

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Friendship

(Jerry Fite)

Most hold friendship in high regard. Is not the pet dog being honored when we hear “*the dog is man’s best friend*”? Above the animal kingdom, is not the wife or husband being honored when the spouse says she or he is “*my best friend*”? Having friends and being a friend is important in life.

Solomon writes, “*A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24 -New King James Version). Or did he write, “*A man of too many friends, comes to ruin, but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother*” (Proverbs 18:24 – New American Standard Version). Without going into textual criticism, but recognizing that a variant reading of the same verse exists among different manuscripts, what should we take away from this verse?

Taking the later, we must take friendship very seriously. A high standard for those we take close to our heart is a wise demand. Having many so-called friends leans itself to the possibility that some will not be good for us. They can lead to our ruin,

by not really caring about our well-being, but only seeing what they can get out of us for their own selfish benefit.

The former reading takes us on a totally different path. From having friends, we take away from the verse the necessity of being a friend. If we are going to have friends, we must actively be a friend. If you are having trouble in securing friendships, try the proactive approach of being friendly.

The variant readings have both been proven true through experience. The later part of the verse reminds constant in the variant manuscripts. It reminds us of the importance of having friendships outside the family. A sibling, due to rivalry within the family, may not be there for us in the time of need. This was especially true when Proverbs was penned and polygamy was being practiced. Two brothers may have the same father, but different mothers. Even blood lines might not prevail in overcoming jealousy, but might even be a factor in causing dissension. A true friend is there by our side in time of need, even when a brother refuses.

It has been said that a friend is like a star. We may not see it shining in times of prosperity, but it shines the brightest against the darkness of adversity. Hushai was such a friend to David. In the list of those who served David by overseeing his cellars of oil, herds of animals, and offering wisdom; we read, “*and Hushai the Archite was the King’s friend*” (1 Chronicles 27:33).

In the dark days of David having to flee from his own rebellious son Absalom, we see Hushai being a friend to David. When David ascended the mount of Olives to weep, with head covered and feet bare, “*behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head*” (1 Samuel 15:32).

Hushai also proved to be a friend by helping David overcome the counsel that the conspirator Ahithophel was offering to Absalom. He was selfless by putting himself in danger for David by being a spy (2 Samuel 15:37-17:23). Friends share our grief, and selflessly serve our needs. They shine as stars!