

living whole, having no true life apart from him, and no independent power of bearing fruit, any more than a severed and solitary branch of producing grapes. But in the verses before us he guards against any misconception of the truth. He speaks of his disciples, not as mere machines, charged with electric force, but as *his friends*—individuals, conscious, intelligent, and responsible.

As such our Lord goes on to speak of the position they are to occupy in the world. They are to be known and recognized as *his friends*. Without understanding the nature of their union with him, the world is to perceive that the principle and motive power underlying their lives is essentially different from, nay, opposite to, its own. This difference must naturally produce *enmity*, since the friends of Christ will aim at bringing every thing in subjection to his rightful rule, while the world is staunch in its allegiance to the deceiver and usurper, the "god of this world."

The right understanding of the lesson pointed out by the Golden Text, *friendship and enmity*, is most important. On whose side is the friendship, and on whose the enmity? There are friends of Christ, and there are friends of the world; but the enmity is all on one side—"the world . . . hated me . . . hateth you"—"enmity with God." On the side of Christ, and, therefore, in those led by his Spirit, is pure, compassionate, longing love. There is hatred against sin, but no hatred against men. The condition of a State in which rebellion has risen up will well illustrate this. The desire of the friends of the Government is, not to destroy the rebels, but to win them back to loyal obedience. On the other hand, those who maintain a friendship with the rebels, *as such*, who acquiesce in their arrangements and further their plans, will, whatever professions they may make, be counted enemies of the Government. But the teacher must be careful to show that friendship with or enmity toward Christ is a personal matter. "*Ye are my friends*"—not those who admire and prefer my rule, but those whose hearts are one with me. There are four points to notice about the friends of Jesus.

1. *How they became such.* We choose our friends generally for some pleasant qualities which we perceive in them, or because of something in common between us. Children make friends over their games; older persons often over their troubles. But Jesus chose his friends very differently. There was nothing attractive about them; nothing in common between them

and him. His love went out to them in their defilement and ruin, and to win them he laid down his life.

2. *What are their special privileges?* There are three mentioned in the passage: they are taken into the Lord's confidence, (ver. 15;) the work of their lives is not sinful and unreal, but precious and durable; and they get the desire and request of their hearts, (ver. 16. Comp. Psa. 37. 4.) All these are interesting to enter upon with elder scholars, but the first is the one on which particular stress is laid. Young people often fancy that to become a Christian is to take up a hard service, but what a different picture is given here! Children like to be taken into the confidence of older persons, and allowed to assist in real and useful work—to be *one of the concern*: young people deem it an honour to be associated with those who occupy prominent and important positions, to enjoy their trust and share their responsibilities. What a wonderful position have the *friends of Jesus!* (Comp. Psa. 25. 14; Prov. 3. 22; Gen. 18. 17.)

3. *How they are to be known.* The inner union with the Lord, the spring and source of their being, cannot be seen, but their words and actions will testify to the world those they are and whom they serve. The world is not altogether ignorant of Christ's commandments, and can easily recognize those who obey them *continually and faithfully*. Even those who are blind to every thing else, cannot fail to observe the special mark of his friends, *love*, (vers. 12, 17; chap. 13. 35; Matt. 5. 9.)

4. *What they are to expect from the world.* Let no scholar go away with the idea that it is the mark of a Christian to be on bad terms with those about him. The true friend of Christ will aim at obeying the injunction, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." But he must expect to find that those whose hearts are set upon this world will find his company dull and irksome, and, perhaps, drop his acquaintance; that he will be called over-particular, and be considered to set himself up above others; that he will be laughed at, and, perhaps, unkindly and even cruelly used. Why? For the sake of the Lord, who calls him *friend*. For the friends of the world are at *enmity with God*. There is no middle path. We must choose one or the other. God grant to all professing Christians the simple love and loyalty of the little girl who declined to play some foolish games *because she did not think it would please Jesus*.