

“Son of Encouragement” (Slide 1)

Reading: Acts 4:32-37

There is a popular song titled: *“Bridge Over Troubled Water”* that fits very well with this lesson. There have been numerous performers who have recorded this particular song.

Without reciting the lyrics, I will give a brief synopsis of its message.

(Slide 2) When trouble arises and you are feeling alone and you can't find a friend or anyone to help you; “I will be there like a *“Bridge”* over troubled water.” The fact is; “I will lay down so that you can walk on me to cross over to the otherside away from the trouble.”

Metaphorically speaking, perhaps the trouble is like a deep drop over a cliff or a tremendously treacherous valley or desert one must cross to escape. That's how discouraged we sometimes feel.

What an encouragement that would be to have someone willing to be the *“Bridge.”* Especially in the church! Someone who will do whatever they can to help and encourage one who needs it the most.

We might ask or wonder, *“What kind of character would a person have to have that would be willing to help someone else by denying themselves and their desires so that someone who is “down and out” can be revived?!!”*

Seems to me that *Barnabas* would be that example. In our lesson text, *Barnabas* was a landowner who sold a tract of land, which we may more readily say (Slide 3) *“He sold the farm.”* He gave it to the Apostles for the common good. In verse 34, the Bible says that *“no one had need”* and *Barnabas* did his part to keep it that way.

Barnabas' real name is *“Joseph.”* He was given the name *Barnabas* by the apostles. Perhaps this was a nickname. Names in Bible times were

significant for they often had meaning based on the person's exhibited behavior or on what they would become.

(Slide 4) The name *Barnabas* fit his character. *Barnabas*' means "encourager." One who "exhorts" or is of great "comfort" to others.

Barnabas imitated a statement by John in:

1 John 3:18 (Slide 5)

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Barnabas not only had great love for others, he demonstrated his love by doing his part financially.

Barnabas was not controlled by his possessions. He was fully committed to the cause of Christ. He knew full well that his possessions were temporary and did something far great by **heeding the word of Jesus!!**

Matthew 6:20-21 (Slide 6)

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Having a proper perspective on earthly possessions prevents us from the disillusionment of selfish behavior.

Shortly after his conversion, Paul needed a friend.

Acts 9:26-27 (Slide 7)

26 When he (that is; Paul) came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He

had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

In the mind of *Barnabas*, no matter what Paul had been, he has forgiven him and counts him as a fellow soldier for the cause of Christ. He can vouch for the character and conversion of Paul because he witnessed what Paul had become.

In addition, Barnabas had first hand experience of being persecuted for his faith and he knew how discouraging that could be. Because of that he was an excellent candidate to send to the church at Antioch:

Acts 11:19-26 (Slide 8)

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. 20 But there were some of them, (Slide 9) men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The news about them reached the (Slide 10) ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full of the (Slide 11) Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. 25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

So do we think then that *Barnabas*, filled with the Holy Spirit, a companion to Paul as he brought the message to the gentiles, a generous and forgiving man was perfect?

Paul admonished Peter for showing partiality to the Jews when they were present over the gentiles and he did that same thing to *Barnabas*:

Galatians 2:11-13 (Slide 12)

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, (Slide 13) fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

No! One does not have to be perfect to encourage others. Perhaps the greatest quality for the “*encourager*” to possess is *humility*. I suspect that *Barnabas* was ready to admit when he was wrong. Just as I’m sure Peter did!

He also understood that we are in this together and all need encouragement and correction from time to time.

In this life, whether we are with those of like precious faith or those who we encounter day to day, we need to be observant when someone is troubled. Most often we don’t know what someone may be going through or how they may feel. Our approach to them can have a positive or negative effect and change the course of someone’s life.

Hebrews 3:12-13 (Slide 14)

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Each one of us faces the daily struggle to stay right with God. We are pulled in every direction, especially our young people. It can be very

discouraging. By design God established the church so that we will be able to lift each other up and encourage one another no matter the struggle.

Hebrews 10:24 (Slide 15)

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds”

I am thankful for those who are “*encouragers*.” We all need encouragement from time to time. These are the ones like *Barnabas*, attune to others when they see something is troubling someone and encouraging them with word and deed. May we all strive to be more like *Barnabas*.

Invitation

Today, if you have not done so, may we encourage you to repent, confess and be baptized into Christ. The greatest life decision you will ever make and then, Spiritually walk with *Christ Jesus* day by day.

If you have been baptized but you find life is getting you down and standing between you and Christ. May we encourage you by praying for you and with you this day to help strengthen your faith.

Please let us know how we can help you this day.

Reading:

Acts 4:32-37

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), 37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Please visit our website for the full audio of this study:

Shelbyvillechurch.com

Shelbyville Church of Christ