

Friend of Sinners
January 15, 2013, Kichijouji Bible Study Meeting
Gotthold Beck

Luke

7:24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

7:25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

7:26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

7:27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

7:29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

7:31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

7:32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

7:33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

7:34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

7:35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

[1]

These are really impressive verses, aren't these? Enemies of Jesus kept calling him a friend of sinners, which is exactly what He was. What a wonderful truth! Let's read verse 34 again.

Luke

7:34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

7:39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that

toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

19:7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

[They were not pleased, but they all murmured.]

There are so many similar words in the Scripture.

John

8:11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Jesus never wanted to judge her.

John

15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Paul also wrote;

Romans

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

Paul testified a number of times, but the point of his testimonies was always the same: *This is a trustworthy saying that deserves complete acceptance: To this world the Messiah came, sinful people to reclaim. I am the worst of them.*

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus is the friend of sinners. Jesus became one with sinners to bear all sins of the humans on his own body. If we accept that we are sinners, we can be friends of Jesus.

What a wonderful friend Jesus is! Wonderful gospels are written only to help sinners. We have to accept everything the Lord God talked about Himself. Then we can embrace Jesus as our friend. The Lord God says that all men are sinners. If we admit this fact, at that very moment the Lord will be our friend.

The founder of the divinity school I graduated from was a very excellent man. Filled with joy right before he died, he said to his wife, "I made a poem." He was truly intelligent person and could speak seven languages fluently. He was born Jewish and his name was Moses. Actually, in German it was Mose.

It was a very simple poem. His wife felt strange and asked him what kind of poem that was, since it was extremely simple. Let me read it:

The Lord Jesus called me a friend.
He called me a friend.
The Lord Jesus died for me on Golgotha.
Jesus called me his friend.

This is actually a very simple poem, but I would say

that those who can express their feelings this way are the most blessed. Right before he died, at the very last moment of his life, he said, "I see Jesus and hear the voice of the Lord Jesus. Redemption of our sins by the blood of the Lord Jesus is the crown of glory."

[2]

Has Jesus already become a friend to each one of us? What kind of friend is Jesus?

First of all, Jesus is a patient friend. Paul experienced the patience of Jesus. Let's see how it is described in his words.

1 Timothy

1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1:16 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.

Paul could say this gratefully, filled with joy. Paul praised the Lord and appreciated the patience of the Lord. He wrote that only sinners could experience the patience of Jesus—that only the most wrecked and hopeless people could understand patience of the Lord. Paul prayed for all believers. He wrote in his second epistle to the Thessalonians:

2 Thessalonians

3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

We all desperately long for the day of Jesus' Second Coming. But why hasn't he arrived yet? We can find the answer in the second epistle of Peter:

2 Peter

3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Why hasn't the Lord come yet? He is waiting until all people are led to Him to be saved. Jesus has not yet arrived because He wants to save our fathers, mothers, relatives and everyone we know.

Jesus is such a patient friend. Very often, we are not so patient. Sometimes we are even impatient with someone we love, aren't we? Humans may not be so patient with us, but Jesus has never been hasty in anything. He is always absolutely patient. Thus, He doesn't care what the states of our minds are when we come to see Him.

The hands of Jesus nailed to the cross always move

us to tears. Jesus has been always patient with us. When we think of the patience of Jesus, we too can be more patient. Jesus is the one who is most patient.

Secondly, Jesus is a friend full of strength.

It doesn't matter how many friends we have—what matters is who your friend is. This is unimaginably important. Jesus is much more powerful and stronger than we can ever imagine. Jesus is the one who gives us everything He made a promise to us. Jesus can protect what He gave us.

Nothing is impossible for Jesus. He is able to save completely—so wrote the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. Jesus is also our spokesman. He is our representative too. What a powerful friend Jesus is! When Jesus lived in this world, He proved His almighty power by Himself.

Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man. Jesus talked to the demons and made them run away. Jesus brought the dead back to life again. Jesus commanded the sea and calmed down the storm. As a little lamb, Jesus completed the greatest work in history. The blood that Jesus shed still has the same power today. It is a power to reconcile sinners with the Holy God.

We have permission to enter the place where the Holy God resides. This is the most wonderful miracle, isn't it? Salvation is absolutely the most wonderful miracle. It changes the slave of the devil into the child of God. Jesus paid all our debts instantly. This means that Jesus has the power to save all of us.

The blessing of Jesus is only given to those who admit their own debts. Jesus is only a friend to sinners. Jesus is called a friend of sinners.

It is only drowning person who needs to grab a life buoy, and it is only the sinners who need Jesus. Jesus has the power to save anyone. Jesus always said to those who were in agony that their sins were forgiven. All these people came to ask for cures for their illnesses—what they actually needed was relief from their guilty consciences rather than their physical pain.

The thief, when he was about to be executed, asked to Jesus to remember him. The Lord Jesus, as the only child of Holy God, said to the thief, "You will be in paradise with me today." What a wonderful friend of sinners He is!

Jesus said to the sinful woman, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith saved you. Go in peace." To Zacchaeus, who obtained his wealth through illicit means, Jesus said that He was going to stay in his

house on that day. He even said, "Today salvation has come to this home."

There was a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. People despised her as such a sinful woman and wanted to stone her to death. What did Jesus say to her? "I don't condemn you."

John

15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

[3]

Let's look at what Paul wrote to his brothers and sisters in Rome in his epistle, chapter 5, verse 8:

Romans

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

Jesus died for sinners. Jesus died while we were still all sinners. What a wonderful grace it was! Let's listen to Paul's testimony:

1 Timothy

1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1:16 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.

The Second World War occurred between 1939 and 1945. This is a historical fact that no one can deny. Several hundreds years ago, a man called Napoleon existed. This is also a fact recorded in history, whether you choose to believe it or not. About 2000 years ago, Jesus died on the hill of Golgotha. This is an undeniable historical fact, regardless of whether we believe it or not.

Jesus died for each one of us. As we all know, the death of Jesus was never the death of a martyr. It was the punishment of God that should have been given to people like us. Jesus died to atone for our sins. Have we ever seen Jesus with the eyes of our hearts as the friend of sinners who was put on the cross?

Jesus gave us his own life. Because Jesus paid our debts and liberated us, we are no longer the slaves of sin. Jesus died for us—sinners—so we don't have to live without freedom or joy anymore.

A friend of sinners, the Lord Jesus has the power to save people—the power to liberate people. To those who believe this fact, the Lord Jesus is already a friend. If we believe in the salvation of Jesus, we will have the certainty of being saved, and consequently, the certainty that our sins are forgiven. If you don't

have this certainty, please don't try to delay things, but acquire it today.

You can start to pray today and feel grateful to Jesus. "Holy Jesus, thank you very much for dying on the cross for a sinner like me, and shedding your precious blood to forgive my sins. I am so grateful to you for being my friend." You will be blessed when you have gratefulness like this. Jesus has the power to save. Jesus has the power to help. Jesus can answer any questions, and explain any problems. Jesus is strong enough to lead each one of us. He is a man full of true strength.

Thirdly, the Lord Jesus is a friend who is clearly present.

It is not very good if it takes you some thirty minutes of hard praying to realize the presence of Jesus. Jesus dwells in each believer. The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus inside us is the hope of the glory. We are already one with Jesus. We are all parts of Jesus' body.

Jesus is together with us. We don't have to walk around to keep track of Jesus in our lives. Instead, we can believe that Jesus is here with us and feel relieved. Jesus promised clearly: I'll neither fail you nor abandon you.

He also said, "I am with you each and every day until the end of the age." This is the promise that Jesus gave to us. There is no lie in Jesus. Jesus is the one who loves us with everlasting love.

Jesus, who redeemed us by His precious blood and sacrificed His life, will never leave us alone. We will never be alone anymore. Jesus is always there with us.

Too often in our lives, so many other things gain more importance than Jesus. As clearly stated in the Bible, even though some mothers may abandon their children, Jesus would never abandon us. If we live a life according to the teachings of the Lord Jesus, we will always receive spiritual consolation. Jesus is the one who actually is present.

Martin Luther was accused as an infidel for leading the Protestant Reformation. Many people were condemned as infidels and were executed by being burned alive in those days in Germany. A friend of Luther's once asked him what his plan was. Luther answered, "I am so rejoiced and consoled because of the presence of the Lord Jesus. He is a friend who is truly there, and I am in His hands."

We are never alone anymore. Let us believe firmly in this fact. Even when the devil makes an attempt on our life, or even if we do not realize it, Jesus is present at this very moment—and He has said he will never abandon us. Jesus is not just a patient

friend or a strong friend—he is also a friend who is actually there with us.

[4]

In addition, fourthly, Jesus is a precious friend of ours.

The presence of Jesus is so precious to all believers. Is Jesus truly the most precious person in our lives? Jesus saves us, loves us and stands by us. The existence of Jesus must be extremely important to our lives. Can we truly say that we love Jesus from the bottom of our hearts?

Do we really know Jesus? To know Jesus is to love the Lord Jesus. When we know the Lord Jesus better, as a matter of course we will love the Lord more and more. Do we have an earnest desire to have communion with Jesus, more than anything? Can we truly say that the presence of Jesus is more precious than all other wealth we possess?

If Jesus is our friend, we won't have to worry about anything else. As long as we stay in the presence of Jesus, it does not matter where we are and what we do to serve Him. Jesus is a precious friend. Jesus was the most beautiful man that ever lived on this earth. Jesus' body was free from all kinds of sin.

Jesus was the one who completed and fulfilled the intention of His father God. Jesus embodied the true image of the Father God. Children always followed Jesus, and so many people walked after Him. Jesus is a precious friend. When those who are hungry and thirsty look to Jesus, their hearts will be satisfied. Why is Jesus so precious to us?

Jesus is honored because He gave up His glory in heaven and came down to this world to live like a slave. Jesus is the most precious one for us because of the love He showed on the cross. Jesus is so precious because He will come again to show us what kind of man He is.

Jesus is truly a precious friend. Have we accepted Jesus as a friend? Do we believe in the truthfulness of Jesus' promises? Jesus is a friend of sinners. Is Jesus the most precious thing in existence for each one of us today? If Jesus is not the most valuable man in your life, please just open your heart to Him now. You will instantly recognize the Lord as the most precious one in your life.

If Jesus is the most precious thing in your life, He can also become the most precious in the life of someone else through you. Jesus saved you so that He can use you to show others the way to salvation. Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Now, follow me." But that was not all he said. He also said, "I will make you a fisher of men."

We have to accept Jesus before He becomes our friend. Jesus is a friend of sinners. We will be truly blessed when we can perceive Jesus as the patient friend, the strong friend, the friend that is really present, and the precious friend.

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