



Barnabas

Son Of Encouragement

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Overview

Barnabas's story is told in Acts 4:36-37; Acts 9:27-15:39. He is also mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:6; Galatians 2:1, 9, 13; Colossians 4:10. Every group needs an "encourager," because everyone needs encouragement at one time or another.

However, the value of encouragement is often missed because it tends to be private rather than public. In fact, people. We most need encouragement when they feel most alone. A man named Joseph was such an encourager that he earned the nickname "Son of Encouragement," or Barnabas, from the Jerusalem Christians.

Barnabas was drawn to people he could encourage, and he was a great help to those around him. It is delightful that wherever Barnabas encouraged Christians, non-Christians flocked to become believers! 20 Barnabas's actions were crucial to the early church. In a way, we can thank him for most of the New Testament.

God used his relationship with Paul at one point and with Mark at another to keep these two men going when either might have failed.

Barnabas did wonders with encouragement! When Paul arrived in Jerusalem for the first time following his conversion, the local Christians were understandably reluctant to welcome him.

They thought his story was a trick to capture more Christians. Only Barnabas proved willing to risk his life to meet with Paul and then convince the others that their former enemy was now a vibrant believer in Jesus. We can only wonder what might have happened to Paul without Barnabas.

It was Barnabas who encouraged Mark to go with him and Paul to Antioch. Mark joined them on their first missionary journey, but decided during the trip to return home. Later, Barnabas wanted to invite Mark to join them for another journey, but Paul would not agree.

As a result, the partners went separate ways, Barnabas with Mark and Paul with Silas. This actually doubled the missionary effort.

Barnabas's patient encouragement was confirmed by Mark's eventual effective ministry. Paul and Mark were later reunited in missionary efforts.

Barnabas the prophet

Acts 13:1

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

What an assemblage was here! In these names we see that the Lord raises up instruments for his work, from various places and stations in life; and zeal for his glory induces men to give up flattering connexions and prospects to promote his cause.

It is by the Spirit of Christ that his ministers are made both able and willing for his service, and taken from other cares that would hinder in it.

Christ's ministers are to be employed in Christ's work, and, under the Spirit's guidance, to act for the glory of God the Father. They are separated to take pains, and not to take state.

A blessing upon Barnabas and Saul in their present undertaking was sought for, and that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost in their work. Whatever means are used, or rules observed, the Holy Ghost alone can fit ministers for their important work, and call them to it.

Acts 15:26

Who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Being warranted to declare themselves directed by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, the apostles and disciples were assured that it seemed good unto God the Holy Spirit, as well as to them, to lay upon the converts no other burden than the things before mentioned, which were necessary, either on their own account, or from present circumstances.

It was a comfort to hear that carnal ordinances were no longer imposed on them, which perplexed the conscience, but could not purify or pacify it; and that those

who troubled their minds were silenced, so that the peace of the church was restored, and that which threatened division was removed.

All this was consolation for which they blessed God. Many others were at Antioch. Where many labour in the word and doctrine, yet there may be opportunity for us: the zeal and usefulness of others should stir us up, not lay us asleep.

An apostle

Acts 14:14

But when Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting,

All things are possible to those that believe. When we have faith, that most precious gift of God, we shall be delivered from the spiritual helplessness in which we were born, and from the dominion of sinful habits since formed; we shall be made able to stand upright and walk cheerfully in the ways of the Lord.

When Christ, the Son of God, appeared in the likeness of men, and did many miracles, men were so far from doing sacrifice to him that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice; but Paul and Barnabas, upon their working one miracle, were treated as gods.

The same power of the god of this world, which closes the carnal mind against truth, makes errors and mistakes find easy admission.

We do not learn that they rent their clothes when the people spake of stoning them; but when they spake of worshipping them; they could not bear it, being more concerned for God's honour than their own.

God's truth needs not the services of man's falsehood. The servants of God might easily obtain undue honours if they would wink at men's errors and vices; but they must dread and detest such respect more than any reproach.

When the apostles preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had only to preach the grace of God in Christ; but when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must set right their mistakes in natural religion.

A Levite who gave his possessions to be owned in common with other disciples

Acts 4:36-37

For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles for those in need.

This was a great evidence of the grace of God in them. They did not take away others' property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call it their own; because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were expecting to be stripped of all for cleaving to him.

No marvel that they were of one heart and soul, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world. In effect, they had all things common; for there was not any among them who lacked, care was taken for their supply.

The money was laid at the apostles' feet. Great care ought to be taken in the distribution of public charity, that it be given to such as have need, such as are not able to procure a maintenance for themselves; those who are reduced to want for well-doing, and for the testimony of a good conscience, ought to be provided for.

Here is one in particular mentioned, remarkable for this generous charity; it was Barnabas. As one designed to be a preacher of the gospel, he disentangled himself from the affairs of this life. When such dispositions prevail, and are exercised according to the circumstances of the times, the testimony will have very great power upon others.

Barnabas accompanies Paul to Jerusalem

Acts 11:30

This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

When the Lord Jesus is preached in simplicity, and according to the Scriptures, he will give success; and when sinners are thus brought to the Lord, really good men, who are full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, will admire and rejoice in the grace of God bestowed on them.

Barnabas was full of faith; full of the grace of faith, and full of the fruits of the faith that works by love.

Returns with Paul to Antioch (of Syria)

Acts 12:25

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch, taking John Mark with them.

We may learn wisdom from the people of Tyre and Sidon, for we have offended the Lord with our sins. We depend on him for life, and breath, and all things; it surely then behoves us to humble ourselves before him, that through the appointed Mediator, who is ever ready to befriend us, we may be reconciled to him, lest wrath come upon us to the utmost.

Barnabas goes with Paul to Seleucia

Acts 13:1-3

Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul.

One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them."

So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

What an assemblage was here! In these names we see that the Lord raises up instruments for his work, from various places and stations in life; and zeal for his glory induces men to give up flattering connexions and prospects to promote his cause.

It is by the Spirit of Christ that his ministers are made both able and willing for his service, and taken from other cares that would hinder in it.

Christ's ministers are to be employed in Christ's work, and, under the Spirit's guidance, to act for the glory of God the Father.

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Barnabas goes with Paul to Iconium

Acts 14:1-7

In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went together to the synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed.

But the Jews who spurned God's message stirred up distrust among the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas, saying all sorts of evil things about them.

The apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. The Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.

But the people of the city were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

A mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them. When the apostles learned of it, they fled for their lives. They went to the region of Lycaonia, to the cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area, and they preached the Good News there.

The apostles' spake so plainly, with such evidence and proof of the Spirit, and with such power; so warmly, and with such concern for the souls of men; that those who heard them could not but say, God was with them of a truth.

Yet the success was not to be reckoned to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God who used that means. Perseverance in doing good, amidst dangers and hardships, is a blessed evidence of grace.

Wherever God's servants are driven, they should seek to declare the truth. When they went on in Christ's name and strength, he failed not to give testimony to the word of his grace.

He has assured us it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it.

The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, yet united against Christians. If the church's enemies join to destroy it, shall not its friends unite for its preservation?

God has a shelter for his people in a storm; he is, and will be their Hiding-place. In times of persecution, believers may see cause to quit a spot, though they do not quit their Master's work.

Barnabas and Paul to Derbe

Acts 14:12-18

They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul, because he was the chief speaker, was Hermes.

The temple of Zeus was located on the outskirts of the city. The priest of the temple and the crowd brought oxen and wreaths of flowers, and they prepared to sacrifice to the apostles at the city gates.

But when Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting,

"Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings like yourselves! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

In earlier days he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left himself without a witness. There were always his reminders, such as sending you rain and good crops and giving you food and joyful hearts."

But even so, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

When Christ, the Son of God, appeared in the likeness of men, and did many miracles, men were so far from doing sacrifice to him that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice; but Paul and Barnabas, upon their working one miracle, were treated as gods.

The same power of the god of this world, which closes the carnal mind against truth, makes errors and mistakes find easy admission.

We do not learn that they rent their clothes when the people spake of stoning them; but when they spake of worshipping them; they could not bear it, being more concerned for God's honour than their own.

God's truth needs not the services of man's falsehood. The servants of God might easily obtain undue honours if they would wink at men's errors and vices; but they must dread and detest such respect more than any reproach. When the apostles preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had only to preach the grace of God in Christ; but when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must set right their mistakes in natural religion.

Compare their conduct and declaration with the false opinions of those who think the worship of a God, under any name, or in any manner, is equally acceptable to the Lord Almighty.

The most powerful arguments, the most earnest and affectionate addresses, even with miracles, are scarcely enough to keep men from absurdities and abominations; much less can they, without special grace, turn the hearts of sinners to God.

Paul and Barnabas choose to go different ways for a while.

Acts 15:36-41

After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return to each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are getting along."

Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not shared in their work.

Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus.

Paul chose Silas, and the believers sent them off, entrusting them to the Lord's grace. So they traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia to strengthen the churches there.

Here we have a private quarrel between two ministers, no less than Paul and Barnabas, yet made to end well. Barnabas wished his nephew John Mark to go with them.

We should suspect ourselves of being partial, and guard against this in putting our relations forward. Paul did not think him worthy of the honour, nor fit for the service, who had departed from them without their knowledge, or without their consent: see [Acts 13:13](#). Neither would yield, therefore there was no remedy but they must part.

We see that the best of men are but men, subject to like passions as we are. Perhaps there were faults on both sides, as usual in such contentions. Christ's example alone, is a copy without a blot. Yet we are not to think it strange, if there are differences among wise and good men.

The gospel is preached to the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:1-9

Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too.

I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I talked privately with the leaders of the church. I wanted them to understand what I had been preaching to the Gentiles.

I wanted to make sure they did not disagree, or my ministry would have been useless. And they did agree. They did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.

Even that question wouldn't have come up except for some so-called Christians there—false ones, really—who came to spy on us and see our freedom in Christ Jesus. They wanted to force us, like slaves, to follow their Jewish regulations.

But we refused to listen to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the Good News for you.

And the leaders of the church who were there had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)

They saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the Good News to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews.

For the same God who worked through Peter for the benefit of the Jews worked through me for the benefit of the Gentiles.

In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews.

Though Paul conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge, or authority, from them. Perceiving the grace given to him, they gave unto him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, whereby they acknowledged that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves.

They agreed that these two should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the Jews; judging it agreeable to the mind of Christ, so to divide their work.

Here we learn that the gospel is not ours, but God's; and that men are but the keepers of it; for this we are to praise God.

The apostle showed his charitable disposition, and how ready he was to own the Jewish converts as brethren, though many would scarcely allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles; but mere difference of opinion was no reason to him why he should not help them.

Herein is a pattern of Christian charity, which we should extend to all the Disciples of Christ.

Barnabas is reconciled to Paul

1 Cor. 9:6

Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves?

It is not new for a minister to meet with unkind returns for good-will to a people, and diligent and successful services among them.

To the cavils of some, the apostle answers, so as to set forth himself as an example of self-denial, for the good of others.

He had a right to marry as well as other apostles, and to claim what was needful for his wife, and his children if he had any, from the churches, without labouring with his own hands to get it.

Those who seek to do our souls good, should have food provided for them.

Many people came to Christ through the ministry of Barnabas

Acts 11:24

Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And large numbers of people were brought to the Lord.

The Success of the Gospel at Antioch

The first preachers of the gospel at Antioch, were dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution; thus what was meant to hurt the church, was made to work for its good.

The wrath of man is made to praise God. What should the ministers of Christ preach, but Christ? Christ, and him crucified? Christ, and him glorified? And their preaching was accompanied with the Divine power.

The hand of the Lord was with them, to bring that home to the hearts and consciences of men, which they could but speak to the outward ear.

They believed; they were convinced of the truth of the gospel. They turned from a careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual life.

They turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship him in the Spirit and in truth. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and he became all in all with them.

This was the work of conversion wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith; all who sincerely believe, will turn to the Lord, When the Lord Jesus is preached in simplicity, and according to the Scriptures, he will give success; and when sinners are thus brought to the Lord, really good men, who are full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, will admire and rejoice in the grace of God bestowed on them.

Barnabas was full of faith; full of the grace of faith, and full of the fruits of the faith that works by love.

Life Application:

As Barnabas's life shows, we are rarely in a situation where there isn't someone we can encourage.

If it had not been for Barnabas, Paul could never have accomplished the great work that he did.

Are you prepared to encourage those with whom you come in contact today?

Key verses:

"When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, many people were brought to the Lord" (Acts 11:23-24).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.