

even against erring brethren. Indeed, Barnabas and Paul were "beloved" men, men who had "hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:25-26).

But as good and encouraging as Barnabas was, he was not perfect. We read of at least one occasion where he sinned. In Galatians 2:13 he went along with Peter and others who began making a distinction between themselves and Gentile Christians. Paul describes this occasion as "dissimulation" or "hypocrisy." Barnabas, the "son of encouragement" was on this occasion a hypocrite and a discouragement. We know he corrected this, though, because Paul's later letters refer to him as faithful again.

So, what can we learn from Barnabas? Being an encouragement involves putting spiritual things above physical, selfless service, unfeigned love for brethren, work, humility, enduring persecution, boldness in the face of error, being filled with Truth, teaching others, etc. It does not mean we are sinlessly perfect. But does mean we repent and correct our wrongs. Basically, it means being faithful to God day by day and taking time to serve others and urge others to be faithful.

If you would like to be a "Barnabas," start with the good foundation of knowing Truth and unfeigned love. And do as Paul wrote: "Brothers, we urge you to warn the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be

longsuffering with all." (1 Thess. 5:14) Can we tell the difference between the disorderly, the faint and the weak? Do we respond appropriately to each? Do we warn the erring of the danger they are in? Or do we hope they will just "grow" out of it? Do we encourage those who become faint and discouraged? Do we even notice when a brother or sister has lost heart? Do we know how to bolster their courage? Do we lift up the weak? Or do we ignore them, or even trample over them?

Beloved brethren, there is much to do in the family of God. Can you be counted on? Are you a "Barnabas"? A "son of encouragement?" If not, then why not become one? ~

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Private and Public Worship

by Irven Lee

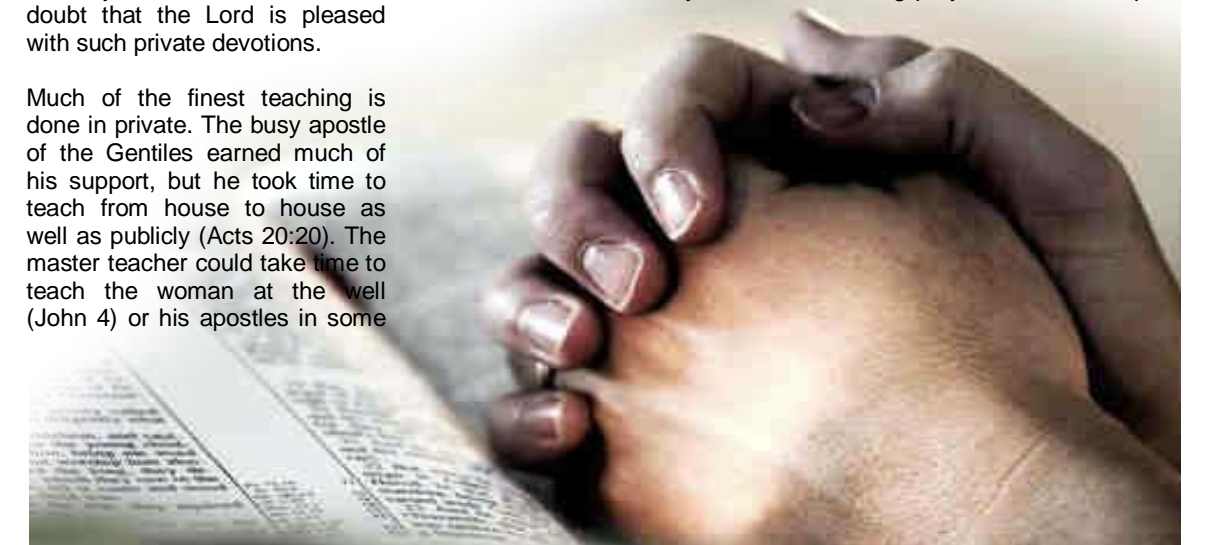
The great sermon on the mount (Matt. 6) encourages men to pray in a quiet room at home. The very command to fathers to nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord is a command for teaching at home. Paul mentions his daily prayers in the first paragraph of almost every epistle he wrote. He offered thanks to God and petitions for loyal Christians and for churches in many lands. There can be no doubt that the Lord is pleased with such private devotions.

desert place away from the crowd, or he could meet with the blind man whom he had healed (John 9). Again we can say that our Lord wants us to speak, as it were, in the temple and in every house (Acts 5:42). The inspired men taught the men of the Jerusalem church so effectively that the men in general could preach the word when they were scattered by persecution (Acts 8:4). It certainly was in order for Priscilla and Aquila to take Apollos aside and teach him the way of the

Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:26). We need thousands more in the church today who may be called faithful men who teach others also (II Tim. 2:2).

Paul was not cut off from prayer even in the prison cell. The Christians over the world were asked to pray for him. These effectual, fervent prayers availed much. These prayers were not offered on the street corners after the blowing of a trumpet. They were not long prayers made for a pre-

Much of the finest teaching is done in private. The busy apostle of the Gentiles earned much of his support, but he took time to teach from house to house as well as publicly (Acts 20:20). The master teacher could take time to teach the woman at the well (John 4) or his apostles in some



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tense. They were not offered just as a matter of forming some ritual. They are examples of private devotions poured out to the Father who knows his children's needs and has made wonderful promises. We can also say that we need thousands more in the church today who come boldly to the throne of grace in private devotions.

The diligence one gives toward becoming a workman that does not need to be ashamed includes much private study. One is encouraged to meditate in his word day and night. The daily contact with the precious promises, warnings, commands, and exhortations of the scripture is very important to one's spiritual welfare. One who would be strong should give attendance to reading that he may understand what the will of the Lord is.

Have these remarks indicated that there is no reason for public services? Do the books of our New Testament suggest that we have a choice between public and private worship, that we may choose the one or the other? Friend, no careful student of the Bible would admit that a choice is suggested. The same Bible that suggests prayer in the inner room also asks that we not forsake the assembling (Heb. 10:25). The same apostle who prayed so regularly and fervently from his prison cell asked that we teach and admonish one another by psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The Christ who died for us asked that we take of the bread and the fruit of the vine in memory of him. Disciples, according to the approved example (Acts 20:7), came together for this. The early church was steadfast in worship (Acts

2:42) just as it was remarkable in showing brotherly love. The private worship suggested was not instead of public meetings in the temple (Acts 5:42), the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9), or in other available places.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim.3:15). Elders are to take the oversight willingly, and all are to serve heartily. The very fact that God made plans for a congregation in each community where saints are found indicates that the coming together is of divine wisdom. Men may say they get more from private study. It is not a matter of where we get more or less. Both public and private devotions are taught in his word. How much benefit one receives at home or in the assembly depends much, though not alone, on his own attitude. The Lord knows that we need to be admonished by others, and that we should cultivate Christian association, as well as to have private study.

Sometimes wonderful periods of public study may suggest ideas and doctrines to our minds which conflict with our own personal ideas and habits. Antiseptics may burn the place that is infected. One reason, no doubt, for our need for group study is that we may be in a position to receive the benefit of the study others have done. Men at Berea could have studied at home, but Paul knew things they needed to hear (Acts 17:11). Yes, they needed to search the scriptures, but they needed to go back to the place of meeting for another sermon, too. Our prejudices keep us from realizing our own errors and inadequacies. We need to be reproved, rebuked, and exhorted lest we

come to resent sound doctrine, or to drift away from the things we have heard.

Imperfections in others did not remove the need for assembly at Corinth. The long letters to the church at Corinth make it very clear that there were imperfections within that congregation, but the best people were not asked to turn away and forsake the assembly. They, no doubt, were to work in humility and meekness to restore those who were overtaken in fault. We know they were to examine themselves, too. (II Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 11:28). In private study we may be more inclined to study on those themes that are most pleasant to us. In public study we may be inclined to want to hear those things that we already appreciate most. Surgeons, physicians, and Bible teachers should concern themselves most with the points of special need. May the Lord give us wisdom and courage to speak the word boldly as we ought to speak (Eph. 6:20). We need his blessed help in our efforts to develop the ability to receive the word with all readiness of mind. (Acts 17:11).

Let no one feel that a few hours spent in the assembly each week will suffice for private study and worship. He who often meets with the saints in hearty worship may be the one who delights most in prayer and study at home. He who is satisfied with an occasional visit with the church at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning may be one who cares little about prayer in private. Let none neglect public worship for private, or private worship for public. Each is suggested by the all wise God who loves us and advises for our good. ~

Barnabas

by Douglas W. Hill

If you had a nickname that described your character, what would it be? In Acts 4:36, the apostles nicknamed Joseph as "Barnabas." This word is Strong's # 3874 and is defined as, "a calling near, imploration, supplication, entreaty, appeal, exhortation, admonition, encouragement, consolation, comfort, solace" (Vine, Thayer, Strong). Thus, Joseph was called the "son of encouragement." Why was he called this? What was Joseph doing so that he was described this way?

In Acts 4 we read of the generosity of believers toward brethren who were in need (4:32-35). Such was their appreciation for Truth, such was the "grace" or "thankfulness" they felt for salvation, that they did not set their hearts on earthly possessions nor hoard up riches for themselves. Instead these saints demonstrated selflessness by selling lands and houses in order to better serve the Lord and brethren. Can we imagine doing that today? Would we ever consider selling our hard earned possessions, our earthly treasures so that we may better serve God?

It is in this context that Joseph is introduced and named. He was among those who sold a field and brought the money (evidently all of it) to the apostles (Acts 4:36-37). In contrast to him we read of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-

11). These also sold a possession, but for the wrong reason. They too gave money for needy brethren, but unlike others they were deceitful about it. These did it selfishly, in order to look good before men. Rebuke and death followed them, but not Joseph. Joseph's generosity was unfeigned.

Next we see Barnabas helping Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:27). Saul was now a Christian, but he had a bad reputation because of his violent past. The brethren were skeptical of him and so they didn't trust him. Barnabas served the Lord and His brethren by being the bridge which spanned this divide.

Later, when persecution scattered the brethren and people in other places began being converted, Gentiles in Antioch heard and believed (Acts 11:19-21). When the brethren in Jerusalem heard of this, who did they send? Barnabas, of course (11:22-24). While there he called upon these converts to continue faithfully and purposefully in the Lord. He is here described as a good man (beneficial, useful), full of the Holy Spirit (full of truth) and faith (active belief in God). He then sought out Saul (11:25) and brought him to Antioch, and they both were involved in teaching many people (11:26). Barnabas was also chosen, along with Saul, to deliver assistance to needy saints in Acts 11:29-30. Such was his character and his consistency

and trustworthiness.

After they returned from Jerusalem the Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul to further work (13:2). We read a sermon by Saul, now called Paul, in Acts 13 which is concluded by noting Paul and Barnabas urging the hearers to continue in the grace of God. Such urgings toward faithfulness included "positive" comments and "negative" comments, as did Paul's sermon.

The next Sabbath the Jews were jealous of the large number of Gentiles who came to hear the truth, so they contradicted what Paul taught. Then Barnabas stood with Paul in boldly responding to these blasphemers (13:44-47). Interestingly, the same truth that angered the Jews, rejoiced the gentiles (11:48). But shortly the Jews stirred enough persecution to drive Paul & Barnabas away (13:50).

When Paul worked a miracle in Lystra and the multitudes thought to honor Paul & Barnabas as gods, both men were humble but very plain in their denunciation of this foolishness (14:14-18).

Paul & Barnabas were steadfast in the face of persecution, even returning to places they had been cast out of (14:19-22). And Paul & Barnabas were foremost in strongly opposing those who would bind circumcision as essential (Acts 15:1-2). They were courageous to stand for the truth,