



The Barnabas Ministry

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“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” (Acts 9:26-31).

Barnabas lived true to the meaning of his name “son of consolation” by spotting the need of Paul and meeting it for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. He was not just a ‘son of consolation’ indiscriminately but applied his energy and resources for the course of Christ. It takes a ‘son of consolation’ to identify the unjust rejects, and to do something about it that improves the situation for them and everyone.

Because of what the disciples knew of Saul when he last left Jerusalem on a journey to persecute, and not acquainted of his conversion, they were sceptical of accepting him into fellowship. This was appropriate caution based on their level of knowledge, to avoid exposing the church to the danger of a possible “wolf in sheep’s clothing”. The only difference is that on this occasion this was a genuine sheep they were yet to know.

The last time they encountered Saul, they knew him as a person who:

- 1) Endorsed the murder of Stephen
- 2) Spearheaded the scattering of the church in Jerusalem
- 3) Obtained letters from Chief priest to continue persecution of the church in strange cities.

Now that he was back in Jerusalem many did not know if his mission was to destroy the re-convened church. So, they were prudent in their hesitancy to embrace him with an open hand, until they saw evidence of genuine change. Many have ruined their

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lives by accepting a “Jonas” into the boat of their lives, without checking out the facts. The scripture admonishes us to “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22).

Barnabas with a superior knowledge of the transformation that has taken place in the life of Paul, stepped in to make a difference by introducing him to the church. We must use our knowledge appropriately to open doors for the gospel. Those that God has called, must be accepted and given opportunity to fulfil their call.

Following the introduction, Paul went on to demonstrate his true colours and won the affection and confidence of the believers (vs 28,29). We always have a responsibility to demonstrate to others who we truly are by our character and lifestyles. His powerful preachings attracted the opposition of the Grecians, who went about to kill him (vs 29). The believers who knew of the plot helped him to escape to Tarsus through Caesarea (vs 30).

It is comforting to know that the conversion of Paul, brought about:

- 1) Rest to the churches throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria,
- 2) The believers were edified to walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, resulting in Church growth.

No condition is permanent. The trials of yesterday will pave way to the triumphs of today. We must hold fast in faith and let every trying time become a trusting time.

Moreover, we must be diligent in the Barnabas ministry by spotting the unjustly rejected and helping them integrate into the fold. Their acceptance and ministry will make a positive difference for good in the expansion of the Kingdom of God.