

28 October, 2007.

WE ALL NEED AN ENCOURAGER

Introduction:

As we are concluding our training in the “Way of the Master”, it is necessary at this stage to consider some of our resources that we need in the body of Christ that can strengthen our hands not only to reach heaven; but to excel here on earth.

In 1 Samuel 30:5 & 6: the Bible says: “And David’s two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved and every man for his sons and for his daughters; but David **encouraged himself in the Lord His God**”.

In the book of Nehemiah, Chapter 2: 17- 20 (Nehemiah encouraged the people to build the wall); but there are instances, as it was in the life of David when things are really very bad and it would take exceptional grace for one to be able to “encourage himself” or when as in Nehemiah 4: 10: “...the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed and there is much rubbish; so we are not able to build the wall”. It is at such time that we need encouragement. We all need a Barnabas!

This man was introduced first in Acts 4: 36 – 37. He showed up in four specific instances thereafter: Acts 9: 26-27; Acts 11: 22-23; Acts 15: 36-40.

Today, I would like to take a quick look at the life of Barnabas, and share with you why he earned the name “**Son of Consolation**.” By the way, this name is very special. The word for “**consolation**” comes from the same word that is translated “Comforter” and which refers to the Holy Ghost, **John 14:26**. It refers to one who comes alongside of another to offer help and encouragement. Apparently, Barnabas had earned the reputation among the Disciples of Christ, as one who was a helper and encourager of others.

Looking back at the passages that I have mentioned earlier, I will like use this material to expand on the role of the encouragers:ⁱ

Acts 9:26-27 Encourage The Desperate - III. The glorious conversion of Saul of Tarsus. After Saul was converted, he tried to unite himself with the other disciples who were in Jerusalem, but out of fear and prejudice about his past, they were afraid to allow him into their group. However, Barnabas came to Saul's side and stood up for Him and told the others about this man's amazing conversion. He stood up for one who desperately needed a friend.

(III. There is still a need for this kind of ministry today! We need to make the effort and take the time to reach out to those around us who seem to be lonely or who have been rejected by others. This is especially true at church. We should do our best to make everyone who comes to this place feel as if they belong here and are accepted just as they are. Every person who darkens these doors should feel like they have returned home after a long absence! We need to love them, welcome them and accept them into our services!

Does this describe your life and practice? We ought to find ourselves actively engaged in this kind of activity. Look around you! There are plenty of lonely, outcast people. Find them and be a friend to someone who needs a friend. That is what Jesus did! It is what He expects of us.)

B. **Acts 11:22-23 Encourage The Disciples** - When the church in Jerusalem heard that there was a new group of believers in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to them to help them along. The Bible tells us that when he arrived, he "**exhorted**" them. This means that he "**offered them encouragement!**" He was excited about what God was doing and how these new converts were serving the Lord and he did his best to encourage them to carry on the God.

(III. Again, there is a lesson here for us today. We ought to do everything in our power to encourage other believers in their walk with the Lord. We need to praise others when they labor for Jesus and gently rebuke our brothers when they stray. Our duty to our fellow believer is to help them to grow in the Lord and to be an encouragement to them, **Rom. 14:19, 1 Thes. 5:11.**)

(III. There are basically 2 types of people in every church. One type seeks to find all the fault with others and the work of the church they can and then they do their best to tear others down. The other type seeks to build up their church and fellow believers and they seek to help them to grow in the Lord. Which description best fits your life and your dealings with others?)

C. **Acts 15:36-40 Encourage The Discouraged** - (III. The events of this story. Apparently, Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were together on a missionary journey. For some reason, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem, **Acts 13:13**. Now, Paul and Barnabas are ready to go out again and Barnabas wants to take John Mark along to give him a second chance. Paul disagrees and he and Barnabas part company, **Acts 15:36-40**. Paul takes Silas and goes out with him, while Barnabas takes John Mark and disappears from the biblical account.

While Barnabas is never heard from again, his ministry to John Mark had far reaching consequences! Because Barnabas gave this discouraged and defeated young man a second chance, his life as a servant of God was salvaged. In fact, before Paul died in Rome, he requested that Mark be sent to him, **2 Tim. 4:11**. Even more important is the fact that because Barnabas took the time to encourage a discouraged brother, Mark was used of the Lord to pen the Gospel of Mark which gives us an exciting account of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.)

(III. What a truth for you and me! How many times have we seen fellow believers fall by the wayside? Our natural tendency is to wash our hands of them and go on. God's plan, however, is far different! We are not to kick our brother when he is down, but we are to reach out to him in a spirit of love and humility and help him be restored to the place of fellowship and service. We are to display the grace of the Good Samaritan by stopping, binding up their wounds and by helping them to recover. Yet, we find it so much easier to gossip about them, to find fault with time and to hold their shortcomings against them for as long as we can. Aren't you glad that the Lord isn't a thing like us? Aren't you glad that He is the God of second chances, **Jonah 3:1**? Why can't we do the same for those around us? We can if we will be an encourager!)

What can we see from the life of Barnabas?

- 1.He was consistently an encourager.
- 2.He was generous
- 3.He was forgiving and compassionate
- 4.He loved the Lord and His people
- 5.He was selfless

ⁱ Those who read this message online can visit : http://www.sermonnotebook.org/new%20testament/Acts%204_36-37.htm (28/10/07) for the full sermon there which I believe is inspired and edifying hence I have adopted some of the materials to enrich this sermon note.