

Friend Or Foe?

John 15:13-15 - *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

Jesus tells His disciples that the greatest love a man can have is to lay down his life for his friends; He says of His disciples, *Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you*. These men must obey His commands to remain in His love. They must obey the covenant. Let's not forget—Jesus commanded them to obey the Law of Moses (Matthew 23:3), and to sell all of their possessions (Luke 14:33, Matthew 19:21).

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.
(John 15:10)

The Holy Spirit also, prior to Paul, was only given to those who *obey* Him:

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.
(Acts 5:32)

But the apostle Paul was not obeying Christ's commands. Paul was persecuting the followers of Christ. Paul was the first to receive grace from the Lord Jesus Christ, in spite of his works.

Paul writes of Christ in Romans 1:5,

...By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name...

Paul received grace and apostleship from Christ for the obedience of faith among the nations. The obedience of this faith is explained later in Romans 4:5,

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

To be obedient to Christ in this dispensation, one must know that he or she can do nothing to please God, but simply believe the gospel, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead the third day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

This does not mean that we *don't do* good works. Ephesians 2:10 states,

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Paul was the first to be saved by grace apart from his works in the dispensation of the grace of God, and was made the apostle to the Body of Christ. Paul himself states that he is the pattern for all who will be saved in this dispensation.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.
(1 Timothy 1:15-16)

Neither me, nor you, nor Paul, were Christ's "friends." We were not obedient to all things he commanded. Nor did we even believe.

Colossians 1:21-22 - *And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight...*

We were enemies of God.

Man hath no greater love than this—to lay down his life for his friends.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
(Romans 5:8)

Under Israel's covenants, Christ died for His friends, that is, those who kept the covenant. But Israel, having been concluded in unbelief (Romans 11:32), was set aside, and now God offers eternal life to all by faith in the gospel.

Under Israel's covenants, Christ died for His friends... but in the dispensation of grace, Christ died for His enemies.