

TITLE: THE EXAMPLE OF BARNABAS (“Son of Exhortation”)

TEXT: ACTS 11:24

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to look at Barnabas’ example and his multiple characteristics that we ought to imitate.

INTRO: Many of us in the church today have spiritual role models we look up to. These are Christian men and women who have blessed us by being living examples of the Bible and its instructions. This is very important for us, because sometimes it’s easier to read about qualities like the fruits of the spirit & the virtues of 2 Peter 1 than it is to see them lived out, either in our own lives or the lives of others. This is why Paul told Timothy to be an example of these things (**1 Tim 4:12**). God knows the benefit we get from seeing examples of these qualities lived out before us. It seems that **Barnabas** was one of these examples. How much do we know about him? Let’s look at some of the godly qualities he lived out.

1. An Encourager (Acts 4:36)

His name was Joses (“exalted”). The apostles called him Barnabas (Son of ‘paraklasis’ - to exhort, admonish, console, comfort, persuade). “A Levite from Cyprus.” At this point we know nothing else of this man. But we know a lot considering what the apostles called him!

2. Selfless (Acts 4:37)

He sold his land and gave the money to the church. How many would do this today? No wonder the apostles called him Barnabas! What a great name! Why don’t we name our sons Barnabas today??

3. A Visionary (Acts 9:26-27)

He brought Saul to the apostles when the rest of the church was afraid of him. He didn’t have the example of the apostles on this yet...*he* was the one to take Saul to them. What was it about Barnabas that made him do this when the rest of the church feared Saul? Apparently, Barnabas was able to recognize the Holy Spirit in the message, even when others couldn’t! Barnabas himself was a man full of the HS.

4. A Leader (Acts 11:22)

He was sent by the church in Jerusalem (you send the one you trust!) to Antioch – which had been a ‘Jews only’ church (v. 19), then Greeks were being added (v. 20), so this had the potential to be volatile...which is probably why the Jerusalem church was interested in it.

5. Knowledgeable of God’s will (Acts 11:23)

- a. He recognized this situation (mingling of Jews & Gentiles) for what it was – the grace of God. You must know God’s will in order to know whether this was God’s grace or not!
- b. And he was glad! Cf. Jonah! Jonah was unhappy when the Gentiles (Assyrians) were obedient to God and were spared. But Barnabas is glad, as he should be! No wonder he is chosen to go with Paul on the 1st missionary journey (**13:2**).

6. Good (Acts 11:24)

“Good” ought to characterize every Christian. Thayer: “good natured, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy, upright, honorable.”

7. Full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:24)

These two go together. “Full” or “filled” (same as is used of the 5000 Jesus fed). A good Christian will truly be full of the Holy Spirit. We know that today this quality is different. Today you & I need to be engrossed & immersed in the Bible so we can be full of the HS...full of His word. This is where faith comes from (**Rom 10:17**). It is impossible to be full of the HS and *not* full of faith.

8. A Teacher (Acts 11:25-26)

He and Paul taught many people in Antioch for a whole year. Our knowledge must be put to proper use. Each Christian needs to be teaching, according to his or her role in the church (1 Tim 2:8-15).

9. Trustworthy (Acts 11:28-30)

Here is an amazing characteristic that might otherwise go unnoticed. If you were to look down this list and think of people to whom you could attribute these characteristics, how many of these people might fall short at this one? How many of those people would you trust with your money? How many times have you hesitated to give money to a preacher for overseas mission work?

Money can get the best of us! Many sound preachers stray from God when it comes to money. Barnabas did not!

10. An Evangelist (Acts 13ff)

Chosen by the Holy Spirit, he and Paul left everything (including the brethren they’d been working with) to walk the earth preaching the good news (and suffering persecution for it)! Most Christians today won’t even walk next door!

11. Humble (Acts 14:11-18)

He and Paul wouldn’t allow the people to worship them. Today this is actually the goal of some religious leaders!

12. A Contender for the faith (Acts 15:1-2; 36-40)

- a. (v. 1-2) He contended with the Jewish brethren who tried to impose circumcision on the Gentile Christians.
- b. (v. 36-40) He contended with Paul about John Mark, so much so that they divided. He did what he believed was right – he forgave Mark and continued working with him. He was a contender, but no evidence of remaining contentious.

13. Not perfect (Gal 2:13)

Even Barnabas sinned. Paul had to rebuke Peter and Barnabas for hypocrisy (not eating with the Gentiles when the Jews were around). But apparently both he and Peter repented of this sin. And Paul concludes his letter to the Colossians (4:10) by encouraging the brethren to receive John Mark, taking the time to distinguish him as “sister’s son to Barnabas.” This is a positive statement about both of them. Paul positively refers to Mark again in **2 Tim 4:11**, but no reference to Barnabas there, probably because Timothy knew Mark & Barnabas and didn’t need Paul to commend them both (like he did to the Colossians).

CONCLUSION: Although Barnabas played a very important role in the development of the congregations of the early church, he doesn't get as much 'air time' as Paul, Peter, or John. Yet as we've seen, he clearly displays multiple Christian qualities that ought to be imitated by Christians today.