

# Jesus is Your Friend

Fred R. Coulter—March 7, 2009

The time of need is a friend indeed. So I want to talk about being friends of Jesus and Jesus being *our* friend, especially in relationship to the Passover.

Now let's look first about friends and friendship. Let's, first of all, read a warning in James the fourth chapter. And James 4 becomes particularly important, especially in the days we are living in today. And you see as we are going through the Bible, let's also understand it contains some of the oldest writings in the world; but they are up to date because they are inspired by the mind of God and they fit in any situation that we are in. So that's why when you read the Bible, like if you were in trouble you read the Psalms and you get encouragement out of the Psalms, because all of those Psalms were written by David and the other ones who wrote them. And many of them were in times when they were in trouble and distress and the enemy was against them, and so forth. So we read how God intervened to help them.

So likewise, here in James 4:1 we have an answer to the carnality in the world. "What is the cause of quarrels and fighting among you? Is it not mainly from your own lusts that are warring within your members?" Because we still have to fight and overcome lusts, don't we? And today we can see this manifested in this way: that is, people are taught today to be narcissistic. That is totally inward to self and that destroys friendships. If you ever go in an airport, you see everyone going around plugged into something. Now hopefully they are plugged into listening to the Bible, but most of them aren't. And when you pull up alongside a car and it's kind of expanding with the boom of the car, you know they are not. But all of this is a reflection of finding pleasure and selfishness and serving the self. So it comes from the lust within.

Now then, James brings it out even more. "You lust and have not... [precisely what we see today] ...you kill and are jealous and you are not able to obtain. You fight and quarrel, but you still do not have because you do not ask... [and then they say, 'okay, I'll ask'] ...then you ask, but you do not receive, because you ask with evil motives that you may consume it on your own lusts" (vs 1-3).

Now James pulled no punches. Now this was the half-brother of Jesus. So he understood what he was talking about here. "You adulterers and adulteresses!.... [sounds like this ought to fit San Francisco quite well and other places] ...Don't you know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God?" (v 4). Meaning that you can make

yourself an enemy of God rather than Him being your friend if you make a friendship with the world.

Now that doesn't mean you don't have friends in the world. That doesn't mean you don't interface with people in the world, do business and things like that. But when you do, you are to be a light in the world for them not to go lock-stock-and-barrel with the way they think, the way they talk, and the way they curse and swear, and all the things that the world does.

"Therefore, whoever desires to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The spirit that dwells in us lusts with envy; but He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, "God sets Himself against the proud and He gives grace to the humble"'.... [And we'll see what kind of grace and we'll see what kind of relationship here as we go on.] ...Therefore submit yourselves to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (vs 5-8).

Now if there is any one thing that we cannot be is double-minded, because it's kind of like straddling a crack in the road. Maybe you could see a little kid doing this, putting one foot on one side of the crack and walking down and see how far he can go. And he doesn't realize the crack is getting wider and wider when he goes down. And all of a sudden he slips and falls. Well, it's the same way if you are double-minded. You can't think like the world and truly be faithful to God. Now we have to understand *how* the world thinks so we know the way it is operating, but we are not to think like the world. The way we are to think is with the Spirit of God, with the Word of God, and that is how our minds are to operate. Now with this then comes a blessing.

We're going to spend a little bit of time in the book of Proverbs, so let's go back to Proverbs and let's begin in Proverbs 22:10 (pg 787). because this ties in to James 4 very nicely. "Cast out the scorner and fighting shall go out. Yea, quarreling and abuse shall cease. He who loves pureness of heart, on whose lips is grace, the king shall be his friend" (vs 10-11).

Now think about that in our relationship between us. We are to be the friends of Christ, and Christ Who is King. And if we have this kind of behavior:

- pureness of heart,
- growing,

- changing,
- overcoming,
- asking God to cleanse us

(I'll cover a little more of that as we lead up to Passover time), then the King is our friend. Isn't that something? I hope we will understand this: that God has placed before us, as Peter said, 'the greatest and most precious promises.' and relationship that we can have as human beings with God. And so we're going to concentrate on that.

Let's come down to v 17: "Bow down your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge; for it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; if all of them are ready on your lips, so that your trust may be in the LORD. I have made them known to you this day, even to you. Have I not written to you excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make you to know the sureness of the words of truth, so you might bring back the words of truth to those who send you?" (vs 17-21).

Isn't that something? Tie that in with everything that we know about the Word of God and you know when you go through the Proverbs, try and expand them out a little bit more in your thinking as to:

- How does it apply to Christ?
- How does it apply to the Church?
- How does it apply to the brethren?
- How does it apply to me?

Then you will be surprised how much you will learn out of it.

We know that Abraham was called a friend of God. Why was he called a friend of God? ***Because he loved God, he obeyed God, he served God, and he believed in Him.*** So all of those things, likewise, will then apply to us.

Now let's look at some admonitions concerning friends. Proverbs 17:17 (pg 784): "A friend loves at all times..."—even in times of difficulty and distress. It's the same way with God. If we are a friend of God, He loves us even if we make mistakes, as long as we repent. Isn't that something? But a friend can always be depended upon; never let you down. Now I know those who have had friends who have gotten into drugs and alcohol and some really bad things; and they still loved them; they still tracked them; and they still went after them to try and help them. And they did so because they were waiting for the moment that when they were in so much trouble they really asked for help; likewise, with God with us. When we get into situations that are intractable, we don't know the way out, we don't know what's going on, we

don't know how it's going to come about, we can always turn to God and He will help us.

So "...a friend loves at all times... [and notice, because friends and brothers and sisters in the Church go hand in glove.] ...And a brother is born for adversity" (v 17). This is something to remember. If someone really gets in trouble, the trouble will probably condemn them enough. If you have to, we'll see a little later on about the 'wounds of friend are better than the deceitful kisses of an enemy.' You may have to give them some strong admonition for them to turn around. That very well may be so, but you can help other people in their difficulties, especially those you know, because that's why we're here. "A brother is born for adversity."

And then what happens? You *mutually help each other*. Correct? And then what else happens? *You begin to pray for each other*. You begin to be concerned with each other and then the friendship is strengthened and made better.

Proverbs 27:4: "Wrath is cruel and anger is overwhelming, but who is able to stand before jealousy?" Now these are all the things that destroy a friendship. You don't want to get involved in that. There's another Proverb that says, 'A soft answer turns away wrath.' And sometimes a soft answer or a soft question blunts the problem and difficulty that someone may be in, and will open the door where you can help them. Always being angry and always correcting—either your children or other people—or ministers the congregation, leads to disaster. Because it's just like here, it's heavy to bear; overwhelming.

Verse 5: "Open rebuke is better than secret love.... [So there's a time for open rebuke, just as Solomon wrote in Ecc.: 'There's a time for many aspects of life.'] ...Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (v 5-6). Now you can think of the epitome of the kissing of a friend. who was that? *Judas*. And what did Jesus say? *Friend*. And that's used in the negative sense in this case. 'Friend, why did you come here?' But nevertheless it showed Jesus' attitude to it; and remember, that was the one that Jesus called to do that very thing. Now don't ask me what Judas' fate is; I'm not the judge of Judas. We'll have to wait for God's judgment on that.

Come down to v 10: "Your own friend and your father's friend, do not forsake them... [In other words, always keep your friendship connected. Now let's apply that to Christ and God. Always keep your relationship with God connected, and that's always connected with:

- prayer, Bible Study,

- Sabbath services,
- Holy Days,
- fellowship, like we had today.

Fellowship like we had today is the kind of fellowship that God wants us to have. It's encouraging, it's uplifting, it is inspiring and it helps strengthen us, too, doesn't it? Isn't it nice when you know that you have a friend that's going to stand by you in *all* circumstances? *Yes! Yes, indeed!* And doesn't that help you have a better attitude? And especially when you're really, really down and out and miserable; and you have whatever thing may be done, whatever degree of how bad or terrible it may have been, and to have a friend **to** say, 'Look, it's going to be all right. Look, here's what you can do. I'm with you. I'm for you, but you've got to do it yourself.' That will encourage them. Rather than say, 'Oh, why, look at you! Man, you must have done something really wrong!' Or in the case of attending church, you go crosswise with the hierarchical minister, especially if you're fishing, (for all of you that know that joke), you're disfellowshipped! And generally not for Scriptural grounds.

You know, what I found out through the years? I found out this: if you treat those with problems with love and respect, they will either change or they will continue in the way they are going and they will leave of their own accord. Now you have to put up with a little guff to work through that; but if we are all strong in Christ, we can put up with a little bit of that. We're not going to put up with heresy and things like that. I'm talking mainly just personal problems here; and help people through them. If they don't want to be helped, generally they end up leaving and you don't have to disfellowship them. I think I've only had to ask one man not to attend church in all the years we have been going with Christian Biblical; because that is how we've handled them.

"...Nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity." (v 10) Sometimes you just need to keep things to yourself; work it through. If you see someone who's gone through a calamity and having difficulty, encourage them. Don't go up and say, 'Hey, what's wrong? You've got that look on your face. There must be something wrong.' Instead of that you can go up to them, and you can give them a hug and say, 'I'm praying for you.' Nothing else. You don't have to say anything else. That's the best thing you can do as a friend—and pray for them; let them know.

"My son, be wise and make my heart glad, so that I may answer him who reproaches me. A prudent *man* foresees evil *and* hides himself, *but* the simple pass on *and* are punished. Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger and hold it in

pledge *when* he is surety for a strange woman... [don't want too many of those cases] ...He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him" (vs 11-14). So if you're a friend, don't be obnoxious and say, 'Hey, Joe, what's going on over there?' 'Hey, man, it's 5:30 in the morning. What are you doing?' Don't want anything like that.

Verse 17: "As iron sharpens iron..." This is where good fellowship comes in. This is where good discussion comes in, that you can have a discussion concerning things without being, how shall we say—immovable, recalcitrant. Now certain things you need to be immovable and recalcitrant about that, and that's concerning the way of God, of course. But you can be discussing and having back and forth and v 17 says: "As iron sharpens iron... [In other words, those kind of conversations and communications are going to benefit both of you. And you will both come away better for it.] ...So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (v 17). So that helps you understand. We have to have things uplifting. We have to have things that are good, we have to have things that are right, we have to have things that will help us do that. So this becomes important in our friendship relationship with each other, and of course, Christ also does that with us. Doesn't He? *He helps us overcome sin*, which makes us sharper with Him and He gives us His Spirit and that is also (how shall we say) a perpetual, self-feeding mechanism that works good.

Now let's look at some ne'er-do-well friends, because there are some of those. Proverbs 19:4—friends who are not really friends. "Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend." Someone has lots of money, lot of people around there, 'Oh, yes, Oh, yes, Oh, yes.' A lot of people around; but when he loses all of his money, where do they go! Like cockroaches in the night when the light is turned on; they are gone.

Verse 6: "Many will beg the favor of a ruler and every one *is* a friend to the man who gives gifts." What do you call the occupation of those people? *Lobbyists. Yes, absolutely!* See how the Bible is living and it applies today? *Yes, indeed, lobbyists. Con men, yes, indeed!* And they're finding out there were many Bernie Madoff's around during this thing. They are uncovering quite a few of them. But poor old Bernie, he's got to wear the crown, he's the king.

Now let's come to Proverbs 14:20. Again, ne'er-do-well friends. "The poor *man* is hated even by his own neighbor." Now you test this the next time you pull up to a traffic light and there's someone on the island out there, has a little sign, 'I'm homeless, I'm diabetic.' Now you don't know whether it's true or not, but you can look at some of

them and see that it is; and I know that I'm particularly touched when I see a veteran. 'I am a veteran, I'm homeless.' You look at him and he's really grubby and miserable. When I first looked at situations like that, your first reaction is: Oh, well, you know. You don't want to do anything, but if you really think about it; and I've often thought this: I have corrected my own attitude on it when I responded that way, and I've said, 'Fred, what if that is an angel and God is testing,? Do you really care?' So I generally give them something.

However, I did find out up in Fairfield they had a scam going, which was this: there were three different families that all got in an RV and they parked the RV behind *Denny's Restaurant* up in Fairfield. They would all go out to the corner where all the cars would come and they would have their children sitting there with them; and have various signs. They would change the signs and so forth. I think it was Belinda Davis that said, 'You really feel sorry for them. I felt sorry for them and then I checked them out a littler further.' She said, 'Why don't you check them out?' I said, 'How will I do that?' She said, 'If you see a big van behind *Denny's* and a couple of families in it and a family over here on the corner, that's the scam.' So you have to watch out for those. There's the difference.

Whenever there are rich people giving out money, they have a million friends. You know, 'I'm your fifth cousin, four times removed. I heard that you won the lotto. Don't you think you ought to share with your family?' 'But of course, here's a dollar.'

Let's look at some more serious things that separate friends and maybe you have had that happen to you. This puts you in a particularly difficult circumstance, doesn't it? Proverbs 16:27: "An ungodly man digs up evil, and his lips *are* like a burning fire. A perverse man causes fighting and a whisperer separates chief friends" (vs 27-28). Now both of those are applicable.

Have you ever been up against something where people have said things about you and something that you have done which was really nothing like they were spreading around? I have, you have. And then someone whom you trust, which means this: if you have a friend, a brother or sister, and he or she comes to you and confides to you some particularly difficult situation in their lives, you keep it locked up in here and zippers here, on your mouth. You do not talk about it. You do not go tell someone else, 'Oh, you know someone called so and so—did you know?' *No!* And if you're a minister or teacher or elder or someone who counsels people regularly, you keep that counsel private—just with you alone. Most of the time you don't even share that with your wife and sometimes

it is better not to, so she's not burdened down with an emotional baggage that she doesn't need to carry.

Why? *Because you are going to help the person work it out.* And everyone has to have someone; someone to talk to that they know, and that may even be beside your husband or wife, that he or she knows it's going to be just between them, period. It will never, never, never, never be let out. Let's apply this to Jesus. When we confess our sins to Jesus, now we can't hide anything, can we, because God is a heart-knowing God. Now if you go into the confessional to the Catholic priest, you can withhold whatever you want. I have yet, in talking with Catholics... I would ask them, 'Have you ever told the priest **every** thing you did?' *No*, but God knows.

Now, just for example, what if you confess your sins to Jesus, ask forgiveness through His name from the Father, and then you see a sign on *CNN* listing all your sins? You wouldn't believe in Jesus at all any more, would you? Why? Because, "...a whisperer separates chief friends" (Prov.16:28). And Jesus wants you as His friend and you want Him as your friend. So that's how we are to treat each other.

Now Proverbs 17:9. Here is what we are to do and here is what Christ does. Now we'll apply this a little bit more in the New Testament here in just a minute. "He who covers a transgression seeks love..." Now that doesn't mean you sort of gloss over sins and transgressions and things, but it means this: if you help a person come to repentance and you know about the sin and transgression, you're seeking love for that individual. You're not giving them license to continue in the sin. So there has to be a reciprocal on both parts.

- The one who is sinning,
- The one who is a confidant.

But you help them with it. You encourage them with it. You help them overcome. You can encourage them to overcome. What if they have a drinking problem? What if they have a drug problem?

And I'll tell you one of the hardest things to overcome is meth addiction. Meth is the toughest. Even on rehabilitating programs with meth addicts, they generally have to go through the program three times before they really make it. You have to have patience and understanding. You don't condone what they do, but you work with them and help them. And you also help lay down some straight guidelines and help them internalize those straight guidelines, so when the temptation comes along they can say no. Now that's how you help cover a sin or transgression. You're seeking love.

Now notice the opposite of that: "...But he who repeats a matter alienates friends" (v 9). Let's see how we are to handle this.

Let's come to Matthew 18:11. Now here is how friends and brethren are to work out their own problems. "For the Son of Man has come to save those who are lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, *does he* not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and search for the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than the nine-nine that did not go astray. Likewise, it is not *the* will of your Father Who *is* in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (vs 11-14).

Now then it shows our responsibility and this also shows how we should handle problems and disputes in the Church, because if we are going to be brethren and friends, we have to know how to be brethren and friends at all times. So v 15: "*So* then, if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault between you and him alone..." Don't go to the minister. Don't use this excuse, and I've had people do this: they called someone for advice before they went to see the person. And the one they called for the advice then happened to have flapping lips, and it got all around before the one who asked counsel on the problem had a chance to get to the one that he had the problem with!

So if you need any counseling, pray about it and ask God to lead you in what you need to do; because Christ expects this to be confidential, between you and the person. And this is what is known in the business world as *solving the problem at the lowest level possible*. Right? *Between each other is the lowest level possible*. That's how Christ wants it done. Face-to-face.

Now what does this do when you get face-to-face? Well, then you can find out, was it really a sin, was it a misunderstanding, did you misread what the person had said. So you go face-to-face, and you work it out. "...If he's willing to hear you, you have gained your brother"(v 15). Problem over, issue dead and you go on.

Now another thing that's important in this is when that happens, you've also got to pray for *forgetfulness*; lest you have a grudge that you carry down in the future. So when there is forgiveness and the problem is solved and it's been settled, you go on as if it never happened.

Before we get to v 16, what does this make us do? Several things:

1. We are to be responsible for solving the problems ourselves. That's important.
2. You will see very clearly, the minister is not involved.

3. It makes you be able to think in terms of how to solve the problem with the Word of God.

That becomes important and it makes you use the Spirit of God and the Word of God to be applied on a one-to-one level. And don't you think that works best? *Yes, indeed*. If Jesus said to do it, that's the best way to do it, isn't it?

There are consequences otherwise. (v 16) "But if he will not listen... [And that, of course, is if it is a serious enough problem and you don't want to be a trouble maker by creating a small problem, and making what we've always called a *mountain-out-of-molehill*. So you have to make a judgment in that. The next step is:] ...But if he will not listen, take with you one or two others, so that in *the* mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (v 16).

Now when it gets to that point, it's a pretty serious situation, isn't it? And when that happens, then take two or three with you, that you know also have wisdom—not two or three with you that **agree** with you; one or two others, so that there are three—but so that you get it right and you come to a right solution for it. Again, the minister is not involved.

Now it says, v 17: "And if he fails to listen to them, tell *it* to the church." Now the church would be like this group here; together assembled we are a church. The church is not a building, church is not a corporation, church is the assembly of the people of God. Now if it gets to this point, then it is a pretty heavy difficulty, isn't it?

Now the minister only gets involved to this extent: that he becomes (how shall we say) the facilitator to make sure that everybody gets involved. Now I'll guarantee you one thing, knowing that this third step is something that needs to be done if the problem is not solved, 99.9% of all problems will be solved with step one and step two. So that's why Christ did it that way.

Let's continue on here, v 17: "But if he fails to listen to them, tell *it* to the church. But if he also fails to listen to the church, let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector.... [Now here's something else that is important to understand. This applies in several ways] ...Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth will have already been bound in heaven" (v 17-18).

Now that's a key thing, because first before you look at how you are going to solve it, you must understand what the Word of God has already said on it, because you are not going to create something new under the sun. It's not that whatever you bind, God is going to bind it, because you bound it. No, the other way around. God has already given the

direction in His Word on how to solve it, and when you solve it and bind, it's already been bound in heaven. So guess what that does to the pope's authority? Takes it all away, doesn't it? *Yes*.

(go to track #2)

Let's come to Matthew 18:19—a very key important verse and it shows how we are to really be mature Christians in conducting our lives and handling difficulties and problems. “Again I say to you that if two of you on earth shall agree concerning any matter... [now that's anything that you wish to request. In other words, asking someone to pray for you, request God] ...it shall be done for them by My Father, Who is in heaven... [Now that tells you how close is the connection between you and the Father—instantaneous. So don't feel you're alone, you're not.] ...For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in *the* midst of them” ( ) Now that's something isn't it? That's quite a powerful thing. So God not only wants you to solve your problems at the lowest level, but God wants to be with you at your level through His Spirit. That's why this becomes so important.

God has not called us just to improve our lives, which they should. God has not called us to join the Church or gather together in a congregation, which we should. He has called us to be His sons and daughters and to help rule with Christ in the Kingdom of God. Now, as such then, the way He views us is, not only are we the friends of Jesus, we are the sons and daughters of God and we are very important to Him because the future of the world is depending upon us. So wherever there are two or three gathered and you're hearing the Word of God, you are studying the Word of God, maybe you are praying together, maybe you are talking about things that concern your lives together, maybe you are solving problems together, **Christ is there**. Because, we're to have the mind of Christ, and with His Spirit that's how we have the mind of Christ. So this becomes important. Notice how mature that we have to be in it. We don't have to be left out, we don't have to feel something like, ‘Oh, where is God?’ He's right there with the next instant prayer that you may have.

Now then, we're confronted with the next one which is patience. “Then Peter came to Him *and* said, ‘Lord... [after hearing all of this, he said, ‘woo, how am I going to handle this?'] ...how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?... [Now that's pretty patient trying, isn't it, seven times? So He puts it on the level of how God deals with us. So before I read Jesus' answer I want to ask you, how many times have you asked Jesus to forgive your sins through His sacrifice? *Every day*, right? Notice what He says

here in v 22] ...Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven’” (vs 21-22). Four hundred and ninety times. That requires:

- Patience,
- Endurance,
- Understanding,
- Working together with the individual.

All of those things are involved.

God does not want us to go around and hold hands just because someone feels bad. Now we may have to on occasion; but what we need to do is help each other, to encourage each other on how to overcome the problem. For in the way of elders and ministers in counseling, we are to teach people how to overcome their problems. I have found this, **this** is the most effective way to do it as a minister: teach the brethren how to run their own lives and you won't have to. That's different from a corporate minister. Corporate minister is this way: here is the minister; he's the chief honcho, and you don't do anything unless you counsel with him. And so you wear the poor guy out with problems and decisions you should be making yourself, so he can help you with your spiritual problems. So there we have that.

Now, let's apply this to Jesus Christ. Let's take all these things about a friend:

- Christ is not a ne'er-do-well friend.
- Christ will not repeat a confidence.
- Christ will not be a talebearer.
- Christ with His love and with His sacrifice covers all sin.

So you see how all of these things apply to Jesus Christ.

Let's come here to John 10 and let's see how Jesus viewed it Himself and then we will also see how this ties in to part of the renewing of the New Covenant at Passover time. John 10:1: “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and robber.” Now why? What did Jesus say? *He said, ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’* Correct? ‘And no one comes to the Father except through Me.’ Can't be any other way. All Muslims, pay attention. Allah is not there. I even saw a special on a Muslim who, after reading one verse; you know what the verse was that turned him away from being a Muslim? ‘Love each other as I have loved you.’ And he said that's the opposite of what Allah teaches.

Now granted he got into Protestantism, but Protestantism is a great improvement over being a Muslim. He emigrated to the United States and he now lives in San Diego and attends a small fundamentalist church. I hope he goes on the

internet. I would like to talk to that man personally, with Habib with me. There is only *one way*.

“But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (vs 2-3). Just put in your notes there, Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by *the Spirit of God*, these are *the sons of God*.” And I’ll tell you one thing that is true for sure that always works; when you ask in your prayers for Christ to lead you, He will. He will answer your prayers and He will help establish your thoughts. Now you can’t have it any better than that. I mean, where in the world would you find a friend like that! He doesn’t want your earthly possessions, He wants you. He doesn’t want to manipulate you and make you a robot, He loves you and wants you to make the choices to do what is right.

Here’s what—calls us by names. And he brings the sheep out. “When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them... [now we’ll see this in a little bit. He was the forerunner.] ...and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (v 4). That’s very interesting, isn’t it? I’ve never heard the voice of Jesus, but I’ve heard the voice of Jesus when reading the Bible; because the Bible, especially the Gospels, are the Words of Christ to us. And as I wrote in the commentary about the New Testament, that the New Testament, especially the Gospels, is a very fantastic thing that God has done. And that goes back to the time when the Israelites, when God was giving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, thundered the Ten Commandments. It was the dark clouds, the whirlwind, the thunder, the lightning and I imagine it was almost like volcanic stuff coming down off the top of Mt. Sinai and the people looked up there and said, ‘Oh, Moses, you speak to us, don’t let God speak to us lest we die.’

So that’s why Christ came. That’s why Moses said, ‘God will raise up a prophet unto you like Me and him you will hear.’ So the truth is, the Gospels are this: if you wanted to sit down with Jesus one-to-one and have a conversation with Him, what would He tell you? *What’s contained in the Gospels*. You don’t have to wait as one man said, ‘Well, I’ll keep the Sabbath when God comes down and tells me to keep it.’ Are you sure you want that? ***He already did.***

Now here’s why the Church is scattered. “They will never follow a stranger, for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers” (v 5). And what do strangers bring? ***False doctrine***. That’s why doctrine becomes important. What did Isaiah say? ‘If they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them.’ Flee from them.

“Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. Therefore, Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them’” (vs 6-8). Very interesting, because this is the way God works. He lets all the counterfeits come first. All the pagan gods came out of Babylon and whatever nation, before Jesus came. Now we know that’s the way God works; because what happened with the confrontation with Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal? He said, ‘You’re many. You go first.’ So Jesus could come last and show by His life and His works and His miracles and His Word and what He was doing that He was the one and not the other ones. Like with the prophets of Baal: show yourself first, cut yourself, jump up and down. Like Elijah said, ‘Maybe he’s asleep, maybe he’s traveling.’

Verse 9: “I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and shall find pasture.” That’s why Jesus said to Peter, ‘Feed My sheep.’ That’s why when brethren come to services or gather on the Sabbath, they are to be fed the Word of God. The Bible is your pasture.

“The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life, and have it more abundantly” (v 10). Well, of course, more abundant life doesn’t come now in the flesh, that comes at the resurrection. You can think: what’s it going to be like to be a spirit being? You know, *we’re all going to live in New Jerusalem*. What is your part in New Jerusalem going to look like? *We’re all going to have new garments*, new clothes to wear. What are they going to be like? And *they have to be composed of spirit*, because we’ll be spirit beings. Because not all spirit is Holy Spirit; some spirit makes and is composed of things that are made of spirit. That’s another whole sermon. We won’t get into that.

“I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep... [And He has set the standard for all those that He has called to the ministry.] ...But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the shepherd*, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them” (vs 11-12). That one verse summarizes our recent church experience in the last thirty years. Right? *Yes*. Exactly.

“Now the hireling flees because he is a hireling and he has no concern for the sheep” (v 13). And unfortunately, in some cases, some ministers quit one church at the end of one pay period to begin another church so they can begin a new pay period

and not miss a payday. How's that for sacrifice? How's that for dedication? Always remember this, you don't have to worry about them. Their day of judgment is coming. And even if you think what you think should be their judgment, that's not what the judgment is that God is going to bring. And He's going to bring in a day suddenly upon them when they won't know it; and they will be totally naked, if I could use the term, and have no solution but to repent and turn to God. So leave it in God's hands.

Now let's continue on in v 14: "I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are* Mine and am known of those who *are* Mine. Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay My life down for the sheep" (vs 14-15). ***'A friend is born for adversity.'*** We are Jesus' friends; He lays His life down.

Verse 16: "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring those also, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock *and* one Shepherd." Obviously the fullness of that is going to be at the resurrection. I have to tell you, the more I think about the resurrection, the greater I think that's going to be. Just think, the angels carrying you up to meet Christ on the Sea of Glass and you look at Him and say, 'Wooo, it really happened, didn't it!' *Yes, and Jesus sent me here to take you up there. What's your name? Oh, that's your name, wonderful.* And He says, 'I've been watching over you for years and you didn't know it.'

Then you get up there on the Sea of Glass and here are all the resurrected saints up there and what a glorious time that's going to be. If you think the celebration after a Super Bowl is something, wait until the celebration of the resurrection! That is going to be some excitement! Maybe we can look down and say, 'There's the world. Look at those armies over there.' *Yeah, we're going to go down and fight here pretty quick*, but:

- you have to *marry Christ*,
- you have your *new clothing*,
- you have to *have your harps*,
- you have to *learn how to sing*,
- you have to *learn how to ride your horse*.

'Well, what is this, LORD?' *That's your horse.* That's going to be great.

Verse 17 is a key verse: "On account of this, the Father loves Me: because I lay down My life, that I may receive it back again.... [He doesn't *take* it back, because He is dead in the grave. He has to *receive* it back. And that's the correct translation of the Greek.] ...No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.... [Now that's why Jesus says He loves you and a friend loves at all times.] ...I have authority to lay it down and authority to receive it

back again. This commandment I received from My Father" (vs 17-18).

Now if you don't have the sermon on *The Covenant Between God the Father and Jesus Christ*, you can get it online. I think it's Hebrews #29, somewhere right in there. Because God is a Covenant God and whenever something new is in God's plan, there is a covenant that goes with that; and that covenant had to be irrevocable between the one Who became God the Father and the one of Elohim Who became the Son. That's why He had authority to receive it back, by commandment; that implies a covenant. Now we are in covenant with God and we are going to renew the New Covenant in just a few weeks. That's the covenant to eternal life and you will get that message in the next mailing that you will receive.

Now let's go to John 15. For the Passover ceremony we read the words of the New Covenant, and the words of the New Covenant include John 14, 15, 16, and 17. And within the words of the New Covenant, it describes our relationship with Jesus Christ, with God the Father, the receiving of the Holy Spirit, the things we will suffer and go through, the blessings we will receive from the Father, and to know that the Father Himself loves us and then it ends with the beautiful chapter, John 17, that we will be one with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Now let's read John 15, because it gets down to that Jesus is our friend. Never forget that. 'And a friend was born for adversity.' And the friend loves always. John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit" (vs 1-2). Pruning. And everyone who is a vineyard master knows when to prune, how to prune, where to prune, and as you view a vineyard and a vine when it first starts out, the vine actually is a cut vine from another plant which is put into the ground and then men still don't know how it does it. But you water it and it starts growing roots. Just like Jesus said: men plant seed, watch day and night and it sprouts, but they don't know how it does, and to this day, they still don't. Isn't that something? You take a seed, and water, and soil. You put in the seed, put water on it, a little later—here's a plant. How did it do that? *Don't know*, but God put it in there. He's the vine, we're the branches. Now every year, what does the vinedresser do? the Husbandman? Now some translations translate *husbandman* as *farmer*. Poor translation. *Husbandman* means that you are married to the property and a husband takes care of the plant, just like a husband takes care of his wife; to nurture, to provide for, and all of that sort of thing. So, the



Father is the husbandman; so Christ is the vine, we are the branches.

Verse 3: “You are all ready clean through the word that I have spoken to you.” This means that every year at the Passover when we partake of the Passover, we renew the New Covenant and we are clean before God. Not that we aren’t cleansed every day through our repentance, and so forth. I’ll talk about the kind of repentance and what it really does for us internally, mentally, and this sort of thing.

Key: “Dwell in Me, and I in you.... [That’s through the Spirit of God.] ...As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can you bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me... [Notice, actively dwelling in Christ. That’s why our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ is so important, because They want to be actively involved in our lives and we be attached to Them just like a branch is to a vine.] ...I am the vine, *and you are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing” (vs 4-5).

That’s why we have to prepare and let Christ open the door. But:

- If we don’t *prepare*, why should He open the door?
- If we don’t *seek*, why should we receive?
- If we don’t *knock*, why would He open?

So it all goes together, v 6: “If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire and they are burned. If you dwell in Me... [here’s part of the covenant. Now notice, God’s part is irrevocable. It has been done. The only question mark is us, because we are not yet perfected.] ...If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you” (vs 6-7). Maybe not exactly in the way that you think. Maybe not exactly in the circumstances that you expected, but it will come to pass; and at the time that God wants it to come to pass. There’ll be times when God will also say no. Accept it.

“In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples” (v 8). Now that applies to us today. Think of this: think of what it’s going to be like for all the prophets and those who did the writings, and for Moses, for all the apostles, when God tells them at the resurrection, ‘Look at the fruit that was produced from the writings that I had you write.’ And I am sure they are going to say, ‘Ahh, God, what a fantastic thing.’ The apostles were told to go to the ends of the earth

to preach. They never got there, but the Bibles are getting there. So their word is going.

“In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you. Live in My love” (vs 8-9). That’s the covenant that we are in with God the Father and Jesus Christ. And this love is not an emotional, feel good love. Now there are emotions involved in it, and there are good feelings involved in it; but love requires all of the character of God that you keep His commandments, that you hold to what is true, that you believe what He says, etc. etc. “Live in My love.” So I have a little motto which is something like this:

- *Stand in grace.*
- *Walk in faith.*
- *Believe in hope.*
- *Live in love.*

Those four things. If you remember those, that will help you remember the Scriptures and draw close to God.

Verse 10: “If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love.” Notice the close relationship here. You can take the opposite; if you don’t live in His love, or if you don’t keep His commandments, you’re on the outside.

Verse 11: “These things I’ve spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and *that* your joy may be full. This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you” (vs 11-12). Brethren, that’s what we need toward each other in the Churches of God more than ever before. Loving each other. We’ve all got faults and mistakes. Hey, I do. I could innumerate them to you, but you wouldn’t want to hear them, and I don’t want to hear yours. You confess them to God.

Verse 13: “No one has greater love than this... [now I want you to think about this and study on this as we come up to Passover time] ...no one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends.... [Now He’s talking about Himself. Just think what He gave up to save His creation. And not only to save His creation, to say, ‘I want you to help Me save the rest of it.’] ...Lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends.... [And everything we read about what *a good friend is* in the Proverbs, applies. And everything we read about what a *ne’er-do-well friend is* or *an enemy of a friend, Christ is not.*] ...You are My friends, **if** you do whatever I command you” (vs 13-14). That’s why we need to know the Gospels, we need to know the Word of God. Why does He command us to do things? *For our own good*, because He loves us. There’s not one single commandment of God that is not for our

good, and He wants to spiritually elevate us to His level through our relationship, and prayer, and study and meditation, and all of this; and to eventually elevate us to His level to be His brothers and sisters.

“No longer do I call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends because I have made known to you all *the* things that I have heard from My Father” (v 15). Have we understanding of God’s plan that people have never had before? *Think of that*. Think of the meaning of the Holy Days, and how we need to treat that not only with love, hold it as precious; but be excited about it and think how great that is. Just like I’ve said, there are three things:

- The Sabbath, which tells you who God is.
- The Passover, which puts you in relationship with God.
- The Holy Days, which tells you what God is doing.

And I don’t know about you, but maybe you might want to do this: put on your little hat, get your little record-a-phone and a microphone, and go to the mall and say, ‘Could you tell me in one sentence what God is doing?’ No one could tell you. All right, so you do that. You go stand outside a Baptist church some morning and they’re coming out and say, ‘Well, I’m doing a survey. Can you tell me what God is doing on the earth?’ And they probably wouldn’t know. They get one or two facets of it right.

Go stand outside a mosque and say, ‘What is Allah really doing, if he is god?’ We have been let in on the greatest secret that the world has not known nor will know until the return of Christ; and we are going to participate in it ***because we are the friends of Jesus***.

Now notice this, let’s read v 16: “You yourselves did not choose me, but I have personally chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go *forth* and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; so that whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He may give you.... [Now how great and wide open and no end to those promises. That’s something.] ...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” (vs 16-18). Don’t worry about it, don’t give any concern about it.

Let’s come over here to John 16:23: “And in that day you shall ask Me nothing.... [This is why we say, ‘Our Father Who is in heaven.’ Yes, we pray to Jesus, thank Him for His sacrifice, thank Him for being the Head of the Church, ask Him to lead and guide us, grant us of His mind and so forth, but our prayers are directly to the Father, because we have

received the begetting of eternal life from God the Father] ...Truly, truly I tell you, whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Until this day, you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I’ve spoken to in allegories; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in allegories, but I will plainly disclose to you *the things* of the Father” (vs 23-25). That’s pretty heavy stuff, isn’t it? You think about the time before God called you and you knew of the Word of God and knew the plan of God. Then compare that with where you are today and thank God, because it’s disclosed of the Father.

“In that day, you shall ask in My name; and I do not tell you that I will beseech the Father for you... [notice v 27] ...For the Father Himself loves you, because you... [because you are a friend of Jesus] ...because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God” (vs 26-27).

Now those are some fantastic words. So when we come to the time now of taking the Passover, let’s remember all the things concerning it and let’s ask God to help us love Him more, draw closer to Him more, and I’ll leave you with one verse about Jesus being our Friend.

Let’s come to Hebrews 13:5 (pg 1,216): “Do not *allow the* love of money to influence your behavior, *but be* satisfied with what you have... [because God is able to provide whatever we need] ...for He said... [now I want you to take this verse if you come to a really low point, if you come to a dead end in your life, and you’re searching and reaching out for Christ] ...for He said, ‘In no way will I ever leave you; no—**I will never forsake you in any way....** [Guarantees you with that He:

1. will in ***no way*** leave you,
2. will ***never*** leave you,
3. will ***never*** forsake you in any way.

That’s a guarantee. So Paul says here, “So then, let us boldly say, ‘*The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?*’” (vs 5-6).

So as we leave here and we go out, and tonight we’re ***hit with*** the news of the world, don’t worry about what’s happening in the world; just be concerned, keep yourself out of the way, don’t get yourself exposed, but remember:

- Jesus is your Friend.
- Jesus will help you.
- Jesus is there.
- The Father is there,
- They love you.

Remember that as Solomon said, ‘Two are strong, but a three-fold cord cannot be broken.’ So if it is you, God the Father, and Jesus Christ. And as we

were discussing: Ropes are wound together in threes; a three-fold cord cannot be broken, because Jesus is your Friend and your Helper.

Scriptural References:

- 1) James 4:1-8
- 2) Proverbs 22:10-11, 17-21
- 3) Proverbs 17: 17
- 4) Proverbs 27: 4-6, 10-14, 17
- 5) Proverbs 19: 4, 6
- 6) Proverbs 14: 20
- 7) Proverbs 16:27-28
- 8) Proverbs 17:9
- 9) Matthew 18: 11-22
- 10) John 10: 1-18
- 11) John 15: 1-18
- 12) John 16: 23-27
- 13) Hebrews 13: 5-6

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Romans 8:14
- John 14-17

Also referenced:

- Sermons:
  - *Hebrews Series: The Covenant Between God the Father and Jesus Christ*
  - *Covenant of Eternal Life*

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