

## Barnabas Calling

### Encouraging words for the troubled, discouraged, or tired soul

The devil, according to legend, once advertised his tools for sale at public auction. When the prospective buyers assembled, there was one oddly shaped tool, which was labeled "Not for sale." Asked to explain why this was, the devil answered, "I can spare my other tools, but I cannot spare this one. It is the most useful implement that I have. It is called Discouragement, and with it I can work my way into hearts otherwise inaccessible. When I get this tool into a man's heart, the way is open to plant anything there I may desire."

If there is one thing that is constant it is that we all are subject to discouragement. There is no shortage of discouragements to hinder the work of God. The Bible is full of men of God who at times became discouraged. And you and I get discouraged from time to time don't we??

Because this is such a potent weapon I would like Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement", to give us some food for thought so that we have something to grasp on to the next time it hits us.

Lets begin our adventure with Encouraging Words:

A. For those times when life seems like it is out of control God is in control.

Barnabas says, don't forget, God is sovereign ... even in our pain, even in our troubles. Through it all, his love is transforming us, perfecting us, completing us.

**James 1:2-4** *Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*

Dave Earley, writing in Living in His Presence said, "there is no such thing as instant spiritual transformation. It is an ongoing process of ever increasing glory. Our character is transformed little by little, a bit at a time."

So the next time things in your life seem out of control and it seems like your world is falling apart remember the words of Ronald James as he wrote "When we worship the Lord, let's remember that He is in control. Nothing alarms Him, or takes Him by surprise. Nothing is too big for Him to handle, or so small it escapes His attention. When the winds of my world begin to blow, He remains seated. When raging waves surround me, He governs their temper...I need not be moved ... Because the Lord is seated and sovereign...He alone is sovereign."

B. For those times when the Christian life seems to move at a snails pace.

Barnabas says, don't forget, there is a process at work in the life of every believer. We are being changed into his likeness, but it cannot happen overnight. Give God time to produce his ever-increasing glory in you.

*2 Corinthians 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Notice the key words in this verse Being Transformed. **A Question:** How long does it take a butterfly to emerge from its growing place? It is no different for us. Saint Francis De Sales said: "Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself... Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them - every day begin the task anew." So next time you feel like giving up because the end seems to be no where in sight, be encouraged to hang in there. The great potter is not done creating the vessel of your life

C. For those times when it seems like life has left you friendless and fearful, afraid of not being able to make it in life.

Do you feel forsaken? Barnabas says, Perhaps you've just forgotten: *God is able ... he will supply. Seek him daily and trust him to provide everything you need. Psalm 9:10 Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

Of this verse Spurgeon writes, " The Lord may hide his face for a season from his people, but he never has utterly, finally, really, or angrily *forsaken them that seek him*. Let the poor seekers draw comfort from this fact, and let the finders rejoice yet more exceedingly, for what must be the Lord's faithfulness to those who find if he is so gracious to those who seek. "

Now lets think about some encouraging words

D. When it looks like God wanted to stretch you.

Barnabas reminds us, we are called to go—go into the world. God tells us to be courageous as we face the dangers and the battles of life. We may not always travel in safe territory, but we'll never be alone. Jehovah, our Salvation, is with us.

*Joshua 1:9 Speaks well here, Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*

In verse 9 we find a further principle: The author writes "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage." What power the assurance of God's mind gives! All indecision as to the path, all terror, all fear of the enemy disappears. Satan cannot harm us; has not God commanded him as he did Job? Such then are the principles which should govern the heart that would enjoy heavenly things and fight the battles of the Lord.

Moving on now lets think about an encouraging word

E. When we are feeling awkward and unlovely

Barnabas doesn't forget to tell that, in God's eyes, he is making us beautiful. Ecclesiastes 3:11 *He has made everything beautiful in its time.* Because He has made us beautiful in his time we ought to be encouraged to listen to the words of William Arthur Ward when he wrote

The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.  
Remember your possibilities; forget your limitations.  
Remember your potentialities; forget your seeming restrictions.  
Remember your abilities; forget your disabilities.

Remember your assets; forget your liabilities.  
Remember your strengths; forget your weaknesses.  
Remember your joys; forget your sorrows.

Now think about this next stop on our journey and encouraging words when

F. We feel overwhelmed with trials.

Here Barnabas encourages us to think about the fact that just as a hammer and high heat are used to forge instruments of iron, God uses trials to develop genuine faith and strength of character in us.

*I Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Marcus Aurelius in his meditations writes "Nothing happens to any man which he is not formed by nature to bear."

Listen to the words of Joseph Tson, a Romanian pastor who lived through the oppression of Nicholae Ceausescu and wrote this about suffering, "The union with Christ is the most beautiful subject in the Christian life. It means that I am not a lone fighter here: I am an extension of

Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not my suffering: I only had the honor to share His sufferings" Barnabas says, so next time the hammer falls on some part of our lives lets keep our eyes on the finished prize. Well suffering may not be pleasant but we can be encouraged when they come.

Next however lets look at Encouraging Words: for those times when

G. Your soul is troubled discouraged and tired.

Barnabas sends a note to encourage. He writes, Remember, God is faithful. He always provides a way of escape. He reminds us that when tempted, your job is not to bear up under the weight of temptation, but rather, to look for the escape route God has already provided.

*I Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Nine-year-old Nooruddin was pushing his cart and selling vegetables in the streets of Kabul, not too far from his grandfather's house. Suddenly there was a blast-as he puts it "a dreadful bang of explosion". Nooruddin was knocked to the ground and he felt this intense pain in his legs - except as he looked more closely his right leg was gone.

Every year about 15,000 people are killed or wounded by landmines. Many of them are children and women. And many, if not most, of the landmine incidents occur after a war. For instance, Afghanistan is the most densely mined country in the world right now. But those mines are not from the current conflict. They're left over from previous wars.

The stories are the same around the world - Angola, Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, the former Yugoslavia. The wars are over but the landmine danger remains. The same is also true in our walk with Christ. The battle has been won. Christ was raised from the dead - sin and death defeated. But there are still leftover landmines buried in the ground, waiting to destroy the unsuspecting pedestrian.

Lets consider a spiritual application from the world as a way to avoid these spiritual landmines by looking at some ways landmines are detected. Various means to detect landmines include:

1. Carefully searching suspected or known minefields areas for mines. Often this is done by crawling slowly into the field, inserting a probe (anything from a knife to a stick) into the soil to find hard objects. When walking in mined areas, mine-clearing personnel may wear large, pillow-like pads strapped under their feet, to spread their weight and dull the

impact of their footsteps, as very slight disturbances of the ground can tip off old, unstable, or intentionally sensitive mine triggers.

2. Using metal detectors to sweep a suspected minefield. However, the detectors may not easily differentiate various types of metal objects, which slows the search.

3. Using animals like dogs that can sniff out explosive chemicals like TNT in landmines. Recent experiments with the Gambian giant pouched rat have indicated that it has the required sensitivity to smell, can be trained reliably with food-reward incentives, and is typically too small to set off the mines.

4. Finally there is sowing genetically engineered flower seeds over suspected minefields from the air. The flowers bloom in distinctive colors when there are explosives nearby in the soil.

Maybe as believers we need to use sin detectors instead of mine detectors. When we come up on one of them, we need to try and remember the call of I Corinthians and go down a different path.

Moving on now, next time your soul is tired, discouraged, and troubled Barnabas says, remember the happiest Christians are those who have found the joy of serving others. The quickest way to end a pity party is to find someone who needs your help.

*Mark. 8:34-35 If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.*

Take to heart the words of William Arthur Ward "Learn and grow all you can; serve and befriend all you can; enrich and inspire all you can." Another author says it this way "The body has to be utilized for service to others. More bliss can be got from serving others than from merely serving oneself." So if you want to feel better and less tired, discouraged remember that helping another dig their way out from under their burden gives you more dirt to stand on to see over yours

Finally when it seems like your soul cannot take another blow, and discouragement is about to eat you alive, stop a moment and think about this, if today you can't find a reason to smile, take some time to focus on the lighter side of life, enjoy your friends, watch a comedy, read the funnies, or spend time with children. Look for ways to include laughter in each day.

*Proverbs 17:22 A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.*

Oh tired one, when was the last time you had a good laugh? Maybe you need to have one today. It will keep you from the pits of discouragement that seek to engulf your soul. **Remember**, although you may be suffering right now, it's only temporary. God, who is infinitely wise and skilled, knows just how to care for you.

Trust that he is shaping you into someone beautiful, honorable, and good and able to reflect his glory. Romans 8:18 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Isn't it something to think that God does not throw us out on the junk-pile of humanity, but instead he has a more wonderful plan?

I read about that plan in Jeremiah When he was speaking to Israel and in the process, to us as well. Listen to that verse Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

Well Barnabas has had a lot to encourage us with, but Andrew Murray leaves us with this in closing

"In times of trouble say, First: He brought me here; it is by His will I am in this strait place: In that I will rest. He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child. He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow. In His good time He can bring me out again - how and when He knows. Say: these 4 things I am here (1) by God's appointment (2) in His keeping (3) under His training (4) for His time." '

Isn't that a good way to start our week with encouragement? Be encouraged dear friend.