

Barnabas: Son of Encouragement

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It's fitting that as we close out 2021 with our theme of "Let Us Rise and Build" and kick off 2022 with the theme of "The Gospel is for All" we're discussing Barnabas.

When we are first introduced to Barnabas in [Acts 4:36-37](#), we learn that Barnabas is not his real name but a nickname that means "son of encouragement." This was a nickname given him by the apostles and one which he definitely lived up to. Barnabas started by encouraging those around him and building them up, and then becoming a missionary in foreign fields.

Many times, when we think of evangelizing, our first thought is going out to foreign lands and spreading God's word there. Barnabas shows us that not only is that a part of evangelism but also reaching out to those around you and encouraging them. When we first learn of Barnabas in [Acts 4:36-37](#), he has just sold some land to help those who needed it. We are not told of the impact this had on the people who were helped by his contribution, but it's not hard to imagine as we've seen examples of what our help has done for others over the years. Acts such as these are needed not only to fulfill a physical need; they also encourage those who are helped and those around them.

Not only was Barnabas one who served those close to him, he was also one that served those he didn't know. Imagine being a Christian in the 1st Century and hearing of all the exploits Saul of Tarsus was committing, throwing people into prison, overseeing executions, along with many other atrocities that were committed against Christians in the 1st Century. If you were to hear that he had converted and been baptized, putting on Christ and putting off his old life, would you believe his sincerity or would you question it and keep him at arms length (or further)? Barnabas was one who truly believed the Gospel is for all and we see in [Acts 9:27](#), "Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus." Another good lesson from this example is that we need to look for any who have ears to hear, and "Sow the seed of the kingdom," not just those we think would fit in well. Our Lord is the Great Physician and we are all spiritually sick and in need of His help, so let's be out there telling others of the help that can be found through Him.

In Acts 11, when word of the believers in Antioch came to the church in Jerusalem, Barnabas was the one they sent to encourage the new Christians. We see in [Acts 11:24](#), "for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord." Great work was being done by Barnabas and the other Christians in Antioch and in order to further the spread of the Gospel, he went back to Tarsus get Saul and we see from [Acts 11:26](#), "...they met with the church a whole year.

And a great many people were taught.” What an amazing example for us of one who was Rising and Building utilizing the Gospel is for All as a basis for that. And from here, Barnabas and Paul go on to become missionaries, spreading the gospel in many places.

There's a poem by Charles Franklin Benvegar entitled A Builder or a Wrecker that I think applies very well to Barnabas:

*As I watched them tear a building down
A gang of men in a busy town
With a ho-heave-ho, and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell*

*I asked the foreman, “Are these men skilled,
And the men you'd hire if you wanted to build?”
He gave a laugh and said, “No, indeed,
Just common labor is all I need.”*

*“I can easily wreck in a day or two,
What builders have taken years to do.”
And I thought to myself, as I went my way
Which of these roles have I tried to play'*

*Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by rule and square,
Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan
Patiently doing the best I can?*

*Or am I a wrecker who walks to town
Content with the labor of tearing down,
“O Lord let my life and my labors be
That which will build for eternity!”*

So the question becomes, are you a builder as Barnabas was, willing to help out in whatever way necessary and truly believing the Gospel is for all, or are you are wrecker? The choice is yours, but let's all strive to make the choice of being a builder as Barnabas was spreading the Gospel wherever we go.