

A FRIEND THAT STICKETH CLOSER THAN A BROTHER

TEXT: Proverbs 18:24: There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Friendship is the only thing in the world concerning the usefulness of which all mankind are agreed. Friendship seems as necessary an element of the comfortable existence in this world as fire and water or even air itself.



A man may drag along a miserable existence in proud, solitary dignity, but this life is scarcely life — it is nothing but existence. The tree of life has been stripped of the leaves of hope and the fruits of joy. He who would be happy here must have friends; and he who would be happy hereafter must — above all — find a Friend in the world to come in the Person of God, the Father.

Friendship, however, though very pleasing and exceedingly blessed, has been the cause of the greatest misery to men when it has been unworthy and unfaithful, for just in proportion as a good friend is sweet, a false friend is full of bitterness. A faithful friend is sharper than an adder's tooth. It is sweet to have confidence in someone; but oh, how bitter to have that support snapped and to receive a grievous fall as the effect of your confidence.

Fidelity is an absolute necessity in a true friend. We cannot rejoice in men unless they will stand faithful to us. Solomon declares that there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. That friend, I suppose, he never found in the poms and vanities of the world. He had tried them all, but he found them empty. He passed through all their joys, but he found them vanities of vanities. The Poor Savage spoke from sad experiences when he said: *"You'll find the friendship of the world a show, a mere outward show. 'Tis like the harlot's tears, the statesman's promise, or false patriot's zeal — full of fair seeming, but delusion still."* And so, for the most part, they are.

Fidelity is an absolute necessity in a true friend.

The world's friendship is ever brittle. Trust it, and you have trusted a robber. Rely upon it, and you have leaned upon a thorn — ay, worse than that — upon a spear which shall pierce you to the soul with agony.

Yet, Solomon says he had found ***“a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”***

Proverbs 18:24b: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Not in the haunts of his unbridled pleasures, nor in the wanderings of his unlimited resources, but in the Person of Jesus, the Son of God, the Friend of sinners.

In order to prove this from facts, we appeal to such of you as have had Him for a friend. Will you not, each of you at once, give your verdict that this is neither more or less than an unexaggerated truth? He loved you before all worlds, long 'ere the daystar flung its ray across the darkness, before the wings of angels had flapped in the un navigated ether, before aught of creation had struggled from the womb of nothingness. God – even our God – had set His heart upon His children. Since that time, has He once swerved? Has He once turned aside? Bear me witness that He has been a certain Friend in uncertain circumstances.



You have despised Him; have taken His Name in vain; laughed at Him; broken His Sabbath; despised His Word. Did He forsake you? No. And at last He arrested you by His grace. He humbled you. He made you penitent. He brought you to His feet, and He forgave you all your sins. Since then, has He left you? You have often left Him. Has He ever left you? You have had many trials and troubles; has He ever deserted you?

True friendship can only be made between true men. Bad men can pretend to love each other, but their friendship is a rope of sand which shall be broken at any convenient season. But if a man have a sincere heart within him, and be true and noble, then we may confide in him. We find no stain or tarnish in the character of Jesus. Who can be compared to this Friend that sticketh closer than a brother?

You may depend upon the fact that a friend will tell you of your faults in a kind and considerate manner. Fawning hypocrites, insidious flatterers, are the seeping and ashes of friendship. They are but parasites upon the noble tree. True friends put enough trust in you to openly tell you of your faults.

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Give me for a friend the man who will speak honestly of me before my face; who will not first tell one neighbor and then another, but who will come straight to my house and say, *“Sir, I feel there is such and such a thing in you*

which, as a brother, I must tell you of.” That man is a true friend; he has proved himself to be so, for we never get any praise for telling people of their faults. We rather hazard their dislike. A man will sometimes thank you for it, but he doesn't like you any better.

Praise is the thing we all love. Now, child of God, has Christ ever flattered you? Has He not told you of your faults right truly? Has He not pricked your conscience even upon what you thought to gloss over? Your little secret sins? Has He not provoked your conscience to thunder in your ears, notes of terror because of your misdeeds? Well, then, you may trust Him, for He shows that faithfulness which renders a man right trustworthy.

A friendship which lasts does not take its risks in the chambers of mirth, nor is it fed and fattened there. You speak of a dear friend whom you acquired last night at the ballroom. Do not, I beseech you, misuse the word. **Friends are better things than those which grow in the hot house of pleasure.** Friendship is a more lasting plant than those. You have a friend, fairly wealthy, but what will he be when poverty raps upon your door? Then, is it so that fair weather friends will flee from us? Those are tight friends that come nearest to us when we are in trouble, in most distress; but those are not friends who speed themselves away when ill times come.

Has not Christ been near you when you were in the house of mourning? You find your friends where men find pearls, in caverns deep where darkness dwells. You found Jesus in your hour of trouble. It was on the bed of sickness that you first learned the value of His Name. It was in the hour of mental anguish that you first did lay hold of the hem of His garment; and since then your nearest, sweetest intercourse has been with Him in the hours of darkness.



The friendship of ignorance is not a very desirable one. I desire no man to call himself my friend if he does not know me. You suppose men to be different from what you were, then you discover their real character and you disregarded them. Many a friendship born in the darkness of ignorance has died suddenly in the light of a better acquaintance with each other.

Friendship and love, to be real, must not lie in words.

The qualities of your friends will be those of your enemies: cold friends — cold enemies; half friends — half enemies; warm friends — fervid (intensely hot) enemies. Knowing this to be a truth, I have congratulated myself when my enemies

have spoken fiercely against me. Well, I thought, my friends love me hard and fast; let my enemies be as hot as they please — it only indicates that the friends are proportionately firm in affection.

Then we draw this inference, that if Christ sticks close, and He is our Friend, then our enemies will stick close and never leave us till we die. Oh, Christian, because Christ sticks close, the devil will stick close, too. He will be at you and with you; the dog of Hell will never cease his howling until you reach the other side. No place in this world is out of the bowshot of that great enemy. Until you have crossed the stream, his arrows can reach you, and they will. If Christ gave Himself for you, the devil will do all he can to destroy you; if Christ has been long suffering to you, Satan will be persevering in hopes that Christ may forget you.

Be not disappointed — the louder the devil roars, the more proof you shall have of the Presence of Christ. *“Give me,”* said Rutherford, *“a roaring devil rather than a sleeping one; for sleeping devils make me slumber, but roaring ones provoke me to run to my Master.”*



Now, I have a question to ask — that question I ask to every man and woman in this place, to every child, too: Is Jesus Christ you Friend? Have you this Friend in the courts of Glory?

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