

Friendship

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place..... – Job 2:11

It is difficult if not impossible to journey through life without friends. Making friends is easy for some and an arduous labor for others. There are a multitude of variables that impact the genesis and the sustainability of relationships when sons and daughters of Adam engage in this phenomenon we call “friendship”. But what is a friend? We learn from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar both what they are and what they should never be...

These three friends of Job started off well. In Job chapter two, they heard of the calamity that had befallen Job – his catastrophic loss of wealth, family, and health. They could have merely sent regrets. They could have “prayed for him”. But true friendship knows there is more to do. So they came “every one from his own place.” In fact, the text tells us they conferred and made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and comfort him (Job 2:11). They purposed to both empathize with him and to try to help him as best they could. This is the action of true friendship – considering the other before self. They left the comfort of their environs and travelled to see their friend. Once they arrived, they continued to do what true friends ought to do. The moment they saw him, they could physically see the damage that Job's fortune had wrought upon him, and it moved them to tears (Job 2:12). They wept with their friend. Sometimes, that's all a true friend can do. Many times, it's all one need do. They seemed to at least initially understand this. They sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. This was not an ostentatious show of good will, but a genuine effort to help a man in his grief. They stayed by his side and dared not speak a word. And had they continued in this state, it would have proven them the best of companions. The problem is, they did not...

After Job cursed his day and began his bitter questioning of his circumstance, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar made the mistake so many do in being friends. They stopped being wingmen and began offering unsolicited counsel. Had Job asked their opinion or input, perhaps some of their insight would have been helpful. But he did not, and in advising Job based on their limited knowledge of both God and Job's relationship with Him, their counsel became accusation. Thus, they actually unwittingly transformed from instruments of the Most High into tools of devil in his relentless assault on this man of God. So much so that God actually rebukes them sternly at the end of the ordeal and warns them to solicit intercessions from their friend Job for their folly.

Dear reader, are you a good friend to someone, or even to many? It is vitally important in our friendships to reflect the nature of our best Friend, the Lord Jesus. He did not break a bruised reed nor quench a smoking flax. If anyone could have judged us righteously, it was Christ. But instead of judging us, He came where we were, wept with us, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, and loved us to the end. He spoke the truth to us, yes – but in love, not in condemnation. And this, that we might rise with Him in newness of life. Let us resolve to be Christlike friends, to help and not hinder those upon whom the devil has unleashed his accusatory fury. The Spirit has yet to reveal what will be the reward of such friends.

-- D. Murcek