

Where Would We Be Without Barnabas' Boldness?

For those of you who have been watching "A.D., The Bible Continues," on Sundays on NBC, you know that they're hitting the homestretch. This Sunday marks episode 11 of 12, and with the conversion of Saul having taken place, the show is well building up to its climax (of course there's no suspense, we all know how it turns out).

At Calvary Assembly in Orlando, our pastor, Ed Garvin, is in the midst of a series of sermons surrounding "A.D." Recently, Pastor Garvin preached on the life of Barnabas, who was very instrumental in the growth of the early church. Barnabas was a man of courage and encouragement, and he took many risks in life, especially in his friendship with Saul, who formerly sought to hunt down and kill Jesus' disciples and early Christians.

Because of his immense persecution of Christians, most believers, including Jesus' disciples, were leery of Saul's intentions to the point of fear. Acts 9:26 says, "And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples. But they were all feared him, not believing he was a disciple."

Enter Barnabas (translated as Son of Encouragement), a Levite from Cyprus and respected leader of the church, who was one of the first, after Jesus' death, to sell his possessions to help Christians in Jerusalem. Barnabas was obviously a man of conviction, and he believed that Saul's radical transformation wasn't simply a plot to trap Christians and kill them. Although it's difficult for anyone to change their reputation—especially that quickly—Barnabas believed Saul's experience with Jesus was real.

Because of his good character, Barnabas, a Jewish convert himself, brought Saul to the disciples and became a bridge between them. In other words, Barnabas showed no fear by sticking out his neck for Saul. So, in a way, we can thank him for most of the New Testament, which was written by Saul (who later became the apostle Paul).

Think about it. Without Barnabas' boldness, we can only wonder what might have happened to Paul. In turn, where would we, the 21st-century church, be without Paul's wonderful ministry? I doubt that you would be reading this.

In other words, Barnabas showed no fear in doing what he believed to be right.

So, how do we develop Barnabas boldness? Take a look at these three L's:

1. Listening. While the disciples did not want any part of Saul at first, Barnabas at least was willing to listen to what Saul had to say. He took a risk by listening to Saul and not being afraid of Saul's checkered past. We, today's church, must do the same with anyone that has undergone radical transformation and is seeking a life of serving Jesus. Let us not be quick to judge, but to listen to their testimony and their cry for help.

2. Learning. We must learn to understand that God is taking care of us and will never leave us. Remember what He said in Joshua 1:5—"No man will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you. I will not abandon you. I will not leave you." He reiterated that in Hebrews 13:5, "... For He has said: 'I never leave you, nor forsake you.'"

3. Leaning. We are a culture that is captivated by fear, and it's easy for us to play the victim. We become paralyzed by fear. If we don't learn to lean on Jesus and to trust Him, then we become an invalid for the gospel of Christ. Like the Israelites, when we allow fear to dominate our lives, we will choose slavery over uncertainty.

Remember when Pharaoh and the Egyptian soldiers were pursuing Moses and the Israelites? At the Red Sea, they said, "When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and indeed, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they were extremely terrified, so the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, 'Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:10-12).

"There's never been an army that God could not defeat or an ocean that He cannot part," Pastor Garvin said in his Sunday sermon.

Think about that the next time you wonder how you are going to pay a bill. Think about that the next time the doctor gives you a bad report. Think about that when you are discouraged and bereft of hope because there's no medical reason you and your spouse are having difficulty trying to have children.

What if Barnabas had allowed fear to override his faith? How would the narrative of the Bible be different if he allowed fear to stop him?

We can be just like Barnabas if we only put our complete trust in God and lay our problems at His feet. Barnabas operated in Holy Ghost courage. You can, too.

And, as I like to say, “there is that.”

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