

A FRIEND OF GOD



It is very likely that most people who attend church with some regularity would consider themselves to be a friend of God. If questioned about it, some might reply: “Why else would I be in church?” Indeed, why else would we be in church but to be on good terms with God, to become His friend? However, is being a friend of God simply a matter of “being in church?” Our investigation will provide some interesting answers.

The very first thing we must consider is the following: “What does it take to be a friend of God?” Jesus gave us the best answer to this question when He said: “You are my friends **IF** you do whatever I command you.” (John 15:14) Therefore, the primary condition of friendship to Him (and therefore to the Father) is **obedience**.

But obedience that leads to friendship with God cannot even begin without faith toward God. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) The **Faith of the New Covenant** is the faith described in Romans 10:9-10: “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart** that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For **with the heart one believes** unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

And finally, before we look at someone in Scripture who exemplified both faith and obedience, a comment about another condition of friendship to God – the **Fear of the Lord**. In actuality, the fear of the Lord embodies many spiritual components:

- the beginning of knowledge (see Proverbs 1:7);
- the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10);
- riches and honor and life – by both humility and the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 22:4);
- and most importantly, hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13);
- and departure from evil (Proverbs 3:7 and 16:6).

Interestingly, one of the evidences of the fear of the Lord is obedience to God, as we will see.

ABRAHAM

Abraham was a man of the Old Testament who was called, by God Himself, a friend of God. Three references that indicate this close friendship may be found in:

1. 2 Chronicles 20:7
2. Isaiah 41:8
3. James 2:23

A study of Abraham reveals that he was strong in obedience, faith and the fear of the Lord- very deserving to be designated as God’s friend. The reference from above that carries the most weight is Isaiah 41:8, in which God Himself says, “But you, Israel, are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of **Abraham my friend**.”

Abraham's **obedience** is chronicled in many Scriptures, but only two will be cited.

1. **Genesis 12:1-3** describes God's calling on Abraham to leave his home country and family to travel to a country that God did not identify at the time of His calling. Abraham's response: "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him...." (Genesis 12:4)

2. **Genesis 22:1-4** is a description of God's test of Abraham in which He told Abraham to take Isaac (now 10 or 12 years old), the son of promise, to Moriah and ".....offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22:2) (Didn't God ever tell Abraham where he was going?) Anyway, what a thing for God to ask of Abraham!

But how did he respond? "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off." (Genesis 22:3-4) Sounds like a man of immediate, resolute obedience.

But what of Abraham's **faith?** When God promised Abraham that he would have innumerable descendants from his own body (Genesis 15:4-5), it is said of Abraham, "And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6) This was not casual faith but faith unto right-standing with God.

Looking now at Abraham's faith when he was tested in the matter of sacrificing Isaac, Hebrews 11:17-19 has some very interesting things to say: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."

Abraham's **fear of the Lord** is also well illustrated in his willingness to take the sacrifice of Isaac to its completion. Genesis 22:10-12 says it all as Abraham obeyed God's command to the very end: "And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' So he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for **now I know that you fear God**, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'"

It is common knowledge that friends often give evidence of their friendship for each other. These evidences are usually the sharing of secrets, both large and small, but all confidentially. God is also the kind of friend who will share His secrets with those who fear Him.

EVIDENCE OF GOD'S FRIENDSHIP WITH ABRAHAM

"The secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."
(Psalm 25:14)

God shared a very big secret with Abraham and even conversed with him about it. As God was investigating the truth or exaggeration of reports that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were committing grievous sin, He reflected on whether or not He should "hide from Abraham" what He was about to do. (Genesis 18:17) However, God's high regard for Abraham was enough to cause Him to share with Abraham His intention to destroy Sodom, a previously guarded secret.

God even allowed His friend Abraham to plea for the perpetuation of the city of Sodom for the survival of the righteous people living there (Genesis 18:23-33). It was an interesting dialogue between Abraham and God. Abraham asked if God would refrain from destroying the city if there were enough righteous people living in it. God promised not to destroy the city if 50 righteous were living there. Then 45 righteous, 40 righteous, 30 righteous, 20 righteous, and finally 10 righteous. God agreed to these numbers but discontinued the conversation at 10 righteous, obviously because there were less than 10 righteous people living in Sodom.

Although Abraham did not prevent the destruction of Sodom and its neighboring city of Gomorrah, God's thoughtfulness to allow a substantive two-way discussion about it demonstrates the depth of friendship God felt for Abraham.

CONCLUSION

Finally, is being a friend of God simply a matter of "being in church?" Although no one should ever be discouraged from "being in church," every believer needs to be subjected to the testing, sometimes rigorous, received outside the church. This is necessary in order to allow God to build in us Godly character and friendship to God.