

ENCOURAGEMENT:

Everyone needs it; anyone can give it.

by Robert Hatfield (robertbhatfield@gmail.com)

While it is the intent to produce “fresh” articles in the bulletin (something other than that which was recently studied in the bible classes or worship assemblies), when Paul recommended that Sunday night’s material be reproduced in the bulletin I was eager to do so!

Sunday night’s sermon centered on the need for encouragement and how church members can encourage one another. Regardless of one’s role or responsibilities in the church, everyone needs encouragement. Likewise, everyone can (and should) give encouragement.

The New Testament book of Acts portrays the epitome of an encourager. In fact, his name meant “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). His real name was Joses, but the apostles called him Barnabas, which indicates a lot about the type of person he was. Notice the following points about Barnabas and how he encouraged the church.

I. Barnabas encouraged others by what he gave (Acts 4:32-37). Barnabas’ generosity provided encouragement to early Christians. Is that not the purpose of the contribution today? The apostle Paul commanded that Christians give on the first day of each week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). The money given to the church is used to encourage people in a variety of ways; it encourages the lost to come to Jesus and it encourages the brethren to remain faithful (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-5).

II. Barnabas encouraged others by what he said (Acts 9:23-29). The Jews plotted to kill Saul following his conversion. In fact, even the disciples doubted that Saul truly had been converted. However, Barnabas spoke on Saul’s behalf, causing the disciples to believe and support Saul’s efforts. Additionally, Barnabas stood up for John Mark when Paul did not think it best to include him on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas believed in Saul and John Mark. Where would Paul and Mark have been without Barnabas? The “son of encouragement” believed in them and encouraged them by the things he said.

III. Barnabas encouraged others by what he did (Acts 11:19-26). When the Gentiles began to obey the gospel and be added to the Lord’s church, Barnabas was sent to teach the Gentiles in Antioch. The Bible says that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). Likewise, Christians today are to “provoke one another unto love and to good works” so that we might encourage each other as we see the day of the Lord approaching (Heb. 10:24-25)!

Who we are makes a difference in the lives of others. Barnabas portrays an exemplary lifestyle of encouragement which we should all strive to model!

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