



June 3, 2007 (Vol. 7)

BARNABAS

Douglas W. Hill

If you had a nickname that described your character, what would it be? In Acts 4:36, the apostles nicknamed Joseph as "Barnabas". This word is Strong's # 3874 and is defined as, "a calling near, imploration, supplication, entreaty, appeal, exhortation, admonition, encouragement, consolation, comfort, solace" (Vine, Thayer, Strong). Thus, Joseph was called the "son of encouragement." Why was he called this? What was Joseph doing so that he was described this way?

In Acts 4 we read of the generosity of believers toward brethren who were in need (4:32-35). Such was their appreciation for Truth, such as the "grace" or "thankfulness" they felt for salvation, that they did not set their hearts on earthly possessions nor hoard up or riches for themselves. Instead these saints demonstrated selflessness by selling lands and houses in order to better serve the Lord and brethren. Can we imagine doing that today? Would we ever consider selling our hard earned possessions, our earthly treasures so that we may better serve God?

It is in this context that Joseph is introduced and named. He was among those who sold a field and brought the money (evidently all of it) to the apostles (Acts 4:36-37). In contrast to him we read of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11). These also sold a possession, but for the wrong reason. They too gave money for needy brethren, but unlike others they were deceitful about it. These did it selfishly, in order to look good before men. Rebuke and death followed them, but not Joseph. Joseph's generosity was unfeigned.

Next we see Barnabas helping Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:27). Saul was now a Christian,

but he had a bad reputation because of his violent past. The brethren were skeptical of him and so they didn't trust him. Barnabas served the Lord and His brethren by being the bridge which spanned this divide.

Later, when persecution scattered the brethren and people in other places began being converted, Gentiles in Antioch heard and believed (Acts 11:19-21). When the brethren in Jerusalem heard of this, who did they send? Barnabas, of course (11:22-24). While there he called upon these converts to continue faithfully and purposefully in the Lord. He is here described as a good man (beneficial, useful), full of the Holy Spirit (full of truth) and faith (active belief in God). He then sought out Saul (11:25) and brought him to Antioch, and they both were involved in teaching many people (11:26). Barnabas was also chosen, along with Saul, to deliver assistance to needy saints in Acts 11:29-30. Such was his character and his consistency and trustworthiness.

After they returned from Jerusalem the Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul to further work (13:2). We read a sermon by Saul, now called Paul, in Acts 13 which is concluded by noting Paul and Barnabas urging the hearers to continue in the grace of God. Such urgings toward faithfulness included "positive" comments and "negative" comments, as did Paul's sermon.

The next sabbath the Jews were jealous of the large number of Gentiles who came to hear the truth, so they contradicted what Paul taught. Then Barnabas stood with Paul in boldly responding to these blasphemers (13:44-47). Interestingly, the same truth that angered the Jews, rejoiced the gentiles (11:48). But shortly the Jews stirred enough persecution to drive Paul & Barnabas away (13:50).

When Paul worked a miracle in Lystra and the multitudes thought to honor Paul & Barnabas as gods, both men were humble but very plain in their denunciation of this foolishness (14:14-18).

Paul & Barnabas were steadfast in the face of persecution, even returning to places they had been cast out of (14:19-22). And Paul & Barnabas were foremost in strongly opposing those who would bind circumcision as essential (Acts 15:1-2). They were courageous to stand

for the truth, even against erring brethren. Indeed, Barnabas and Paul were "beloved" men, men who had "hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:25-26).

But as good and encouraging as Barnabas was, he was not perfect. We read of at least one occasion where he sinned. In Galatians 2:13 he went along with Peter and others who began making a distinction between themselves and Gentile Christians. Paul describes this occasion as "dissimulation" or "hypocrisy". Barnabas, the "son of encouragement" was on this occasion a hypocrite and a discouragement. We know he corrected this, though, because Paul's later letters refer to him as faithful again.

So, what can we learn from Barnabas? Being an encouragement involves putting spiritual things above physical, selfless service, unfeigned love for brethren, work, humility, enduring persecution, boldness in the face of error, being filled with Truth, teaching others, etc. It does not mean we are sinlessly perfect. But does mean we repent and correct our wrongs. Basically, it means being faithful to God day by day and taking time to serve others and urge others to be faithful.

If you would like to be a "Barnabas", start with the good foundation of knowing Truth and unfeigned love. And do as Paul wrote: "Brothers, we urge you to warn the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be longsuffering with all." (1 Thess. 5:14) Can we tell the difference between the disorderly, the faint and the weak? To we respond appropriately to each? Do we warn the erring of the danger they are in? Or do we hope they will just "grow" out of it? Do we encourage those who become faint and discouraged? Do we even notice when a brother or sister has lost heart? Do we know how to bolster their courage? Do we lift up the weak? Or do we ignore them, or even trample over them?

Beloved brethren, there is much to do in the family of God. Can you be counted on? Are you a "Barnabas"? A "son of encouragement"? If not, then why not become one?

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Joyce Gardner (eyes), **Johanna Fletcher**, **Othena Kinnard**, **Jo Miller**, **Wesley Geer** (Life Care 316), **Mag Bumbalough** (Life Care 519), **Thelma Cunningham**, **Mary Cox**, **Monie Petty** (breathing difficulties), **Dave Poteet** (NHC 212), **Dorris Williams**, **Robert & Betty England**, **Ed Williams** (heart blockages), **Joe Smith**, **Mike Tenpenny**, **Thelma Klein**, **DeLeesa Price** (expecting) and **Alisa Fletcher** (expecting). **Kenley Streeval**, **Lydia Poe**, **Larry Bumbalough**, **Jake Hale**, **Joshua & Misty Poteet**, **Carolyn Williams**.

Herbie Sims (Ralph's brother).

NEW MEMBERS: We rejoice that Randy, Angie & Mandy White have placed membership here. Their address is on the bulletin board. Be sure to make them feel welcome!

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. June 9, 23
- **Door To Door** - Every Tuesday @ 6pm.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. June 24
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Brian Yeager, April 13-18, 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sunday 9 AM Bible Study & 10 AM Worship
Sunday 6 PM Worship & Wed. 7 PM Bible Study

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