

Voice of Christian Fellowship

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“SONS OF ENCOURAGEMENT”

Barnabus is one of the New Testament believers who never made the front page but was one of the great men who helped shape the life of the Apostle Paul. Barnabus was so named because of his unique ability to encourage others, especially Paul. Encouragement means to put courage into someone or to come along beside them. They don't stand on the other side of the road and shout out instructions but rather they meet you where you are and provide assistance. Paraclete is the Greek word for encouragement which means to come along beside or to comfort. The Comforter is the Holy Spirit and His mission is to come along beside to assist, encourage and comfort. That is what Barnabus was to the Apostle Paul. Even the greatest men and women of God need someone like Barnabus in their lives to gently nudge them along to the next junction in life. The Bible refers to someone who encourages others as having the deposit of grace or the gifting of grace in their lives. Just remember that God gives the deposit of grace and we're honored to pass it on. Why not deposit some grace on someone today and encourage them in their walk with the Lord?

Pastor George Ferrington

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

On Saturday, August 29th, at 6:00 PM, there will be a FAMILY NIGHT at the church. All are invited to enjoy hot dogs, hamburgers and treats. The kids will have games to enjoy. Vacation Bible School participants will be awarded certificates and their crafts will be on display. Parents are encouraged to participate. Call Judy Woods or Cheryl Ferrington for more information, and to volunteer to help with food and activities.

PUTTING THE WILL OF GOD ON DISPLAY “Believers Observing the Effects of Miracles”

It is my belief that miracles more than any other Christian activity provide the believer the opportunity to observe the effect of the unseen spiritual world on all that is visible. Much of this teaching is based on the teachings of Pastor Bill Johnson. He relates a story that happened in his church that reveals the importance of learning to observe miracles. He writes, “**One Sunday night, a**

young man in our church fell in the back sanctuary and broke his arm. The mother came to me quickly and said, ‘Come pray for my son.’ The healing of broken bones, even the ones from decades ago that healed incorrectly, had become commonplace. I ran back and found him laid out on the ground, his arm clearly broken. I got down on the ground with him, put my hand on his arm, looked at the break—and suddenly fear stole into my mind. I forgot every miracle I had ever seen, and I said, ‘Let’s call the doctor.’ Now, I wouldn’t fault anyone for calling the doctor in that circumstance. For most it would be the proper thing to do. But for me the moment was personally revealing. I had seen deformed bones disappear, bones re-set, hips reshaped, blind eyes opened, deaf ears unstopped—but now, looking at a young man with a broken arm, I forgot everything I had seen. I switched from supernatural mode to natural mode. My experience with miracles hadn’t fully shaped me. I repented and apologized to the mother a week or so later, not because I felt guilty or ashamed, but because I realized I had a long way to go in having my mind renewed.” This story tells me that it is not enough to put our revelation into practice. I have come to the understanding that we must also become students of miracles. In doing so we look at the miracles we experience and let them through the Spirit of God living in us shape how we think.

Miracles are wonderful and can be very dazzling, but they are not primarily designed to dazzle us. God gives His power to help people, and also to help the one administering His power by giving them the training to see differently. Think of it this way, just as there are nutrients in food, so every situation and encounter with God comes filled with the “nutrients” necessary to make us strong as a representative of God on this earth. The problem as I see it is that many believers go through this life experiencing encounters and miracles with God while not extracting what was intended for them in those experiences. They don’t extract any nutrients from the spiritual food they are fed. We see this in our churches today. When God does a miracle, some people say, “Wow, that was great,” and they leave unchanged. They are thankful, but they have not learned to see differently. These same believers will go home after a miracle and their life continues on in the very same pattern as before. The only thing that has changed is that they now have one more great and exciting thing to add to their memory that they got to see God do. They are thankful, but they have not learned to see heaven’s reality over earth’s reality.

If this has happened to you, don’t feel too bad. It happened to Jesus’ disciples too. They were part of the great miracle found in Mark 6 of the multiplication of food. The truth is, the multiplication actually took place in their hands, not in Jesus’ hands, and that’s a key point to remember. Jesus didn’t wave His hand and create a huge heap of food, **“But He replied to them, Give them something to eat yourselves. . .”** (V37). He took the small portion that they had and divided it into 12 groups, and as the disciples gave it away, it was replenished. As this story unfolds, we will see that it was later that day when they would have failed the test. Jesus tells them to cross over to the other side in their boat to Bethsaida, and He went to a mountainside to pray. While on the mountain, Jesus saw in His spirit the disciples straining at rowing, and doing all they could in the natural to keep it afloat. They were in danger, so He came walking on the sea close enough to check on them. They saw Him and screamed in fear, and He ended up coming into the boat. The wind and waves stopped at that moment and the disciples were amazed. Why? This is answered in Mark 6:52 AMP: **“For they failed to consider or understand [the teaching and meaning of the miracle of] the loaves; [in fact] their hearts had grown callous [had become dull and had lost the power of understanding].”** This verse is an odd ending to the story of the disciples failure. But it teaches us an important lesson. They had obeyed perfectly when carrying out the miracle of the loaves and fishes, yet they allowed their hearts to remain hard. They failed to see through the miracle. It had not transformed them.

Here’s the scoop: You and I can obey God perfectly, and be the instrument that brings about the miracle and still have a hard heart. The New American Commentary says it this way, “.....if the disciples had seen in the miracle of the loaves and fish an indication of the identity of Jesus rather than a mere miracle of multiplication of food, they would have recognized him when he came to them on the water for the purpose of revealing himself.” The Life Application Bible Notes say, “Even after watching Jesus miraculously feed 5000 people, they still could not take the final step of faith and believe that He was God’s Son.” If they had,

they would not have been amazed that Jesus could walk on water. The disciples did not transfer the truth they already knew about Jesus to their own lives. We read that Jesus walked on the water, and yet we often marvel that He is able to work in our lives. We must also transfer the truth to our own life situations.j

Pastor Bill Johnson said it this way, “I agree with all that these men said in their commentaries but I am compelled to say also that there is something else that they missed. It is a fact, the disciples did everything Jesus said to do, and yet when they got to the next problem, it came to light that they didn’t learn the lesson from the previous one. What was the lesson? They should have seen their role in the miracle. Because they did not see their role in the previous miracle, the next time they encountered a problem and Jesus wasn’t in the boat, they had no solution!” Please recall, Jesus said, **“You give them something to eat.”** He didn’t say, **“I’ll do it for you.”** It was at their touch, their obedience, that the food multiplied. And yet they missed the whole point. It’s important that we understand that it wasn’t Jesus’ goal to send them into a storm so He could show up and be the hero. He planned to pass by, but they weren’t understanding the lesson. They did not extract the nutrients from becoming deliverers, and so Jesus had to deliver them once again.

The seed of further transformation could not penetrate and take root in their hearts. This is the problem as I see it in the universal church today. We need to understand that we indeed do have a role in miracles. In my next lesson I will discuss “The Leaven of the Mind.”

Associate Pastor, Gene R. Brown

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

Ecclesiastes 12:1-13, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw near; when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, are not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain; In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets; when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; And when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; Or ever the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God, who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity. And, moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails fastened by the master’s of assemblies, which are given by one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

Recently God spoke to me this statement—“I am greater than the sum of all your fears and weaknesses.” This was a revelation to me, although I already knew it to be a fact. To hear God speak it into my spirit placed greater significance and caused me to seek out His guidance for further explanation.

The book of Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon. It is an expression of heartfelt feelings, mostly resulting from his faults and failures in serving God. He has admitted his flesh problems—that is the desire for sex, power, fame and fortune. His life had gotten derailed and he put God on a shelf. You will see in verse 8 his expression, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” He is saying that all that he (and we) count as

important in this world is just vanity. The word vanity means that which is empty, without permanent value, that which leads to frustration. This book is an outpouring of his frustration over the wasted years of his life, and his subsequent acknowledgment of God once again.

One key element of Chapter 12 is the discussion on this body aging and losing its strength and ability. We are reminded in verse 1 to serve God when we are young and strong and vital. If most people will be truthful when asked the question, What do you fear most?, they will say death. What is death? It is the absence of life. We hold life so dear that we are strangling the life out of ourselves. God said if we are willing to give up our lives, we will have life. Young people are less fearful of death because they see it as a something that is a long time away. As you age it becomes a more real threat.

Solomon presents a unique description of aging in these verses. In verse 2, the keepers of the house that tremble represents the hands and arms that grow old and weak and tremble. They no longer have the dexterity they once had and many times arthritis sets in. The strong men shall bow themselves, means the legs and back that grow weak and fail. The grinders cease because they are few, refers to the teeth that become few or are replaced as they age. Those that look out the window are darkened, refers to the eyes that fail due to loss of sight, cataracts, glaucoma, or other issues. The doors shall be shut in the streets, is the loss of hearing. The daughters of music shall be brought low, means we will no longer be able to speak or sing as well or as long. The fear of high places usually accompanies age as we realize our loss of equilibrium and balance. The almond tree flourishing refers to the graying of the hair with age. The silver cord, the golden bowl, the pitcher broken at the fountain, the wheel broken at the cistern, and mourners in the streets portray different classes of wealth or poverty in people, but all die and must leave their possessions behind. Truly life without God is vanity.

Matthew 16:26 tells us, **“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.”** Satan is deceiving the world into believing that there is no God, and no reason to serve anyone other than our own desires. Solomon was deceived, but came to realization of his failures. That is why he has written in verse 13, Fear God and keep His commandments. This is the key to all happiness. Not just to be obedient, but to have a reverence of God for His holiness, His righteousness, His goodness, His love, His sovereignty, His fellowship toward us, and on and on. Love God supremely, trust God completely, obey God totally, fear God with all your faith and love in Him.

We each have a purpose in God’s plan. We must fulfill that purpose. In verse 14 we find that every act is brought to judgment, whether it is good or evil. Our primary purpose is to establish a personal relationship with God, that results in a life that counts for something here and continues into eternity with Him. As King Solomon said, “The conclusion of the matter is—Fear God and keep His commandments.”

Bro. Mike Woods

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HAVE FAITH

IN GOD