

ENCOURAGEMENT
Acts 4

I want you to go back with me to a chapter in the life of our church – Acts 4

Yes – those are our not-too-distant relatives in this chapter! We stand on their shoulders a few generations following!

When we read Acts and the Epistles that's our church that we are a part of. Lets not forget it!

Note the events:

v.1-12	Peter and John roughed up, arrested
v.13-22	Threatened and released
v.23-31	Boldness and power in prayer (v.29 note)
v.32-35	Financial drain to meet needs

WOW!

- threats
- roughing up apostles
- imprisonment
- release
- prayer
- sacrificial giving

Equals a time of great need...

Remember - this is the first church literally . We have the luminaries of first degree magnitude:

Peter, James, John.

The Apostles

Our Lord's brothers, James

And Mary and the

120....

And now – in that glow of greats enters an unknown foreigner! Look at v.36

Joseph

A Levite

Of Cyprian birth

Kind of dim in comparison to the big guys – elders, apostles, prophets, the inner circle, long time saints, insiders with Christ and so on!

But note the special character of this new comer:

Which was called Barnabus by the Apostles which translated means:

Son of Encouragement

Now – lets take a stop and relate to this fellow! Most of us usually feel we are pretty insignificant don't we?

Well God is the God who has a game plan that says He chooses the weak and insignificant and despised to do His grand plan.

Let's take a quiz from your memory of some great lives –

1. Who taught Martin Luther his theology and inspired his translation of the New testament? - *Melancthon*
2. Who visited Dwight L. Moody at a shoe store and spoke to him about Christ? *Kimball*
3. Who worked alongside and encouraged Harry Ironside as his associate pastor?
4. Who was the wife of Charles Haddon Spurgeon?
5. Who was the elderly woman who prayed faithfully for Billy Graham for over twenty years?
6. Who financed William Carey's ministry in India?
7. Who refreshed the apostle Paul in that Roman dungeon as he wrote his last letter to Timothy? *Onesiphonus*
8. Who helped Charles Wesley get underway as a composer of hymns?
9. Who found the Dead Sea Scrolls?
10. Who personally taught G. Campbell Morgan, the "peerless expositor," his techniques in the pulpit?
11. Who followed Hudson Taylor and gave the China Inland Mission its remarkable vision and direction?
12. Who discipled George Muller and snatched him as a young man from a sinful lifestyle?
13. Who were the parents of the godly and gifted prophet Daniel?

Footnote

- 1) Swindoll, Encourage Me, p.

The reason we don't know those answers is because God chose to use some "unknown" folks – 'nobodies'

We can call them...

But without them most of the pages of church history would be blank.

What was it Jim Elliot, the martyred messenger of the gospel to the Aucas, once called missionaries? Something like a bunch of nobodies trying to exalt Somebody.

But never confuse unknown with unnecessary! To God the unknowns are quite an elite group!

....some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary ... so God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that might otherwise seem less important (vv. 22,24 TLB)

Without some behind the scenes folks, we wouldn't:

- Have upholstered pews to sit on...
- Be in a warm building
- We wouldn't have found the door unlocked, someone did that for Christ tonight!
- How about our omnipresent unseen custodians?
- And your second grade teacher?
- How about that counselor at camp? Christian professor when you went to school?
- Oh how much we take for granted:
 - that the nursery will be there ready
 - the room will be set up
 - etc. etc.....

Flash back now to Acts 4 to see how we can be sons of consolation or encouragement or exhortation.

And just to get some motivation the Bible has this ratio for us New Testament Believers:

Of the four main ministries inwardly we are to have admonish-rebuke-console-exhort/ encourage.

Here's the priority:

109 X Encourage and Exhort
8 X Admonish
5 X Comfort
2 X Rebuke

Let's focus on the majors as we look through the eyes of the Son of encouragement – Barnabus!

We find him in Acts 4, 11, 13 and 15.

Each time he is busy in the role of encourager/ exhorter

- 1) 4: 32-37 Encourager of Finances
 - just when pressed to the wall
 - as resources being drained to care for local needs!
(that is a vital ministry isn't it!)
 - Barnabus comes through
- 2) Quickly to Acts 11:19-30
 - v.21 "Large number"
 - v.24 After B. "considerable number"
 - v.25 Key "encouragement of ministry"
 - He sent to look for Saul (9:20-31 outcast because he was not trusted thus unqualified)
 - No pride – no turf – just encouraging

WOW –
Financial encourager
Ministry encourager

3) Acts 13:1 Barnabus is #1!
Last mentioned Saul!

- He pointed to the one the encourager but not to minister...
- This is the encouragement of fellowship and as Chuck Swindoll calls it "fellowship"

Watch Progression
v.2 Barnabus and Saul
v.7 Barnabus and Saul
v.9 Saul known as Paul
v.13 Paul and Companions
v. 16 Paul
v. 42 Paul and Barnabus

Son of Encouragement is a humble encouragement of fellows and fellowship.

Finally

3) Acts 15:35 (Paul, Barnabus)

And...

-Journey two ready to go

-John Mark had bailed out in 13:13

-v. 37 the Son of Encouragement now demonstrates a wondrous final aspect of his God given love.

The encouragement of the second chance or in spite of failure...

v. 39 Barnabus says Yes, Paul says No

v. 39 Parting of ways

It all comes down to this: A strong commitment to the encouragement of others. But Henry Drummond's remark haunts me at times:

How many prodigals are kept out of the kingdom of God by the unlovely characters of those who profess to be inside!

One writer has a good challenge:

Barnabas demonstrated: encouragement in spite of failure.

Oh, the need for this ministry today! Is there some soul known to you in need of financial encouragement? A student off at school...a young couple up against it...a divorcee struggling to gain back self-acceptance...a forgotten servant of God laboring in an obscure and difficult ministry...? Encourage generously!

Do you know of someone who could and should be promoted to a place of greater usefulness, but is presently in need of your companionship and confidence? Go to bat for him! Stand in his stead...give him a boost. He needs your fellowship. How about someone who is better qualified than yourself? You would be amazed at the blessing God would pour out upon you if you'd really back Him with fellowship.

Then there are failures. The Lots, the Samsons, the Jonahs, the Demases, the John marks. Yes, they failed. They blew it. Are you big enough to extend a hand of encouragement and genuine love? Lift up the failure with encouragement. It pays off! It did in John's case. He wrote the Gospel of Mark and ultimately proved to be very useful to Paul's ministry (2 Tim 4:11b).

To Henry Drummond's indictment, I suggest a solution. A new watchword for our times.

ENCOURAGEMENT!

Shout it out. Pass it around.

Let's start tonight:

1. Put a warm, loving smile on your face, even if it hurts
2. Grasp a hand finally...
3. Look someone directly in the eyes
4. Genuinely say a word of loving encouragement, not flattery – be specific

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