

BARNABAS (Part 1): THE UNSUNG HERO OF THE EARLY CHURCH/A MAN OF ENCOURAGEMENT

INTRO:

- He only gets mentioned in seven chapters in Acts & three times in the epistles
- We are introduced to him in Acts 4:32-37
- His name was Joseph but we know him by his nickname 'Barnabas' which was given to him by the apostles. It means 'Son of Encouragement'
- He was from the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea, about 350km from Jerusalem
- He was a Hellenistic (Greek) Jew – a Levite
- We don't know whether he was married with children

GENEROSITY & TRUSTWORTHY:

- Acts 4:37 tells us he was a **generous** man; selling a field and giving the money to the church
- Examples of generosity in early church – 2 Cor 8:2. Acts 11:27-29. 2 Cor 9:7
- Barnabas was also a man who could be **trusted** Acts 11:30, Titus 1:7-8 & financial integrity

ENCOURAGEMENTS:

- Acts 9:26-28 Barnabas the **encourager** as he 'takes Saul by the hand' and leads him to the apostles in Jerusalem. The word 'parakletos' means 'one who is called alongside'
- In this matter Barnabas shows **kindness, discernment, forgiveness** and **reconciliation**

FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

- Acts 11:22-24 Barnabas is commissioned by the apostles to go to Antioch to help in the church
- He is the best man for the job – a **dependable** leader who is **pastoral** at heart
- Acts 11:24 tells us he was "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith"; a similar description to that of Stephen who was martyred for his faith. Acts 6:5
- 'Being full of the Holy Spirit' seems to be a requirement for leaders in the early church: Acts 6:3
- Eph 5:18 instructs us to be 'full of the Holy Spirit'
- The Holy Spirit's work can be divided into two areas: ordinary & extraordinary, regular & exceptional, indirect & direct
- Ordinary working – sanctification and regeneration. Extraordinary working – revivals and empowerment for miracles and healings etc.
- Are you filled/controlled with the Holy Spirit? Rom 8:9, Gal 5:16.

QUESTIONS:

1. As a person do you have a nickname?! What do you think you are known for?
2. When was the last time you were encouraged by someone? When was the last time you sought to encourage someone in your church – and is there anyone in particular at this time that needs encouragement?
3. How generous are you with your time and money?
4. Are you a leader who is known as someone who is dependable and trustworthy? How would you react in a situation in the church where the treasurer is stealing money?
5. Barnabas was obviously able to forgive Saul for his actions against the early church – are there people in your life who need to be forgiven for things done against you or the church? How do we go about forgiving people who have sinned against us?
6. Are you controlled by the Holy Spirit or are there areas of your life that are too full of other influences so that the Holy Spirit gets squeezed out!?

BARNABAS (Part 2)

THE UNSUNG HERO & MAN OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Delegation, Humility, Sending out, Persecution, Perseverance, False teaching:

- **Acts 11:25-26:** Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul – and brought him to Antioch and for a whole year they met with the church and taught great numbers of people. Note the importance of **team work**; of being **humble** enough to ask for help and being **willing** to let someone be a part of 'your' work.
- **Acts 13:1-4:** The **Antioch Principle** – our mandate and responsibility as church leaders to send out workers and missionaries into the world. See Matt 28:19.
- **Acts 13:45, 49, 50.** **Persecution** is often part of the Christian walk. See also **Acts 14:5 & 19**. Note that Jesus warned us in **John 15:18-20** that persecution would happen for those who followed Christ. Paul also warns us in **2 Tim 3:12** that '*everyone who wants to live a godly life will be persecuted*'. See also 1 Peter 4:12 & 16.

It has been estimated that in 2002 over 164,000 Christians were killed for their faith. The World Christian Encyclopaedia suggests that in the last century (1901 – 2000) about 45 million people lost their lives for being Christians! All over the world, even today, Christians are being persecuted for their faith – remember the story of Joseph the Masai warrior.

- **Acts 14:2-3:** Despite strong opposition Barnabas and Paul continue to speak boldly for Christ and were prepared to **persevere** in the face of trial.
- **Acts 15:1-12:** The need to be aware of **false teaching** in the church – and to stand for the truth where there is error. Jewish Christians were trying to apply Jewish laws and regulations to Gentile Christians saying that they needed to be circumcised. Beware of a gospel which says we have to do something to earn our salvation – we don't! It's a free gift from God through grace. See **Eph 2:8-9**. Beware of legalism within the church – story of the boy who nearly drowned!

The last mention of Barnabas in Acts - conflict:

- **Acts 15:36-40:** Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on a return trip but Paul disagreed and as a result they had a 'sharp disagreement' and parted. See **Ch 13:13** for the reason that Paul didn't want Mark to come with them.
- Stories of unresolved disagreements – the man who cut his house in half and the man who was angry at receiving a smaller piece of meat than someone else! **Eph 4:26** talks about not sinning in your anger – the importance of reconciliation, forgiveness and humility between Christians during and after disagreements.
- **1 Cor 9:4-6** – written after their disagreement this shows that Barnabas was still highly regarded suggesting that they had been reconciled.
- **Col 4:10 & 2 Tim 4:6:** Notice how important Mark has become to Paul! Despite our failures and our disagreements God is able to work his purposes out.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do we as leaders resent other leaders getting involved in 'our' project or do we welcome their help recognizing that team work is essential and that we are each blessed with different gifts to use in His Kingdom. Do we become envious and jealous when other leaders do well in their ministry – possibly at our expense?
2. The Antioch Principle: Are we seeking to send out workers from our church? Are we too inward looking? Is everything we do designed to help those already in the church or are we looking to reach out beyond the walls of the church and possibly our town and country?
3. What is your reaction to prosperity gospel teaching that suggests that life shouldn't be hard once you become a Christian? Why should we as Christians and as leaders expect opposition in our ministry and what should be our reaction? What trials are you facing at the moment and how can we help each other through the trying times?
4. False teaching in the church: Are you aware of preachers and leaders in your area who are spreading teaching which is contrary to what the Bible teaches. How should we respond?
5. Think of some examples where you have been in conflict with a fellow leader. How did things work out and what was the disagreement? Was it vitally important to your ministry? Was there reconciliation between the people involved and what could you have done differently? Is there a leader or a person you are currently in conflict with – what should you do to remedy this situation?

COMMENT:

Whilst everything we read about in Acts is positive when it comes to the character of Barnabas there is a reference in **Galatians** that suggests that at one point Barnabas made an unrighteous judgement! At the end of the day he was just a man – who sometimes made mistakes, just like us! Read **Gal 2:11-14**: The trip that Paul mentions here in the passage could refer to the journey that Paul and Barnabas made to Jerusalem in Acts 15 (when the circumcision issue came up) but we can't be sure.

Sometime after the issue was debated it would seem that there was a further conflict with the Circumcision Party. Paul tells us that Peter apparently made a trip to Antioch and that Peter and Barnabas then apparently began to draw away from eating with the Gentiles in agreement with the Jews of Antioch. Paul vigorously disputed this position by Peter and Barnabas. It seems as though Barnabas may have been easily swayed by Peter in this matter, although that's hard to understand when we consider how vigorously Barnabas argued his case with Paul at the Jerusalem meeting.

Notice the words '*even Barnabas*' in V13 which shows us again that he was very highly thought of by Paul even after their sharp disagreement.