



"A man should keep his friendship in constant repair."
—Samuel Johnson

28-Mar-14

Passover and Friends United in Truth (Part One)

With [Passover](#) just a few weeks away, Christians must be more focused on [Jesus Christ](#) and the various aspects of our relationship with Him than at any other time of the year. We should be driven by an increasing sense of urgency to be prepared for the annual opportunity given only to those who have been buried with Him in [baptism](#) and raised to newness of life.

Through the apostle Paul, [God](#) has made certain that all of the members of the Body of Christ recognize, not only the necessity of participation in this solemn memorialization of Christ's death, but also the careful preparation that is a key to proper participation. Each individual must scrupulously examine himself while recognizing the inestimable cost of what has been done on his behalf.

God has clearly shown, as recorded I Corinthians 11, what He expects from all the participants leading up to that evening. Paul, in his letter to the church at Corinth writes:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and after he had given thanks he broke it and said, "This is my body,

which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me." For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

For this reason, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself first, and in this way let him eat the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks without careful regard for the body eats and drinks judgment against himself. That is why many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few are dead. But if we examined ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with [the world](#). ([1 Corinthians 11: 23-32](#), *New English Translation Bible*)

God does not intend for us to go through this examination process with a sense of self-condemnation. Rather, as the Greek word for "examine" indicates, God intends it to be an approval process of making an honest evaluation of how we are relating to the One who has paid the price for our lives, the One to whom we owe allegiance in our every thought and action. The other side of the coin is that, without proper preparation for the Passover, we bring condemning judgment on ourselves for not undergoing the preparation process with all our hearts.

God has given us an assortment of tools to handle this process, and probably one of the best is to go through Jesus' own words spoken in the last 24 hours of His human life. Of the 21 chapters in John's gospel, five of them (13-17), almost a quarter of the book, are detailed instructions from that one day, which we can use as a guide for our self-examination leading to the Passover. Jesus spoke these words either directly to His disciples or indirectly, as in His prayer to His Father just before He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane to be tried and crucified.

We could focus on various points from these words to guide our personal examination as we approach that most solemn evening, but we will concentrate on one important and telling piece of our relationship with Him, as seen in our relationships with one another.

In [John 15:11-19](#), in the middle of His last crucial directions to His chosen disciples on the night before He offered Himself for our sins, Jesus teaches:

These things I have spoken to you, that My [joy](#) may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you [love](#) one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 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. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Of all the instructions Jesus gave to us on that night, this may be the most encouraging, and at the same time, among the most difficult for us to realize in our blossoming relationships within the church. God has ordained that we produce fruit engendered by a loving relationship among *the friends of God* in a world of those who are, through blindness, His enemies.

Out of the entire world, we have been chosen now to develop that friendship, not with the world, but with those placed in the love and friendship of the Body of Christ! This relationship, unique among the brethren separated from the world to Christ, is a critical part of the judgment God is talking about in [I Corinthians 11:31](#). This should be a key element of our evaluation as we strive to keep the Passover in a worthy manner.

Are we really living up to the ordained responsibilities of the friends of God within our relationships with one another? [Proverbs 18:24](#) reads, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." The deep meaning of this verse in Hebrew gets lost in the English translation. At first glance, it seems to say merely that to be a friend we need to be friendly, but a closer examination reveals it to be a clear warning to those God has separated from this world through Christ.

The exact translation of this verse has spawned quite a bit of controversy, but it is not difficult to see a clear tie between this verse and what Jesus tells those who are in a proper relationship with Him, as recorded in John 15. Those in a relationship with Him must have the same relationship with one another, a relationship that binds to Christ and separates from the world! We will see this in more detail in Part Two.

- Mark Schindler

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Passover and Hope](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The Passover is a beacon of hope in an otherwise hopeless milieu. The book of Job, initially a seeming extended treatise of hopelessness, turns into Job's speculation about a possible resurrection, realizing from his prior experience that God enjoys the company of men and wants men to be like Him. Hope can be defined as "confident, enduring expectation," and the heart of hope is faith in God. The strength of our hope depends upon how deeply we know God. Abraham, after 50 years of experience trusting God, knew He would provide despite the visible circumstances. Jesus provided hope to His disciples at His last Passover, exuding confidence and hope, despite His knowledge of what was immediately ahead. In Hebrews, we are counseled to emulate Jesus, who endured due to the joy before Him. We can have rock-solid hope that God will provide despite the intensity of our trials.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Godly Friendship: A Priceless Commodity](#)

by David F. Maas

We tend to take our friendships for granted, but they are important parts of our Christian lives. David Maas explains how we should cultivate and appreciate our friendships, for they are a necessary tool in growing in godliness.

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