

BARNABAS: SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

Acts 11,13, 15

Last week we noted Barnabas showing hospitality in his giving to help others, and building bridges of friendship to help people into the life of the early church. Barnabas was a person who was always encouraging others in all he did. I would challenge us today, to be always encouraging others in all we do! It is one of the basic hallmarks of Christians!

Today, we note Barnabas in several other situations as he shared the Gospel and helped in establishing to the early church:

Acts 11:22-26 NIV

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called “Christians” first at Antioch

**Antioch, a Greek town 300 miles north of Jerusalem, became the first center of early church activity in Gentile (not Jewish) culture. Barnabas was sent there to “check out” the new group of believers, and he soon sent for Saul, who had fled to his home in Tarsus, following the threat to his life in Jerusalem. He and Saul spent a year there, teaching and encouraging the believers, and because of their life-style the new disciples were named “Christian”. I think the very name we bear today, is a direct extension of the life and teaching of Barnabas!

Acts 13:2-3 NIV (In Antioch)

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (on their missionary journey)

**Thus began the first missionary outreach into the larger, Roman/Greek world, places in Asia minor and what is now Turkey. (the area of Eastern Orthodox Church) Barnabas was part of the first 'Mission Outreach' by the Christian Church! And Barnabas was the leader, because his name is mentioned first! That soon changed, (13:9), when Saul's name became changed to Paul, and from that point on, Paul was usually listed first, and became the leader!

Acts 15:1-3 NIV

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

**Paul and Barnabas, (note the order of names), had been gone from Antioch on their mission journey, and by the time they had returned to Antioch, they discovered some church leaders from Jerusalem had come to Antioch, and began teaching that everyone needed to be a practicing Jewish person to become a 'Christ follower'. So, Paul and Barnabas were sent to headquarters, Jerusalem, to resolve this issue. And the entire chapter 15, is devoted to how they wrestled with this question, having some pretty intense debate and prayer/fasting. Finally, due to the witness of Barnabas/Paul, it was decided that it was not necessary to do all that! This was a major decision, that influenced the entire history of the Church, even today! The essential message of the Gospel is that we are saved by God's grace, through Christ, not works or obeying Jewish religious practices!!!!

Acts 15:36-40 NIV

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we

preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas, and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

**From that point on, much of the focus was on Paul and Silas, making several more missionary journeys, getting the headlines, becoming the focal point of much of Acts, and of course Paul writing the Epistles, etc. Barnabas is not mentioned in any major function from that point, but he must have had a tremendous influence as a mentor upon John Mark, who wrote the first Gospel! (It is commonly thought that Mark's gospel was written before the others, although it is not the first in position in the NT, and used as a source by the others).

---Barnabas was a significant church leader and major influence in the life of the early Church:

- As he showed hospitality by generously giving to the needs of others
- As a builder of friendships, welcoming Saul (Paul) into the life and fellowship of believers
- As living an encouraging life-style that set the standard of the name Christian
- As being one of the first missionaries bringing the Gospel to the Roman world
- As a mediator, one who helped navigate (lead) the Church thru a difficult/important decision
- As a mentor to a younger, less experienced leaders, who had major influence on Christianity

Barnabas is an example of hospitality and sharing the Gospel in ordinary ways, always living out the love of Christ “in his community and around the world”, speaking when necessary, but always ENCOURAGING OTHERS. He is an excellent model for us in our current congregational setting, and for each of us individually to follow!

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