

“Hang-On Snoopy...”

What is it about the timeless, innocent humor or Charles Schulz? The kids, the dog, and a few birds compose the cast that never grow up - and delight the many who never want to. The Peanuts® are forever to make the aging feel young again, the *seasoned* to feel innocent again and the young to laugh at what the others are reading or watch again...and again.

Among this cast is the world-renown white-haired, black-eared beagle; and besides his uncustomary color is perhaps the most eccentric of all the cast. He is perhaps too good to sleep in his house; but prefers to rest on the ridge of the roof - if that were possible; he dreams of being a crack WWI pilot fighting the invisible and relentless Red Baron; and he host the occasional bird and his flock with unexpected patience. In these expressed qualities, I have to wonder if Snoopy is truly a dog - but then, he is a cartoon character.



1 Thessalonians 2:12

We were never patronizing, never condescending, but we cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did.

- *The Message*

Not just any character however, Snoopy is possibly the most famous beagle of his breed and, considering his character, might lead anyone to consider that acceptability or friendship is not really the decision of the other (so-called human cast), but is really at the discretion of Snoopy; in other words, the dog gets to choose his friends. He may be ornery, and subject to momentary rage, but Snoopy has a most loveable attraction (from the fans) and apparent loyal caring from the cast.

Bearing in mind that this is only a cartoon - but because it is such an enduring story - what is the application to *The Message* and this letter (1 Thessalonians 2) from Paul. Well, in one sentence, it is that Snoopy may not be the most amiable pet (or easiest to care for) but, from our viewing, is loved just the same; he is loved by us and by his fellow cast - birds and all.

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When Paul was addressing the church (body of Christ in Thessalonica), he was (or is) reminding of their friendship - of his devotion to them like a *mother cares for her children*. The church was young and there were evidently distractions that could lead them astray. Like a mother, Paul wanted the church to remain in relative safety; he wanted the believers to keep their attention on the future by his reminder of the past.

This past was not easy to be sure - but was marked by an underlying if not expressed, genuine love. For Paul, one concerned may have been that they would forget this past - that they would lose or lapse in memory what he (and others) did for them. Why are the memories so important to the church body?

Memories (or experiences) are important because of how each and all define and prepare us for the future. Some memories are less desirable or attractive than others; especially the painful or tough ones. For Snoopy, such less-desirable memories may be the countless times he has been shot-up (and shot-down) by the formidable foe, the Red Baron. Something tells me - perhaps the many years of viewing The Peanuts - that this rival lives-on...and that Snoopy is always ready to climb into his makeshift biplane for another mission over Baron.

Other memories are wonderful - and leave us hopping and skipping like Snoopy or his cast: heads-cocked back, smiles on face, and feet shuffling at blurring speed. The wonderful memories for the church were under girded by the manner in which Paul spoke (in recollection): "Every time we think of you, we thank God for you" (Chapter 1). Paul was delighted with the church and wanted to remind them of just how much he loved and cared for them.

The church may not forgotten this care or his love; but may allowed the years or events to somewhat dilute or diminish the realization. If Snoopy had a similar *loss or lapse*, he might never attempt another mission again; "why accept the inevitable; the Baron will best you!" - might be our thinking. Snoopy evidently overlooks the loss...and proceeds with his plan...or his duty; and with the loyalty exemplified in his caring cast, this beagle *never gives in never gives in...and never gives in*.

Winston Churchill, prime-minister of the UK during World War II, would have been as proud of Snoopy as Paul was of the Thessalonica's; not only because Snoopy was defending the skies of The Crown, but because he shares the same resolve and determination to "never give in".

The "loyalty of the cast" - or probably more like his owner - has evidently worn-off on the pet; as Charlie Brown himself knows what it means to not given in...or give-up. You see, Charlie Brown has spent all these years attempting to kick a field-goal; his dream is to deliver the ball somewhere beyond its teed-position and, each fall, he commits himself to try again. "Never give-up" is the theme of Charlie's perennial place-kick - and though Lucy is always up to eager to *trick or trip* - he refuses to lose.

To elaborate on this story and the relationship of owner to pet, perhaps Snoopy has been inspired by *his master's* "forgetting" fortitude: both of them share in this somewhat forgetting of the past (occurrences) and the pressing-on for what lies ahead. Though one is defending the skies and the other is offending the football, both are pretending to be something of a hero or star. Paul describes a similar experience (or relationship) with the church: "You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you, and determined to live that way yourselves". (Chapter 1).

It's possible that Charlie Brown is a similarly a role-model to Snoopy - but any evidence of this relationship could be overshadowed by the respect and recognition that he longs to have (rather than has...attained or earned). But even more than whether the pet has learned from his owner, is whether the two ever do anything together. Yes, they are each represented from one scene to the next but, in my mind, they live seemingly separate lives... *different worlds*.

And as already introduced, Snoopy is eccentric (for a dog) and could very well *stand* on his own; but then there is the matter of a person who seemingly loves and cares. For the church, that person was Paul; and for Snoopy, that person could be Charlie Brown but is definitely each one us; for like the pop tune, we sing "Hang-On Snoopy", *we love him dearly, and we want to give him our hearts*.