

Portrait of an Unsung Hero of the Faith
Acts 4:36-37

Intro: If I were to mention names such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Rahab & Gideon you would think of the heroes of the faith who are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. If I were to mention names like the apostle Paul, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Thomas Aquinas, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, John Knox & John Calvin you might recognize these as heroes of the reformation. Names such as Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Adoniram Judson, William Carry, Charles Spurgeon, D. L. Moody & Billy Graham you should cause you to think of the heroes of the church.

Names like G.B. Vick, R.O. Woodworth, Dr. W. E. Dowell & Bob Hughes are men who, if you know the history of our fellowship, are men I call heroes of our fellowship.

But when I think of Heroes I think of men and women who have enabled these great men accomplish what they have accomplished. It is reported that when D. L. Moody first visited C. H. Spurgeon in England that Mr. Spurgeon took Moody on a tour of the great Metropolitan Tabernacle. As they ended the tour and it was about time for Mr. Moody to preach Mr. Spurgeon asked Mr. Moody if he would like to see the “power plant” of the Tabernacle. Moody recalls that he was a little put out by the invitation, “who wants to see a boiler just before they preach?” But, out of respect Mr. Moody agrees. They go down a flight of stairs that lead underneath the pulpit. Mr. Spurgeon opens a door and points to 100 or so men on their knees in pray and tells Mr. Moody, “There is the power of this great Tabernacle. Some would call Spurgeon a “hero of the faith” and they would be right, but I say that the greater heroes are the nameless men who were on their face praying while the preacher preached.

To me, in this church, the real heroes are those who, if they were to stop doing what they do would cause this ministry to nearly come to a stop. Men like Bill Dennis who takes care of our sign, the men & women who mow, the Sunday school teachers and those who invest in the ministry.

You might say they are ***Unsung Hero of the Faith***. An ***Unsung Hero of the Faith*** is someone whose impact goes mostly unnoticed and sometimes even unappreciated until long after they are gone.

Barnabas can be called an ***Unsung Hero of the Faith***, in his life and service we see a ***Portrait of an Unsung Hero of the Faith***

[Read Acts 4:36-37/Pray/Dismiss Jr Churc]

I never truly appreciated Barnabas, and his contributions to the church, and the cause of Christ. But, after studying for this message I am convinced that Barnabas is the unsung hero of the early church. The first thing that you'll notice about Barnabas is that his real name was Joseph.....the Apostles gave him the name Barnabas and I think for good reason.

The name given to him had great meaning and gives us a sneak preview of the character, and qualities of this unsung hero. Barnabas means son of consolation. A Levite of Cyprus and an early convert to the Christian faith (Acts 4:36). He derived his unusual title from his remarkable powers of exhorting the people and ministering consolation to the afflicted. Barnabas was a source of encouragement. All of us need encouragement.....but not all of us give encouragement.

So what is it about Barnabas that makes him the unsung Hero of the church?

In Barnabas we find a ***Portrait of an Unsung Hero of the Faith***
An Unsung Hero of the Faith...

1. ***Invests in Kingdom Work*** Acts 4:36-37
 - a. Barnabas was from Cyprus.
 - i. He owned land on this beautiful island.
 - ii. The island was famous for its vineyards, wheat, oil, and figs.
 - iii. John Phillips refers to Cyprus as the "*secular Canaan*".
 - iv. It was a fruitful land; to own land there one had to be rich, and influential
 - v. Yet, Barnabas surrendered his fortune. When he heard, and saw the needs of the early church.....he sold his land, and brought the money and laid it at the apostle's feet
 - vi. By doing that, he was declaring that he would live a life of faith
 - vii. He had answered the call of God, stepping out by faith in the direction that God was pointing him
 - b. I have always been greatly inspired by missionaries who answer the call of God to a foreign field, and leave behind their fortune
 - i. It is such a blessing to see those whom God has blessed with the ability to give.....give sacrificially
 - ii. I know that not all of us have to give as Barnabas did
 - iii. We may not be able to give the amount that he did.....but what a blessing it is to be able to give what we can to the Lord.....to take part in his service.

- c. **ILL:** I received this email from a missionary this week. "Missionaries continue to cut costs in every way they can. Missionaries do get some raises in monthly support from some churches, but the few that give an increase is not enough to cover the dollar devaluation, much less other increases. My family does everything we can to try to save, we bundle up with more clothes and keep the heat very low and do not heat any of the bedrooms, everyone has learned to take military showers (this means the water is only on long enough to get yourself wet and then only to rinse off (yes, this makes taking a shower in the winter very cold and you take it very quickly, so that you can dressed again) we line up at the bathroom and all use the toilet at one time and only flush after the last person, except when someone does #2 or guests are here (we also turn up the heat for guests, we eat out very rarely, usually once every six months. These are just some of the ways that we have learned to cut back. It might sound a little extreme, but it really helps to save and is really not that bad once you get use to it.

"...most missionaries are going way beyond in order not to be a great burden on churches and being accused that we are living lavishly. The reason for this article and my comments is to start a discussion on missions and what our strategy will be in order to get missions support up for present and future missionaries. This is especially important since one of the top reasons missionaries leave the field is lack of support. I know many missionaries who have left Europe

because of the dollar crunch.

Most missionaries are not allowed to work on the field and taking a year off to travel the US trying to raise new funds is not really an option for European missionaries as well as many other countries. Leaving an area to take this time out to go stateside only causes great unease and distrust in those that you were finally able to gain trust and build a relationship with. So what can be done to lower the time on the road trying to raise the needed funds...? What can be done to help missionaries stay on the field that God called them to with the ever increasing costs and devaluation of the dollar? Yes, God does supply, but the question is how does he supply? So what will the strategy be to not only reach the area around your church, but to also have a greater financial part in helping missionaries stay on the field with increased monthly support and specials?

- d. The answer to this missionary's questions is simple, the Church needs more Barnabas' willing to invest in the Kingdom work; willing to be come an unsung hero of the faith.

An Unsung Hero of the Faith Invests in Kingdom Work...

2. *Comforts Kingdom Workers* Acts 9:26-27

- a. One of the ways his name can be translated is '*Son of Consolation*'
- i. That means he was a source of comfort to somebody who is upset or disappointed
 - ii. What a source of comfort he must have been to Saul!
 - iii. Barnabas believed him
- b. Nothing in this world can be more frustrating than to be kept at arm's length.

- i. Saul was a social leper to everyone in Jerusalem
 - ii. But Barnabas believed him
 - iii. Barnabas came to visit him, talked to him, sensed the innate honesty of the man
 - iv. Maybe even quietly but prudently checked out his story
 - v. Whatever the case he befriended him
- c. Words cannot tell what that must have meant to Saul
- d. The result was that to the end of his days Paul never forgot what he owed Barnabas, the first man to trust him in Jerusalem
- e. I know what it feels like to be someone who is looked at with suspicion **[speak about my first visit to IBBF meeting in 2001]**
- f. But I also know what it means to have a Barnabas **[tell of Pastor Smith and how he befriended me]**
- g. **ILL:** I watched them tear a building down;
A band of men in a busy town.
With a 'HO-HEAVE-HO' and a lusty yell;
They swung a beam and a sidewalk fell.
I asked the foreman, 'Are these men skilled?
And the men you'd hire if you had to build?'
He gave a laugh and said, 'No indeed!
Common labor is all I need.
I can easily wreck in a day or two,
What builders have taken a year to do.'

And I thought to myself as I went on my way,
Which of these roles have I tried to play?
Am I a builder who works with care?
Measuring life by the rule and square?

- Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
Patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker who walks the town,
Content with the labor of tearing down?
- h. Are you someone who builds or someone who wrecks? Are you an encourager or are you a discourager?

An Unsung Hero of the Faith Invests in Kingdom Work, Comforts Kingdom Workers Work...

2. *Enlists Other for Kingdom Service* Acts 11:25-30

- a. When the saints were scattered abroad during Saul's persecution of the church, some of them ended up in Antioch, the capital of Syria, 300 miles north of Jerusalem.
- i. A busy port a center for luxury and culture,
 - ii. With its large mixed population and its great commercial and political power, Antioch presented to the church an exciting opportunity for evangelism.
- b. When the persecuted believers arrived in Antioch, they did not feel intimidated by the magnificence of the buildings or the pride of the citizens.
- i. The Word of God was on their lips and the hand of God was on their witness, and "a great number" of sinners repented and believed.
 - ii. It was a thrilling work of God's wonderful grace.
- c. The church leaders in Jerusalem had a responsibility to "shepherd" the scattered flock, which now included Gentile congregations as far away as Syria.

- i. The elders commissioned Barnabas to go to Antioch to find out what was going on among the Gentiles.
 - ii. a wise choice Barnabas lived up to his nickname, "son of encouragement."
- d. Verse 24 gives us a "spiritual profile" of Barnabas; he appears to be the kind of Christian all of us would do well to emulate.
- i. He was a "*good man*" that means he was a righteous man who obeyed the Word in daily life so that his character was above reproach.
 - ii. He was filled with the Spirit, which explains the effectiveness of his ministry. That he was a man of faith is seen in the way he encouraged the church and later Saul.
 - iii. New Christians and new churches need people like Barnabas to encourage them in their growth and ministry.
- e. Barnabas encouraged these new Gentile believers
- f. His encouragement
- i. Enabled the church's witness to have a great impact on the city so that "many people were added to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).
 - ii. This growth of the church meant that Barnabas needed help; so he went to Tarsus and enlisted Saul.
- g. What Barnabas did for Saul needs to be practiced in our churches today.

- i. Mature believers need to enlist others and encourage them in their service for the Lord.
- ii. It was one of D.L. Moody's policies that each new Christian be given a task soon after conversion.
- iii. First, it might be only passing out hymnals or ushering people to their seats, but each convert had to be busy
- iv. **ILL:** He often said, "*It is better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men.*" Many of Mr. Moody's "assistants" became effective Christian workers in their own right and this multiplied the witness.
- h. It was at Antioch that the name *Christian* was first applied to the disciples of Jesus Christ.
 - i. In mockery, some of the pagan citizens of Antioch came up with *Christian*.
 - ii. It was intend to be a name of mockery but became a name of might
 - iii. I can't help but believe that we own in large part our very title to an **unsung hero** named Barnabas

An Unsung Hero of the Faith Invests in Kingdom Work, Comforts Kingdom Workers Work, Enlists Other for Kingdom Service...

3. *He Encouraged Failures to Continue in Kingdom Service* Acts 15:37-39

- a. Paul and Barnabas agreed that they needed to go on their 2d missionary journey.
 - i. They could not agree on the make up of the "team."
 - ii. Here were two dedicated men who had just helped bring unity to the church, and

- yet they could not settle their own disagreements!
- iii. Disturbing and painful as these conflicts are, they are often found in church history; and yet God is able to overrule them and accomplish His purposes.
- b. That Barnabas would take up John Mark case is no surprise they were cousins (Col. 4:10) and family ties can be strong.
 - i. But Barnabas was the kind of man who eagerly tried to help others, which is why the early church named him "son of encouragement."
 - ii. He was ready to give John Mark a second chance, another opportunity to serve the Lord and to prove himself
 - iii. Barnabas "kept on insisting" that they take Mark along.
 - iv. But Paul was just as adamant that they *not* take Mark!
 - v. After all, on the first missionary journey, John Mark had deserted them to return home, and this was a mark of weakness.
 - vi. The ministry was too important, and the work too demanding, to enlist someone who might prove unreliable.
- c. You may be a Christian who sometime in your past have failed, made mistakes Jesus, like Barnabas is saying I'll give you a second chance
 - i. 1 John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleans us from all unrighteousness.

- ii. Christian if you have made a mistake
don't let it keep you from moving forward
confess, turn from and move forward.
- d. If you have never received Christ and feel that you
aren't good enough and don't deserve to be His –
you are right – but then none of us are.

Conclusion: Are you a real hero of the faith? Are you a
Barnabas? Are you someone who, ***Invests in Kingdom Work,
Comforts Kingdom Workers Work, Enlists Other for Kingdom
Service, Encourages Failures to Continue in Kingdom
Service?***

If not why not, isn't it time? Get in the game, become a hero and
take part in changing lives.

Challenge: lost to receive Christ by realizing that Jesus, like
Barnabas, is waiting to give you a second chance.

Saved who have stumbled a second change at serving

Other saved get involved.