<u>The Barnabas Effect</u> – Acts 11:19-26

Over the past few weeks, we have looked at several key people who had tremendous impact on the establishment of the early church. Our efforts have been focused on the book of Acts as we've attempted to learn some important lessons from this great book. Most important was the impact of the Holy Spirit. When we consider how quickly and how substantial the growth of the early church was, we must make sure to give credit where credit is due and that credit must be given to the Holy Spirit. Yes, Peter, John, Paul, and as we'll see today, Barnabas, did some remarkable things to advance the Gospel, but they only did those things under the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures inform us that it is the same spirit, God's Spirit that gives each of us our spiritual gifts. Their purpose was to spread the Gospel and "build" the Church. Our purpose is to allow God's divinely given spiritual gifts help us continue sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to "build up" the body of Christ, which of course is the Church. In three primary places, Paul informs us of the purpose behind God giving us these gifts. **Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.** Then, read **Ephesians 4:11-13.** Finally, read **Romans 12:6-8.**

Here, in Romans 12:8 we see the word *exhort*. Another, more common word found in other translations is the word *"encourage."* The Greek word used is *parakaleo.* Para means "alongside of" and kaleo means "to call." Therfore, *parakaleo* means "to call alongside of." This word gives us the idea of coming to the aid of someone in a particular area where he/she cannot help themselves. Listen to the words of Romans 12:8 again, but from the New Living Translation. This English translation reads, *if your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.* As I was thinking about today's message, I was reminded that during our brief look into the book of Acts, we have read about someone whose name is a direct reflection of his spiritual gift. Returning to **Acts 4:36-37,** we read: *Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.* This man Joseph, whose common name was Barnabas was given this nickname because of his everyday character. He was viewed by many as a *"Son of Encouragement."* Paul says, if you have been given the gift of encouragement, then encourage.

Barnabas is a fitting example for us as to what this means. **Read Acts 11:19-30.** Barnabas was a minor player in the growth of the church, but if you look at the things the Holy Spirit led hi to do, you'll see that his role as an "encourager" was necessary. If you remember last week's message, Barnabas supported Paul when everyone else was skeptical. **Read Acts 9:26-27.** It was his character that reflected his spiritual giftedness. He built people up. He supported them and loved them unconditionally. The idea behind this spiritual gift is that God gives this gift to empower people for the purpose of coming alongside another person who is weak in a particular area, to help them in a moment of need. It is the divine ability to lift the burden from another person and help them along their way.

There are at least two places in Scripture where every Christian is called to encourage others. **1 Thessalonians 5:11** and **Hebrews 3:13.** We are all called to be encourager, but for those who have the gift of encouragement, then they have been given a special ability in this area. When a person with this gift comes along side you, you will recognize it because you will immediately feel better. Even if that person is calling you out about a weak point in your life.

I thought I should give you some indicators for what to look for in these little Barnabas.' When they are in your life, you'll feel **The Barnabas Effect.**

1. They genuinely like people.
2. They are relational by nature.
3. They root for the underdog.
4. They are open-minded, forgiving, and tolerant.
5. They are quick to respond to the needs of others.
6. They are quick to give the benefit of the doubt.
7. They are usually well-liked by others.
8. They are talkative.
9. They are quick to spot a person's potential.

The gift of encouragement is a "How-to" gift. People who have it are hands-on. They are usually practical and don't like a lot of theoretical debate. They get bored with doctrinal discussions that have nothing to do with real life.

This gift is sometimes a viewed as the "Counseling" gift. People who have it enjoy spending their time helping other people work through their problems.

Good leaders are encouragers, but they don't always feel like they must lead. They are content with serving in a support role. They find joy in simply cheering others on.

Thank God for the people who encourage us. What a sad and dreary world it would be without them. They light the way and lift us up when we fall short. Many of us would have quit long ago if someone hadn't encouraged us to keep on going. Thank God for the Barnabas' in our life.

Do you have those? Barnabas'? If not, let me be one for you today, by encouraging you to seek those with this gift out. Find those gifted to encourage and let them do their work. Let them come alongside you. Let them help you carry a burden that seems too heavy. A two-man lift is always better and safer than trying to go it alone.

Let me once again remind those of you who have this gift of Paul's words from **Romans 12:8a**: *if your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging (NLT).*