

BARNABAS

Acts 4:32-37:

- **Jesus.** I love how the preaching of Jesus is in the center of benevolence in this passage. That's the way it should be in our giving. He's the center and motivation of all we do. He changes everything and mixes up the world in the best of way.
- **Son of Encouragement.** Barnabas. Well, his name was Joseph, but that's what the apostles called him. It means "son of encouragement." That alone say a ton. They could all see and agree - this brother builds people up. We'll see as we go along that he encouraged by what he did and taught. It shouldn't be one or the other.
- **Levite:** Saul wasn't the only Hebrew of Hebrews. Barnabas was also from Cyprus, but had apparently moved to Jerusalem and bought land. Let's take a look on the map and see where that's located.
- **Action:** Sometimes others don't know how much you love them until they SEE how much you do. As John the apostle would write: *"By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."* (1 John 3:16-19).

Acts 9:26-28:

- **Fear:** When Ananias was sent to Saul by Jesus, he replied, *"Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."* Acts 9:13-14. Now here he is in Jerusalem. Would have easily welcomed him?
- **Loved:** However, Barnabas saw something in Saul. Pretty encouraging, is it not? He wasn't ignorant of Saul's reputation. We need people like this. People who show mercy and grace. People who let their belief triumph over their fear. Again, Barnabas wasn't naive or ignoring the truth. Sometimes we think of being hopeful or encouraging about a thing despite the fact we know better. That's being naive and dishonest. Barnabas heard his story and believed in Saul. He knew the risk, but he didn't let fear take over. He left love reign. Later Saul would write, *"Love bear all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things"* 1 Corinthians 13:7.

Acts 11:19-30:

- **Inclusive:** Who was Barnabas? A Levite, remember? A Hebrew of Hebrews! But when he was sent to Antioch on behalf of the church in Jerusalem (wonder why they would send him!), he didn't see Gentiles cramping their style. He saw the grace of God and this made him GLAD. (Antioch was the capital of the Roman province of Syria. 500,00-800,000 people lived there. Only Rome and Alexandria were larger than Antioch). So, he exhorted them to keep the faith with purpose! God bless people like this. Why did he do things like this? Because he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. That's why. That's what it takes to be a Barnabas, brethren. Makes you think of the expectations from the ones chosen earlier in Acts when there was a dispute among the Hellenists and Hebrews over the daily distribution. They needed men who would love all and not respect one person over another. And what kind of men were they to be? *"Men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom"* Acts 6:3.
- **Humble:** He didn't think too much of himself and he needed help. So, what did he do? He sought out Saul to help spread the word. These two labored together for a year in Antioch.

- **Consistent:** It's not as though we only see him preaching from this point on. We see how Barnabas and Saul took their money to Jerusalem. This is what they lived for! You'll see the completion of this trip mentioned in [Acts 12:25](#).

Acts 13:36:

- **First Missionary Journey:** This records the first "missionary journey" of Barnabas, Saul and John (Mark). They started in Antioch, traveled to the island of Cyprus (Barnabas' home town), then to Lycia proclaiming the word of God.
- **Bold:** Sometimes we have a misconception that in order to build one up, you must always say lovely things - things that don't challenge or warn. Words that may even rebuke. Listen what Paul AND Barnabas spoke in [13:46](#), "*It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentile.*" Take note of the Gentile response. The Jew's rebuke turned into a blessing for the Gentiles . . . and they came to believe.

Acts 14:

- **Knew Their Place:** We're still in the "First Missionary Journey" of Paul and Barnabas. They're now in Iconium (district of Galatia). They begin by teaching in the synagogue and persuading Jews and Greeks, but angering unbelieving Jews. It was a divided audience, but they continued to teach. After an attempted stoning, they fled to the region of Lycaonia (lik-ey-OH-nee-us), Lystra and Derbe. Paul healed a crippled man at Lystra. This caused the crowd to react, thinking gods had visited them. They called Barnabas, Zeus and called Paul, Hermes (because he was the chief speaker). They attempted to offer sacrifices to these men, but they tore their garments and corrected the crowd. They didn't receive the glory. It actually upset them. **They pointed it to God.**
 - Side note: Taken from ESV Study Bible (pg. 1465), "*When Paul performed a miracle in Lystra, the people treated him and Barnabas as gods (14:8-18). They did this because of a local myth about the gods Hermes and Zeus visiting their region in human form, seeking hospitality. Only one couple gave them shelter, and as a result they were spared when the gods drowned everyone else as punishment.*"
- **Roles:** It's interesting how the description changes from Barnabas and Saul to Saul and Barnabas and so on. Barnabas doesn't get as much credit as we give him (this happens in many areas - it's just the nature of it all), but he was a good man who didn't need to be driving the wheel. The focus turns to Paul, but that doesn't mean Barnabas wasn't doing his part and changing lives through the preaching of Jesus. In fact, you'll take note in the next chapter how Iconium called Barnabas "Zeus" and Paul "Hermes." It's true that Hermes was the chief speaker, but he was a son of Zeus, the god of gods. They both played a role. Many times Paul took the lead in teaching, but you can see going through Acts how they were both valuable both to their listeners and the apostles.
- **Courageous:** We considered how Barnabas was bold right alongside Paul, but he was courageous. Paul was stoned outside of Lystra. They went to Derbe . . . and then back to Lystra. What was the message to this in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch? Continue in the faith and know that many tribulations wait at the gates of the Kingdom.

Acts 15:

- *(This begins with teachers who stirred up brethren at Antioch, stating that you must be circumcised. This led to what is called the "Jerusalem Council." The apostles, along with Paul and Barnabas, related that signs and wonders God had accomplished through them among the Gentiles. They returned to Antioch with good news and strengthened the brethren at Antioch.)*
- **John/Mark:** Vs. 36-41. Yes, the well known argument over John. Paul didn't want to take him because he left them in Pamphylia, but Barnabas did. Typical Barnabas. Paul should have known better. After all, Barnabas saw and believed the best in Paul. Who was right? Who was wrong? I think we can sympathize

with Paul, but at the end of the day, *"Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for his is very useful to me for ministry."* **2 Timothy 4:11**. Doesn't this make everyone feel a little less detached from such men?

Galatians 2:11-14:

- **Setting:** Perhaps here's what we have:

- Men came from James (that would be, men from Jerusalem who believed you must follow Jewish customs/commands such as circumcision and not eating with Gentiles due to their diet's and being presented with unlawful food). These would be Jewish Christians from Jerusalem.
- Before they arrived, Jewish Christians were eating with Gentile Christians. The church in Antioch was made up of Jews and Gentiles. They had no issue eating with one another.
- However, when they arrived, Peter, Barnabas and "the rest of the Jews", (Jewish Christians from Antioch) began to pull back and separate themselves from the Gentile Christians. Imagine being Gentile Christians and seeing pillars in the church . . . ever your own brethren you've been worshipping and eating with . . . now distancing themselves from you!
- Paul is making the point to Peter: "You're a Jew (race), but live like a Gentile (not forcing Jewish customs and eating like and with Gentiles). How can you then force Gentiles to live like Jews (putting them in a position to adhere to Jewish customs or attempt to find a way to be acceptable to their customs/laws?). This is my understanding of what Paul is saying.

- **Imperfect:** We've said much about Barnabas today. It's all been good, hasn't it? We like to focus on what is good, and rightfully so. We like to see and think the best in one another. That's what love does, does it not? However, we need to remember two things:

- We all all short of the glory. Even your heroes lose some battles.
- One event (or for that matter one struggle) doesn't define a man.
- How do you feel about Peter, for example? Yet this happened after he denied Jesus and was shown by God in a vision that Gentiles were accepted in the kingdom. This did not define who he was, nor did this define who Barnabas was. Nor does it define who you are. Listen, we struggle. We give into pressure. Even pillars.
- We have this confidence, because He who was perfect, you see, our Jesus . . . the hero who never lost, doesn't lose today and will never lose, died for us. And though we may feel that our stumble or struggle is the death of us, we must remember: He rose again. You too will rise from this struggle and be acceptable to Christ, who will resurrect His own one day.
- We're so thankful to God for such men and women. People who lift you up, shoot straight with love, and would do go to the end of the earth (or at least to Jerusalem - haha) for you. People who, after being around them, make you a better person. And why are they such people? Because they've been around Jesus . . . and they're all the better for it.
 - I enjoyed hearing a brother talk about Barnabas and such people. He discussed some lyrics and said: "I love you, not just for what you are yourself, but what I am when I'm with you. There are people who make you better when you're with them. You love them for that. 'When I'm with you, I'm better than I was before. It's not just for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.'"