***Love for our Friends

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-035***

We are studying Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians, segment number 13.

**"Agape" Love**

A child of God who is in temporal fellowship with God the Father is characterized by a life in the faith, which is expressed in Bible doctrine, and by a mental attitude love for other believers. These two qualities are not natural in a person, nor can they be developed by individual self-effort. The apostle Paul was happy to hear that these two virtues of faith in the Word and mental attitude love characterized the Colossians saints. This is emphatic in the Word of God as a duty of Christians to exercise this "agape" mental attitude love toward one another.

"Agape" love creates a life which moves in reality. This is why the world, that tries to imitate this kind of camaraderie (this kind of compassion), never makes it. They move in a world which is detached from reality. They do very great unreal things. And I'll tell you that when you point it out to them, they become very indignant. They become quite put out, very angry, because they feel that you are suggesting to them that they're not capable of the highest relationships in life, or the greatest wisdom. And the problem is that that's exactly what is true.

"Agape" love creates a life in touch with the realities as God has created those realities – not in the self-delusions created by the world of Satan. This lack of mental attitude love creates mental attitude sins toward other Christians, and it disrupts the unity of God's people. Mental attitude love produced in the Spiritual Christian by the Holy Spirit makes all human relationships right; godly; Christ-honoring; and, kind. And that's the best of all lives – to be able to be free, and open, and at ease with all the saints in a spirit of what is right; what is godly; what is Christ-honoring; and, what is kind.

**The Bible Doctrine of Love for Friends**

I direct your attention today to the Bible doctrine of love for friends.

1. **The Three Kinds of Love**

First of all, there are three kinds of love that we may distinguish. The first is one that we have not been dealing with. It's called eros, e r o s. This is sexual love. This particular word is not dealt with in the New Testament. The second type of love is represented by the word "philos" (fee'-los), which is "friendship or rapport" with a person expressed in emotions. The third kind of love is signified by the word "agape." This is mental attitude goodwill with a spirit of sacrificial service and care toward the objects of that love. So, there are three kinds of love that everybody has to deal with. "Eros" is the physical sexual level; "philos" the friendship and rapport of emotions; and, "agape" is the mental-attitude, sacrificial concern and care.

1. **The Unbeliever can Love**

The second point in the doctrine of love for friends is that the unbeliever, as well as the Christian, can participate in all three kinds of love. In the unbeliever, the source of these three loves is the sin nature. Therefore, all three are merely humanly produced, and they are shallow, and they are very unstable. There is no physical relationship of stability; of depth; and, of quality. There are no consistent stable emotional attachment. They come and go. And there is no mental goodwill, because that will also fluctuate up and down, and be very unstable, cause it is simply based upon human capacity flowing from the sin nature.

The Spirit-filled believer, however, on the other side, produces all three of these loves by means of the Holy Spirit. So, all three are a divine expression of love. This is part of what Galatians 5:22 calls the fruit of the Spirit. So, sexual love is a product of the Spirit of God, as are emotional attachments, and as are the mental goodwill of sacrifice and care for one another. However, when the believer is not filled with the Holy Spirit, which means that he is out of fellowship (he's out of sync with the Spirit of God), then he too is no longer producing any of these loves by the Spirit of God, but he produces them simply from his own sin nature. It is very important to realize that just because you're a Christian, you're not going to be the right kind of Christian in terms of these three categories of love. It also takes the quality of being in the Holy Spirit.

I'm must tell you again that you should not take lightly your personal confession of known sins – your personal admission of what is out of sync with the Word of God. It is always amazing to me that people will attack what Christians stand for. And when you say to them that that is in the Bible, they have one or two alternatives in response. They can say, "Well, the Bible is wrong, and I don't agree with it," which is what the liberal will do, who is honest. Or, they will say, "Well, that's how you look at it," implying that the Bible is a mysterious book that we cannot understand. The truth of the matter is that we do understand the Word of God. And when it has spoken, and you are in step with the Spirit of God, you will understand what you are reading, and you will understand what the Bible has to say. And when you, as a Christian, are out of fellowship, then you're no better than the unsaved, natural man who is discrediting the Bible; who is sloughing it off; and, who doesn't have the manliness or womanliness to say, "Well, I just don't like what the Bible says, and I have a better way, and I'm going to have my way." That, at least, is more honorable. That, at least, has a semblance of integrity. Just discard the Bible, and don't try to pretend that God does not condemn acts of sin, both mental and overt.

1. **"Agape" Love**

"Agape" love is produced only in the mind of the soul by the filling of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 5:5, we read, "And hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us." And in the Greek language, the word "love" of God there is the Greek word "agape."

So, here we have a clear declaration that this kind of mental attitude goodwill is not something you can crank up on a long-term basis yourself. It will be a natural function of your thinking when you are in fellowship of the Spirit of God. That's just the kind of person you will be. There'll be no mental attitude sins interrupting the flow of that mental attitude goodwill. And you will have respect for the volition and the privacy of others.

**Prayer**

Part of your goodwill mental attitude love is that you'll mind your own business, as we read in the previous session. And you will find that you will also have respect, therefore, for the choices of other people. And while sometimes those choices may be wrong, and you may try to redirect them to a better choice, nevertheless, they are their own priest; they must deal with themselves before God; and, your love for them (your goodwill for them) will seek opportunities to correct; to caution; and, above all, to commit them to prayer.

If there's anything we should have learned in our studies here in the early part of Colossians, it is that God the Holy Spirit is very emphatic on the subject of the personal responsibility of individual Christians to preserve themselves from heresy; to preserve themselves from false doctrine; and, to do that through the practice of prayer.

If you want to have some fun sometime, get a concordance, which takes an English word, and tells you everywhere that it occurs in the Bible, and just look up the word "prayer," and just go through it one after another. You'll be astounded how much God says, "Before you do anything else in life, pray." And when you have mental attitude goodwill toward God, that will be your natural inclination. When you find that prayer is the last thing you care to do, and the last thing you think about doing, it's not a good sign. It's a sign that you have deluded yourself as to how close is your affection indeed for the Lord. And nobody should learn this better than young people. You who are moving into the prime of life you have; you who have powerful physical forces and mental capacities; and, who are surrounded by a filthy evil world – you above all should understand that prayer should be a part of your life. And you should be the kind of a person that seeks to be a super person in every aspect of life.

I have a great deal of respect and of appreciation for these people who sit up here in the band every Sunday night. They go through the effort of preparing; they arrange their lives around this service; and, they are faithful to this service because God has called them to it. And one of the reasons I like to see them do that is because these people have capacities in a variety of other ways. But I have noticed, over the years, that people who play musical instruments, and who have the capacity to do that (they have that refinement within themselves), have an appreciation for the aesthetics; they have an appreciation for the beautiful; they have appreciation for the lovely things that God has created, and music is one of them. Some of these people are good athletes, but they are a lot better athletes because they also have an appreciation for the beautiful. And when they come and they play in this band, it is ennobling their soul.

They don't even realize it now, but they'll look back on it, and they will discover that (years in the past) while they had capacities in whatever way, and they have skills of one kind and another in various ways, that they played in this band, and they served God in this way. Why? Because of their affection for Him. They have a love for the Lord, and that's why their lives revolve around that. And when they add prayer to that combination of sensitivity to the Word of God that they have learned, and to the capacities or the activities of life in which they're engaged, they become a very attractive human being. And they become a very powerful magnet for the blessings of God. And the younger you are, and the sooner you, learn that the better for you. That's "agape" love.

1. **"Philos" Love**

"Philos" love is an emotional expression of the soul produced by the Holy Spirit. This is love which is flowing from the emotional facet of the soul in a believer who is in temporal fellowship. In this Christian, who has a deep, emotional feeling for other people produced by the Spirit of God, the mind of that person is occupied with Chris. His self-consciousness is on the Lord, and he is operating on a set of values and standards that are divine, to guide the emotions. "Philos" is a very wonderful kind of love. It is an affectionate, warm expression. And when it is the product of the Spirit of God, it comes from the frame of reference of occupation with Christ, which puts it in a right category, and in propriety. And it is based on the values and standards of the Word of God. Therefore, it is something that makes life very attractive indeed. This is totally out of reach for the unbeliever. "Philos" love requires the control and the knowledge of doctrine which has been learned. "Philos" love, in its maximum emotional expression, is the product of obeying the commandments of God.

1. **We Love both God and People**

Now, both of these types of love ("agape" and "philos") are expressed toward God and toward people. You express them toward God understandably; you express them toward your mate; or, you express them toward your friends. A Christian is to express "agape" love toward all people: those who are in the family of God; and, those who are outside. And this kind of love can be commanded because it's an attitude, and it's volitional; so it is commanded. "Philos" love, however, is toward God, and towards some people. You cannot command it. It is something that rises as a natural emotion; a natural affinity that you have for people; a natural camaraderie; a natural common ground; or, a common bond. You just have a rapport. You have an appreciation for a person in a variety of ways. That is not volitional. You can't crank that up. That is there for some people, and it's not there for others. "Agape" love, however, must precede the emotional "philos" expression toward a person. You cannot have genuine, godly "philos" love until there is mental attitude goodwill toward that person. When sin exists, it will not be there.

"Philos" love toward God flows from the use of that grace system of perception, by which we learn the mind of Christ. We learn to inhale doctrine into our souls. We develop a rapport with God. And then we develop a rapport with our friends. And that develops into the close relationships that are expressed emotionally. “Philos” love toward friends flows, then, between two people who are thinking; who are loving; who are talking; and, who are living doctrine together in the Holy Spirit. That is the highest camaraderie expression. The world knows nothing about that. It toys around with the word "compassion," but anytime the world gets into compassion, it's destructive, because they don't have the system of an emotion produced by the Spirit of God.

When your emotions lead you into doing something wrong: a wrong association; a wrong attachment; or, a wrong expression, it is because the Word of God is not functioning in your life. It is because you are out of fellowship, and therefore, Satan is playing with your emotions. Your mind has to be so filled with the Word of God, and so oriented to God's point of view, that out of your innermost soul (out of that human spirit where doctrine is stored), the Spirit of God will keep bringing up how you should conduct yourself with other people of all kinds in all relationships. So, you will always maintain your manliness (your manhood); you will always maintain your womanhood; and, you'll always be able to look yourself in the eye with great respect. And most of all, you'll be able to know that God looks upon you with respect. Husbands are told to share with their wives both the "agape" and "philos" types of love.

Interestingly enough, in the Song of Solomon, that great book on marital love, one of the points it makes is that mental attitude love is not enough. Song of Solomon 5:16 says, "His mouth is full of sweetness, and he (her lover) is wholly desirable. This is my beloved, and this is my friend. O daughters of Jerusalem, where has your beloved gone?" And here the bride, whose husband is away, dreams about him, and his mouth is full of sweetness to her, and he is a man that she wholly desires, and has great respect for: "And he is not only my beloved (my "agape" one," but he's also my friend." My husband not only loves me, but equally important, he likes me.

It is a terrible thing to have a marriage relationship with someone that you don't really have anything against. You don't have any ill will, but you just don't like them. You just don't like them. And you want to be careful when you get into marriage that you have both parts of it there. That's what the point is here in Solomon's song – to remember that you have to like this person. And when you like this person, then everything will fall into place – all the irritations and all the particular idiosyncrasies that they make are the life together that evolves. "Philos" love and "agape" love are what should exist between husband and wife. They have a great goodwill toward one another, but they also have a great emotional affection. They like each other. Divine love of one believer for another in this way, of course, glorifies God and not man.

1. **One Can Love, Regardless of Gender**

The next point is that love for friends can be either for a male or a female by both gender, contrast to love for opposite sex on a one-to-one relationship. Love for friends involves the soul only, while love for one's mate (the person you're married to) involves not only the soul, emotional aspect, but the body. With a Christian, your affection will involve, for other people, the soul and the spirit for your friends. You will love people with both your soul and with your spirit. And for those who are your marriage partner, you will love them with your spirit, and with your soul, and with your body. It's very important that you remember, in getting into marriage, that you must go in that order. That's the way Paul describes how we are made. He says that we are made spirit; soul; and, body. We like to reverse it. We talk about the three parts of ma as body; soul; and, spirit. We put it in exactly the reverse order, the way the world does.

So, the first thing you have to do in getting a relationship with anybody, whether it's as mere friend, or whether it's as potentially a marriage person, is that you have to get intimate on a spiritual level – very well-known to each other on a spirit level. Now, that's very tough, because there are many factors that are trying to dissuade you to look over this person in other more emotional ways. This is why anybody who is short of being a college-age person should never have a one-on-one date. Teenagers should not go: one boy and one girl. They're not equipped to do it. It's very dangerous territory. And it corrodes their sensitivity and their refinements.

The thing to do is to get acquainted with people in group categories of activities. Get to know people spiritually. When you are in a position where you are ready to get to know somebody on a soul level, there comes dating. And always remember that dating is for mating. And you should also remember that dating is an American custom. This is not something that people in other parts of the world do. This is a custom unique to us, and it was called "courting" in the old days. When you wanted to get to know a lady or a man, and you had made the decision as a Christian that there was a compatibility spiritually, then you proceeded to what was called "courting" this lady. What are you trying to do? You want to know what she's like in her soul. In her soul, she has a mind (hopefully); she has a will (and you want to know about that); and, she has emotions. And that's very important. You want to know how compatible you are as person-to-person. And that's where the liking comes in.

She may have a mind that'll send you climbing the wall. If so, say "Adios, muchacha." Or she may have choices that are just horrendous. She may sit down and have a pickle with ice cream on it for dessert. And you're going to have to see if you can live with that, and cope with that. And she also has emotions – how she feels about things. And that's very important. So, this is where you get to know a person on the courting level; and, that's where dating comes in, and that is a very proper thing to do.

And then, of course, when marriage comes into the picture, then the third intimacy is physical relationships. That is the ultimate way of knowing a person.

So, you can't do this in the wrong way. And kids aren't equipped to do this. And their parents are at fault before God if they're allowed to do it. It is a parent's responsibility to protect them from themselves. And that means keeping with group activities, and waiting for the time to come when you have the maturity to understand what is happening.

It's always good to remember that what you were at 12 years old, now that you're 16, you look back, and you cannot believe that a weird person like you were at 12 ever existed. You can't believe that such a human being was even possible in the human race. But what you should remember is that between 16 and 20, a great metamorphosis takes place. And what you think, and how you act, at 20 is so different than 16 and 17, that you look back and say, "How could I have ever been such a real outrageous oddball like I was at 16 and 17. Because at 20, a whole new era of mental outlook descends upon you. And by the time you hit 21 or 22, you have been transformed by God. That is the reason why, in the Old Testament, a child (a son particularly) was the responsibility of a parent until that son was 20 years old. That was because, by that time, the son had produced now some mature outlooks. He wasn't going to go off in some flippaty gibit way. He had developed some personal stability. He was now ready to start associating with girls. He was ready to start courting and doing all the other things that life prepared him for.

So, love for your friends can be a male friend, it can be a female friend. But it is one that has to go in the proper order. Love for God in Christians will involve your soul and your spirit. Now the pagans bring in the body. The pagans in the Old Testament times, and even in the New Testament times, worshiped God through sex. They brought in the body as an act of worship. This is not the case in the Word of God. And Christians worship God through the Spirit. Their contact with God is on the spirit level, and their contact with Him is through the senses in their souls.

**Homosexuality and Lesbianism**

Lesbianism and homosexuality, therefore, are evil perversions of love. And it is not a sickness. We know that because God calls it a sin. In fact, homosexuality (or lesbianism) is one of the things that the word "abomination" is attached to. And you know that "abomination" is the word that God uses when He wants to express His deepest loathing and His greatest wrath in condemnation for something. So, when we talk about love for friends, that emotional attachment can be for male or female, but it cannot be on the basis of a sexual attachment of male-to-male or female-to-female.

It is interesting that we know that when Paul wrote the book of Romans, he wrote it as a formal dissertation on how to go to heaven. And he wrote it by going through the details, saying, "Here's what our problem is. Here's why we can't go to heaven. Here's how we had become such a degenerated lot that we're totally depraved. And, by George, what is the first thing he deals with in the opening chapter of Romans, but the perversion of love for friends that descends into the sin and the abomination of homosexuality and lesbianism? And before he gets off out of the first chapter, he has made it very clear that this is condemned before God, because it is a sin.

Some people say "I was born like this." Were any of you people here born with the inclination to take what doesn't belong to you? Did somebody have to teach you to steal things? Do any of you here have the inclination to lie – to not tell what is true? Did anybody ever tell you that you have a natural propensity for cheating? Now where does all that come from? Are those things sins? Yes. The Bible says they are sins. They come out of your sin nature. And is it in the heart of man to be sexually impure? Does somebody have to teach you to do that? That's in the sin nature.

So, what does the Bible say? The Bible says that these things are sin, and that you are to be a Christian with the spiritual capacity developed within your soul such that you will have friendship with men or women without descending to these sins. You cannot say, "Well, I was just born that way." Yeah, you *are*. You *are* born a thief. You *are* born a cheater. You *are* born a liar. And the point is that we override that. Once we're born again, the sin nature cannot control us and make us do that.

That's why improper sexual relationships of the homosexuality and lesbianism are strongly condemned in both the Old and New Testaments, because they are not the way you were born. They are a volitional choice. If they were not a volitional choice, God could not say that that is a sin. Some of you, unfortunately, were born with blue eyes. We cannot say that's a sin, because you didn't have a choice. If you could have chosen, you would've had brown eyes, but you have blue eyes. It's not sin. You had no choice. You had no volitional control over that. I'm just kidding – no, about the eyes, not the other.

So, in love for friends, you can have any number of human objects of love. But in love for your mate, there's only one human object. So, men can have a great deal of affection and camaraderie for men, as well as for women. And women can have a great deal of camaraderie affection for women and men. And it is kept within its proper bounds of propriety by the controlling factors of the Spirit of God. It is God's will for believers to have a strong attachment for one another. It is God's will for Christians to love each other. In 1 John 4:11, John says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

1. **Love Creates Stability and Power**

Next, love for the friends creates stability and power in one's own life. You have friends for whom you have a great emotional attachment. And they reciprocate. This gives you a stability in your life. It gives you a sense of being with somebody; camaraderie; and, support that you can turn to. 2 Samuel 1:26, "I am distressed for you my brother, Jonathan," David says. "You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women."

Isn't that amazing? He is comparing his love for Jonathan to the depth and the warmth of the affection of a woman for a man. And here is Jonathan, who is to be the next king of Israel by inheritance, but who has already been told, and who understands from God, that his father's dynasty is going to be destroyed because of the sin unto death of his father, Saul. And he will not be the king. And he has been told that David has been selected to be that king. And Jonathan, when that was recognized by him, takes his royal robe off, and puts it on the shoulders of David, to make it very clear that Jonathan recognizes the will of God. And between Jonathan and David, there arose this great emotional rapport with one another as one might normally expect in the depth between a man and a woman. This had no adverse connotations. It was a way of showing the intensity and the warmth of their relationship.

Proverbs 17:17, also adds to this – that love for friends creates stability in our own lives. Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." A friend loves you through the good times and the bad times. And one who is a close brother in the Lord, that's the one you need in the bad times to fall back.

Proverbs 27:9-10: "Oil and perfume make the heart glad. So a man's counsel is sweet to his friend. Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend. And do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away." There are many members of our own human relationship families that we don't have the closeness to that we have to those who are friends in Christ. And we would go to them before we would even go to the people who are our blood relatives.

Notice Proverbs 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron. So one man sharpens another." One who is a good, close friend gives you stability and perception in life. John 15 also has something to say about this. John 15:13: "Greater love has no man than that one lay down his life for his friends." Those who are your close, emotional friends give you a supporting hand.

Then Galatians 5:14 adds to this, "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

1. **Love Creates a Good Environment**

Love for friends creates a relaxed and happy environment. Please notice the book of Romans 13:10: "Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the Law."

Also, Proverbs 10:20: "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver. The heart of the wicked is worth little."

Then Proverbs 10:12: "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgression." What a point of wisdom that is. Hatred stirs up strife. That's an emotion. But love (an emotional attachment from the Spirit of God) covers all transgressions. When your friend does something that is wrong, you try to help him through it, and you cover him. True friends do not have to be on guard with each other. And if you have people that you're afraid to talk in front of, or you're not sure of their loyalty; their trustworthiness; or, their confidentiality, that is not a true friend. And you'll not have a deep emotional attachment for that person. Someone that you cannot trust; someone whose loyalty you cannot count on; someone that might gossip; or, someone who might be deceptive about you – that is no friend. And that is the kind of a person you should be very careful about taking to your bosom. People that we cannot trust are not really our friends. They are just our acquaintances.

1. **Love is Free from Hypocrisy**

Love for friends is free from hypocrisy. In Romans 12:9, Paul says, "Let love be without hypocrisy." Don't smile at a person, and say nice things, whom you are mentally stabbing into the back.

Proverbs 27:6: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." And, of course, Judas was no friend of Jesus Christ, but he had the kisses for Him. If your friend is your true friend, they may treat you with an affectionate embrace, and it will be without hypocrisy.

1. **Love is Outgoing and Objective**

Love for friends is outgoing and objective rather than self-centered and hypersensitive. Galatians 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brethren. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh (the sin nature). But through love, serve one another." Love for your friends is going to be outgoing. It's going to be objective. It's not going to be self-serving.

In 2 Samuel 1:26, we again have this principle enunciated: "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me. Your love has been more wonderful than the love of women." That is the same passage that we read before, between Jonathan and David,

If people are subjective, then they're hypersensitive, and they will have trouble making friends. I remember one time saying to a person that one day came in and walked up to me over in the academy building, and I said, "Well, what do we need now?" And boy, the person exploded: "Well, if that's how you're going to feel, I'm not going to say anything." Now that's being hypersensitive, and that is not being a friend. That person must have had something to be guilty about. You should not use your friends to satisfy your ego. And if you are self-pitying, and I've heard people on and off say, "Nobody wants to be my friend." And they just whine, and are so self-pitying: "Nobody wants to be my friend." And I say, "I can see why." If you're going to be that self-pitying like that, with eyes on yourself, who would want to be your friend? Love for friends is outgoing. It's for the object – not for yourself.

1. **Love Motivates Grace Orientation**

Next, love for friends among Christians motivates grace orientation in their dealings. We have that exemplified in the book of Philemon that Paul wrote in connection with a runaway slave. Philemon 1:9-12: "Yet, for love's sake, I rather appeal to you, since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner Christ Jesus. I appeal to you for my child whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, Onesimus, who formally was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. And I've sent him back to you in person; that is, sending my very heart." Paul says to Philemon, "Your slave – I have found him here in Rome. I've told him that the right thing for him to do is to go back to you, his master, until you have freed him under the legal system of the day. And I want you to know that when I send him to you, I send you my heart, because this man is dear to me." Love for friends motivates them to be gracious, and it gives some slack to people who are unbecoming in their behavior.

1. **The Capacity to Give**

Next, love for friends is motivated to give on the basis of one's capacity to give. Love is an act of grace giving, with no strings attached as a bribe (1 Samuel 18:3-4). Here again is the experience between David and Jonathan: "Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him, and gave it to David, and his armor, including his sword, and his bow, and his belt," signifying: "David, I accept you as Israel's king." You cannot buy somebody's love. Love for friends is motivated by the capacity to give.

1. **Enemies Destroy Love**

Love between friends has enemies which can destroy it. The first thing that can destroy love is mental attitude sins (Job 19:19). A second one is sins of the tongue (Proverbs 16:28). That is a great tragedy – when the tongue is used to destroy the love between friends. Proverb 16:28: "A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends."

Proverb 17:9: "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends." People who are close friends, which is what God intends Christians to be, will destroy their emotional rapport by not covering transgression, or being gossips with the tongue. False doctrine and ignorance of doctrine, results in a pseudo spirituality; legalism; or, emotional domination of the soul. All these things will destroy love between friends.

1. **Love can be Counterfeited**

Love for friends can be counterfeited. That is a false friendship. Proverbs 19:6-7: "Many will entreat the favor of a generous man. And every man is a friend to him who gives gifts. All the brothers of a poor man hate him. How much more do his friends go far from him? He pursues them with words, but they are gone." So, when you do nice things for people, and they smile, and they treat you as a friend, just be sure they're not doing that because of what you are doing for them. That's a counterfeit friend.

1. **The Loss of Friends can be Discipline**

Next, the loss of friends may be a part of extreme discipline that God brings upon a believer. If you will not behave yourself; if you will not think the way God thinks; and, if you will not be opposed to the evils that God condemns, you may find yourself flapping in the wind out there on your own. Psalm 38:11: "My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my kinsman stand afar off." Here, it is describing an act of divine discipline upon this individual for his sin.

Notice Psalm 88:18: "You have removed lover and friend far from me. My acquaintances are in darkness." What a sad condition, when those who should be your loved ones are removed far from you. Those who should be your true friends are no longer there. And the acquaintances you have are all that human viewpoint crowd who is in darkness. That's what you'll be left with. When that happens. It's divine discipline.

1. **A Right Relationship with God**

And finally, all right, relationships with the human race are based upon a right relationship with God. And that right relationship with God is based upon doctrine and temporal fellowship of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

So, the doctrine of friendship is a very important doctrine. And when the apostle Paul commends the Colossian Christians for their love for all the saints, that mental attitude goodwill that they had also eventuated in an emotional attachment among themselves with certain members of that congregation. And nothing is more valuable, and nothing is more precious than the friend who is closer than the brother. And no friend is closer to you than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the brother. He is the one who sticks closer than a brother. He is the one who is the example of friend-to-friend.

Believers should have an open and affectionate attitude toward one another in Christ. And as God brings you together, those are the people that you should esteem, and that you should care for, that are in the circle of your particular concern. That's the Christian way. And that's what God has called us to. But that cannot function where there was evil in the camp.

Father, we thank you for the doctrine of friends, and the doctrine of our love for those who are our friends. We thank You that this marvelous spirit of rapport and appreciation for people in a variety of ways brings us together as Christians one to another. We thank You for the fact that we have the great starting point of mental "agape" love with all of its sacrificial inclinations provided to us by the Spirit of God. And we thank You that out of that grows these emotional attachments with people who, for one reason or another, we hit it off with, and who become our closest comrades in the work of God.

your Son the Lord Jesus Christ had 12 disciples, but three of them were really close to Him as his friends. And so too are some of the believers among us. We pray that these we will esteem, and to realize that there can be no exchange of love (mental or emotional) if it is not on the basis of truth. An evil clogs the mind of that kind of mental and emotional love.

We pray that we shall live our days from youth to old age in the glowing relationships that come with individual human beings who share our devotion to personal godliness and personal integrity, so that the love of God can be shed abroad in our hearts with an intensity that only grows through the years, and that our attachment to people runs very deep. Thank you for that capacity. In Jesus name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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