

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Can God call you a friend?

(Jerry Fite)

Friendship has been defined as “*a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people.*” Having a friend is more than having an acquaintance, whom we might know casually and like on a limited basis. Friendship is cemented in time with “enduring affection” with someone we can “trust.” Friendship is a two-way street. It is more than one person claiming that another person is his or her friend. There are “name drop-pers” in this world seeking acceptance among those whom they admire. But do those who are admired esteem mere “professing friends” enough to call them their friend?

According to the Bible, friendship exists between God and man. God says so! David helps us know friendship from God’s perspective: “*The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant*” (Psalms 25:14). Newer translations translate the “*friendship*” word in this text as “*in secret,*” picturing God as giving His personal “*counsel*” to those as He manifests unto them His covenantal promises. When comparing the different translations, we readers can rise from the text knowing friendship with God is indeed special. It is a

close, intimate relationship we can have with our Creator through His revealed covenant.

In David’s time God had laid out His promises and demands in His covenant revealed through Moses. But what could David and people living under the Law of Moses bring to the relationship of friendship with God? David declares it is found in the man or woman who “*fears God*” (Psalm 25:12a). The one who humbly and respectfully reverences God is teachable: “*Him shall He instruct in the way that He (God) will choose*” (Psalms 25:12b). We today, having the promises of God in Christ before us in the Gospel, should “*with meekness receive the implanted word which is able to save your souls*” (James 1:25).

The reverential fear aspect of friendship with God must be coupled with “*obedience.*” God’s challenging test of Abraham was met with trusting obedience. Isaac was the son of God’s promise. But Abraham on this occasion trusted in God to fulfill His promise, even if it meant first placing his beloved son on an altar and killing him (Genesis 22:1, 9-10; cf. Hebrews 11:17-19). What God saw that day was proof that Abraham “*feared*” God. When God stilled Abraham’s

obedient outstretched hand, He declared, “*...now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me*” (Genesis 22:12).

Reverential fear plus obedience equals friendship with God. James puts it this way when reflecting on Abraham’s obedient faith “*...And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God*” (James 2:23).

Jesus highlights for us the close intimate relationship of friendship connected with obedience of faith. In addressing his apostles, Jesus said, “*Ye are my friends, if ye do the things I command you*” (John 15:14). Then, He adds in distinguishing friends from servants, “*...I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known unto you*” (John 15:15).

Here again, as with David, the intimacy of friendship is the close personal contact with God through the counsel of His revealed covenant and one’s obedience to God’s covenantal commands. God always fulfills His part in an everlasting friendship. Will you? Can God call you today His friend?