

Purer In Heart - Verse 2 Continued

We have been looking at the song "Purer In Heart, O God" and the scriptural references to its lyrics. The second half of the second verse of that song has the words, **"Be thou my friend and guide, let me with thee abide."** The questions about this request include; "What does it mean to be a friend?" "Can we be friends with Jesus?" And "Will He let us abide with Him?"

During Jesus' final lessons in the upper room before His arrest, He makes the connection between love and friendship clear with His use of terms. *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Here, Jesus uses Agape, the "lay down one's life for" love to be equal to His disciples being His friends, Philos. We often refer to the Greek word phileo and its derivatives as family love, dedication, or affection. But Jesus says the devotion needed to be His friend would be the love to cause one to *"be faithful unto death"* (Revelation 2:10).

The depth of attachment and love between individuals is understood in the stories of Old Testament people. We see Abraham's special attachment to his son Isaac when God told him, *"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering"* (Genesis 22:2). We see a similar connection between Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17). And the devotion between David and Jonathan was stronger than between family members. *"The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself"* (1 Samuel 18:1). Jesus put all these emotions and feelings together as He told His disciples that they were His friends, then added one more requirement. *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"* (John 15:10). He also tells them that He has confided everything to them because of the trust they share with Him as friends (John 15:15).

We can also be His friends if we Love, learn, and obey. The letter from Paul to Philemon concerns the run-away slave Onesimus who had broken the laws of his master, Rome, and God. Onesimus was changed by his love of and obedience to Christ. Paul refers to the family relationship shared, in Christ, between the slave and his master as both belong to and follow Christ. Paul says Onesimus is *"no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord"* (Philemon 1:16). From slave, to outlaw, to the friend of Christ. The opposite is the subject of James' comment as he wrote, *"Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?'"* (James 4:4-5).

Note that James indicates that God "jealously desires" the spirit he placed in us, before we were born, to be with Him. God not only wants but expects us to dwell with (abide with) Him (John 15:4-11). So before we ask, **"LET ME WITH THEE ABIDE,"** He has provided the way. John explains, *"This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit"* (1 John 4:10-13). John had been there in the upper room when Jesus said, *"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"* (John 15:9-10).

The ultimate abode of God is heaven. As Jesus prepared to return to heaven, He told the disciples, *"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:2-3). Years later, Paul wrote, *"For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house (our earthly body) is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Are we ready for that heavenly home? Have we loved and obeyed Christ? Have we believed and obeyed Him completely? (Matthew 28:19-20).