

strengthen the brethren." Healed yourself, you will be ready to labor for the healing of others. O what a revival it would be in all our churches, if the backsliders, and the fever-patients, and the lean dyspeptics, and the sin-sick professors would come trooping out of the hospital and report them else for duty! Of such a church the Master might say once more "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily."

CHRIST'S FRIENDS.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

A little group of men—who had been obscure nobodies three years before—were gathered in an upper room at Jerusalem. The divine Jesus looking around on the company, says to them "Ye are my friends." They had not chosen Him; He had chosen them. The electric cord of divine love had made the little group one. Presently the charmed circle widens; a brilliant and bitter enemy of Christ is stricken by the heavenly electricity and transformed into a most enthusiastic friend. A wretched runaway slave in the slums of Rome is lifted into the discipleship. By and by great thinkers, scholars, philosophers, and orators, Jeromes and Augustines and Chrysostoms and Bernards are drawn in. The circle keeps widening as the ages roll on. Poor cottagers in their cabins, poor widows and orphans in their garrets, sailors in the fore-castle, sufferers in hospitals, slaves in the cotton fields, are admitted to the wonderful household of love. And as the converting grace transforms them, and the great arm embraces them, we hear Him keep on saying "I have called you friends!" It is the greatest marvel in history; for out of that obscure handful in that upper room has sprung the mighty kingdom of Immanuel, which shall yet fill heaven with countless myriads of glorified spirits. "Ye are My friends" describes them all.

1. It is a *confidential* friendship. Jesus tells His chosen ones "I call you not bond servants, for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth." A master sets his slaves to work without any explanations. But Jesus had opened God's thoughts to His disciples, and initiated them into the great mysteries of redemption. He had also chosen the twelve "that they might be with Him." For the same reason Christ takes us into His companionship, offers us His escort, promises us His presence, helps us on the journey, and intercedes for blessings that we need. There are limitations; for love has its *reticence* as well as its revelations. Our hearts ache often to pry into certain mysteries, but our Lord

keeps the veil drawn, and says "What I do ye not know now, but ye shall know hereafter." It will be one of the joys of heaven to study the finished tapestries of Providence, which in this world look often so rough and unravelled.

2. A *conferring* of infinite honor is this friendship. I the Son of God call you poor ignorant sinners who were my enemies to be "My friends." The group to which He originally uttered these words had been obscure day laborers, who were not known a score of miles from their homes, and would have been forgotten in a score of years after their death. He does for them what the sun does for the planets; He floods them with his omnipotent light and love until they become stars of the first magnitude for the guidance of all generations. Brethren, do you and I even begin to appreciate what it is for the Lord Jesus to say to such creatures as we are, "Thou art my friend; I have chosen thee, I have died to redeem thee from hell, I have pardoned thee and graven thy name on My hand, and have prepared a home for thee, that where thou art I shall be also?" The Prince of Glory fits up a palace for paupers, and transforms them into His confidential friends and joint-heirs to His own inheritance!

3. This is a *corrective and chastening* friendship in this world. He is the best friend who is not afraid to point out our faults. Jesus is ever more saying to us "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." No part of our earthly schooling costs so dearly or yields such precious fruits. How often we need the file, the chisel, and the hammer to shape us into something like the ideal which Christ has before His own eye! Christ was continually chiding, rebuking, educating, and pruning those poor fishermen and publicans, until He made them fit to go out and be His witnesses and ambassadors before the world. Jesus never loves us more than when He is pruning us of the dead branches to let the rich clusters ripen.

4. But this wondrous friendship is all *conditional*. It depends on a great "IF". Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. Obedience to Christ is the only evidence of a genuine affection for Him. Jesus himself acknowledged no other test than entire submission to His will, and cheerful obedience to His commandments. In fact, this is the Bible ideal of *holiness*; it is just the doing of Christ's will and the letting Christ have His own way with us. To all such true friends, in storm and shine, the Master is constantly saying "If ye keep My Commandments ye shall abide in My love; My Father will love you, and we will come unto you and make our abode with you."