

## ***Session 9 Friendship with God: The Reward of Love (Jn. 15:15-16)***

*“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)*

### **I. REVIEW**

- A. Friendship with God is glorious, yet it is rare and costly. Jesus is talking about something rare and very special that is available to all believers. The highest reward of love is found in possessing the ability to love more in a deeper friendship. It is the reward of wholeheartedness.

***<sup>14</sup>You are My friends if you do whatever I command you...<sup>15</sup>but I have called you friends...”***  
***(Jn. 15:14-15)***

- B. Jesus did not teach that every believer is a friend of God. This is clear by the warnings that He gave 5 of churches in Revelation 2-3 (Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Laodicea).

***<sup>4</sup>“...I have this against you [Ephesus], that you have left your first love...<sup>5</sup>I will...remove your lampstand...unless you repent...<sup>14</sup>I have a few things against you [Pergamos], because you have there those...who taught...[My people]...to commit sexual immorality...<sup>16</sup>Repent, or else I will...fight against them...<sup>20</sup>I have a few things against you [Thyatira], because you allow Jezebel...to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality...<sup>22</sup>I will cast...those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent...<sup>23</sup>I will kill her children with death...”***  
***(Rev. 2:4-5, 14-16, 20-23)***

***<sup>1</sup>“...you [Sardis] have a name that you are alive, but you are dead...<sup>3</sup>if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief...<sup>16</sup>...because you [Laodicea] are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth...<sup>17</sup>...you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked... (Rev. 3:1-3, 15-17)***

- C. Jesus identified laying down one’s life for another as the greatest expression of love (Jn. 15:13). Jesus’ love for us was manifested by laying down His life on the cross *to satisfy God’s justice* (Rom. 3:26) and *to model* the extravagant love that the Church would display for Him.

***<sup>13</sup>“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends [to rescue them from trouble]. <sup>14</sup>You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. <sup>15</sup>No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”***  
***(Jn. 15:13-15)***

- D. Jesus told them they would be His friends if they obeyed what He had just taught them (15:13-14). Here, He prophesied their friendship with Him—knowing that ultimately they would be faithful unto death in their love for Him—even knowing that they would leave Him that night (Mt. 26:31).

- E. Jesus defined one of the essential aspects of having a deep friendship with God when He explained that a servant does not know *what* his master is doing (or *why* he was doing it), but He had made known to them all that the Father showed Him to emphasize in His messaging—see Matthew 21-25.

- F. This promise of friendship is for any who are willing to sacrifice their life and resources *to rescue people* for love (15:13) and *to promote the messages* that the Father wants emphasized (15:15). This gives context for what He had in mind when saying, “if you do what I command you” (15:14). Thus, He they could be His friends if they obeyed what He had just taught them in 15:13-14.

## II. THE REWARD OF LOVE

- A. The greatest reward for obedient love is to be empowered to love more with deeper friendship.
- B. The subject of God giving rewards to His people is meant to *motivate* them to greater faithfulness. Yet, some dislike this subject because they *feel pressure* by thinking that they could have more in God if they lived differently. It *confuses* some who see gaining rewards as “earning” something which seems contradictory to grace and the free gift of salvation that is received by faith.
- C. Jesus exhorted us to live in a way that the Father will reward (Mt. 6:4,6, 17; 10:42; 16:27; Lk. 6:23). Rewards express how Jesus feels about the way we loved Him, not about “being over others.”  
*<sup>4</sup>your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father...will Himself reward you openly...  
<sup>6</sup>pray to your Father...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly...  
<sup>17</sup>when you fast...<sup>18</sup>your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:4, 6, 17)*  
*<sup>22</sup>“...when men hate you...for the Son of Man’s sake...<sup>23</sup>your reward is great in heaven...” (Lk. 6:22-23)*  
*<sup>42</sup>“Whoever gives...only a cup of cold water...he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Mt. 10:42)*  
*<sup>27</sup>“The Son of Man will come...He will reward each according to his works.” (Mt. 16:27)*  
*<sup>12</sup>“I am coming...My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.” (Rev. 22:12)*
- D. We are commanded to believe that the Lord rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).  
*<sup>6</sup>...he who comes to God must believe that...He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him... (Heb. 11:6)*
- E. Paul gave us details about our appointment at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). The gift of righteousness based on the Jesus’ death on cross is our foundation. We are saved as a free gift, by faith in Jesus’ work on the cross, but we are rewarded according to our works.  
*<sup>8</sup>Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor...<sup>12</sup>If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each one’s work will become clear...it will be revealed by fire... <sup>14</sup>If anyone’s work...endures, he will receive a reward.  
<sup>15</sup>If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved. (1 Cor. 3:8-15)*
- F. Jesus called us to buy “spiritual gold” by diligently seeking and obeying Him (Rev. 3:18).  
*<sup>18</sup>“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich.” (Rev. 3:18)*
- G. We are not all the same in the age to come. Jesus spoke of some called “great” and some called “least” in the kingdom. God will call their life choices “great” because they loved and obeyed Him.  
*<sup>19</sup>“Whoever breaks [consistently] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does [consistently] and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt. 5:19)*  
*<sup>41</sup>...one star differs from another star in glory. <sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection... (1 Cor. 15:41-42)*

### III. SCRIPTURE EXHORTS US TO EXTRAVAGANT FAITHFULNESS AND DILIGENCE

- A. At the end of Paul’s life, while in prison, he *pressed* for the prize of the upward call (Phil. 3:12, 14). As the premier teacher on grace, Paul exhorted believers to press into God for this personal prize.  
<sup>12</sup>...***I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ...laid hold of me [the fullness of my destiny]...<sup>14</sup>I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God... (Phil. 3:12-14)***
- B. We are all running a spiritual race with our heart, not with our legs (1 Cor. 9:24-27).  
<sup>24</sup>...[run to] ***receive the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it...<sup>26</sup>I run thus: not with uncertainty [lack of focus]. <sup>27</sup>But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)***
- C. In Scripture there is various terminology for walking in mature love and deep intimacy with God:
1. To be a “*friend of God*” (Jn. 15:15).
  2. One’s life choices being “*called great*” by God (Mt. 5:19).
  3. Jesus will say to some, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Mt. 25:21).
  4. Jesus said that “*one thing*” was needed and that Mary chose the “*good part*” (Lk. 10:42).
  5. Paul referred to his highest ambition to be “*well pleasing to God*” (2 Cor. 5:9).
  6. Paul spoke of pressing toward the goal for “*the prize*” of the upward call of God (Phil. 3:14).
  7. Jesus spoke of living radical obedience referred to as “*spiritual violence*” (Mt. 11:12).
- D. Jesus said that “the Father loves” (enjoys the life choices of) any who love Jesus (14:21, 23; 16:27). He was referring to a very specific blessing—that some are *loved by the Father* “because of” their extravagant response to love and obey Jesus.  
<sup>21</sup>“***He who...[obeys]...is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father...***” (Jn. 14:21)  
<sup>23</sup>***If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him...*** (Jn. 14:23)  
<sup>27</sup>...***for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me...*** (Jn. 16:27)
- E. The idea of the Father loving us “because” we love and obey Jesus confuses some because it appears to be a contradiction to the truth that we love God because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19).
- F. Jesus spoke of two distinct expressions of God’s love for His people:
1. ***#1 God so loves the world in fullness*** (Jn. 3:16). The Father loves all people in the world *redemptively* in the sense of valuing, caring for, and pursuing them. God so loved the world with His infinite and everlasting love—He proved it by sending His Son to die for us. His love for all the people in the world is not caused or motivated by their response to Jesus.
  2. ***#2 He loves or enjoys His relationship with those who obey Him***. The Father enjoys and esteems the life choices and fruit of those who obey Jesus. He enjoys His relationship with them and delights in working “with them” in partnership (Mk. 16:20).  
<sup>17</sup>“...***My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.***” (Jn. 10:17)

- G. The invitation to be a “friend of God” creates the tension that Jesus referred to when He said, “Blessed are they that mourn” (Mt. 5:4). This mourning refers to the pain that we feel when we see “the gap” between what God has made available to us and what we are actually experiencing. God has made available to us great grace to walk in mature love for and obedience to Jesus. We mourn seeing how little we experience as compared to how much is available. This mourning includes the pain we feel over our failure to follow through in seeking and obeying Jesus in a wholehearted way.
- H. **Mourning and joy:** We hold these two truths in tension. We rejoice in who we are in Christ and what we are experiencing in God, while we are aware of how much more there is to experience. We are grateful for all that we experience, but continually seek the Lord for a greater measure.
- I. Immediately after speaking on friendship with God, Jesus assured them that it was not their idea but a glorious privilege that began in God’s heart which He will bring to completion (Phil. 1:6).  
<sup>15</sup>“...I have called you friends...<sup>16</sup>You did not choose Me, but I chose you...” (Jn. 15:15–16)

#### IV. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD: ABRAHAM, MOSES, AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

- A. John the Baptist’s life is the model of friendship with God. John described his message, lifestyle and his ministry style as a *friend of the Bridegroom*—comparable to the best man in a wedding, he refused to draw the bride’s attention to himself, but helped her to receive the bridegroom’s embrace.  
<sup>29</sup>“...but the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears him...” (Jn. 3:29)
1. **Who stands:** He was diligent to stand in God’s presence in prayer, feeding on the Word.
  2. **Who hears him:** He was faithful to respond with obedience regardless of the price.
- B. Jesus described John as having a burning heart and a shining lamp of ministry (Jn. 5:35) and later Jesus set forth John as a model of wholeheartedness. God requires “spiritual violence” to experience the *fullness* of all is available in God. To “suffer” violence means that God permits (and rewards) it in our deep pursuit of God. It is violent because it confronts our sinful desires and “violently” reorders the way we talk, spend time and money, and pursue comfort, success, and honor.  
<sup>12</sup>“...the kingdom of heaven suffers [permits] violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Mt. 11:12)
- C. Abraham was called a friend of God who believed in God’s delayed promises.  
<sup>23</sup>Abraham believed God, and...he was called the friend of God. (Jas. 2:23)  
<sup>20</sup>He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God...giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup>and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. (Rom. 4:20-21)
- D. Moses received direct communication with God “as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11).  
<sup>11</sup>So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. (Ex. 33:11)  
<sup>24</sup>By faith Moses...<sup>25</sup>choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup>esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward... <sup>27</sup>for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. (Heb. 11:24-27)