

A GOOD MAN

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." Acts 11:24.

It is doubtful if any tribute is greater than that paid to Barnabas, "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." You may think me daring to attempt to interest you by talking about a virtue so prosaic as goodness. Who is complimented by being called "good"? Bad company has wrecked this word "good." However, it is not used here in the common acceptation of the term, but in the divine. If a man lives morally; if he pays that which he owes; if he bestows his goods to feed the poor; if he conforms to the rules of society and the forms of religion; whatever his motives for so doing, by universal consent he is considered "a good man." Now the goodness of Barnabas included these things, but this quality in his life was divine, or the creation of the Holy Spirit.

I. The Fact Of His Goodness.

1. Men recognized it.
2. Angels admired it.
3. God appreciated it.
4. Bible stated it.

II. The Features Of His Goodness.

1. He was a genuine believer in Christ.
Because of his faith in the Saviour a wonderful change was wrought in him. He was saved. He became a man of prayer, and a student of the Scriptures.
2. He had good character.
He had a kind, affable, and courteous disposition. In him, there was amiability, kindness of purpose and manner, generosity of spirit, considerateness for others, and readiness even to sacrifice his own things for the good of others.
3. He was full of the Holy Ghost. Acts 11:24.
Therefore, he had right views, principles, desires and purposes. An anxious and careful culture of Christian character will also open our hearts, lives, and workings to the full energies of God the Holy Spirit.
4. He was full of faith. Acts 11:24.
Faith is the foundation of Christian character and service. His faith was sincere, cordial, warm, energetic, and productive. He had a strong grip on the gospel truth, and was not troubled with weakening and depressing doubts. He had a clear vision of the broader aspects of the Christian system.
5. He had convictions.
 - (1) Regarding Christ.
 - a. The Revealer of God to man.
 - b. The Redeemer of man from sin.
 - c. The Reconciler of man to God.
 - (2) Regarding himself.
 - a. His responsibility to Christ.
 - b. His responsibility to the world.
6. He was courageous. Acts 9:26-27.
He espoused an unpopular cause.

7. He was sympathetic. Acts 4:36; 9:27. The Apostles gave him a new name, Barnabas, meaning the Consoler, as expressing so well the man's character. Luke translates the name, "son of exhortation," though the Greek covers also the ideas of consolation and encouragement. He specialized in the ministry of consolation. He made it his special work to comfort the sorrowful, to cheer the discouraged, to strengthen the weak and the weary. To be in trouble, to be downtrodden, to be misunderstood or mistreated, to be in any sort of need, was quite sufficient to gain for one the sympathy and help of Barnabas. Where there were tears and sorrows, broken hearts and crushed hopes, lives bowed down and souls in despair, Barnabas was there to help if he knew about it.

8. He was generous. Acts 4:37.
He was a man of generosity.

(1) Generosity of hand.

He lived on the island of Cyprus and owned considerable property. He sold his property and gave it all to Christ. The generosity of that deed is measured not by what he gave, but by what he had left. That is always true. Generosity is not a sum in addition. It is a sum in subtraction. Remember the bigness of his gift. He not only gave all he had, but that all was a great deal.

There was no compulsion, but a voluntary surrender of all for the good of the whole. This deed gave him a place of prominence and power in the Jerusalem Church. Then Ananias and Sapphira became very envious and jealous.

Barnabas was the cousin of John Mark whose mother, Mary, was a woman of some wealth since her home in Jerusalem was the gathering place of the Jerusalem Christians. But in spite of his aristocratic affiliations, he was a man of generous sympathies with the common people.

(2) Generosity of mind.

It does not always happen that the man who is generous with his money is generous in his judgments of men. The mind of Barnabas was as open as his hand. A strange convert had come to the disciples. He had gone to Damascus to hale men and women into prison, and returned as an enthusiastic disciple. They were suspicious of him and afraid of him. Saul's conduct as the leader of the Pharisaic persecution in Jerusalem was enough to throw suspicion upon any reports of his change of heart and life. It is never easy to live down one's past. "They were all afraid of him." Acts 9:26. They gave him a cold shoulder. Fear and criticism demanded that Saul furnish proof of his sincerity before he be received as a brother in Christ. It was a crucial moment for Saul and for Christianity. Just then Barnabas stepped forward, took Saul by the hand, brought him face to face with the apostles, gave him the weight of his influence, and told them about the genuineness of his conversion and his consequent preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. It was a bold and noble thing to do. Barnabas risked his own reputation to save Saul to Christianity. It is a high sort of courage to champion the cause of a discredited man.

There was more in Barnabas than hospitality to new men. There was also hospitality to new ideas. And that we all need, especially as we get older. As we get older we tend to get hidebound in our ideas.

(3) Generosity of heart.

He made allowance for the weaknesses of men. On the first missionary journey, Mark had played the coward, and went home to his mother; but he was sorry for that and wanted to make amends for the past. Paul said, "No." Barnabas took the position that although he had failed once, he did not need to fail a second time. He wanted to take Mark along with them. Instantly Paul took

and held a position against that proposal. He was afraid that Mark might desert them in a pinch again. Paul said this is a difficult service and we must have a reliable man. Barnabas, friend of the friendless to the end, held that one is entitled to a chance to come back. Paul demanded that he prove his mettle before he be trusted so much. Paul had the best of the argument, but Barnabas would not turn Mark down. So they parted company. Neither cherished bitterness, nor became idle. Barnabas befriended Mark in his hour of crisis, and thereby helped to shape him for greater usefulness. Barnabas must have been justified in his generosity in his estimate of Mark, for Paul, in writing to Timothy, said, "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Thus the man he would not have at the outset, he was glad to have at the close.

9. He was unselfish. Acts 11:23.

He rejoiced in the work done by others, and in the successes that were granted to them. He had the unusual faculty of doing the right thing at the right time.

There was no sign of resentment on the part of Barnabas when he saw his assistant, Paul, take the lead. He was glad to take second place for the good of the cause. In nothing is the greatness of Barnabas more manifest than in his recognition of the superiority of Paul and the acceptance of a secondary place for himself.