

Encouraging Like Barnabas

I. Introduction

There are 7 fundamental, motivational gifts mentioned in Rom. 12:6-8. Encouragement is the central one of them. In the 7 verses which follow are the keys to unlock the meaning of each spiritual gift. Rom. 12:12 unlocks encouragement: rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer (NKJV). Barnabas best exemplifies this gift in the N.T. In fact he was nick named "son of encouragement".

II. Body of the Lesson

There are three main periods in Barnabas' life. In each he illustrates one of the key elements to encouragement, as well as one of the three ways that the same Greek root word "paraclete" is translated.

A. Pre-missionary career: Barnabas encouraging as he is found rejoicing in hope in various people.

1. Evidencing faith to the believers at Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-37; Matt. 6:19-21)
 - Invest in eternal treasures in heaven (Word of God/souls of men), not temporal things
 - Encourage others to live by faith; example of foreigner from Cyprus & his retirement?
 - Saw beyond the present needy situation; came along side to help channel God's aid
2. Exhibiting confidence in Paul at Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30)
 - 3+ years later; Saul (Paul) saved→Damascus→Arabia (Gal. 1:17), now →Jerusalem
 - Living letter of recommendation; stood beside Paul when others doubted his faith
 - Looked beyond the past problems to what Paul would become; references for 1st job!
3. Evaluating objectively the Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:19-24)
 - New assembly did things differently (no traditions yet); sent Barnabas to investigate
 - Took time to understand what was happening by God's grace; encouraged the good
 - He rejoiced in what the church would become; looked beyond the problems of growth
4. Enlisting disciples at Tarsus, etc. (Acts 11:25-26; 2 Tim. 2:2; Acts 11:29-30; 12:25; Col. 4:10)
 - There was a need for teaching; encouraged Paul's help (on hold at Tarsus for 10 yrs.)
 - Disciples multiply effect in reaching world; don't fear that disciple better than teacher!
 - Looked beyond the training years to future; already recruiting next disciple (John Mark)

B. Missionary career: Barnabas comforting as he is patient in tribulation in various places.

1. Enabling the Christians at Antioch (Acts 13:1-5, 13; cf. Jn. 14:15-21)
 - Worked with the assembly 1 yr.; prepared them for when they were no longer there
 - Encouraged a missionary spirit/vision; able to support missionaries (no CMML)
 - The Christians weren't helpless (cf. disciples after Christ's departure, H.S. presence)
2. Engaging in follow-up in Asia Minor (Acts 14:21-23)
 - Perga→Antioch→Iconium→Lystra (nearly dead)→Derbe; no easy return via Tarsus!
 - Encouraged believers re: tribulations, recognized elders, prayed with and for them
 - The Christians weren't forgotten! (Importance of revisiting national workers.)
3. Experiencing furlough at Antioch & Jerusalem (Acts 14:26-15:35)
 - Gave report to their commending assembly of all that God had done through them
 - Took time to comfort, communicate with supporters; helped with Jerusalem Council
 - The Christians had not wasted their time--their prayers had been answered!

C. Post-Missionary Career: Barnabas exhorting as he continues steadfastly in prayer for Mark.

1. Enduring misunderstandings (Acts 15:36-41; cf. Matt. 18:23-35; 2 Tim. 4:11; Gospel of Mark)
 - Missionaries are human beings, only more so! Work more important than worker?
 - Grateful for a second chance (how soon Paul/we forget!); cf. parable of debtors
 - Not giving up on Mark paid huge dividends (for Paul, later for us); humiliating at time

III. Application and Conclusion

Remember, we are most like: God the Father when we love, God the Son when we submit, and God the Holy Spirit when we encourage one another!