

# “I’m Your Friend”

Peter Scott, transcribed from Teaching, January 21, 2018



This morning I would like to talk about the Lord Jesus. As we have already heard this morning, it is not about us. It is about all we are in Christ. We have no argument with that. That is so true. He is so good to us in every way, shape and form. However this morning I would like to go over one thing in particular: **that Jesus is our Friend**. He is God but He is also our friend. There is a balance there but then again there isn't a balance. If you want to be balanced your whole life, go ahead, but sometimes you've got to dive in and take the risk. When you are at the top of the high dive and it is twelve feet down before you hit the water; a lot of conversations go on inside your head before you jump.

They don't even make high dives any more. It's too dangerous in New York State or something like that. But in the old days, you'd go to any pool and it had a high dive. You get to that top part and you say to yourself, "I'm ready!" Then you realize that you're up to the top and you are NOT ready. The conversation takes place and you have trouble finding the trust you need. You have to stop and think about all the things you were planning on doing. But then, when you finally do jump and go in, all those plans become rubbish. You can only trust and rely on one thing and that is that God holds this universe together and you are going to make it okay. Water will still be water. Air will still be air. And you will still be able to breathe.

Well, Jesus is a Friend. We know, everyone here in this room knows, that Jesus is a Friend. From the very first, He came to each of us individually as a Friend. However, what does it mean? When we are going through trials? When we are going through sickness, disease, when our friends are suffering? What does that mean? "These are our friends, Lord. What are You doing?" I need to go back and tell you a story since the meaning of "friend" to me has to do with the reality of what a friend is. I always try to deal with something that has actually happened. Reality is a good thing.

I remember when we went to the Philippines one year, the first year our team had visited, Ruddy Ancheta and his family were our hosts. We were in an apartment on the streets of Balut, the YWAM base. We had arrived and when we did (it takes about 24-28 hours), as soon as the door to the airplane opens you realize you are in a "different planet." At least a different part of the planet. First of all it is a LOT warmer and everything is different. By the time you get to the gates, somebody has already approached you with one thing or another. It is so different.

Here I am a middle-aged man with a family, vaccinated, ready, as ready could be. But, I wasn't ready for what I saw and I saw such poverty, not just physical poverty and filth. But I saw poverty of *mind*. SO, I was really having trouble with that. Maybe someone else can just jump into a place and adapt, but I cannot, because I feel what other people are feeling and I'm trying to understand what other people are doing and saying. This day I was having trouble. Someone else could say,

“Well just rely upon the Word of God, just rely on worship and praise. You just need to rely, etc. etc.” Well, I was having trouble. Right there and then and I needed a friend. Right?

You need a friend in times like that. Interestingly, Ruddy Ancheta had a family and one of his daughters, maybe all of twelve, she just zeroed in on me. She was saying to herself, “This guy is in trouble! He needs a friend.” So she immediately went over and made a friend, purposed to make a friend in me. I don’t know all of what that takes but you know when somebody comes to you and wants to be your friend. It is instantaneous; it’s a universal communication. So she versed it, “I know you are having trouble.” She touched my hand and said, “It’s not as bad as you might think. Breakfast is still breakfast. You are going to have cereal and you won’t have to ‘die.’ “ Those kind of things, because she’s been there before. She has actually witnessed other people coming in from the States and having a hard time and she knew how to be a friend to me. And she was indeed.

One of things that they do there at the YWAM base, especially to all newcomers . . . they try to get you to eat these fertilized chicken eggs. When you look at them you can still see the feathers forming, whatever. They told us everybody eats these things and try to make you do it too. I’m saying to myself, “You want to make me sick to my stomach? This is a good way to start.” Ruddy’s daughter looked at me and smiled and said, “Mr. Scott, we here at the base don’t really do this. (It is a prank.) This is crazy; don’t do it.”

Everybody else volunteered and they looked at me and said, “What about you, Peter?” “Nope, I’m going by my friend’s advice.” No, I didn’t do it. Isn’t that interesting? A friend is there to go alongside, to comfort, yes, to give advice but there is even more than that. There is a communication that happens that gives you the strength to go through places, even wisdom to know and understand things that are going on around you. Whereas by yourself you are completely and totally lost, even if you know where you are and have a map. But with a friend, you are *Found*. You can be at a place you are afraid of and if your friend is there, it is not so bad. Isn’t that right?!

Well, what a Friend we have in Jesus. Remember the song, “*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.*” This song is a conversation that takes place. This old Methodist hymn back in the early 1800’s only says part of who God is and who He is to us as a friend. He isn’t someone we can just go to and say, “By the way, Jesus, here’s my list today. . .” That is what that song was about. But He is much more than that. A friend is more than that, someone who is by your side and as a friend *not always in agreement with you*. You might say, “He’s not my friend because he’s not agreeing with me. So long, goodbye. This friendship is over.” How many of us have seen that happen? That is pretty shallow friendship. But a friendship should be there saying, “You know, Peter, the road you are going down is a dangerous road. Be careful.” Or, “The road you are going down isn’t a good road at all. You need to change your course. The road you are going down, you are going to need a lot more help than you might think. “ So forth and so on. And so, a friend isn’t one who just answers your prayers and gives you what you want and tells you that everything is going to be okay, patting you on the back, putting his arms around you. No, he is going to be the one who is going to be there regardless and *remains a friend*, regardless.

What does Jesus say that a friend is? He says, “I’m it. *Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15). In that same chapter He talks about being a *friend* versus being a *servant*. He is calling us to be His friend. He is *our* friend but He is calling us to be *His* friend. This is a little tough because God is still God but there is a process going on in that He wants you to *know Him as a Friend*. He wants you to know Him as creator and all the majesty that is written in Revelations. We know how fearsome and awesome is our God. But He is also calling us to be a friend.

Paraphrasing John 15:15, “*By the way, guys, I don’t call you as slaves or servants anymore because a servant doesn’t know his master’s business.*” Now a friend then, by Jesus’ definition, knows his master’s business. How do you know someone’s business, what they are involved in? Not just what they do. Not just mimicking what they are doing. “I’m doing good, just follow Me, mimick Me.” No, a true friend knows everything about the master’s business of being good.

Jesus was good. Jesus was righteous. The business cannot be just a mimick of what Jesus is and does, but it has to be about Jesus Himself, about His person, about who God is. What are His intents and the purposes of His heart? Listen to this! ***It is about the intent and the purposes of God's heart.*** Only a friend can know the intent and the purposes of God's heart. No one else. You cannot just be an angel and somehow graduate and know the intent and purposes of God's heart. You can't. You have to be called friend. And you are. And you are. Wow, what a privilege to have this friendship/relationship. Jesus says instead, *"I have called you friends."* He not only calls them friends He is going to *relate* to them as friends. *"For everything I have learned from My father,"* (How is He going to be a friend to them this time? Is He going to die for them? No, He's not talking about that.) *"... for everything I have learned from the Father I made known to you,"* giving you the intent and the purposes of God's heart. He is not going to withhold that from you; knowing the heart and intent of God is part of the friendship of Jesus Christ. That is part of who He is in you, part of who He wants you to be. He doesn't want you just to do the law; rather, He wants you to know the intent and purposes of the law from the very beginning to the very end, when there will be no need for law at all.

Jesus and the Father are One. Isn't that true, does everybody believe that? There is only One God. He went to the Father so He could send us the Holy Spirit, the Triune God. What a wonderful thing that we can follow the Holy Spirit within us and know Jesus as our Friend, and to know the Father. How does Jesus ask us to pray? *"Our Father, . . ."* Thomas said, *"Show us the Father. Who is He? Where is He?"* Jesus said to Thomas, *"What! Have I been so long with you that you don't know who I am?"* Jesus identifies Himself as the Father. He identifies Himself as the Holy Spirit. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, our Friend who calls to us and calls us friends and IS our Friend, who will be counseling us on what to do and what not to do. Who will be putting His arm around us to comfort and to teach, who will be there regardless if we have gone down the wrong path or not. He is a wonderful treasure, a Friendship, one which I will never go without.

When you meet a true friend in this world other than Jesus, you know who they are. My wife is one of them for me. It is really nice. It is nice having a wife/husband relationship too, but, friendship is really a very important part of that process. So, when she smiles that friendly smile, it does more than just warm my heart. I know that it is true and genuine friendship. She's not walking away, no matter what. Isn't that wonderful? Jesus isn't walking away from you. He's going to give you friends.

I saw an old photo and I put it on Facebook, a picture of the Dayspring baseball team. Dayspring was a church we started after a group of us were sent out from the Fountain of Life to the New Paltz area, way back in the 1980's. Around the second year we were together we felt that there were more than nine people and we should join the church league and have a softball team. We did that. I looked at that picture of our team yesterday and thought, *"Wow, these were all my friends."* We went out on that field and we were friends! They were willing to do anything for you, encourage you in any way possible. It wasn't just about winning. It was about friendship. Some of them saw the picture years later and all they could say was, *"Wow. Wow."* I know what they are thinking. There was a friendship there that has never been lost. Apostle Paul said in Romans that a lot of things, even knowledge, will pass away, but friendship isn't one of them. This is an awesome thing. We are *"stuck"* with each other. This is a good thing. Amen.

Well how did Jesus relate to His disciples? Never mind how Jesus relates to you now, let's talk about how He related to His disciples then. He related to Peter in a different way than how He related to everyone else. He related to each one individually. He just doesn't make a blanket statement to them all equally. He individualizes His personality and His communication with each of them as persons. And so, when Peter came up and answered Jesus, *"You know. You are the Christ."* Jesus said, *"I'm going to name you 'the Rock,' because upon this revelation the church is going to be built."* Later on Peter told the Lord not to go the way of cross and Jesus says to him, *"Get away from Me, Satan!"* He is still Peter's friend. . . He is never going to desert Peter. Peter is going to desert Him, but He will never desert Peter. Jesus is his Friend. Peter at the transfiguration. Peter running to the tomb.

How about John? John always refers to himself as the one whom Jesus loved. Do you think he had a relationship with the Lord, a loving relationship? He sure did; his friendship was an affectionate one. What about Matthew, the converted tax-collector? Do you think He related to him like He did to Peter or John? No, I don't think so. But read the gospel of Matthew; it is awesome. What about James, the brother of Jesus, a very practical teacher, understanding the word of God and Christianity and what it means to us, living and working it out. Jesus had a relationship with him as well. What about Thomas the doubter? As much as Thomas wanted to doubt, Jesus never doubted in Thomas. Andrew? Nathan? These guys didn't write a lot to us or perhaps nothing at all, but they were good brothers. They were good friends to Jesus. They were with Him.

Paul, the apostle? How do you think Jesus related to him? He related to him as a Friend. He brought him from a place of murdering and deceit and self-righteousness to a place where he could write most of the books of the New Testament.

What about Jesus' mom? How did He relate to her? *"Mom, My time has not yet come. Mom, can you wait a little bit?"* *"No, turn the water into wine."* There was a friendship there. How about Mary and Martha? He did not leave anybody out. **Jesus is our Friend.** Because of the friendship we can come right to the throne of grace, we can come to our Father God, we can come to the majesty in the heavens and say, "Lord, I need help." Can't we? Our government seems to be shutting down at this moment. There is nothing we can rely upon except the love of God. His friendship will never fail.

What about myself? Let me give you my personal take, my advice. First of all, my relationship with the Lord here is real. If it isn't, I'm going to a church where it is. You can have the church government right, you can have everything right, but if the friendship of Christ isn't right, I'm going someplace where it is. One thing that I continually ask the Lord for is wisdom. Oftentimes He will give me that wisdom in times when it's not very pleasant to go through. The Lord might say, *"You know, you need to give this person a break. You need to give this person grace."* I think to myself the person doesn't need grace; he needs judgment. The Lord says, *"Later on you'll see why you need to do that."* And I did and I gave that person grace. And then that person turned on me in a combative attitude and made things really bad for me. But the Lord said, *"It's still true."* "What's still true, Lord?" *"It is still true you have to give grace. You still don't have remorse for that person do you?"* "No, I don't" He may have turned and bit the hand I was feeding him with but that doesn't make any difference since I know the will and intent and the purposes of God's heart, that He is putting in me, that is to give the grace and mercy of God out to anybody who asks for it. Even if they cannot give it back. Even if they don't intend to give it back. Even if there is deceit. That's a hard one to take. But listen, He has called you friends for a purpose. It isn't just so you can do it; it is so you can encourage others. He has called you friends for Himself, for you, and for those around you.

So, I ask the Lord for wisdom and advice all the time regarding the circumstances I find myself in. I'm not going there unless He is with me. How about you? Are you willing to go without Him? You are crazy if you are. I find myself finding Him. I find that word "finding" interesting. He is playing a game of Hide and Seek with us. Am I speaking reality! He says, *"Seek and you will find."* He isn't going to make Himself obvious all the time. Sometimes He will but when He makes Himself obvious He almost follows that up with, *"I need to make it obvious to you because you are really in trouble at the moment."* That's when we have to seek Him. He says, *"You see you can do a lot better than you think you are. You can do this. You can find Me in circumstances. You can find Me in the creation. Look arounds you."*

Isaiah 41:10, *"Fear not, for I am with you; . . ."* Why don't we fear; because Jesus is with us, His friendship. He is almighty God. *". . . Be not dismayed, for I am your God,"* Your Friend, your God. Look about you. Your Friend owns all this stuff. He made it. He keeps it together.

I'm teaching my new students about blood (hematology). I'm saying, "Your body does all this even if you don't know about it or understand it. There are a lot of things it is doing." Just so, Jesus holds the universe together by the word of His power. From the beginning to the end, it is Jesus. Without Him there is nothing at all.

*"... I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

So I find Him. One of the reasons I take photographs, one of the reasons I go out with my telescope, one of the reasons that I just look around, one of the reasons that I love you, is that I find Jesus there! When our sister Helen comes up and shares I don't just see Helen, I see Jesus there. Isn't that true? Thank you, Helen. When I fail, she is succeeding. Her words permeate through the junk around my life and says, "Peter, wake up! Why are you afraid?" Listen, people to what she is saying to you. Listen to Jesus in her circumstance. Amen. Thank you, Lord, for Helen.

In my friendship with Jesus, I ask Him for advice, but I'm asking for advice *through you*, and His counsel *through you*. So I'll ask Him in prayer to hear from Him personally, but I often know He is going to answer me personally even through the Word or from your voice, or from your testimony, or from your circumstances. And I say to myself, "Yes, drink it in. This is God." I find Him without fail in the worship and praise that we have on Sunday. I find Him without fail in the worship and the praise we have in our home-group meetings, and when we are together in any excuse. One of the things I had to do last night, since we were on vacation and hadn't had church fellowship for a long time, I told my wife Cheryl, "I'm dying here! I need to worship the Lord." So we did. Good stuff.

And so, how did Jesus relate to His disciples? He said, *"I'm not going to just treat you as servants or slaves. I'm going to die for you but I am also going to teach you as friends and I'm going to show you God's heart."*

Let's look at Matthew chapter seven in a way you have never seen it before. Chances are that when you read this in the past, it was all about you and how God relates to you and how you relate to God. However there is something else that is going on here. Throughout this whole chapter, it is about how you should relate to *other people*. Your friendship with Christ isn't just for you and for Christ, but it is for those around you. And you *need* to be giving it away, not losing it because when you give it away you will gain it back even more. It is more blessed to give than to just receive. If you are just receiving life from Christ and not doing anything with it, it is not a blessing at all. It is like the Dead Sea, going nowhere. But if you do something with it and God will show you how to do what He wants you to do, then it will bring life in you and everything around you. You will be able to see things better. You will be able to go through the all the circumstances, and the next one and the next one. "Aren't I done? Aren't I 'toast' yet?" No. There are more things coming. I personally don't want to hear that. I want to be retired now. It doesn't matter whether you are retired or not. It's not over till it's over.

Matthew chapter seven begins with judging. What is it about friendship and primarily how we judge one another? Jesus says, *"Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you judge you will be judged. With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye (your friend) but do not consider the plank in your own eye."* So you minister to each other in friendship in a different way than you might think. *"How can you say to your brother, let me remove the speck from your eye and look a plank is in your own eye. You hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye then you will see clearly (And you will. Removing the plank is not just for you. Removing the plank is for your friend.), you will be able to remove the speck from your brother's eye."* Wow. Immediately the thought comes that I should never judge anybody. No. That's not really what He is saying about judgment as here He is actually talking about an **attitude** of judgment, an intent and purpose. So if someone shows me a man or woman who has a political preference that I don't like, I'm already judging them. There is an attitude and a process going on. Do you think that is true? Yeah.

This word of the Lord isn't about just judging what is right or wrong nor judging things correctly, because He says in the next verse, *"Do not give what is holy to dogs or caste your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces."* So He is asking you knowing that you already know how to discern and judge what is a dog, how to judge what is a pearl, how to judge what is a swine and all of that type of thing. You know it is too easy to know about those kinds of things, isn't it? That is not where our hearts should come from, but He is saying, *"You are to take your life not to just anybody, but rather for those I am calling you to be friends."*

*Sometimes it will be the unlovely, for sure. But for these you will see something in their hearts that is not a dog. Everyone else may say to cast these away. Everyone else may say they are not worth anything, yet you will see a pearl instead!*" However, what will cause you to see that pearl, but the grace and mercy of God, nothing else. God will open your eyes by the Holy Spirit and let you see things that even these unlovelies do not know or see about themselves. I have people say to me, "How do you know that! I don't know that myself." I said, "Because the Holy Spirit showed that to me." You and I are called to know the purposes and will of God, *specifically and individually* in peoples' hearts.

Here is the one we have referred to, asking and seeking God. It says, "Ask and it will be given to you." Really?! "Okay, Lord, I'd like to win the Lotto." (That's not going to happen.) "Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you." So what is He saying? It has to be an attitude in our heart in this friendship/relationship that Jesus has with His disciples that is one of *seeking out and being with*. If Brian is my friend but I never go to him then I'm not really being the kind of friend that I should be.

*"To everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."* So we see that this has to be an **aggressive posture**. "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?" This is a different slant on what He has just said. He is talking about how we ask the Lord. Sometimes we have to be persistent. It is not going to happen right away. ". . . will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil (meaning not good), know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

Now that is great. This is a "trust scripture." You need to always trust God. When He gives you something and you know it is from God and you believe it is, then trust Him! We used to use this scripture for people who wanted the baptism in the Holy Spirit. When they would say, "How do I know I'm not being baptized with the tongues of devils and not of angels at all?" Well this last scripture is a good anecdote to that. God is not going to give you the tongues of devils; He is going to give you the tongues of angels. He is giving you the Spirit of Life not one of death just like a good Father would.

But here is the key verse in this passage and how this whole chapter changed for me, "Therefore . . ." Therefore what? Therefore your judging is different. Therefore you are knocking and seeking. "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this fulfills the Law and the Prophets."

God is saying to me, "There are people begging for your friendship, Peter." There are people begging for *your* friendship also. You may not be able to get to first base with them the first time you are at bat. But try again! You have stuff to give them. Remember what this twelve-year-old kid gave me on the "Dump." It wasn't scripture. It wasn't, "I know all you need to know." It was her friendship . . . That's all! Give away the friendship the Lord has given to you in that same manner and purpose of your heart, whatever it takes and reach out to them! And they are going to be blessed and so will you. You might say, "Well, not me. I'm looking out for #1." "Enter by the narrow gate," Jesus says. *Broad is the way that leads to destruction*". Everybody else can go the other way but NOT you. What is He teaching? The purposes and intent of the heart of the Father. What is He teaching His disciples? He is teaching them because He's their friend. He's not just giving them laws, He's giving them the *intent* of the law, because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life. There are few who find it. Never mind how other people interpret that scripture. Just read it the way it is.

The intents and purposes of the Father. Wow, what an honor and a privilege to know that! We have no right to know that in ourselves, right?! Do we have a right to know that? Only in Christ and by His Covenant. Without the New Testament Covenant, we have no right to know the purposes of God. But now, we certainly have the right to know His heart. He created us for this very purpose even from Genesis.

I think it comical that He turned to Adam and Eve and said, "Be fruitful and multiply." Like He had to tell them. Sometimes however He needs to tell us even the most obvious things. He needs to proclaim it to us. It is obvious to us that friendship is good. It is obvious to us that we need friendship but *He is **proclaiming** to us, "If I am your Friend, so therefore, YOU need to be somebody's friend too!"*

The Lord continues in this scripture. Okay, we aren't talking about others anymore. Now you need to beware of false prophets. These you need to judge. ". . . *who come to you in sheep's clothing but **inwardly** (that is the key word), they are ravenous wolves.*" He is going to make you a discerner of the spirit within men and women. You will be able to know if their inward heart is right or not and whether God is in the process of rescuing them or not. You will know. You will know because He says you will. "*Beware.*" This means you have the ability. They will come in sheep's clothing. They'll look pretty good on the outside but you will see on the inside they are ravenous wolves. This may sound crazy, but He says you will know them by their outcome, by the fruit. Well inwardly, how can you know an outcome? For instance, if someone wants to murder me in their heart, how would I know that until after I am murdered?

Isn't it strange and interesting that He would make that kind of jump or leap. But it really isn't that far, since that which is the intent and purposes of man's heart, He has given you eyes to see. There are outcomes you are going to see (inwardly) even before they manifest themselves outwardly. You are going to see the outcome in a spiritual way.

Jesus says, "*Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit (good intent-good fruit), but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit (black cannot be white), nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (judgment).*" You see we are talking about Eternity and the ability to look into the eternity that is in men's and women's hearts. Therefore He is giving you this privilege to look not only into the intent and purposes of His heart, but also into the intent and purposes of men's hearts. "*Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*"

Whoa, seriously? You might think that this is just a job for the elders of the church. No . . . He isn't just talking to His disciples at his time. He is talking now to the whole church. That discernment is for you. That privilege is for you to see Eternity in men's hearts.

Then He says, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven . . .*" This is a good place to be, the kingdom of heaven, don't you think? But just because you say the right words isn't going to make it for you. ". . . *but he who does the will (the purposes and intent) of My Father in heaven.*" Not just a list of laws, but he who does the will and purposes and intent of the Father.

"*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you (You missed it. I never was your Friend. You weren't listening to Me. I never knew you.); depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness (craziness, not understanding)!'"*

"*Because I gave you the intent and the purposes of Father's heart and you refused to see it. You traded that for a list of laws. You traded that for physical comfort, circumstances that would be just right for you. You traded it all so you're out. So long. Goodbye, because I'm out after a friendship for you, for Me and for those around you.*" (Paraphrased)

To make His point of view more clear He says, "*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine . . .*" Really, Lord, You use the word "sayings?" When you see Him teach His friends the intents and purposes of God's heart, how can we call them *just* sayings. These sayings of the Lord, these parables, these ideas were demonstrating God the Father! Well if you hear them and you don't do anything about it . . . but if you do something about it, He says, "*I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock . . .*" What is a rock? Something that cannot move. ". . . *and the rain descended, the floods came (that's circumstances, tribulations, things that are bad), and the winds blew and beat on*

*that house (an assault), and yet it did not fall for it was founded on the rock.*" The Rock is Christ Jesus, our Friend. He will **never** be moved. Amen.

What won't He be moved from? He won't be moved from being your Friend. He won't be moved! He is not going anywhere! He will be right here with you, with the purposes and intents of God's heart. *"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, . . ."* Another words just an idea. Ideas are good but ideas ought to be take shape and form. *" . . . will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended (trials come, the same ones), the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house (an assault); and it fell. And great was its fall."* Now why was it a great fall? Because there is nothing that can stand the assault of the enemy when he turns his weapons against you unless you are in Christ Jesus. We need to be hidden with Him. Be hidden with Him. The best way I know how to be hidden with Him is in His Friendship, His worship and praise and mercy, and His lovingkindness. All of that comes about through the blood of Christ, that New Covenant that He made with us. Greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his friends. We are His friends.

Jesus stood away from the pulpit at this point to go talk another time, to go spend time with His Father and some private time with His disciples. The people around Him were pretty amazed. It says, *"And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings (of the intent and purposes of the Father), that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having **authority**, and not as the scribes (who didn't have the authority)."* How do you know and have the authority that Jesus had? The answer to that is what we've been talking about, knowing the heart, the intent and purposes of the Father. There was only One who had that kind of authority. Well you might say that the Father just gave Him "carte blanche." Or that He had that authority because He was the Son of God. You could say all kinds of things but that authority originated and remains and is a part of that relationship which Jesus had with His Father which He refused to break at any time! Even when He was dying on the Cross, He called out to His Father. He never stopped calling. His Father never stopped responding.

So Jesus came and we sing that song, *"What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear."* Oh what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer in that relationship. It isn't a prayer that you have memorized. You might start there but it is a prayer and a conversation you have *continually* with Him, day to day, circumstance to circumstance, through the times that are good and the times they are not so good.

So here I am starting something new, teaching college and asking myself what I'm going to teach these students. This is too stressful for me. I don't need to do this. I don't need the money now that I'm of retirement age. So I'm stressing out. Do you ever do that? It is called self-stress. Circumstances don't stress you out; you stress yourself out. I do that a lot, but Jesus says, *"Don't do that. Don't be anxious. Just look about you. I'm your God. I will strengthen and help you. I will uphold you with My righteousness."* Wow. So He brings to my remembrance in Philippians, *"Think on the good things."* Do you ever kind of "purpose" to do God's will? I do that a lot and it is a good thing to do, however, it doesn't always work! Sorry. "I purpose to sleep tonight and I am not going to stress about this!" Now I wake up and it's two o'clock in the morning. I say, okay I'll think about the good things, the photograph I just took. I think about the creation of God. That was great. I think about a relationship with my wife or something like these things. But this particular night the Lord said, *"No. I want you to think about another relationship tonight."* I thought of my granddaughter, Lilian, for instance and think of her smile. Peace came.

Things change in your life, so true. My wife Cheryl said to me, "You know you have really changed." "What?" "You just went to a college, a university and you parked your car in a student parking lot and you had Minnie Mouse's car seat in the back. You would have never done that before!" She is right; I never, never would have. But now it is a status symbol to me! Now it symbolized the love that the Lord has given to me for this child and my other grandchildren as well. It symbolizes something the Lord is pouring my life out and into. So I began to think about her smile and went back to sleep. That was good.



That is because it is the word of God not just because I purposed in myself to do it. Self-purposing may be part of the solution; it might have to start there, but it is God Himself who has to intervene lest we forget. God Himself has to intervene in our lives and He does. Testimony after testimony. Amen. It is true.

So today, I thank the Lord for His Friendship. And for yours. You have no idea when I walked into the men's meeting the other morning and I saw my friends! I saw those who God has called me to build together with and I saw my friends. They didn't all come and embrace me but they did in their hearts. I say to myself, "Awww, this is good stuff, good stuff." A few months ago I asked the Lord what He was doing in our church (Fountain of Life). The Lord spoke to me and said, "*Are you kidding?! I'm building friends. I'm building those you can trust and rely upon. Do you want to go somewhere else?*" No, I don't. I repent. I really liked the singing and the songs in large cathedrals that I visited in London, but I'd rather be with my friends. I'd rather worship with them any day. I'd rather be with you. Amen.

Let's stand together in unity of that friendship that Jesus has given and pray:

*Thank You, Jesus. Lord, I know that these are not just my thoughts. These are Your thoughts, because they came from the very word that You were preaching and teaching your disciples. You poured Your life into them and it wasn't just a list of things they should do and how they should behave, but rather why and how they should behave. Lord, they may not have succeeded in understanding, walking it out as new disciples. But You were always with them. You didn't leave them as orphans to somehow walk it out on their own and hope the church would remain. But You poured out the Holy Spirit in abundance, more than we need! We just need to ask for it. And that Holy Spirit isn't just in worship. The Holy Spirit isn't just in the Word but it is also in the word of friendship that we have with and to one another. This church doesn't begin at 9:30 am on a Sunday morning. This church doesn't begin whenever we want it to begin. It begins when (at any time) we come together and fellowship with each other, because You have called us to be friends. I thank You, indeed, for these children of mine, these men and women, these brothers and sisters, these fathers and mothers who I call my friend. Amen. Thank You, Lord.*