

"The Importance of Good Friends"

Part 1

Colossians 4:10-15

Introduction: Someone ran an add in a newspaper in Kanas that said this, "I will listen to you talk for thirty minutes without comment for \$5.00." The man received 10-20 phone calls per day. Some people were so lonely and so desperate that they would gladly spend the \$5.00 to get thirty minutes of companionship. There are so many lonely people in our world today. It is so sad but it is true. Last week in our study we looked at how important it is to have friends because God made us in a way that we need one another.

Proverbs 27:17

¹⁷ Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

⁹ Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

¹⁰ For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

We see many examples in the Bible of friends helping friends.

Exodus 17:10-12

¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

¹² But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Moses had Aaron and Hur who helped hold his hands up until Israel prevailed over Amalek.

1 Samuel 18:1-3

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

² And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

³ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

David had Jonathan as a good friend.

Ruth 1:16-18

¹⁶ And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

¹⁷ Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

¹⁸ When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Naomi had Ruth as a special friend who was stedfastly minded to go where she went.

Daniel 1:6-7

⁶ Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

⁷ Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

Daniel had three good friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Even Jesus had friends who were His disciples.

John 15:15

¹⁵ Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Paul was another man who had many friends and tonight as we work toward the end of this letter, let us see what we can gather from those mentioned at the end of the letter.

➤ **Friends overcome differences.**

Notice Colossians 4:10-11

Here are three men who are Jews. Aristarchus, Marcus, Jesus, which is called Justus.

Notice Colossians 4:12-14

Here we see three more names who are Gentiles. Epaphras, Luke, the physician, and Demas. Paul was also a Jew and these men all worked together. Now to us that does not seem like it is something that is significant but it is when you consider how the Jews viewed the Gentiles. The Gentiles were looked at as people whom God created just to fuel the fires of hell. Remember Peter's meeting with Cornelius in Acts 10?

Acts 10:25-28

²⁵ And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

²⁶ But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

²⁸ And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

John 4:7-9

⁷ There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

⁸ (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

⁹ Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

In Paul's day Judaism had become very discriminatory. There was much hatred between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews despised the Gentiles and namely the Romans for they ruled over them. The Romans had taken away their right to execute criminals and they laid heavy tax burdens upon them. Therefore, there was no love lost between the Jew and the Gentiles. In the Roman Empire there was something known as the Pax Romana. This was a period of peace that lasted some two hundred years between the different nationalities. This happened through a peace keeping/police force that prevented civil unrest between the Jews and the Gentiles. During Paul's third missionary journey while he was in Ephesus there was a riot which broke out headed by Demetrius. Many of the city

turned upon Paul and the believers and dragged Aristarchus and Gaius into the theatre. The town clerk broke up the mob with a few words.

Acts 19:38-41

³⁸ *Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.*

³⁹ *But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.*

⁴⁰ *For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.*

⁴¹ *And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.*

The town clerk was fearful of dealing with the peacekeeping/police force. This is needed in a world full of sinners. But it should not be needed in the church. Paul's friends overlooked differences and it was the Gospel that had brought them together.

Application:

This is what brings the church together also. Think about how different we all are. We come from different backgrounds and different families. We have many different ideas and educations. In reality we should never all get along, but we do because we are all united through the Gospel of Jesus Christ just as Paul's friends were.

- **Friends stay close through difficult times.**

Notice Colossians 4:10

Aristarchus came from Macedonia and may have been saved on Paul's second missionary journey.

Acts 19:29

²⁹ *And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.*

We see he was from Macedonia so he may have been from Phillipi, Thessalonica, or Berea. Either way the man was saved and he was with Paul through many trials. Here in Acts 19, he is with him during the riot. It is believed that he made the trip with Paul to Rome which

means he was there through the shipwreck. Now as we come to Colossians Paul calls him a fellow prisoner so he is still right there with Paul.

Application:

True friends will stay by your side no matter how difficult the path becomes. Ruth stayed with Naomi as she went back home with nothing. Daniel's friends stayed true with him as he refused the king's food. They were men who encouraged Daniel when the trials came. Jonathan remained true to David throughout his life and David did the same for Jonathan. David honored his promise to show kindness to his family after he was king.

Getting to the point, this is how true friends respond when trouble comes rushing in or when the tests of life come upon us. Aristarchus would stay with Paul right into his prison stay. What an encouragement he must have been to Paul. Might we be the same toward our friends as well. All of us go through storms and trials and when we do it is a comfort to know that we have friends that are there.

- **Friends extend forgiveness.**

Notice Colossians 4:10 again.

Here we see Marcus, who is John Mark. Let us see what had happened earlier on Paul's first missionary trip.

Acts 13:13

¹³ Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Here we see that John Mark quit the first missionary journey. This then caused great tension between Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 15:36-40

³⁶ And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the LORD, and see how they do.

³⁷ And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

³⁸ But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

³⁹ And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

⁴⁰ *And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.*

Then we come to Colossians and we see that Paul and John Mark are together, which tells us the differences were worked out between them.

Application:

As believers we do not overlook the sins of our friends but instead, we hold them accountable and we come alongside them and help them back to their walk with the Lord.

Hebrews 10:23-25

²³ *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

²⁴ *And let us consider[watch] one another to provoke[prod] unto love and to good works:*

²⁵ *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

We are to be there to encourage our friends to repent and help them pick up the pieces.

John 11:43-44

⁴³ *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

⁴⁴ *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

Conclusion:

Next week we shall pick this thought up again. In closing I want to share a verse that best describes how the church is to treat one another like family and friends.

John 13:33-35

³⁴ *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*