

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Sunday 20th September 2015

THE BARNABAS WAY (3) - Encouragement In Failure

In this final study on Barnabas, we touch on the whole area of failure – not just personal failure.

Alan spoke of the Spirit gifts passage in **Romans 12:6-8** where the gift of encouragement is mentioned alongside others gifts like prophesy, teaching and service.

How do you see the difference between a general ministry of encouragement and a specific gifting of the Spirit in being an encourager?

Share something of your own experience of being on the receiving end of encouragement.

1. Encouragement flows through a church in the face of famine.

Barnabas and Saul were involved in teaching the church at Antioch (**Acts 11:26**).

There is an insight into the church at worship when prophets from Jerusalem came among them and spoke of an impending famine back in Jerusalem and Judea (**11:27**). Notice how the church responded with a monetary offering to help another part of the Body of Christ.

Barnabas and Paul took the offering to Jerusalem and when they returned John Mark was with them as a further helper – **Acts 12:25**

The encouragement flow is further seen in **Acts 13:1-4**. What do you discover about the church in Antioch from this little snapshot that is taken of the worshipping congregation? See how serious they were about seeking God's will and purpose as they shared in the important spiritual disciplines of fasting and prayer.

Imagine for a moment what it would be like for the church to send off their two best communicators and trust God to anoint others to cover their teaching and preaching.

There is the indication by Luke that Paul became the dominant personality. The partnership of Barnabas and Paul was soon changed to Paul and Barnabas.

What do you think would be the challenge for Barnabas to play 'second fiddle?'

2. Encouragement flows to John Mark in the face of personal failure

This is the episode in (**13:13**) when John Mark decides to return home early on in the first missionary journey.

When the second journey was being planned (**15:37**) Barnabas wanted to give John Mark a second chance but Paul had strong reservations. In fact a sharp contention arose that ruptured their partnership and Barnabas ended up taking John Mark to Cyprus and Paul linked up with Silas for his journey.

What are some of the lessons that we can learn about the issue of disagreement and finding the way forward? Are there any principles that relate to the issue of encouragement? How do you cope with unreliable people?

Has there been anything in your experience where failure proved not to be final and there were those who stood with you as encouragers.

There are a number of indications (**Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11**) that the broken relationship of Paul with John Mark experienced reconciliation and also with Barnabas (**1 Cor 9:6**).

3. Encouragement flows through Paul in the face of faith being compromised.

This is to do with an episode in Galatians 2:11-14. Summarise the situation and the lessons that were learnt. Why did Paul react as he did?

In what ways was Paul an encouragement in this strong exhortation to two Apostles?

What practical and spiritual lessons have you learnt from the life of Barnabas?