

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## ***A Friend*** ***Hebron Lane Bulletin***

We all want and need friends. Without friends, life is miserable and lonely. How, though, do we get friends? And, who is a true friend?

The wise man said, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). If we are not a friend to others, it is unlikely they will be a friend to us. After all, is it not inherent that friendship is a two-way street? Thus, friendship is truly based on character. It cannot be purchased or coerced (Prov. 19:6).

The characteristics of a true friend are relatively few. A true friend will tell you what you need to hear, not necessarily what you want to hear. This means a friend's words may sting at times. We see an example of this in Paul's relationship to the Galatians. He told them they were in sin and asked, "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6). Let us be thankful for friends who tell us the truth.

A friend will help us to improve our character, not drag us down. "As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17). This may include words of rebuke, but also of admonition and exhortation. A friend will give good advice based on your interest, not his or hers. You will be warned about pitfalls and dangers, or encouraged to press on.

"A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17). To love at all times does not mean to tolerate or

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accept at all times. As we noted above, a true friend will sometimes oppose you because your course of action is self-destructive or harmful to others. The love of a true friend will include sacrifice. The friend will forego his or her contentment, comfort, or desires to help you when needed.

An example of a true friend is Jesus Christ and cannot be exceeded. He tells us what we need to hear. He does not sugar coat matters, but is plain and forthright. He improves our character through admonition and encouragement. He loves us at all times, though He does not accept us at all times (Rev. 3:19). When we sin, we must repent or forfeit a relationship to Him (1 Jn. 1:7-9; 2 Jn. 9-11). And, truly, He put our well being ahead of His own when He gave Himself to die on the cross (Phil. 2:5-8). "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus."

## ***"Must" Is Not An Option***

**A Selected Article**

The book of Acts is a history of the early church. It traces it from the beginning in Acts 2 to Paul's imprisonment in chapter 28. While it mainly focuses on the work of two apostles, Peter and Paul, it is more than just an account of their lives. The book is an inspired look at the way men and women became Christians, a part of the body of Christ.

Depending on who you talk to, you will get a different answer about how one becomes a Christian. Some say it is by faith alone, others grace alone. Some will tell you you must repent of your sins; others will say baptism is also necessary. How do you tell who is right? Well, if you look into a book filled with conversions you will find the answer.

Can we agree that if we find the Lord telling someone what they "must do" then that is what "must" be done? In other words, if God said, "you must climb a 5,000 foot mountain to be saved," then it is a requirement you cannot forego. Would you also agree that if God told you to go to "so-and-so" and he will tell you what you "must do," then you "must" do it? Of course, if God sent you to one

of His inspired messengers or sent the inspired messenger to you, then you “must” listen to that person if you hope to please God. Good. I am glad we are agreed.

So, let’s look into the book of Acts, a book of conversions, to see where the Lord tells us we “must do” something to be saved.

First, there is Acts 9:6. This is the account of Saul on the road to Damascus. The Lord appeared to Saul and he asked Him what he must do. The Lord said, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” As we read through the rest of Acts 9 we do not read of anything that Saul is told to do. We read of his actions, but no commands (Acts 9:17-19). Rather, we have to look into Acts 22, where Paul is recounting the events in Damascus. There he says Ananias came to him (Acts 22:12-15). When he is told to “do” something, Ananias said, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). What must he do? Be baptized to wash away his sins. The Lord told him to go into the city and he would be told what he “must do.” When he was told to do something, he was told to be baptized. Was it an option? Was it a suggestion? Was it something he “should” do? No. It was something he “must do.”

Second, Cornelius was instructed by the angel to send for Peter. He specifically said to him, “He will tell you what you must do” (Acts 10:6). When Peter arrived he began to preach Jesus as the Christ (Acts 10:34-43). However, his sermon was interrupted by the Holy Spirit as Cornelius and his household receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15-17). At this point, the audience had not been told to “do” anything. Then Peter said, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47). Finally, then, the record says, “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). Peter told them what they “must do.” It was not an option, suggestion, or merely something they “should” do. Rather it was a command, a “have to,” a “must do” to be saved. Notice when Peter was recounting things to the Jews in Jerusalem, he quoted the angel as saying, “who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14).

What “must” you do to be saved? You “must” be baptized. Does this discount belief, repentance, or confession of Christ? No. Those are things you “must” do as well (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9, 10). Does it rule out the grace of God? No. You “must” have the grace of God or nothing is of value (Eph. 2:8, 9). Have you done what you “must do?”