

**A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.
Proverbs 17:17 – A Proverbial Story
By Ted Hildebrandt and Chatgpt**

The snow had fallen thick over the mountain trail, turning the forest into a silent world of white. Jacob pulled his scarf tighter against the biting wind, his boots crunching loudly in the hush. Behind him, his best friend Caleb limped along, his face pale with pain.

"You should've stayed back in the cabin," Jacob called, looking over his shoulder. "Your ankle's only getting worse."

Caleb gritted his teeth and kept walking. "I'm not letting you go out here alone. Not with your brother missing."

Jacob clenched his fists. His younger brother, Eli, had set out to trap rabbits that morning but hadn't returned. The temperature was dropping fast, and night wasn't far off.

"You're stubborn," Jacob muttered.

"Yeah," Caleb said, forcing a grin. "And you're family to me. That's what friends are for."

Jacob didn't answer, but his eyes softened. The trail split ahead, and he paused, scanning for tracks. There—a faint line of bootprints leading toward the ravine.

"Here," Jacob said, heading toward the edge.

Caleb followed without hesitation, despite the pain. As they reached the rim, they spotted the broken snow below, a splash of red, and the crumpled shape of a boy lying in the drift.

"Eli!" Jacob scrambled down the slope, sliding on his knees as he reached his brother.

Eli was conscious but shivering, his leg twisted at an unnatural angle.

"I fell," Eli whispered, voice trembling. "Can't move..."

"I've got you," Jacob said, pulling off his coat and wrapping it around Eli.

Caleb arrived a moment later, wheezing from the effort.

"We need to get him back. Fast."

"But how?" Jacob asked. "He can't walk. And you—"

"Don't worry about me," Caleb interrupted. "We'll carry him. Together."

They fashioned a sled from branches and rope, working in silence except for Eli's occasional moans. The return was brutal. Caleb's injured ankle buckled more than once, but he didn't stop. Each time Jacob offered to take over, Caleb waved him off.

Hours later, long after darkness had fallen, the three of them reached the cabin. Inside, warmth greeted them like a long-lost friend. Jacob laid Eli by the fire while Caleb collapsed in the corner, his face white with exhaustion.

As Jacob tended to his brother, he glanced at Caleb.

"You didn't have to come," he said quietly. "You could've stayed safe, let me do this alone."

Caleb gave a tired smile. "A friend loves at all times," he said, "and a brother is born for adversity."

Jacob stared at him, then nodded. He looked back at Eli, whose breathing was already steadying in the warmth of the fire.

"I guess that makes you both," he murmured. "Friend and brother."

Outside, the wind howled across the peaks, but inside the cabin, the fire burned bright—and the bonds forged in adversity burned even brighter. The old proverb was true: "A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).