

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XVIII

July 12, 2009

No. 28

Son of Encouragement

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The phrase “Son of” in the New Testament conveys the meaning of kinship and is used to describe the embodiment of certain qualities. One such example is found with a Christian named Joseph or, as we commonly know him, Barnabas. In Acts 4:36 we read that this Joseph “was called Barnabas by the Apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement).” What does it mean to be a “Son of Encouragement” and how can we exemplify this attribute in our lives? To answer this question let us look deeper into the life of Barnabas.

The word “encouragement comes from the Greek word *paraklesis* which means “imploration, comfort, consolation, exhortation, or entreaty.” There are two primary qualities of encouragement, namely entreating others to do right and providing solace to those who are walking in righteousness. We see both of these characteristics in Barnabas.

When we first read of Barnabas in Acts 5 we find that he “owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet” (vs. 37).

Barnabas was willing to sacrifice his possessions so that others could be provided for. He gave up his liberty and prosperity for the comfort of others. Truly this was a selfless act of encouragement!

In Acts 9:26 we see that Saul was trying to join himself to the disciples after his conversion, but no one would believe that he was truly converted. Barnabas comes to help during this difficult time for Saul. In Acts 9:27 we read that Barnabas was the one who took Saul and brought him before the disciples and vouched for him when no one else would. Barnabas implored the fellow disciples to do right by taking Saul in and he also provided solace to the recently converted Saul, both are indicative of true encouragement.

All through Paul’s first missionary journey, Barnabas remained ever loyal at his side. During some of the darkest of times Barnabas’ faithfulness never ceased to be a source of consolation for Paul. Yet, before they embarked on their second missionary journey, Barnabas and Paul decided to go different ways over the decision of John Mark (Acts 15:36-39). Even though John Mark

had defected on the previous trip, Barnabas was willing to help teach this young evangelist. Barnabas’ encouragement through the confidence and teaching of John Mark seems to have helped immensely for we read the effect years later in 2 Timothy 4:12 where Paul desires for John Mark to come because “he is useful to me for service.” Barnabas was willing to exhort the brothers that would be discounted by others.

We should earnestly strive to be like Barnabas, a Son of Encouragement, in our lives. It should be our aim to love our brethren and seek every opportunity to comfort one another (1 Peter 2:17, Gal. 6:10). It is also important to realize that encouragement is not a mere pep talk, but is inclusive of honest exhortation for others to do God’s will. Paul tells Timothy to “give attendance to reading, exhortation (*paraklesis*), and doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13).

May we be like Barnabas in our lives today by comforting our brethren and encouraging them to closely abide and grow in the word of God!