



"The measure of our love for others can largely be determined by the frequency and earnestness of our prayers for them."
—A.W. Pink

04-Apr-14

Passover and Friends United in Truth (Part Two)

Part One ended with considering [Proverbs 18:24](#)—"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother"—in relation to the meaning of [Passover](#) and Christ's giving of His life for His friends, those who have been called out of this world. This verse, however, has a long history of debate over its meaning.

For instance, many have written, including E.W. Bullinger in *The Companion Bible*, that its first Hebrew word has been improperly understood to be *ish* ("a man") rather than *yesh*, meaning "there is (or are)." The following word, "friends," comes from the Hebrew word *rea*, which can mean "brother," "companion," "friend," "fellow," or "neighbor." It suggests many kinds of common relationships, even the rapport of those involved in a common cause, like a political movement.

But the most controversial part of this verse comes with the next series of words—"shows himself to be friendly." The Hebrew literally reads, "who breaks in pieces"! This translation seems very strange until we read it in context and consider this verse beside Jesus' proclamation to His disciples in John 15. Here are some translations of the verse's first half:

- *The Companion Bible*: "There are friends that rend us. . . ."
- *The Amplified Bible*: "A friend of all [the world](#) will prove himself a bad friend. . . ."
- *The New International Version*: "A man of many friends may come to ruin. . . ."
- *The American Standard Version*: "He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction. . . ."
- *The New Living Translation*: "There are friends who destroy each other. . . ."
- *The English Standard Version*: "A man of many companions may come to ruin. . . ."
- James Moffatt's *New Translation*: "There are friends who only bring you loss. . . ."

In his commentary, Adam Clarke embellishes on this kind of "friendship":

There is a kind of [artificial] friendship in the world, that to show one's self friendly in it, is very expensive, and in every way utterly unprofitable: it is maintained by expensive parties, feasts, etc., where the table groans with dainties, and where the conversation is either jejune and insipid, or calumnious; backbiting, talebearing, and scandal, being the general topics of the different squads in company.

The last half of [Proverbs 18:24](#) reads, ". . . but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." This "friend" is a different word, *ahab*, than the one earlier in the verse. The same word appears in both [II Chronicles 20:7](#) and [Isaiah 41:8](#) describing Abraham's relationship with [God](#). It is translated as "friend(s)" nine times but as a form of "love" 200 times! The word implies a sense of binding loyalty and affection.

God then adds another word, *dabeq*, translated as "sticks closer," to emphasize this important relationship. It means "cleaving," "joining," "clinging," "adhering." The verse, then, speaks of a relationship that is so close it produces an *intense* affection and unifying loyalty! Commentator Albert Barnes describes this kind of friend: "What we prize is the one whose [love](#) is stronger and purer even than all ties of kindred." Such a friend is one who, Adam Clarke adds, ". . . continues closely united to his friend, even in the most disastrous circumstances."

There are various kinds of friendships, and we should try, as Jesus did, to be friendly and kind in our interactions with others in the world. But if we really desire to have a friendship of binding affection with Christ, then we need to be examining our relationships with one another. Our unique bond of affection and friendship with Him, which sets us apart from the world, is the glue that binds us together with one another.

This is the friendship described in the second half of [Proverbs 18:24](#), one that takes so much work but gives us the opportunity to have proper relationships in all other aspects of our lives. Christ and the truth draw us together as friends, but it takes strenuous effort to make it grow. We can only produce real fruit if we are bound to one another through Christ, and even then, our relationships require a great deal of work and self-examination.

The apostle James, in chapters 2 and 4 of his epistle, notes that God calls many different kinds of people into His church, and they all have different predispositions for what satisfies their needs for friendship. He goes to great lengths to show that our friendships within the Family of God must go beyond our own self-interests, and we must take pains not only to be the true friend of God but true friends of one another.

God has opened our minds to the true nature of the bond of friendship, so it is now our responsibility to submit ourselves in love to Him and one another according to His Word. We often fall into the trap of judging one another based on our own predispositions for friendship. God tells us, though, that only by working to sacrifice in submission to one another will we develop the real and lasting friendship unique to God's Family.

As we near Passover, consider: Have we spent enough time examining whether our relationship with Christ is mirrored in our relationships with one another? How well are we living up to the standard of real friendship in Christ? Is our love and friendship for one another as great as we think they are with our Savior? If not, then we have not truly reached the standard of friendship that Jesus calls for in John 15.

In [Mark 3:31-35](#), He tells exactly what He thinks about us and how we need to think of each other:

Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

Christ clearly states the will of the Father in [John 15:12](#): "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." How diligently are we examining our efforts to do this within the Body of Christ, strengthening the bond of real friendship with one another, and therefore with [Jesus Christ](#)? As He also says, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" ([John 13:35](#)).

- Mark Schindler

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Love's Importance and Source](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The world really hasn't the foggiest idea of what love really is. Of all God's spiritual gifts, love is the preserving agent preventing any of the other gifts

such as prophecy, knowledge, or tongues to become corrupted. Love, an attribute of God Almighty, needs to be the driving force of everything we do. Without love, some normally positive attributes like drive, courage, and determination become brittle and self-seeking. God is the sole source of love; mankind by nature does not have it. It is only by knowing God that we can have this love. Love can be described as a cycle, which God initiates. As we give it back to Him, He gives more to us because we are growing and our love must be perfected. Love is not feeling but action. As God loves us, He expects us to reciprocate back to Him and out to our fellowman, and by so doing we become credible witnesses for God.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Learning to Love One Another](#)

by Geoff Preston

We may look around the church of God and wonder why so many are not being healed. Geoff Preston, suffering a chronic illness himself, uses his experiences to assure us that God is working out even these matters for our good.

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