**ARE YOU THE PREACHER'S FRIEND?**

Dr. Paul Fedena

**INTRO**.:

**A.** Paul is the preacher & he is writing to his friend, Philemon. Note how he addresses him: “dearly beloved” - a term of special endearment or friendship. Philemon had been a special friend to Paul, so Paul writes this very personal letter to him which reveals why they were such good friends. (Some people don’t believe that a preacher should have any special friends. Paul obviously did. So did our Savior!) To be a true friend of the preacher, imitate Philemon’s traits & activities which bonded him to the preacher, Paul.

**ILLUS.**: If you want to be a friend of this preacher you could try bringing me some dark chocolate, peach (or lemon, or apple, or cherry, or raisin) pie, take me to dinner, take me fishing, give me money, send me flowers…

**B.** These things impress me & may be an indication of your friendship to me as a person, and will definitely be appreciated, but if you want to be a true friend to me as a preacher, you will just need to follow Philemon’s example as revealed in this personal letter & it won’t cost you a dinner or a fishing trip, or even a pie…

**I. ARE YOU A FELLOW-LABORER? V.1 (cf. v.17 “partner”)**

**ILLUS**.: In Phil.4:3 Paul uses the term “yokefellow.” That’s two people in the same harness, pulling the same load, going in the same direction. Philemon was a “yoke-fellow” or “fellow-laborer.” Some say the preacher is a slavedriver or dictator. You don’t have to drive someone who’s in the yoke beside you. You only have to drive those who are unwilling to work.

Sometimes you see lists of names in the Bible & we wonder why the Holy Spirit would waste so much space on the names of people we don’t know anything about, e.g., Rom.16. In v.3 “Greet Priscilla & Aquila my helpers in the Christ Jesus.” In v.6: “Greet Mary who bestowed much labor on us.” In v.9: “Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ.” In v.12, Salute Tryphena & Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis which labored much in the Lord.”

**A.** Get Involved:

 **1.** The best way to please the preacher & show your friendship is to find a job & get involved.

 **2.** It is also the best way to please the Lord.

**ILLUS**.: Elisha was Elijah’s friend; he went along & poured water on the preacher’s hands. Joshua was Moses’ friend & servant, who labored with him. Aaron & Hur held up Moses’ hands & when they did Israel prevailed in the battle. They were “fellow- laborers.”

**II. ARE YOU COMMITTED? V.5**

**A.** Love the Savior:

 **1.** If you want to make the preacher happy, fall in love w/the Lord.

 **2.** Those who love the Lord don’t cause the preacher any problems.

**B.** Love the Saints:

 **1.** Those who love the Lord have little problem w/His children.

 **2.** Someone said “Love is doing what is best for others regardless of personal expense.”

 **3.** This was Philemon’s testimony - is it yours?

 **a.** He didn’t sow discord.

 **b.** He didn’t use anybody’s ear for a garbage can.

 **c.** Loving the Savior & loving the saints is what revival is all about.

 **ILLUS**.: Philemon wasn’t concerned about his own ego. He was concerned about what glorified God & edified the saints. Love seeks the benefit of the object loved. You can tell everyone how much you love them while tearing them down. You can give them a hug & stick a knife in their back. Want to be a friend to the preacher? Love God, love His children & love lost souls!

**III. ARE YOU A SOUL WINNER? V.6 “…the communication of thy faith”**

**A.** Soul Winners Are The Preacher’s Friend Because They Increase the Crowd:

**ILLUS**.: Nothing gets the preacher any more excited than hearing that someone has won someone to Christ, & then sees them bring them out to church!

D.L. Moody was preaching in a YMCA meeting (when they were Bible-believers!) & saw a bunch of people greeting people as they came in & engaging them in conversation. Moody asked, “What are they doing?” The reply was “They are doing personal work. They are soul-winners.” There were 45 of them. Before Moody preached 44 of them had won someone to Christ & when Moody gave the invitation, they brought them down the aisle to make it public! That will excite a preacher. Someone came to Moody & said “I don’t like the way you win souls.” Mr. Moody said “I’m not particularly fond of it myself. How do you do it?” He sputtered, “Well, I don’t do it.” Moody said: “I like the way I do it better than the way you don’t do it! I guess I’ll just keep on doing it my way.” REVIVAL FIRES!

**B.** Soul Winners Are The Preacher’s Friend Because They Have The Same Interest:

**IV. ARE YOU A REFRESHER? v.7 & v.20**

**A.** Cultivate A Good Spirit:

 **1.** The only time some folks talk to the preacher is when they have a problem, or want to share some gossip, or complain about someone or something.

 **2.** Be careful of “dumping” some garbage on the preacher just before a service.

**B.** Cultivate The Gift of Exhortation:

 1. Preachers are human & they get discouraged (cf. Elijah, Jn. The Baptist,etc) & they need people around them who will refresh them, not burden them.

 2. One man said to me “I have the gift of criticism” - it’s not in the Bible!

 3. A couple of my deacons are “refreshers” - they always have a word of encouragement.

 4. A number of the people in this church are true friends - they are refreshers!

**ILLUS**.: When I was having real bad days of pain, some “refresher” would send a card of encouragement or a note w/a Scripture verse, or a bouquet of flowers, or some chocolate candy.

When I was fighting one of the biggest battles in this ministry & had lost one of my best friends, the only thing that got me thru that were the “refreshers.” They showed themselves to be my friends.

**V. ARE YOU WILLING TO DO MORE THAN REQUIRED? v.21**

**A.** Go The Extra Mile:

**ILLUS**.: Jesus said: “Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” Mt.5:41 According to Roman law, if a soldier told a Jewish citizen to carry his bag 1 mile, he had no options, but he didn’t have to go one step farther. His duty was fulfilled. But Jesus said to go 2 miles. The extra mile was for Jesus! The principle is found also in Lk.17:10. Lk.17:10

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

 **1.** To be profitable servants we need to do more than our duty, more than required, more than commanded.

  **2.** Philemon was the preacher’s friend because he was willing to do more than asked of him.

**ILLUS**.: Many Christians are looking to do less, not more, than required or requested. We look for loopholes instead of opportunities. You say the preacher asks to much of us, when actually you should do more than the preacher preaches.

**IV. ARE YOU A PRAYER PARTNER? V.22**

**ILLUS**.: During my recent surgery, the most comforting thing of all was a note or card assuring me of prayer support. Your prayers affect my life, my preaching & my power. The greatest friend I have in these pews are folks who regularly pray for me. Paul was a prisoner when he wrote to Philemon & knew the power of his convert’s prayers. (Cf.v.19)

**A.** Share the Preacher’s Blessings:

 **1.** If God blesses me & my ministry thru your prayer support, you will share in the blessings & rewards.

**ILLUS**.: D.L. Moody had two ladies who prayed for God’s power on him. One day their prayers were answered & God’s power came. Whereas he used to have 10 souls saved in his meetings, preaching the same messages, he would have 100! Don’t you know these ladies share in his rewards?! REVIVAL FIRES!

 **2.** If people would pray for their preacher as much as some complain about him, they soon wouldn’t have anything to complain about.

**CONCL**.: Paul the preacher had a layman friend who proved himself to be a true preacher’s friend. He was a FELLOW-LABORER, COMMITTED, A SOUL-WINNER, A ‘REFRESHER,’ WAS WILLING TO DO MORE THAN ASKED & WAS A PRAYER PARTNER. “ARE YOU THE PREACHER’S FRIEND?”