

## Barnabas the Encourager

We first read of the man called Barnabas in:

**Acts 4:36-37** “AND JOSES, WHO BY THE APOSTLES WAS SURNAMED BARNABAS, (WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED, THE SON OF CONSOLATION,) A LEVITE, **and** OF THE COUNTRY OF CYPRUS, HAVING LAND, SOLD **it**, AND BROUGHT THE MONEY, AND LAID **it** AT THE APOSTLES' FEET.”

Later Luke describes him this way:

**Acts 11:24** “FOR HE WAS A GOOD MAN, AND FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST AND OF FAITH: AND MUCH PEOPLE WAS ADDED UNTO THE LORD.”

There are many aspects of the life of Barnabas that we could point to and use as examples of the kind of people, the dedication that we should have to the cause of Christ. However, for a few moments this evening I would like for us to concentrate on one characteristic of this man that we all can emulate. In **Acts 4:36** he is called “THE SON OF CONSOLATION”, the actual meaning of his name, Barnabas. In the ASV the word is “CONSOLATION” in the KJV is translated “EXHORTATION”, in the NKJV it is translated “ENCOURAGEMENT”. And when we consult Vine’s “Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words” we find that consolation, encouragement, exhortation and comfort are basically interchangeable and each a synonym of the other. In Bauer’s Greek Lexicon we also find the meaning for consolation as an “act of emboldening another in belief or course of action”, “lifting another’s spirit”.

Barnabas was certainly one who worked at encouraging others. Consequently we can see the fruit of his labor reached far beyond the preaching and teaching that he did with the Apostle Paul and later with John Mark.

First of all he was the one who took Saul under his wing and helped him gain acceptance in the early church:

**Acts 9:26-27** “AND WHEN HE WAS COME TO JERUSALEM, HE ASSAYED TO JOIN HIMSELF TO THE DISCIPLES: AND THEY WERE ALL AFRAID OF HIM, NOT BELIEVING THAT HE WAS A DISCIPLE. BUT BARNABAS TOOK **him**, AND BROUGHT HIM TO THE APOSTLES, AND DECLARED UNTO THEM HOW HE HAD SEEN THE LORD IN THE WAY, AND THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO HIM, AND HOW AT DAMASCUS HE HAD PREACHED BOLDLY IN THE NAME OF JESUS.”

Then we observe the nature of his dealings with John Mark. We don’t know the reason that John Mark left Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey and returned to Jerusalem, but we know that he did:

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**Acts 13:13** "NOW PAUL AND HIS COMPANY SET SAIL FROM PAPHOS, AND CAME TO PERGA IN PAMPHYLIA: AND JOHN DEPARTED FROM THEM AND RETURNED TO JERUSALEM."

We also know that Paul was not happy with Mark because of his decision.

**Acts 15:38** "BUT PAUL THOUGHT NOT GOOD TO TAKE WITH THEM HIM WHO WITHDREW FROM THEM FROM PAMPHYLIA, AND WENT NOT WITH THEM TO THE WORK."

Barnabas, however, wanted to take John Mark with them:

**Acts 15:37** "AND BARNABAS WAS MINDED TO TAKE WITH THEM JOHN ALSO, WHO WAS CALLED MARK."

And this caused so great a contention between the two men, Paul and Barnabas, that they separated and each went his own way.

**Act 15:39** "AND THERE AROSE A SHARP CONTENTION, SO THAT THEY PARTED ASUNDER ONE FROM THE OTHER, AND BARNABAS TOOK MARK WITH HIM, AND SAILED AWAY UNTO CYPRUS;"

Barnabas was persistent in his desire to encourage and strengthen John Mark. Later we see the result of his encouragement. Paul writes in his last epistle to Timothy from his Roman prison:

**II Timothy 4:11** "ONLY LUKE IS WITH ME. TAKE MARK, AND BRING HIM WITH THEE; FOR HE IS USEFUL TO ME FOR MINISTERING."

Where would Saul have been without the encouragement provided to him by Barnabas? What would have happened to John Mark if Barnabas had not defended him; took him under his wing and encouraged him in the work of spreading the Gospel? We don't know the answers to these questions but it should give us pause to reflect on the opportunities that we have to encourage others. Especially those who need to be strengthened in living the life of a child of God; those who stumble and need our help to get up again and continue on, those whose faith is faltering and need reassurance.

Elders need encouragement to do the work that God has tasked them to do. Deacons need encouragement to continue in the work that they do as do Bible teachers and others who serve. Members need encouragement to study God's Word, pray, attend services and a litany of other things that man tends to neglect when they grow weak in the faith.

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We may not have land to sell as did Barnabas. We may not be able to travel across the world to teach and preach the gospel as did Barnabas. We probably won't ever meet or have the opportunity to know a man like Paul or even John Mark that we can encourage. But there is opportunity all around us daily to encourage others to read and study their Bibles, be faithful to God, to pray and attend worship services. We can encourage those with aptitude to teach and preach to develop and use their talents. There are many ways that every one of us, regardless of gender, status, age, or any other condition of our lives, can be a Barnabas, a person of "CONSOLATION", a person of "ENCOURAGEMENT", a person of "EXHORTATION". Are we seeking out and exercising those opportunities. They are works of faith, works of God that are just as important as any other that we might do.

Invitation