

Let Me Introduce You to Barnie - Lessons from a Lesser Light
FBC-DL April 22, 2018, Pastor Luiken

Introduction:

- Most of us won't achieve the greatness of an Apostle Paul, or a Moses, or a David.
- God gifts and uses some extremely special men and women in the cause of His purposes. Think Billy Graham for example.
- That, on the other hand, can leave us to think that since we are not as gifted as they are, that there is nothing that we can do for the Lord. Comparisons are dangerous.
- Many Christians have a low self-image of themselves; thinking that they are basically useless and sadly make little effort to do anything in the cause of Christ.
- Today, I want us to look at Barnie (not Fife), and be encouraged to see that God can use us if we are available to be used; in ways that are truly meaningful.
- I call our subject Barnie, because I don't know many men named Barnabas, do you? But Barnabas was his name.
- Or I should say that his knick-name was Barnabas, because his given name was the much more common name, of Joseph... common old Joe.
- But I am getting ahead of myself... turn with me to Acts 4:32-37.

I. Barnabas - Encouraging the early church. 4:36-37. Read

- We learn quite a bit about him from these two verses.
- He was a converted Jew, a Levite, from Cyprus; a landowner of a tract of land.
- He sold his property and laid it at the apostles' feet.
- Problem: the Levites, the priestly tribe of Israel was not to own land (in Israel) for their inheritance was to be the tithe that the children of Israel paid to support them (Num. 18:20-24; Josh. 18:7)
- Perhaps Joseph owned land in Cyprus, which was not forbidden, sold it and gave it for the Lord's work. Note context: vs. 32- 35; (Also note prominence of the "resurrection" in the early Christian message; see 33; 4:2) and 4:1-22 Persecution of Peter and John...

Appl. - I want to stop right there. Do you own any property? A house? Any land? Have you or would you sell it if there were needs in the church to be met? Land is sacred in the rural parts of our country. You can't make new land can you? If you sell it you probably can't get more; especially if you give the proceeds away.

- I think that you can see this man is not looking so common after all.
- His uniqueness is seen in the contrast with a couple in the very next verse who also sold some land, but kept some of it for themselves, and brought a portion of it to give to the Apostles.... Ananias and Sapphira... with them the Lord was not well pleased.

-Anyway, Joseph's generosity earned him a new knick name of Barnabas; which means 'Son of Encouragement.'

Appl.- I marvel at Barnabas's unbelievable act of generosity; which most of us are not spiritually mature enough to do.

- Jesus has a different take on this kind of generosity.
- He said in Luke 16:10 something like this: We are "stewards" of the material possessions of life and we should be shrewd about using our possessions and positions in life to make friends who later will welcome us into eternal habitations.

-And then Jesus says something remarkable: If God cannot trust us with the "very little thing" of our money, how can He trust us with that which is "much?" vs 10
-If we are not faithful in "unrighteous mammon," who will trust "true riches" to us?
-If we have not been faithful in that which is "another's," who will give us that which is your "own?" Barnabas was faithful in the management of a "very little thing/another's/money... so then God entrusted greater ministries to him.
Appl - Maybe Barnie is more unusual than we think. How about you, friend, who owns your possessions? You will leave them all behind... every bit! Your possessions are not yours to "own" but only yours to manage for the Lord. Some of us never have learned this basic lesson.

II. Barnabas - Encouraging Saul at Jerusalem. Acts 9:20-22

-In chapter 9 of Acts we meet public enemy #1, Saul of Tarsus. 8:3
-He didn't like Christians; as a matter of fact he had a passion to get rid of them.
-But then Saul met the King of Kings on the road to Damascus, was wonderfully saved, and began to proclaim Jesus in Damascus. 9:20-22.
-Understandably the believers were suspicious of Saul (see 21). Even the Jews suspected Saul of betrayal and were plotting to kill him (23-24); but some disciples thought maybe he was OK but felt they should move him out of Damascus so they lowered Saul in a basket over the wall of the city (25) and he goes back to Jerusalem.
-Saul's reception isn't much better there for the believers were rightfully fearful of him (26b Read).
-Enter the "Son of Encouragement:" READ 27- Note the verbs-action words - READ.
-Barnabas vouched for Saul telling of his conversion experience, relationship with the Lord, and his ministry in Damascus.
Appl. - Any risk there? You bet! Barnabas risked something again. Are you a risk taker for the Lord?

-Saul carried on a ministry in Jerusalem for the Lord but his old allies, the Jews, plotted to kill him so the believers scurried him out of dodge and Saul returned to his home in Tarsus.

Appl. - Barnabas told the believers, "I believe in Saul! You can trust him." What is there that we could do in like fashion? Whom can you encourage?

III. Barnabas - Encouraging the believers at Antioch. Acts 11:19- 30

-The gospel was spreading after the persecution of Stephen from Jerusalem to Antioch (in Syria) where a number and Gentiles were coming to the Lord. 20-21
-In the early church there was **friction** between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. We see this already in Acts 6 where some of the Gentile "widows" in Jerusalem were being "overlooked in the daily distribution of food." And when the gospel spread to Antioch from Jerusalem the message was first taken primarily to Jews. Only as believers from Cyrus and N. Africa came did Gentiles hear and respond to the message of salvation. **TENSION:** the "mother" church at Jerusalem vs. Damascus/other places: Jew vs. Gentile (Also in Acts 15 - First Church counsel clarified the gospel message: salvation is by faith in Christ, not keeping the Law.)
-The church at Jerusalem heard the news and immediately sent Barnabas there. 22 (His reputation for encouragement must have been known).
-Barnabas "**encouraged** them to remain true to the Lord with a resolute heart;" and "considerable numbers" of people were brought to the Lord. 23-24

-So what does Barnabas do with this "success?" He **"left"** Antioch for Tarsus to **"look"** for Saul and **"brought"** him back to Antioch where they **"met"** with the church and **"taught"** considerable numbers" of believers for an entire year. (25-26)
-Perhaps Barnabas knew of Paul's effectiveness with Jews ("proving that Jesus is the Christ" earlier in Damascus. 9:22) and knew of the Lord's commission to Paul to go to the Gentiles (9:15). And since Gentiles, as well as Jews, were coming to know the Lord in Antioch, he went looking for Saul. Acts 9:15
-And look at the result: 26b *"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."*
-The chapter ends with the church at Antioch sending financial relief to the church in Jerusalem in the face of impending famine. And whom did they trust with the money? Barnabas and Saul. 29-30. (Do you suppose "generous" Barnabas encouraged their giving?)

APPLICATION -

-Let's review **how** Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement, was used to encourage others.

- 1) He sold a field and gave the money to meet the needs in the infant church of Jerusalem. Acts 4: 36-37
 - 2) He vouched for the converted Christian exterminator, Saul, to the Apostles and testified to his experience, relationship with the Lord, and his ministry. 9:27
 - 3) He encouraged the infant church in Antioch to remain true to the Lord. 11:22-33
 - 4) He sought out Saul, the minister to the Gentiles and Jews, providing "on the job training" to help teach at Antioch for a year, where believers were first called Christians. 11:25-26.
 - 5) And he carried relief to the famine-plagued city of Jerusalem. Acts 11:29-30
- He used his possessions/finances... words of encouragement (to a new believer and a new church)... provided on the job training for Saul... and was trusted to carry a financial gift to the elders in Jerusalem.

-What a man! What a ministry!

He wasn't flashy; not prominent like Paul later became and yet what a difference maker his encouragement meant to individuals and churches!

-But you might be saying, "that's not me; I could never do what Barnie did."
Really, how so?

- 1) Remember how he started and the Lord's lesson on using our possessions to "make friends who will welcome us into eternal habitations?" If I am not faithful in a "little thing" like "money;" who will entrust me with that which is much? If I am not faithful with "unrighteous wealth," who will entrust "true riches" to me? If I am not faithful with that which is "another's," who will entrust me with that which is my "own?" Luke 16:10-11

Illustration: Bob Salstrom: gave away not one but two cars; one nearly new.

Appl. Set aside some cash and ask the Lord to lead you to whom or what you should give it. Or find something you could sell and take a step of faith to give it to the Lord; withdraw something from the bank and give it to the Lord's work.

- 2) He stood up for a new believer and encouraged the fearful/skeptical church to accept Paul.

Appl. When someone new comes to church do you reach out to him/her in friendship? I can tell you one way not to grow... don't be friendly to strangers.

People remember acts of friendship/kindness.

Illustration - When I was a Jr in HS I injured a knee in a BB game and was hospitalized. I remember to this day every one who came to visit me.

-Remember the Veteran "walker" who showed up here? Several befriended him.

-Barnie encouraged believers to remain true to the Lord with resolute heart when they were going through the trial of persecution/**division** between Jew and Gentile.

Appl. Do you know anyone who is going through a trial? Who has experienced a loss? Is grieving? Who is struggling with health issues? Is struggling spiritually?

-Do you know anyone who is fearful or needs encouragement to "hang in there?"

-Can you say, "I'm sorry for your loss?" Share a verse that has meant something to you? Show you are genuinely concerned? Make a call? Send a card?

-Can you encourage them to "keep the faith" and remain true to the Lord in the trial?

Illustration: Man who was deployed in the military remembers that I sent him emails and interviewed him when he came home for R&R. He didn't say he remembered any of my sermons. PARENTS: how are you encouraging your kids?

3) He was available to serve where needed: Note his travels: he traveled to Antioch; traveled to bring a gift to the Jerusalem believers; traveled to seek out Saul in Tarsus. How do you suppose he got there? Comfortable SUV? Cruise ships? Sedan?

Appl. Are you available to serve the Lord where needed? To travel; use your transportation.

Illustration: Ever thought or said, "Somebody ought to....?" "Somebody ought to" is usually the Lord saying; "the somebody is you."

4) He involved Saul in on the job training. This is big since most churches don't do this well. Think about it: whom was Barnabas preparing for ministry by his on the job training? The Apostle Paul! Parents: Involve YOUR KIDS in ministry.

Illustration - youth group leadership encouraged me for more service.

Appl. Whatever you are doing in the church can you bring someone else along to learn by observing and doing? Don't make it a life-sentence, but an exploration.

-Are any of these activities things that we can do? Yes, I think so... no, I know so.

Don't miss Acts 11:24: Barnabas was "full of the Holy Spirit and faith." He was yielded and submissive to the Lord... remember II Chron. 20:12? "O our God...we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You!"

-I am convinced that one of the easiest and most needed ways we can encourage is through our words: Eph. 4:29; I Thess 5:11, 14; Heb 3:13.

"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear." Eph. 4:29

"Encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing."

"But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. 3:13

Closing Prayer - Lord, use our mouths to encourage one another, our possessions and position in life to make friends who will welcome us into eternal habitations... Amen

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