared as a friend, but they did not have your best interest at heart. Some in the church can be the same way. (Matt 7:15 NIV) *“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”* This is perhaps the most insidious deception. If they appeared as they truly are at heart, then it would not be so sinister. Peter warns in his first letter chapter 5, verse 8: *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* Paul makes us keenly aware in Ephesians 6:12: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”* Some may want us to think that they are our friends, but listen carefully to their words.

Jesus is our True Friend. He is a Friend in a day of trouble. He himself says, *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). He promises to help in a time of need. *“Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you; and you will honor me”* (Psalm 50:15). Jesus always has our best interest at heart. He prays for us in His high priestly prayer of John 17:24: *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”* Uriah the Hittite was in the hottest part of the battle and his fellow soldiers withdrew from him on the command of King David. We do the same thing to our fellow soldiers when we withdraw our prayers from them. Jesus knows when and how to help His friends. Even when helping cost Him His very own life. (John 15:13 NIV) *“Greater love has no one than this; that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

My friends in Jesus, let us not only be friends with the One who gave Himself for us, but let us be friends with one another as well. As we journey together in this life of faith, let us reach out to one another with love, kindness, patience, and understanding.

Close with prayer, the Lord's Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #46 “What a Friend We have in Jesus”