

A Brother Like Luke

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As the end of Paul's life drew near, he found himself imprisoned in Rome. Knowing he was soon to be executed, Paul was comforted by his hope in Christ (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Further comfort accompanied the apostle in the presence of a special friend and brother in Christ. Writing what was to be his final New Testament letter, Paul told Timothy:

9 "Make every effort to come to me soon;
10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.
11 **Only Luke is with me.** Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service."
2 Timothy 4:9-11 (Emphasis Mine)

Those are such beautiful words. They say so much about the character of Luke. Later in that same chapter Paul told Timothy:

"At my first defense **no one supported me, but all deserted me;** may it not be counted against them."
2 Timothy 4:16 (Emphasis Mine)

Actually, all but one had forsaken Paul, Luke was still present. When you read of the trials experienced by the apostle in preaching the Gospel, remember that Luke was a constant traveling companion with Paul, no doubt experiencing much of the same (cf. 2 Cor. 11:22-30). How comforting it was to have his close friend and brother in Christ by his side.

Think of what it took for Luke to be present at that time. Paul was in Rome, where the wicked Nero ruled as Caesar. This was not a safe place for Christians. Still, Luke was present. What a faithful brother!

We all have friends to help us in life. When we think of good friends in the Bible, perhaps most of us think of Jonathan and David. What a special friendship these two shared.

Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.

1 Samuel 18:1 (Emphasis Mine)

That's a close friend! That's what friendships are all about. "Souls" knit together. They share the experiences of life together, enjoying the good times, and holding on tight to each other when the storms of life beat upon one or the other. This is the kind of friendship Luke and Paul enjoyed. They were knit together in soul.

Do you have a friend like that? Someone like Luke? Someone who is always there for you? A special friend with whom you have been through all kinds of weather, good and bad? If so, you know the blessing and joy of a good friend. Solomon described it well:

"A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity."
Proverbs 17:17

The idea of that proverb is that there are friends, and then there are (what we might call) close friends. Those close friends, at times, become closer to us than family.

Sharing the difficult experiences of life: the trials, troubles, and heartaches, brings people closer together. A good friend will always be there for you. If that friend sticks with you through the storms of life, he will become more than just a friend. He will become as a brother. That was Luke to Paul.

However, Luke was a brother to Paul in a much more significant way than just being a close friend. Luke was a brother in Christ.

As brethren in Christ, we have some responsibilities toward one another. Notice a few Scriptures:

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.

Romans 12:10

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

1 Corinthians 12:26

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.

1 Peter 1:22

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

1 John 3:16-18

As a brother in Christ, Luke modeled all the instruction contained in those verses, and the many more that could be listed. How about us? It is one thing to be friends with one another. Being friends is good. However, while friends may be souls knit together, it is only in Christ that we are truly knit together for eternity.

Let us be more than friends. We must recognize that we are brethren first. Like Luke, let us strive to fulfill, in love, our responsibilities toward one another in Christ.