



A Spiritual Encouragement Message September 16, 2020

Barnabas-Part 2

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4. Barnabas saw the grace of God in an imperfect church

Verse 23: "When he came and saw the grace of God . . . "It is part of Barnabas' goodness that he had eyes to look beyond the imperfections of a church that had just been planted and see the grace of God. Not everyone can see the tokens of God's grace in the lives of the saints, especially the newer saints. But Barnabas could, and that is why he had such a remarkable gift for encouragement. He saw living embers of grace that he wanted to fan into flame, where others saw only the ashes of imperfection.

Why did his faith produce that kind of goodness? Because faith lives by grace. Faith spends all of its time looking for grace and locking eyes with grace. And so, faith has a kind of homing device for grace. Faith is like a radar screen designed to pick up the slightest motion of grace. It's like one of those little metal detectors that men use to hunt coins. If it gets near to a tiny little fragment of grace, the signals go off. So, Barnabas had the goodness of being able to see the grace of God in the imperfect lives of the Gentile saints in Antioch, because his faith was tuned in to the frequency of grace. Because faith can't survive without grace.

Barnabas not only saw the grace of God, he rejoiced over the grace of God in the lives of others. Verse 23 goes on: "When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad." Faith not only sees grace; it delights in grace. Faith is not only like a homing device and radar and metal detector that spots grace in an instant. It is also like an addiction. The more grace you see and taste, the more you must have. And when you get near it, you not only spot it, you savor it, you rejoice over it! And so, the goodness of Barnabas was his readiness to rejoice over the grace of God that he saw in the young church in Antioch. And the reason he was so ready to rejoice was because his faith had in it a deep and thrilling addiction to grace developed over a long period of dependence.

5. His Exertion for the Saints' Perseverance

Verse 23: "When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose." Genuine saving faith has in it an impulse to persevere and to fight for its life every day against all the temptations to unbelief. Genuine saving faith feels that it would be utterly inauthentic if it took off the armor of God, laid aside its vigilance, and acted as though past decisions could guarantee future blessings. And since genuine saving faith knows that its own life depends daily on the Word of God and prayer and moral vigilance, therefore, faith will produce in us the same vigilance for others. And this is a great goodness. Barnabas "exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with

steadfast purpose; for he was a good man.” His goodness was his exertion for the perseverance of the saints and it came from the living persevering reality of his own faith.

6. His Trustworthiness with Other People’s Money

Finally, Barnabas was utterly trustworthy with other people’s money. Notice verses 29–30: “And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea; and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.” In other words, Barnabas, along with Saul, was chosen to be trusted with the collection. Luke seems to want to emphasize this part of Barnabas’ goodness because he gave Barnabas as the main example of generosity in the Jerusalem church back in Acts 4:36–37.

Thus Joseph, who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet. Barnabas had a reputation for being trustworthy with other people’s money because he lived in a way that showed he did not love money or things. He was willing to sell his land for the cause of the gospel. He was willing to leave his land for the cause of the gospel. Money had no hold on him. He was free. Why? Because he trusted God, not money, to take care of his future. He was laying up treasures in heaven, not on earth. He was banking on the promise, “I will never fail you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). And so again it was his great faith that gave Barnabas the goodness of being utterly trustworthy with other people’s money.

Therefore I say with the writer to the Hebrews, “Consider the outcome of his life and imitate his faith” (Hebrews 13:7).