

The Marks of a Friend

“And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.”

Acts 27:3

“...And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.”

Acts 10:24

“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.”

Acts 9:26-27

Dangerous New Convert

It is not surprising that the disciples did not believe that Saul had been converted. Just some time before they recalled how that Stephen had been brought before the Sanhedrin on false charges of blasphemy. At the conclusion of Stephen's defense the people had gone wild. They rushed at him, putting their hands over their ears at what they felt was blasphemy. They forced him to the **“Place of Execution”** and threw him into the pit. As the false witnesses began to throw huge stones at Stephen it was Saul who held their coats. Immediately, there was a full-scale attack on the believers. Almost immediately the church at Jerusalem reduced, and nearly vanished, as Christians escaped, taking the gospel everywhere. Saul, a zealous Jew, was a ringleader in the onslaught of assault against the Christians. He chased, beat, tried them in court, jailed, and stoned them. He had one purpose in mind, and that was to stop the church.

However, we know that the persecution actually launched the church forward! Believers were spread everywhere in nearly two hundred different towns. The ringleader who had tried to stop the church was now part of spreading the gospel. Could it be a trap? Would he go ahead and trick them and launch his greatest attack? You can see, there was a reason to doubt and be afraid. After all, it was on this very trip to Damascus, with letters of authority to arrest Christians in his hand, that he claimed to be stopped by the Lord.

Encouraging New Friend

It was Barnabas, **“The Son of Encouragement”** that took a chance on Saul and adopted him as a friend and brought him to the disciples and introduced him. Later, it was Barnabas that called on Paul to come and assist him in the church in Antioch. Then it was Paul who accompanied him on a missionary journey. At first, we see the words **“Barnabas and Paul”** written in the Book of Acts. Then we see a transition to **“Paul and Barnabas.”**

Eventually, Barnabas is no longer mentioned at all. We do not find Barnabas becoming jealous, hateful, or envious over the growth in popularity of the young convert Paul. Rather, he encouraged and strengthened him. The only time that we see a sharp conflict between the two is when Paul refuses to take John Mark with them on a missionary trip. John Mark had retreated back home on an earlier trip. Barnabas felt like John Mark needed a second chance.

Barnabas was a man who gave people a second chance. Because Barnabas took a chance on Saul we see later that he proved himself, and had many other friends that ministered to him.

True Friends

In the Old Testament, there is a story of friendship between two men. They were David and Jonathan. Jonathan was next in line to inherit the throne. Because of the disobedience and rebellion of his father, the throne had been taken from him and was to be given to David. Jonathan had every reason to

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be jealous and envious of David. Instead, they became the best of friends and made a life long covenant to remain friends. Jonathan loved David even more when he found out that David was to be the king. Jonathan was able to recognize the will of God. He didn't mind losing the throne (**position**), but he could not lose his friendship. His relationship with his brother was more important. He would not step on his friend in order to get a position.

What Is A Friend?

- ❖ **“A friend is one who is not hard to find when you are penniless.**
- ❖ **A friend is one who makes your grief less painful, your adversity more bearable.**
- ❖ **A friend is one who joyfully sings with you when you are on the mountaintop, and silently walks beside you through the valley.**
- ❖ **A friend is one with whom you are comfortable, to whom you are loyal, through whom you are blessed, and for whom you are grateful.**
- ❖ **A friend is one who warms you by his presence, trusts you with his secrets, and remembers you in his prayers.**
- ❖ **A friend is one who gives you a spark of assurance when you doubt your ability to fulfill your noblest aspiration, climb your special mountain, or reach your secret goal.**
- ❖ **A friend is one who helps you bridge the gaps between loneliness and fellowship, frustration, and confidence, despair and hope, setbacks and success.**
- ❖ **A friend is one who is available to you, understanding of you, and patient with you. A friend is no less a gift from God**

than is a talent; no less a treasure than life itself.

❖ **A friend is also someone who listens.”**

William Arthur Ward

More important than the friendships established between Barnabas and Paul, and David and Jonathan, there is some one who has died to become our closest friend. He is Jesus Christ, “... **a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.**” (Proverbs 18:24) This is because He wants to come inside and live in us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He is the truest friend of all. He is the God of the second chance. We deserved to be lost but He has redeemed us through the death of the cross. The mark of a friend is written on His hands.

The Marks of a Friend

A touching song by, “**Youth On A Mission**”, a choir of Parkway Apostolic Church is entitled, “**The Marks of a Friend.**” The words describe for us the role of a friend that Jesus plays in our lives.

It also allows us to know some of the areas in which we can become better friends to others.

**“The marks of a friend,
A love that binds a wound,
A heart full of compassion, unselfish,
Blind to all your faults and failures.
Someone to listen to
The secrets of the soul.
The one who won't condemn
But leads you to the truth
And never lets you go.**

**And the truest friend of all
Bears the marks upon His hands.
And the marks of a friend
Are written in His hands.”**

Leslie Weatherhead, told a World War II story of a young soldier, who had a friend that was shot down in battle. In spite of direction from his leader not to go into the battle, he rushed into the enemy territory to rescue his friend. Reaching his friend he placed him on his shoulder and made his way back to the

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place of safety. Passing through the enemy lines he too was shot down. He was rushed to the clinic and soon the leader of the group came into the room.

“I told you not to go!”, he lamented, crying over the dying man. “It was not worth it! Now you are also dying. It was not worth it!”

“Yes it was,” the young soldier moaned in response. “It was worth it because when I reached my friend, he said, ‘I knew you’d come!’”

Friendship Footnotes

“He who seeks a friend without a fault remains without one.”

“A faithful friend is a sure shelter. Whoever has found one has found a rare treasure.”

One mother often told her son growing up, “Be careful whom you kick on the way up because you may need the same person on your way down.”

“True friends are those who, when you’ve made a fool of yourself, don’t think you’ve done a permanent job.”

“For the friendship of two, the patience of one is necessary.”

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

Proverbs 17:17

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

Proverbs 27:6

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

Proverbs 27:17

“You can have no better epitaph (grave stone) than that which is inscribed in the hearts of your friends.”

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

Zechariah 13:6

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

Proverbs 18:24

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” John 15:13-14

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Barnabas was the Son of _____.
2. Why would the Church have been doubtful that Saul had really been converted? _____

3. Persecution did not stop the church. It _____ it.
4. Where was Saul knocked down? _____

5. Why did Barnabas want to take John Mark on the missionary journey again? _____

6. Who are two great friends in the Old Testament? _____

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7. Why could Jonathan have been jealous of David? _____

8. What is a "friend" according to William A. Ward? (Write only in the space provided here) _____

9. What type of friend is Jesus? _____

10. What are some marks of a friend? ____

11. Where does the truest friend of all bear the marks of this friendship and love? ____

12. Quote one Scripture from Proverbs on friendship. _____

13. What will happen if you are looking for a friend without a fault? _____

14. What is a faithful friend? _____

