



"CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP: ITS ORIGIN"

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

In the three following verses our Lord speaks of His relation to His disciples under a new aspect—that of friendship. He point us to the love in which it on His side has its origin (v.13); to the obedience on our part by which it is maintained (v.14); and then to the holy intimacy to which it leads (v.15).

Our relation to Christ is one of love. In speaking of this previously, He showed us what His love was in its heavenly glory—the same love with which the Father had loved Him. Here we have it in its earthly manifestation—lay down His life for us. *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*

Christ does indeed long to have us know that the secret root and strength of all He is and does for us as the Vine is love. As we learn to believe this, we shall feel that here is something which we not only need to think and know about, but a living power, a divine life which we need to receive within us. Christ and His love are inseparable—they are identical.

God is love, and Christ is love. God and Christ and the divine love can only be known by having them, by their life and power working within us. *"This is eternal life, that they know thee."* There is no knowing God, but by having the life—the life working in us alone gives the knowledge. And even so the love—if we would know it, we must drink of its living stream—we must have it shed forth by the Holy Spirit in us.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man give his life for his friends." The life is the most precious thing a man has. The life is all he is. The life is himself. This is the highest measure of love: when a man gives his life—holding nothing back—he gives all he has and is.

It is this our Lord Jesus wants to make clear to us concerning His mystery of the Vine—with all He has, He has placed Himself at our disposal. He wants us to count Him our very own. He wants to be wholly our possession, that we may be wholly His possession. He gave His life for us in death not merely as a passing act—that when accomplished it was done with—no, but as making Himself ours for eternity. **Life for life—He gave His life for us to possess that we might give our life for Him to possess.** This is what is taught by the parable of the Vine and the branch, in their wonderful identification, in their perfect union.

It is as we know something of this, not by reason or imagination, but deep down in the heart and life, that we shall begin to see what ought to be our life as branches of the heavenly Vine. He gave Himself to death—He lost Himself, that we might find life in Him. This is the true Vine, who only lives to live in us. This is the beginning and the root of that holy friendship to which Christ invites us.

Great is the mystery of godliness! Let us confess our ignorance and unbelief. Let us cease from our own understanding and our own efforts to master it. Let us wait for the Holy Spirit who dwells within us to reveal it. Let us trust His infinite love, which gave its life for us, to take possession and rejoice in making us wholly its own.

His life for His friends. How wonderful the lessons of the Vine, giving its very life to its branches! And Jesus gave His life for His friends. And that love gives itself to them and in them. My heavenly Vine, oh, teach me how wholly Thou longest to live in me!

