

The Bulwark

APRIL 10, 2022

UNFEIGNED FRIENDSHIP

In Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights*, the reader is introduced to Joseph, who is a caretaker. He is the most cantankerous, grumpy person one could envision. Prone to use Bible passages in order to heap criticism on to others is described thusly, "He was, and is yet the wearisomest self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses to his neighbors." A true sweetheart of the rodeo, right? Not hardly.



The noted description above, might bring a smile as it brings to mind people that we may very well know. Don't stop there, step back and if you're really honest you may recognize that at times you are quick to condemn others, while justifying self. It would seem that the vast majority of us would be found "guilty as charged".

Scattered throughout the pages of Scripture, there are examples of individuals who were able to "flip the script" so to speak; as they embraced a completely different mind set. Consider Moses, who while he did have faults, notice what is seen in Exodus, chapter thirty-two and verses thirty-one and thirty-two. "Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for

themselves. But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin-and if not please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!" Moses had the utmost of concern and desire for his compatriots. The essence of true, unfeigned friendship.

The ninth chapter of Romans finds Paul laying bare his feelings, "that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (vs 2-3). What a contrast to the pomposity that sometimes we embrace.

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1John 3:16)

What is being shown in the passages noted above is the essence of genuine spiritual friendship. Self righteousness flies out the window, when such a mind set is in place. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. Now those who belong to

Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:22-26)

Reading a bit further in Galatians, notice chapter six and verse one where Paul stresses that "each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted." In the next verse notice the directive that is set forth. "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ."

Take a minute and look at the picture to the left. In what ways does it relate to capturing the essence of unfeigned friendship? ^(wbe)

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