

What a Friend!

One of the many names of Jesus is “Friend of sinners.” He is called that because of several things He did and said, as reported in the Gospels.

When He was criticized for going to the home of the hated tax collector, Zacchaeus, He replied, “...the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10) When



the Pharisees criticized Him for eating with sinners at the home of Matthew, another tax collector, He answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:12-13)

Think of Jesus, and what He means to **you**, personally.

He is God’s Son and, in fact, Jesus is God. He said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and every time He said “I am” (as in “I AM the Good Shepherd,” “I AM the bread of life,” “I AM the way, the truth, and the life,” and several more), He was calling himself God, the “I AM.” That’s one reason the Jews were so upset with Him.



Jesus came to earth as a man in order to save **you** from having to suffer the punishment for your sins, which are many (as is true for all of us). Thus Jesus is your Savior, if you have said yes to the amazing free gift of salvation. (And if you have not done that, what are you waiting for? Heaven is glorious light and joyful life forever in the presence of God. Hell is eternal agony and darkness, forever separated from God and peace and love. Why would you choose Hell?)

Also, He is your Lord, or at least He wants to be, and He is, if you will respect Him and obey Him. His orders are not many, and they’re pretty simple:

- **Love God wholeheartedly.**
- **Love your neighbor as yourself.**
- **Love one another.**

And, finally, Jesus is your friend. He said, “No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) The next verse ties friendship to lordship: “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:14)

Jesus actually did lay down His life for you. The “Friend of sinners” has made Himself your friend. As you receive that friendship, and as you make Him your Lord by obeying His commandments, you make yourself His friend.

And what a friend He is.

Long ago, God promised the Israelites that He would never leave them nor forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:6). The promise is repeated to Christians (Hebrews 13:5), and Jesus makes the same promise to believers, and to you: “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 27:20)

I want to make something very clear here. Many of God’s promises are conditional. Many times He said to the Israelites, if they would obey His commandments, they would continue to receive His blessings. But God’s love, the love of Jesus, is not conditional. He loves **you** all the time, completely and unconditionally, and He always will. You can’t earn His love, and you can’t stop it. And the friendship of Jesus is the same. It doesn’t depend on you. Your good behavior can’t increase it, and your wrong behavior can’t diminish it. Can you make the sun shine brighter, or dim its light? No. Neither can you increase or decrease the love and friendship that is the basis of the relationship that the Father and the Son have with you.

What you can change is how you respond to that love and friendship. Are you going to scorn it and refuse it; saying, “No, I don’t want it,” Are you going to ignore the Holy Spirit’s beckoning and just go your own way until you die? Or will you accept the gift and allow Jesus to be your Savior, your Lord, and your friend?

Here’s something else to think about. When you say “Yes” to God, He does more than save you. He

**What a FRIEND
we have in
JESUS**

actually makes you his adopted child. In ancient times the law was such that a natural child could be disowned by the father, but an adopted child could not be disowned.

When Jesus says to **you**, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” He means it.

So believe it. Receive it. Rejoice that God loves you enough to adopt you, forever. Rejoice that Jesus is your forever friend.

Which, actually, is just the first item of Good News. After that comes the best part—the transformation of your life.

Jesus said that, if you want to get into Heaven, you have to be born again. (John 3:3) Why is that? It's because every human being is born selfish. It's inherent in human nature, passed down to us from Adam and Eve, after the Fall. And selfishness is the root of every sin there is. So you have to be “born again,” made “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17), made over by water and the Spirit (John 3:5). If that does not happen, then it won't be God who keeps you out of Heaven, it will be you, yourself. That selfishness, that sin nature, cannot enter Heaven. Nothing evil can enter into eternal fellowship with God, with Jesus.

How good God is! What a Friend Jesus is! Not only did Jesus bear the punishment for your sins; God promises to guide you and change you through the process of becoming fit for your Heaven home.

The Bible says that King David was a man after God's own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) But David was also a serious sinner, having committed adultery and murder. Psalm 51 is believed to have been written by David after God called him to account for those sins. David wrote,

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin! ...
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

David “got it.” He admitted he was a sinner, and he knew that he was powerless to rescue himself—not only to be forgiven, but helped to become again the man God wanted him to be. So he said to God, “wash me” — clean away the filth of my sins, or in

other words, forgive me — and then, “give me a new heart.” The transformation from a person with a selfish, evil heart to a person with a new, loving, good heart is God's work. It's the work of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to cooperate. That's why the Bible says, *Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.* (Romans 8:14)

Getting in tune with God's plan for transformation is mainly a matter of attitude. Consider this from the Apostle Paul's pen:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

It's giving in, giving up, giving yourself to God, to do whatever He wants with you. As Jesus put it, it's denying yourself. As Paul put it, it's being buried with Christ so that you can be resurrected with Christ.

Jesus asks you to die to self, so that you can become suitable and able to live forever with Him, with God. But He also promises to be right with you, comforting you, guiding you, loving you, during the entire life-long process.

What a wonderful Friend we have—**you** have—in Jesus!

Blessings—

Brother Roland



*Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!
HALLELUJAH!*

**Comments and questions may be sent to Brother
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He Wipes My Tears Away

By inmate Keith Spriggs (2017)

As I think about the past, I feel a pain in my heart.

It's hard to put this into words. How do I start?

I feel I have done more things wrong than I have right,

But through it all, I have not given up the fight.

My past haunts me to this very day.

That's why I try always to get on my knees and pray.

But it's hard to have faith that all will be okay.

I cry out to God, asking why this life was mine.

He says, "Have faith in me, son. Everything will be fine."

It's hard to stay positive when you've made so many mistakes.

He says, "Hang in there, son. I know you have what it takes."

I don't know how He has faith in me when I don't have faith in myself.

I have not done what was required to keep up my spiritual health.

Sometime I feel like I will never get it together;

Like every day of my life will be filled with stormy weather.

I don't understand His love for me; all I can do is ask "Why?"

Then His presence falls upon me and I feel a tear burn my eye.

And there in His presence is where I want to stay!

And there in His presence, He wipes my tears away!

Jesus Is ...

There are many names for the Son of God. Here are some of them (A-G). Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

D E L I V E R E R O F Z I O N R I L F K C O S V D Z H Y X J P V R
I G T T Z F R I E N D O F S I N N E R S Q T R Y O X J R W B E Z A
T R O R B C Z T T A K U D P A P U S J W G L F Q G B Y O R T R G T
W E V O P V M S Y E E R U J G E X B E A U T Y O F H O L I N E S S
S A P L D C D S L K G A U R T E N D O G F O Y R O L G G C B Y M G
T T G L G M P E I A R M O F T H E L O R D X P K N I Y F R N C C N
N H U E D R A N J T W V K G C S Y I O M B R I D E G R O O M O E I
A I R S I S V S Y L E V O L R E H T E G O T L A S I R S J R T Q N
N G E N S X O U T C Q A H Z L H A L L I N A L L O L G S N E C J R
E H G U S R X O P E S I R A O T R A T S Y A D Q H L Y E R V Q Y O
V P E O O Y Y E B I R X G G I F T O F G O D V N C C R N T E H R M
O R T C L B Z T C R E A T O R O F A L L T H I N G S A T B R D Q T
C I F A V O B H H I I B X E I R Y T H G I M L A T L U H E L C D H
F E D A E L I G F O M L A B W O F X J V F E Q O G M M G L A A R G
O S R T R H S I A C Z E P U G O I X D H O V N O Q Z B I O S P E I
R T S Y O C W R T W M S X L D D M C A C U E D I I E N R V T T H R
E J R N F F A F B D E S I R E O F A L L N A T I O N S B E I A P B
H P A F A S F O O V F E H D U L N R W J T Z E D X F O H D N I E W
S E L V L T I H H N F D Y F D L K O P W O X A Z T G Q A S G N H O
I H P G L I R C T U R P Y M L W L P J W F F S E V Z M K O X O S W
L W H O T U S N I S F O R E V I G R O F L C I S G E N O N R F F L
B E A O H R T A O I G T C L M I D N N O I T A D N U O F C F S E O
A M A I I F B R E B E E B U I L D E R O F T H E T E M P L E A I R
T M N H N T O B R E N N U R E R O F L V E X W E E N J N I Q L H M
S A D Z G S R R N I L T B R E A D O F G O D N M X Y K C Y J V C W
E N O I S R N G O N N A W M D F U L L N E S S O F G O D H E A D L
H U M M V I C D V H M T F A I T H F U L O N E M G K H Y W R T Q A
S E E U T F T U J M C E T N E M G D U J F O R O T U C E X E I K Q
I L G E T A C O V D A N A E Y H C R M P A Z Y Y C W O K H S O S X
S Y A D F O T N E I C N A R U A G O F E Z T V L R L D Y G M N P T

Words:

ADVOCATE	BRIGHTNESS OF GLORY	ESTABLISHER OF COVENANTS
ALL IN ALL	BUILDER OF THE TEMPLE	ETERNAL GOD
ALMIGHTY	CAPTAIN OF SALVATION	EVERLASTING
ALPHA AND OMEGA	CHIEF SHEPHERD	EXECUTOR OF JUDGMENT
ALTOGETHER LOVELY	CHOSEN OF GOD	FAITHFUL ONE
AMEN	CHRIST	FIRSTBORN
ANCHOR OF HOPE	CORNERSTONE	FIRSTFRUITS
ANCIENT OF DAYS	CORN OF WHEAT	FORERUNNER
ARM OF THE LORD	COUNSELLOR	FORGIVER OF SINS
BALM OF GILEAD	CREATOR OF ALL THINGS	FOUNDATION
BEAUTY OF HOLINESS	DAYSPRING	FOUNT OF LIFE
BELOVED SON	DAYSTAR TO ARISE	FRIEND OF SINNERS
BLESSED POTENTATE	DELIVERER OF ZION	FULLNESS OF GODHEAD
BRANCH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS	DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS	GIFT OF GOD
BREAD OF GOD	DISSOLVER OF ALL THINGS	GLORY OF GOD
BRIDEGROOM	DOOR OF THE SHEEP	GOOD MASTER
BRIGHT MORNING STAR	EMMANUEL	GREAT HIGH PRIEST