

Barnabas

Part 1

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[00:00:01] So, we look at the Prophetic Book of Acts, referencing this morning to the character of Barnabas, and it does seem to me, upon looking at what we have this morning, we can learn some very practical lessons on the life of this good man.

And could we read, first of all, part of Acts, Chapter 4, which appears in Acts, Chapter 4, verse 32.

The multitude of those that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common, and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, [00:01:04] and great grace was upon them all.

Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them, brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet.

And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is being interpreted as the son of consolation, relied on the country of Cyprus, having land sold, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

As the Lord will, we may turn to other passages in connection with this, but the thought of Barnabas was reinforced for me this morning, as Mr. Naum helped me unfold it, [00:02:02] some thoughts from the second chapter are grouped in our Bible reading this morning, reference was made to gleaning, of healing, of being associated with the assembly, and of having a sense of the mighty man, Boaz, of course, who was a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. The group she purposed in our hearts, and that was the thought that Mr. Nelson wondered what we call it, he didn't actually use the word, he referred it to Barnabas, she purposed in her heart to serve God, she said, your God shall be my God, and your people my people, and she gleaned, and she laboured, and she was diligent in service. And in the New Testament I think we have in many ways a counterpart of the group, I'm not saying that there's an exact parallel, but Barnabas is a character that we would be well-earned to study, [00:03:05] and in some measure to emulate.

We read in verse 36 of Acts chapter 4 that he was called Joseph, the surname was Barnabas, which meant, in our authorised, some consolation.

Other translations use the expression, some encouragement.

And the next, to me, conveys more exactly what seems to be behind the character of Barnabas, he was some encouragement. And if we live in a day when the Lord's people need to be encouraged and to think that it is the day, we were exalted to be at the Lord's table and for the Lord's gatherings. And surely by doing that we encourage others to do the same.

Now the first thing that's said about Barnabas here is that he was a wealthy man, but he had land, he sold it, [00:04:01] and brought the money, laid it at the apostles' feet. They experienced the great power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them. We read in verse 33, the great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. Do you catch everything? Those who possessed lands sold them. Among that number was Barnabas.

So he was a man of generous heart and he sold his earthly possessions and gave them to the apostles. Now we may not be asked to sell our earthly possessions, but surely there is a great lesson for us here. How much are we using what God has entrusted to us, whether it's our money, all our time, all our talents, for the Lord's work?

Barnabas, he sold the land we had and brought the money and gave it to the Lord. [00:05:02] And are we consecrating, are we devoting our lives, our times, our talents, we have our jobs to do, most of us, but are we devoting the energies and the time and the talents and the money for the Lord's work, for the Lord's glory? The Lord Jesus said, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you. And we live in a day when the material things are regarded as most important and as the Lord's people we could do well to reinforce this truth of putting the Lord first, of bringing our tithes into the storehouse.

As it says in the book of Malachi, he will pour down a blessing, putting the Lord first, and that he will command the blessing. Well, this is what Barnabas did here. We had reference to the so-called Reverend Movement of the last century. What characterised them was not only their [00:06:03] great learning, their great understanding of the Scriptures, but that they were men of simple yet mighty faith.

The story is told of Darwin, it's a bit humorous, but I think the message is terrible. Somebody said to him, Why do you always have a third class? And he said, Because there isn't a fourth. And there's a great lesson in that, I think, for you and me, that he was prepared to take a very humble place, so brought up in a very eminent situation.

Recognising that the Lord Jesus had called us to a path of service, to a path of witness for him in a world that refuses him. And here was this great son of conservation laying down his worldly possessions for the Lord's glory.

It seems, and I don't want to press this too far, but if you look in chapter 5, it seems to have encouraged another man [00:07:02] to do the same. Now, of course, I know that what he did, he didn't do with a full heart, but it seems at least in the first place where he encouraged Ananias.

It said that a servant of the man named Ananias sold the possessions, but he kept that part of the price. And he wasn't doing it out of a full heart, but at least it prompted this man in the first place to start, and there may be many others of which the scripture does not give an account, because of this

man's devotion to the Lord Jesus, it encouraged others to follow the same. So I would like to ask myself a question, and I would like you to ask yourself a question. Are we encouraging, or are we discouraging others? Are we seeking to build up, or are we seeking to do the other thing? Well, the next mention, I may have not got these in the right order, if I missed out any, I'm sure that you will kindly draw my attention to them. [00:08:02] But as far as I'm aware, the next mention of Barnabas is in connection with the Apostle Paul in chapter 9.

And we read just by way of connection when the Apostle Paul was leaving Damascus because they were laying in wait for him, it says that in verse 26 of chapter 9 after Paul's dramatic conversion, when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him and believed not 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 he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

And he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And so it was Barnabas, in this style of encouragement, [00:09:02] with this name of a generous heart, who recognized that God had spoken to the Apostle, that God had revealed himself to him. He wasn't jealous of any position of his own, but he brought the Apostle Paul, or as he was then called, Saul of Tarsus, to the church of Jerusalem, introduced him to them, so that the Apostle was received by the brethren of Jerusalem. There wasn't any doubt in Barnabas' mind.

He recognized the law of working in somebody else, and he was pleased to see it. And so often there is a sense of terrible jealousy when we see God working through others and in others, and we ought to give God thanks for every evidence of his working. And I'm sure that Barnabas is an illustration, a practical illustration to us of somebody who was a sign of encouragement. [00:10:03] And then, Barnabas is then referred to, I don't know if he's referred to other than this, but he's referred to in chapter 11, a place that we all associate with him. It says in verse 22 of chapter 11 of Acts, Then tidings of these things, that is, that the hand of the Lord was with them at Antioch, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. That's verse 21 of Acts 11.

Then tidings of these things came unto the church, which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, you notice that, who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, he rejoiced, when he saw the Spirit of God and the grace of God operating, not within the confines of the Jews, [00:11:03] but here to this church of Antioch, this great center of evangelical and missionary enterprise, who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, the apostles had been scattered, and the scriptures had, and they were, had gone down, as a result of the persecution, had gone down to Antioch, who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and it's brought to them all, that with purpose of heart, they should cling unto the Lord.

Now what a word that is for us. Simple as it comes.

With purpose of heart, they would cling unto the Lord. Not having a double purpose in life.

A single eye for the Lord's glory. Having the Lord Jesus first and foremost in all his ways.

And then we have this testimony of Barnabas. It says about him three things here. It says that he was a good man, or a righteous man, [00:12:01] full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith.

He was a good man.

It says in Romans 5, perhaps for a good, especially for a righteous man will one die, perhaps for a good man, some of you would dare to die. You know, perhaps we have suffered from, and let me be careful what I say here, for people who will seek for what is right, but with sadly, little evidence of the grace of God. And where the grace of God operates, in a right person, we find it produces a good man. One who has a generous heart. One who recognizes what God is doing and has no thought of jealousy, no thought of coughing, but he was a good man, it says. Full of the Holy Spirit.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles of those who were full of the Holy Spirit. [00:13:02] We have a classic example, for instance, in Stephen.

We read of him that his face shone as an angel when he was brought before his persecutors.

And he was a man of whom it is said that he was full of the Holy Spirit. Surely, we need to take heed to the exhortation in the Scripture. There is no exhortation in the Scripture to be baptized in the Spirit. But there is an exhortation to be filled and continually filled in the Spirit. And that those who are empty of self, empty of the old man, may be full of the Holy Spirit. That the Lord Jesus fills those empty vessels. Empty of self.

If we're cut enough with the things of the flesh, there is no room, if one can dare speak in that term.

We breathe the Spirit, and we quench the Spirit in our lives. [00:14:03] But we need to recognize the operation of the Spirit of God.

So Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith. He was a faithful man. He was a man full of faith in God.

And many people were added unto the Lord.

Then in verse 25 it says, They departed Barnabas, the Tarsus, the Seeker. I like that verse because, again, it shows no sense of trying to halt the work for himself. He recognizes that God has chosen this great vessel, Saul, and he goes and seeks him out. Because he was a man who God had chosen.

It reminds me of the character of Nehemiah's brother, Nehemiah.

His name means gracious.

God is gracious.

And he went to seek out his brother, Nehemiah, to seek his help [00:15:03] in the restoration of the walls and the gates of Jerusalem. And so similarly here, Barnabas does the same, seeking out the help of the Apostle Paul.

And so we read later in this chapter that they wanted to send help, practical help, to the Christians in Judea.

And they did this, verse 13, by sending it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, two men who the Lord had entrusted for this great work of carrying practical help for the work.

In chapter 13, we read in verse 2 that when the church of Antioch had certain prophets and teachers, and it names them, in verse 2 it says, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul [00:16:03] for the work unto which I have called them. So far we have Barnabas first and Saul second.

It's not my purpose to go through the history of this missionary journey, but just to mention that God was using this man and he was encouraging him and strengthening him. And so these two went on their missionary journey through Cyprus and then on to what we now call Turkey.

And then when they got to the mainland, we read that their companion went back.

Verse 13 of chapter 13.

Now when Paul and his company left Cyprus and Paphos and they came to Poah and Pamphylia and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. Nothing more is said of that incident [00:17:01] until we come to the time when the apostles were going out on their next missionary journey in chapter 15.

In chapter 15 we read, and some days after, Paul said to Barnabas, let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have priests that wear of the laws and see how they do.

Barnabas determined to take with him John, who serlings loved, but Paul thought it was not good or wise to take him with them. He departed from Pamphylia and went not with them to the world. And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder from the other, and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed off to Cyprus. And Paul chose Cyrus and his party. Now it's up to me to pontificate or to say who was right in this dispute.

[00:18:02] The point I'm simply wanting to draw your attention to is that I'm sure whatever the rights and wrongs of this incident were, that Barnabas had the blessing of Mark to Cyrus.

And Barnabas and Mark sailed to Cyprus.

And in the divine record, Barnabas passes from the scene and Paul is the one who dominates.

The point I want to make in contention with this is that many years afterwards, Paul refers to Mark as one who was now profitable to him.

Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed off to Cyprus.

And I have no doubt that through the encouragement of Barnabas, through his wise counsel, through his practical life, [00:19:02] those three characteristics of being a good man, full of attitude and faith, this great sum of encouragement, he was used by God for the recovery, the full recovery of Mark.

So Mark, who in the first instance had become an unfaithful servant, now became a profitable servant and was used by God to write that great gospel that speaks of the faithful servant of God, Lord Jesus Christ, the one who ever did God's will, the one who was immediate in his service for the Lord, service for God, and he wrote the gospel of the true servant, the one who before had been unprofitable, but the one whom I suggest had been encouraged and had been restored [00:20:01] by Barnabas to return to the work so that the apostle Paul, who had fallen out to use in our common expression, now recognized, at least at this point, this later point, that Mark was now profitable and Barnabas, I'm sure, was the man, one of the servants whom God used for his recovery.

So may we be like Barnabas, the sons and daughters of encouragement.