

Episode 90

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach."

- Acts 1:1

The gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were both originally compiled for a Roman named Theophilus. What we have here in verse one is a classic ancient near eastern way of acknowledging one's benefactor, as Luke begins to document his account of Jesus and his people.

It was common in those days to finance a work like this, very much like a newspaper would finance an investigative journalist. Luke would have had to find those who had been healed, check their medical records, interview their parents and neighbours, and collate his findings with reputable people in each city as well as getting eyewitness testimonies. This would take huge amounts of time and money, as Luke retraced Jesus' footsteps across Israel, and then travelled along the disciples' missionary journeys that spanned the accounts we have in the book of Acts.

Having done all of this, Luke puts his findings down in writing for Theophilus, two books that made Luke the primary contributor to the New Testament. You see, although Paul wrote on more occasions, Luke wrote the most!

Now let's rewind for just a second. This means that a businessman paid for two books of the New Testament to be written, and today, 2000 years later, if it had not been for Theophilus' generosity, we would be lacking the largest contribution to the entire New Testament.

Such is the power of God-centred generosity. We never know the generations, and nations it may influence. We never know what can grow from such a simple seed.

So next time you are tempted to miss an opportunity to be generous, just consider how much would be missing from scripture if Theophilus had been more concerned about what it was costing him.

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