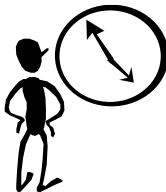


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:	
Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)	
Bible Study	4:00 p.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday:	
Bible Study	7:00 p. m.

How Jesus Dealt with His Friends

By Steve Goff

A true friend is not easily found. A trustworthy advocate who consistently manifests affection for us and who honestly seeks our best interest without ulterior motive is rare in this life. But one such friend available to all men is Jesus Christ. In temptation, we can find no greater comfort than from Him who was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. In tribulation, we have no surer companion, in victory no more joyful comrade. And his actions toward His disciples serve as a perfect illustration of what a true friend is.

Jesus loved His friends. His was not a selfish love, spent as an investment, expecting a reward for feigned affection. Rather, Jesus sought the best for others. And His love for His friends was constant. Not a fair-weather friend, Jesus exemplified Proverbs 17:17: *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”* He cried at the tomb of Lazarus, even knowing that He would raise this friend from death, prompting someone to say, *“Behold how he loved him”* (John 11:36). And he performed the ultimate expression of love, giving His own life as a sacrifice for sinners. Jesus explained, *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13).

Jesus was loyal to His friends. *“...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24). While teaching at Capernaum, Jesus was told that His mother and brothers waited to speak to Him. His loyalty to His disciples was exhibited by His reference to them as His true kin. *“For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother”* (Matthew 12:50). In life, Jesus forsook personal gain and comfort in order to teach His friends. And after His death and resurrection, Jesus promised his disciples, *“... I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). Through thick and thin, Jesus is a

loyal friend.

Jesus told the truth to His friends. Friends speak the truth, even when the words are hard to utter. A true friend will rebuke and admonish when such is needed. Jesus told the lukewarm Laodiceans, “*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent*” (Revelation 3:19). When His disciples displayed a lack of trust during a storm, Jesus rebuked them (Matthew 8:26). Jesus was a friend enough to prepare His disciples with instruction in the will of God. He was a friend enough to warn them of Satan’s deceits which would ensnare even Peter (Matthew 26:31-34). Jesus was a friend enough to express His innermost emotions as He anticipated the agony of crucifixion, saying, “... *My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me*” (Matthew 26:38). And Jesus displayed concern for His apostles, foretelling of His death and telling them, “*Do not let your heart be troubled...*” (John 14:1).

Jesus encouraged his friends to be righteous. This is the mark of a true friend. Young people (and others) often mistake interest for friendship. Those who claim to be friends may exert pressure to engage in premarital sex, drinking, taking drugs, or lascivious dancing. But these are not friends. What true friend would encourage action resulting in the loss of one’s soul? A true friend wants us to be what is best. Jesus was that kind of friend, encouraging His followers to shine forth in good works. (Matthew 5:16) and to walk the narrow way which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14).

Jesus prayed for his friends. In the final hours before His betrayal, Jesus prayed for His disciples. He prayed for their unity (John 17:11). He asked the Father to keep them from evil (verse 15). He prayed for their faithfulness to the truth (verse 17) and for their salvation and reward in heaven (verse 24).

Jesus set an example for his friends. Our Lord never asked His disciples to do anything new, untried, on their own. In all things, He paved the way and promised to be with us every step of the way. His impeccable life serves as our example, that we should follow His steps (I Peter 2:21). Teaching obedience, He obeyed even unto death. Teaching love for others, He gave his own life for mankind. Teaching humility, He washed the feet of His servants. Teaching forgiveness, He forgave those who, through hatred and envy, nailed Him to the cross. He the great example is!

From this study, we conclude two great lessons. First, the life of Jesus provides our greatest example of how to trust friends. A true friend acts in love, is loyal to the end, encourages righteousness, prays for his friends, and sets an example worthy of emulating.

Second, we are reminded that all these benefits of being a friend to Jesus may be claimed by those who obey Him. Jesus said, “*You are My friends if you do what I command you*” (John 15:14). To know that we have a loving and loyal friend who lived and died for us is to be assured that ours is the best friend a man could ever have. And so

with appreciative hearts and fervent voices we sing, "Jesus is all the world to me. And true to Him I'll be; Oh, how could I this friend deny, when He's so true to me? Following Him I know I'm right. He watches o're me day and night; Following Him by day and night, He's my friend."

The Pilate Philosophy

By Terry Wane Benton

The Pilate philosophy is to wash your hands of responsibility and to pretend there is no way to know the truth. "What is truth?" (John 18:38), he asked Jesus. There was also a "cancel-culture" mentality in his presence in the Jews wanting to get Jesus canceled by unjust elimination, crucifying Him to shut down the voice of truth. They could not handle the truth Jesus told. Pilate suddenly became complicit with the cancel-culture of his day by washing his hands when he knew Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. When Pilate asked, "What is truth?" he was complicit with a philosophy that can no longer administer justice because every man has his own "truth," allowing the criminal to operate under his own "truth" and each man just has different truths. The mob mentality was sure to prevail when the arm of justice that Pilate represented could no longer distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, justice from injustice. When judges fail here due to the pressures of cancel-culture mobs, we see injustice prevail in the courts, and the system begins to crumble.

We see the cancel-culture in full operation today, but it seems mixed in with the same blindness to the truth, unable anymore to accept the truth that a baby is really a baby in the womb, and a man is a man, a woman is a woman. What is "truth?" Our culture declares when it suits them. If a man wants to be a woman, what is true for him is true for him/her. And you must be canceled if you think there is absolute truth. Jesus declared that there is absolute truth (John 17:17). We must come away from the Pilate syndrome of believing that "truth" includes all kinds of lies that each person desires to tell themselves. When we become angry that truth is spoken in the pulpits and Bible classes, we have been conditioned into the Pilate philosophy and the cancel-culture of eliminating the voices of truth.

When we don't want people to hear the truth, we have made truth irrelevant, and we have adopted the Pilate philosophy that every person has their own truth if there is such a thing as truth. We have bought into the propaganda that conditions us to close our hearts and ears to the voice of truth, the word of God. Stand in the ways and see and ask for the old paths!

The Pilate philosophy does not work. It is simply not true.



Why Did Paul Appeal to His Roman Citizenship?

By Doy Moyer

Acts 16 tells us the story of Paul and Silas being arrested and imprisoned in Philippi. They sang praises while bound, others listened, and then an earthquake shaking the foundations set them free. Instead of running, Paul told the jailer, who was about to commit suicide, not to harm himself. We then read of the conversion of the jailer and his family.

Acts 16:35-39 then tells of the chief magistrates sending their police to release Paul and Silas. It's at this point that Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship: *"They beat us in public without a trial, although we are Roman citizens, and threw us in jail. And now are they going to send us away secretly? Certainly not! On the contrary, let them come themselves and escort us out."* Hearing that Paul was a citizen put fear into these officials, *"So they came to appease them, and escorting them from prison, they urged them to leave town."*

The question is, why did Paul wait until then to appeal to his citizenship? He was already free. Why didn't he do it earlier? Here are a few thoughts about that.

First, isn't it interesting that Paul was not using his citizenship for selfish reasons? Had he appealed to it earlier he could have avoided the jail time altogether. But he waited. There must have been a reason for this.

I realize that we cannot give an adamant answer here, but this is something, I believe, worth thinking about. Recall that the jailer had come to them and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Our minds immediately jump to salvation from sin, and this is indeed what was addressed. But there may be more to it.

Is it possible that the jailer was also wondering about being saved from impending judgment from the Romans because he was facing the prospect of losing those under his charge? He was about to kill himself for a reason, and he knew that there is something special about Paul and Silas. He could still lose his life because prisoners were set free, even after he had obeyed the gospel. Could this be avoided?

Here, then, is a suggestion to consider. Paul appealed to his citizenship at that moment, after being set free, not to use it selfishly or mock the officials, but rather to make a point that would force the officials not to punish the jailer. If they themselves had violated the law by what they did to Paul, then they cannot very well punish the jailer for what happened to those under his charge due to an earthquake.

Paul not only was instrumental in saving the jailer from his sins, but he was also saving the jailer's life and reputation by appealing to his own citizenship and making a point that forced the issue. Perhaps... just perhaps... while our heavenly citizenship is always most important, our earthly citizenship can be used for the benefit of others rather than for selfish reasons.

Just think about it.

