

God's BFF
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Romans 10:4-15

Christ is the goal of the Law, which leads to righteousness for all who have faith in God.

Moses wrote that anyone who insists on using the law code to live right before God soon discovers it's not so easy—every detail of life regulated by fine print! But trusting God to shape the right living in us is a different story—no precarious climb up to heaven to recruit the Messiah, no dangerous descent into hell to rescue the Messiah. So, what exactly was Moses saying?

The word that saves is right here, as near as the tongue in your mouth, as close as the heart in your chest.

It's the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—"Jesus is my Master"—embracing, body and soul, God's work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That's it. You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That's salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: "God has set everything right between him and me!"

Scripture reassures us, "No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it." It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help."

So how can they call on someone they don't have faith in? And how can they have faith in someone they haven't heard of? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it?

That's why Scripture exclaims, "A sight to take your breath away! Grand processions of people telling all the good things of God!"

It's very odd, what became of today's message. As I read this scripture, prayed about it and asked God, what does this say to me ... what is being said right here, right now that is important for me and us to hear and take about ... my mind kept going toward friendship with God.

Paul is talking to the Romans about their salvation. They've become so focus on "the law" and "doing religion perfectly" – but for the wrong reasons. Not so that they can be intimate with God. Not so that they can experience and share the teachings of Christ. But rather, to "be perfect" as a demonstration to others. It's about them.

Paul reiterates to them, "remember what Moses was saying." I.E. I'm telling you now, what Moses told the Israelites back then – salvation, life, ETERNAL life is about our relationship with God. "The law" is a guide so that we can have a vibrant and flourish life in which we experience joy and share that joy with everyone other. THAT is salvation.

The law isn't an object, distant from you, but rather it's in you; your heart. And God is part of that – in your heart and soul is God and “the law.” Being in relationship – in friendship – with God, that is the law.

IS GOD YOUR BFF or your BAE? (BEFORE ANYONE ELSE)

If I asked you to describe the relationship between you and your BFF or your BAE, how would you describe it? What adjectives would you use?

- * closeness
- * deepness
- * connected
- * real
- * sharing everything
- * open
- * honest

I read an article by licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Andrea Bonior and author, Shasta Nelson about understanding and defining TRUE friendship – about knowing if someone is really your BEST friend. The article listed many factors that determine one's BFF status and as I read it, I kept thinking, “I have that kind of friendship with a human, but do I have that kind of friendship with God?”because I want that. Here's what they had to say:¹

1. You trust them
 - a. No fear of betrayal.
 - b. God will set things right because that's what God does.
2. They trust you
 - a. With a BFF trust MUST go both ways
 - b. Can you say that you trust God or that God can trust you? Looking at God's relationships with those in the Bible like the Israelites, Moses, Abraham, David ... is God someone we can trust?
3. Consistency
 - a. Whether you see each other weekly, monthly or even yearly, there is still that sense of consistency; that they're “in your life” and things will pick up whether they left off. “For us to feel safe and feel like you can rely on that person, we still have to have some pattern that feels comfortable and familiar to our relationship where we believe we could reach out to that person.”
 - b. God is always there – are we? Remember that God wants to be in relationship with us – do we show up and provide those opportunities for friendship with God? Or do we only God to God when we need something? How consistent are we with God?
4. You interact in multiple ways
 - a. Phone call, texting, mail, Facebook, in-person – it doesn't matter. HOW you interact isn't important – just that you do.
 - b. This can be funny because wouldn't we all want to be able to get a call or an email from God? It would be so much easier, right. But it's not about the HOW, but DOING. I think of that line, “call your mother.” Just “call on God!”
5. You're vulnerable with each other
 - a. Those who are truly vulnerable with another person know a lot about them. The more you know about each other, the more we feel safe having shown ourselves, the more things we've gone through together, the more we've seen each other in different ways.” Bonior added, “There's got to be a level vulnerability with each other—being willing to open yourself up to

¹ <https://hellogiggles.com/love-sex/friends/signs-your-friend-is-your-best-friend/>

that person and know that they've got your back. That's got to be paramount. You reveal parts of yourself to them that you might not reveal to other people—and they love you anyway.

- b. Being completely vulnerable is hard, but rewarding. God sees and God knows, but when you actively and intentionally ARE vulnerable with God, we feel closer. It's sharing with God that you are struggling with faith, that you aren't sure about what to do or say ... that brings you closer in your friendship with God. You reveal parts of yourself to your best friend that you might not reveal to other people—and they love you anyway. And in return, God reveals God's self to you, more and more.
6. You feel seen by them
 - a. "Most of us just want friends who see us and affirm us and believe in us and if we could do that for each other, we will probably be able to survive almost anything,"
 - b. Isn't that what we want from God? Believe in that feeling because it's real and it happens. It's called GRACE.
 7. You motivate one another
 - a. "A best friend should be somebody who makes you want to be a better person," Bonior said. "They make you feel inspired and you inspire each other to do better. Maybe they're living their life in such a way that you get motivation. So that means that you genuinely admire this person and they admire you. And that even though you show each other the most embarrassing parts of yourself, overall, there's respect there."
 - b. Jesus life, death and resurrection – now there's motivation. Jesus experienced temptation, trials and unfathomable challenges, remaining sinless. Teaching care and compassion. The GOSPEL is motivating – love! Love unconditionally. When we believe in the Gospel and share it – it is motivational for us and those we touch. Our relationship with Jesus Christ is beyond motivating.
 8. You tell them things first
 - a. Imagine something has happened to you at work—maybe you got a raise or maybe you had a disagreement with your boss. In the words of the Ghostbusters: Who you gonna call? According to Bonior, the answer is your bestie. "Your best friend should be somebody that when something happens to you—good or bad—you want to call them right away. They come first on that list. You want their opinion on things and you want their understanding on things," Bonior said. So, while your parents, siblings, or significant other may be high on that list too, your BFF is at the top with them. And even if it's not a phone call per se, you'll be sharing your news with them one way or another.
 - b. Do we share EVERYTHING with God? Yes, God is omnipotent, but God wants us to have that dialogue – "God, isn't it amazing that I got this great job. I'm so grateful."
 9. They are there for the good and the bad
 - a. a true best friend should be somebody that—good news or bad news—you want to share it with them." And when you do share, they'll be there to listen.
 - b. We always share the bad with God – but what about the good? Think about your earthly BFF...what it would be like if you only went to them to share the bad things?
 10. You share the same values
 - a. You don't have to be exactly like the person," Bonior said. "But you have to have enough in common that makes you want to do some of the same things at least. And that you find some of the same things important.
 - b. I'm not perfect like Jesus and I never will be, but I hopefully share the same values as Jesus? That's why we approach "the law" with the understanding that it's in our heart. My values aren't etched on a tablet or written on paper. They're not a tangible, legalistic document. They're a part of my heart and soul - that's why we have faith in the law of GOING TO GOD.

Understanding that Jesus Christ, his ways and teachings are the goal that speak from our hearts.

11. You affirm each other

- a. Regardless of whether you're focusing on the same or different things, you affirm them, support them, and see opportunities to get to know each other better through those affirmations.
- b. We affirm God in our praise and adoration and in turn, we are affirmed in the multitude of blessings that we receive.

12. You put in the effort

- a. Life gets difficult and transitions create challenges like moving across the country. Regardless of that event, you put in the time and effort to maintain your friendship – because it's worth it.
- b. Good friendships and good marriages require effort. You have to work at them and put in the effort. We **MUST** do this with God. Not by following laws and rules perfectly like the Pharisees and Sadducees expected of the Romans, but rather in our desire to simply believe in the Gospel – to have faith in message of Jesus Christ to love God and one another.

13. You fight

- a. It's not a matter of not having conflict, it's a matter of being able to communicate and work through the conflict. BFF friendships have experienced hurt feelings and also the benefits of working through them and healing – becoming closer and stronger.
- b. Too many people struggle with the idea of being mad at God and fighting with God. It's God – I can't be mad at GOD!? Well, if you want to have a real relationship with God, you need to trust and believe that you can be.

14. You're honest

- a. You share difficult things, such as being hurt by them. Being able to tell a friend, "what you said or did hurt me," means something. It means they matter enough – they mean that much to you.
- b. This is part of that "fighting" thing. You're honest because it's important to be truthful with them and yourself. By being honest with God, confessing that you're flawed, broken and in need of help – deepens your relationship with God because it removes barriers. True friendship involves such faith.

15. They may not always be there – AND THAT'S OKAY.

- a. Sometimes you're having a dilemma that you want your BFF to weigh in on, but maybe they're a bit too occupied to give you the support you need. "There's a whole bunch of reasons why our close friends can't be there for us all the time and it has nothing to do with them wanting to be malicious or to disappoint us." BFF's understand this and can handle this – it goes back to the honesty, vulnerability and trust.
- b. We have all experienced that feeling that God isn't there. If we expect God to be there whenever we feel its important or necessary, then that kind of friendship can be controlling and manipulative. God is omnipotent and omniscient, but not to be at my beck and call. Not to serve my needs, good or bad, when I DETERMINE IT'S TIME. That's the reality of friendship with God. God sometimes isn't there – and there may be reasons. We trust in our friend God that those reasons are valid.

16. You like spending time together.

- a. with our closest, healthiest friendship, we are leaving their presence having been affirmed, laughing, gift-giving, being goofy together, having moments of inspiration together—anything that leaves us feeling positive feelings as opposed to feeling judged, competitive, or passive-aggressive.
- b. This is SALVATION. Have eternal life that is described as affirming, laughing, joyous, goofy. Did you ever think of eternal life as goofy? Why not? Why does "eternal life," have to be clouds and

harps? Can't spending time with God, in this life and that to come, be goofy, inspiring and fun? Imagine THAT kind of faith, trust and friendship with God!

This is not about ignoring the law or discarding it. Moses and Paul are instructing us that "the law is nothing, pointless, without trusting God to help us, shape us and guide us on HOW to truly understand and *live* the law. It's not about a God who is so bent on perfection (adhering to ALL of these laws, perfectly, all of the time) or else! THE LAW IS IN US, NATURALLY. IT'S HOW GOD CREATED US. It's not a separate book or tablet – the law is part of our hearts and souls.

Scripture reassures us, "No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it." It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help." (11-13).

Caught up in religions and the "right God" or the "right practices" – Paul reminds us that it's not about religion. It's not about Jews vs. Greeks. It's not about right laws, right faiths or right customs. It's about everyone without exception being in relationship with their creator. Not letting anything come between he or she or they going to their creator. That's a relationship, a BFF relationship that I want with God – that I want ALL of us to have with God.

I think this is why as I read and studied this scripture that I focused on friendship. I've been taught (and I'm sure many of you have been also) to be in relationship with God like God is a punitive, ruler that can send us to heaven or hell with the snap of a finger, unless we're good. Unless we follow "the rules." I want God as a BFF – to be goofy with. To laugh and cry with. AND...when I need help, to go to and say, "Help me, Lord. Speak to my heart. Help me be better."

That's the good news Jesus teaches us! Trust that God ALREADY loves you unconditionally and only wants one thing from you, "relationship." Lord, help me. Help me to stop focusing on *my ability* to "do good works" by following "the law" and trust in the effective, divine action of God in Christ. We have faith in God and God's divine action, brings Christ so near us that "the word" is in our hearts and on our lips. Let us tell all about the good things of God!

God – be our BFF and may we be yours.

AMEN.