

"The Excellent Servant of Christ"
Acts 11:19-30
(Preached at Trinity, January 18, 2006)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the last couple chapters we've been following the missionary work of the Apostle Peter. He began travelling toward the Mediterranean Sea and then northward.
Acts 9:32 – "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*"
 - A. Peter carried the Gospel first to Lydda and then to Joppa.
 - B. After receiving a vision from God telling him to embrace the Gentiles as brothers he continued northward to Caesarea.
2. With the salvation of Cornelius the way had been opened for the Gentiles to enter the Kingdom of God. Peter faced great opposition for receiving Gentiles into the church.
Acts 11:2 – "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,"
3. After Peter carefully explained that this was the work of God they all glorified God,
Acts 11:18 – "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."
4. Now with **Verse 19** the text picks up with **Chapter 8:4** discussing the effect of the persecution following the death of Stephen. The scattered Christians went to Samaria, Caesarea, Damascus, Lydda, and Joppa – even as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch. The Jews continued to preach only to the Jews.
5. Eventually, some of the Christians made their way to Antioch preaching the Gospel even to the Greeks – **Verse 20**

Antioch was one of the three greatest ancient cities behind only Rome and Alexandria. It was a city of great culture and commerce, but as with many of the ancient cities, it was also a city of great wickedness and pagan religions.
6. The Gospel of Christ was being preached and God was attending it effectually. Multitudes were being saved.
Acts 11:21 – "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."
7. Antioch was astir as people were coming to faith in Christ. As news traveled to Jerusalem they determined to send one of their own as a missionary. He had to be a man of God, a faithful man, a steadfast man. They sent Barnabus. He serves as an example of an excellent servant of Christ. An example we should attempt to imitate.
8. What were some of the excellent qualities of Barnabus.

- I. He was an encourager – **Verse 23**
- A. Barnabas came and observed
1. He saw the great demonstration of God’s grace in their lives
He could see the evidence. It was glorious to behold
 2. Based upon what he saw he encouraged them
 3. He didn’t seek to make carnal people feel good about themselves.
- B. To the brethren he was a great source of encouragement
1. His name means “son of encouragement” – it was his character
 2. He encouraged them set their heart on a singleness of purpose – being faithful to Christ
 3. This should be our never ending goal as we continue together – to encourage one another to be faithful to Christ
Hebrews 10:24 – “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”
 4. We should always be mindful of those things that encourage and build up our brothers and sisters in Christ
Things that will motivate him and build him up
- A good example, our high standard will help our brother raise his standard. Even our attendance encourages and motivates others
- Tender correction
- Biblical instruction
- A kind word of praise and exhortation
- II. He was a good man
- A. He was good for the job
1. He possesses wisdom, patience
 2. He would know how to assess the situation and bring them comfort and encouragement
 3. But this means more than that he was good for the job
- B. Barnabas was a godly man
1. This can be seen in his chief priority for them – he encouraged them to greater devotion to Christ
 2. He did this because this was the emphasis in his own life
 3. His life was characterized by righteousness, holiness, purity.
His life was full of Christian graces – he was sweet spirited, loving, kind.
He was good natured and charitable.
- C. Notice the reaction of Barnabas to the work of God in Antioch – he was glad
1. This is from the word χαίρω - to rejoice, to be filled with joy
 2. These were the things that interested him – he was glad about what God was doing
 3. There was the complete absence of selfishness – this was not his church, they were not his people – yet he rejoiced
It’s easy to be happy when God is working in our church – Are you also glad when God works in other churches – we are all part of the same kingdom.

III. He was full of the Holy Spirit

- A. The first fruit of being filled with the Holy Spirit is a life consistently conformed to the will of God
1. The Holy Spirit's presence conforms our minds, hearts, wills
 2. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is being saturated by the Holy Spirit's influence
This was the life of Barnabus – he maintained a life under submission to the Holy Spirit – this is what made him a “good man.” God was being made manifest in him.
 3. This is the essence of Paul's command in **Eph. 5**
Ephesians 5:18 – “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”
 - a. Just as wine gains control over the mind so does the Holy Spirit
 - b. He changes our entire lives - a controlled life – **Eph 5:18 – 6:9**
 - (1) He teaches us to submit to one another
 - (2) He places husbands & wives in proper relationship
 - (3) He sets the proper standard for children
 - (4) He sets the proper relationship between masters and servants - proper understanding of authority
 4. We can see the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5**
- B. Being filled with the Holy Spirit produces holiness
1. We are indwelt by our infinitely holy God
 2. We have become the Temple
- C. The person filled with the Holy Spirit has a great love for the things of God
A passion for prayer and communion with Christ
A zeal for evangelism
They are given to holy conversation

IV. He was full of faith

- A. Faith is the essence of salvation
Ephesians 2:8 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:*”
1. It is a full acknowledgement of God's holiness and our utter sinfulness.
It is a full acknowledgement that we are justly condemned and helpless to do anything to resolve our plight
Faith involves coming to the conclusion that only Christ and His perfect sacrifice can relieve our guilt.
 2. Faith is trusting in Christ alone – His righteousness becomes our righteousness
Faith is the instrument through which we are brought to Christ
Faith means to trust Him alone
- B. Not only is faith vital for salvation, faith is also essential in the Christian life
1. Faith is the spiritual bond between the individual believer and God
We know Him, we trust Him, we rest in Him – all by faith.
 2. Faith is our vital connection to Christ.
 3. Faith is the fuel of the Christian's progress
 4. Faith is the lifeblood of our prayers

5. It is by faith we persevere – Our confidence in our Lord only increases
2 Timothy 1:12-13 - “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. ¹³ Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.
- C. To be full of faith is to live in obedience
1. Faith leads us to know that obedience is the key to happiness and joy
 2. Faith always produces holiness and good works
John 8:31 – “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;”
 3. To be full of faith always produces a heart of love – faith and love cannot be separated
1 Corinthians 13:13 – “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.”
- D. To be full of faith produces patience, confidence, assurance
1. When adversity comes faith brings us to wait upon God
A.W. Pink – “Nothing but real faith in the veracity of the Promiser can sustain the heart and prompt to steady endurance during a protracted season of trial and suffering.”
 2. Faith brings us confidence in His Providence – we know that His wisdom is perfect. Faith brings us to patiently wait upon Him to accomplish His perfect work.
 3. Faith removes all discouragement. God works in His time.
 4. Faith removes all complaining or murmuring.
- V. His life was characterized by generous and compassionate giving – **Verses 29-30**
 See also **Chapter 4:36-37**
- A. Barnabas demonstrated the Holy Spirit’s rule in his life
1. He had died to self
Colossians 3:2-3 – “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
 2. He lived for Christ which led him to live for others
- B. Most people work on the level of what is best for them
1. This is the self-centered life—everybody looking out for themselves. People pushing to the front. They are often polite about it but the end is still the same.
 2. This is consistent with our fallen nature
 3. Paul’s description is most accurate
2 Timothy 3:2 – “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,”

- C. Christianity creates a whole new condition
 - 1. We've experienced God's gracious goodness. God did not have to save us. He could have left us in our poverty. But he showered us with the riches of His grace
Those who have experienced grace should be gracious
 - 2. In addition we recognize that God owns all things. All that we have was given to us by Him. If we give it all away it is nothing for God to replace .
- D. Barnabas' life had an affect upon the rest of the Christian community
 - 1. Notice in **Verse 26** that he was with them a whole year teaching them – both by word and example
 - 2. The result was they began to live like he lived – **Verses 29-30**

Conclusion:

- 1. We too must live as he lived
 - A. His life was a constant source of encouragement
 - B. He was a good man
 - C. He was full of the faith and the Holy Sprit
 - D. He was given to compassionate giving
- 2. These are the traits of all who are godly. They are the same traits Stephen had.
- 3. This is God's desire for all of His people. This is the life of excellence we must live. These are the people God uses greatly in His kingdom.