

PARTNERSHIP IN EVANGELISM -III

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We have looked at micro-partnerships. Now we will look at keys to a bigger partnership and we will look at two different tracks at the same time. One is Barnabas, the encourager and the other is Antioch the missionary church. I will not be reading a passage today because I am going to use three different passages. If you have your Bible open, we will go by passage to passage, and we will read it as we move along. Let us pray and ask the Lord to guide us.

The first time that Joseph, Barnabas is mentioned is in Acts 4: 36-37. We are told that he is a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles call Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement. He sold the field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostle's feet. Now, it is very interesting that here is the man whom the apostles called Barnabas, Son of Encouragement or one who habitually encourages. Barnabas, is one of the few famous people I know whose nickname became the name by which he is generally known. It was a very appropriate name and you will see evidence as we go on today and tomorrow.

The passage of course is describing the radical community life of the church that we talked about yesterday. Barnabas is given as the example of this community life, and I think Luke, being a good historian, chose Barnabas as the example because he was going to play a prominent part. Luke tells us in verse 37 that he sold the field he owned and that this is the example found in verse 32. No one claimed that any of the possession was his own, but they shared everything that they had. Before I study Barnabas's life, let me just say that Barnabas had learned not to cling to things that he could rightly claim as his own possession. Because Barnabas had learned to share and not cling to things, it qualified him to be an encourager. An encourager is one who doesn't say this is mine. Leadership often fosters an attitude that pampers the ego, and the power of leadership is such that we can demand whatever we want, once we become leaders. Barnabas gave up what was his for the sake of the church.

We know many leaders who haven't crucified the self. Leadership gives great encouragement sometimes to un-crucified living, but some leaders are downright egotistical. They won't give up leadership; they are so busy thinking about their advancement and the advancement of the group that they lead that they have no time to invest in others, to think of the advancement of those that they lead. Often they stifle the development of others. So that's the introduction that we have to Barnabas.

We come now to chapter 9, verse 26, where there is more about Barnabas. When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were afraid of him, believing that he really was not a disciple. You can just imagine the scene. Here is Saul converted, he was coming to the place where he had his former great exploits. This is where he had excelled as a student, this is where he rapidly climbed the social ladder; and now his old associates shunned him and the new family to which he came did not trust him. He was greeted with suspicion; was he a spy, was he a wolf in sheep's clothing? Some people, perhaps, had scars that he had inflicted on them and they may not have forgotten the terror that he had inspired in their life. This was the man who had made them so miserable. So there would have been great sorrow and disappointment as he came to this place. Christianity teaches about a new life, where all are of one body and where barriers are broken, and yet the members of the body do not trust him. How many bright new Christians face such loneliness and disappointment. It could lead them to despair and bitterness but God often provides a way of healing in the form of encouragement.

Earlier on we had Annanias who went up to Saul and called him Brother Saul. He does this through Barnabas, as we read in verse 27. This is the same Barnabas who took him to the apostles. Now the Apostles were the inner circles of the church. He, Barnabas, was taking the adversary to the inner circle. If he really were a spy, this would have been the opportunity he was waiting for to get information about the church. Others would have been upset with his caring enthusiasm, but most sober people would be wondering, what on earth is this outspoken boldness on this person's part; once he was so crazy against Christianity and now is crazy for the gospel. Yet Barnabas stuck his neck to support him. He was willing to take the risk.

Today, we glorify risk taking. We talk about great people being risk takers, but often those who take risks are people trying out new schemes, blazing new trails. But here is another way of taking a risk. Supporting others, pushing them forward. Even then, some don't make it. Pushing someone forward is humiliating when he or she doesn't make it, but many do make it and that makes the ministry of encouragement all the more worthwhile. Look at the second of verse 27, where Barnabas told them how Saul, on the journey, had seen the Lord, and that the Lord had spoken to him; how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. Barnabas told them the story of Saul. Saul didn't share his testimony; Barnabas shared Saul's testimony. He had listened to Saul. Encouragers are good listeners and not only listening, they act as public relations people for the junior people. Often, it's the junior who does the public relation work for the leader. But in the Bible, the senior for the junior person often does it. Paul also learned this habit and in his letters you find him doing public relations work for Timothy, giving glowing tributes for others. Often leaders are so interested in telling their own story that they have no time to listen to the story of others.

Barnabas not only listened to Saul, but he told Saul's story. He used the esteem that he had won in the church as a senior leader to help the church accept the junior person. This could be one of the great ministries for famous people: to use their fame to lift others up. This is very important for us in Asia, because we hear many complaints from younger leaders, who say that they are being stifled instead of being encouraged. I hope that those of us when we come to a senior age and those of us already in those ages will make it one of our ambitions to push others forward.

We come to the church in Antioch, found in chapter 11 verse 19. This is the next time we encounter Barnabas. "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch telling the message only to Jews." Chapter 11 verse 20, "Some of them however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus." Verse 21, "The Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people

believed and turned to the Lord.” Now here you find a revolutionary move forward; William Barclay called this one of the greatest events in history.

Who are these daring spirits who pioneered world evangelisation, ministering for the first time consciously to the Gentiles? Luke mentions the cities they come from: Cyprus and Cyrene. But we are not given their names. And why aren't we given their names? Because they were not prominent leaders in the church. So it would not be necessary to give their names because no one knows about these people and second, it seems as if no one person apparently emerged as the great evangelist of the Lord. It was a group of Christians who simply went and shared the gospel, and when they shared the gospel a church was formed. Let us remember that the famous are not necessarily the most significant or the most important in the church. Famous people have gifts that put them in the limelight and that is not wrong, but neither is it a big deal. Unknown witnesses, who were obedient to Christ, do some of the most significant work for the kingdom where they are. And where they are does not attract much attention.

Today, marketing is a big thing and our orientation to publicity associates greatness with news-worthiness. A great amount of effort is made to make an event look newsworthy. Today some people, in order to become newsworthy, write books. They want to become great authors; someone who is a great author or has a big organisation is considered newsworthy. Some people write books simply to be newsworthy. In fact sometimes they get others to do most of the writing and they put their name as the author. I think this is unnecessary; our task is to be faithful to our call. And if that doesn't put our name forward on earth, who cares. Our name is not important; the glory of God is what is important. Our aim is not to get our name in the papers; our aim is to hear the master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” And that is the joy and expectation we have; that is what thrills us on earth. Rejoice, rather, that your name is written in heaven. It is not to read an article about us in a Christian magazine. Perhaps there is nothing wrong with that but we need to anticipate, to look forward to the master's “Well done.” This is a lesson for those

of us who write books, who have names and pictures in the Alpha Brochures and things like that. But it is no big deal. Don't ask for fame; it is dangerous and can cause our downfall. Ask for faithfulness to the call regardless if you are a public evangelist, the head of a large organisation, or a famous author. If that is our call, let us do the work with all our might, and if praise comes, well - I do not suppose it's wrong to enjoy it occasionally. However, let's remember that it is no big deal, because some are called to be evangelists among resistant people. Whether you are a pioneering evangelist in the slums and the villages of the world, an accounts clerk in a Christian organisation, or a lay person in a government office, all of us are significant in God's sight.

The problem however, with “insignificant” or non-prominent people doing significant things, is that they have no credentials. In addition, because of that, when they do something, people wonder what is happening - they wonder if this is worthy, if this is all right, so they need a known person to check out what is happening. Moreover, 11:22 says, “News of this reached the ears of church at Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.” When the same thing happened in Samaria, they sent Peter and John. Now they are sending a non-apostle, but what a wise choice: a Jew from Cyprus. So he was one who would understand, be open to their enterprise. He was a person with the gift of encouragement and a spiritual giant, one whom the leadership could trust. When we send people on sensitive appointments, it is important for us to send the right person. Not necessarily a most senior person, but the most suitable person. Therefore, that is what happened when they sent him.

Verse 23: “when he saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad.” That is another thing about an encourager. This was a young church and as such, there must have been many shortcomings there. However, there was one thing that he saw and on which he focused his attention: the grace of God that made him glad. Encouragers are easily gladdened when they see the grace of God in the lives of other people. Some people see a new work and then compare it with their work and they feel threatened about their own work and the status that they have. Therefore, they look at the shortcomings of the new work, they focus on the shortcomings. I am sure that there were

many shortcomings in a new work, and so they end up criticising that work. The criticism may be valid but it is ill-timed and done in the wrong spirit. By doing that they alienate themselves from the young, enthusiastic and sometimes immature people who have started this new work. They forfeit their chance of influencing them to maturity. Moreover, many young enthusiastic Christians join churches with a sincere desire to serve. They lack in wisdom and maturity but they do not lack in zeal, which leaders often find to be a threat. They focus on the lack of wisdom and maturity, and the young, who have much potential, are lost from the church. They either give up trying or they remain uninvolved; some go elsewhere and serve and others become bitter rebels.

In verse 23, the second half, we see that he, Barnabas, was not only glad. Encouragers are happy when they see others doing well, but they also encourage all to remain true to the Lord. Just to know that the boys in Jerusalem were thrilled would have been a source of encouragement for them. Nevertheless, he did more than that. He encouraged them, perhaps a reference to the meaning of his name, to remain true to the Lord. He also urged perseverance. The young, in their enthusiasm, when problems come they cool off, they become discouraged once the initial thrill of their new life wears off. When there are disappointments and discouragement, they can cool off.

When discouragement sets in, we need a mature leader. The mature leader has weathered the storms; that leader is not surprised by storms; he or she has the faith to handle the crisis and can give stability to young ones. When, therefore, we start new work, we should ensure the presence of mature leaders. Today we often appoint only young enthusiastic people and then send them out alone to difficult assignments. Especially in church planting, these people often end up in shipwreck. In a crisis, when the discouragement comes, they were alone and they did not know what to do. They made rash decisions, committed huge mistakes and sometimes fell into big sins. Moreover, we are partly responsible for their errors. It was simply not fair to put them into such a situation where they could not handle these difficult experiences. I Timothy 5:22 says "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands," that is in appointing elders, "do not share in

their sin." The meaning is this: if we are too hasty in appointing elders, when they sin, we are partly responsible for their sins. We share in their sins.

He encouraged them to remain true to the Lord. Now, this could be misleading. It could mean to suggest a strict, a rugged perseverance when problems come. However, that was not for the Greek mind set. Hebrews translates it as clinging to Jesus like a child clings to her mother in thunderstorm. It is not just rugged discipline; it is a clinging love. Therefore, in crisis, we often have great expressions of Christ's love coming from people. Many of the martyrs had some of the highest experiences of God when they were in a crisis. They were forced to ask, to ask questions if their faith was relevant. In addition, in grappling with those questions comes a fresh understanding of an experience into the love of God. Suffering produces deep spirituality. In Psalm 43 the Psalmist, who was deep in struggle, went on to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" That is Christian perseverance. Being able to say in the midst of the storm: whom have I in heaven but thee ?

Discipleship, not just obedience, deepens our ties to Jesus. Therefore, the key is get people close to Jesus. I love that statement from John Stam, martyred by the communist in China "Take away everything I have but don't take away the sweetness of walking and talking with the King of Glory." Then, when they have come close to Jesus, tell them to do so with all their hearts. In other words, it is a call to total commitment. Now an example of this type of encouraging ministry can be seen in a story I heard once. A preacher from England, who came to Sri Lanka, gave this story many years ago. He told this story of his son who was running a race. The father stationed himself at the final turn before the home stretch of the race, and the son, when he came to the final turn, was not leading. The father saw the son running and he shouted at the top of his voice, "GO". The son, recognizing the father's voice, received new strength, new encouragement; he ran more quickly and won the race. That is what we do as encouragers, when we give a shot in the arm to the faith and to the ministry of other people. When they are discouraged, may our words lift them up.

Let me give some examples of this. Here is a young new believer battling temptation. He has failed and he comes and tells us, "Oh, I am useless" and we tell him, "No, it's not you, it's by the grace of God, the blood of Jesus that is sufficient to cleanse us from all sin." We just keep telling him this until he passes through our door. Remember the power of Jesus is enough; the power of Jesus is enough to urge him on. Then comes a young preacher who comes to preach and has a long face. You ask him what the matter may be. "Oh, I was planning to prepare this morning, and there was a big struggle in my home; my father and mother were fighting. I couldn't do any preparation. How can I come and preach before these people?" The encourager puts his arm around him and tells him, "Brother, God knows what you went through. God is Sovereign. He will help you. Go in the strength of God." He lays his hands on him, prays for him, and sends him out to preach. A person busy with his work sees that his colleague is discouraged. He stops his work, goes to the colleague, and asks him what is wrong. The colleague says that he has a problem and so the friend drops everything and goes to help the colleague. A person is interested in reading. He comes and asks you about what books to read. We stop and we give him the names of books that we know will help him. Someone is interested in social justice and he says that he has an interest in social justice and evangelism. He asks what he can do as an evangelical. We listen. We explore possibilities. We write to people involved in social justice projects and introduce this person as a possible partner in the work of social justice. We help people to achieve what God wants them to achieve.

Verse 24, gives us the qualification for the ministry of encouragement. Unfortunately, the New International Version leaves out many first letters, first words in the Bible. There is a word "for" or "because" at the beginning of verse 24. It is left out in some of the Bibles. "For he was a good man, he did this work of encouragement because he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and faith." Here then are three qualifications for the ministry of encouragement. First, to be a good person. What does it mean to be a good person? The qualities above are righteousness as in Roman 5:7. Very rarely will someone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly die or dare to die. It seems as if

a good man inspires loyalty and commitment. Abbott Smith says "Dikaios" which is righteousness, measuring to a high standard of rectitude, that which is correct. Goodness is more than correct. He says, "Agathos", goodness is inner excellence. Here is a person who is not only correct but his heart has come into correctness. Of course, goodness must include righteousness.

I think that the biggest issue facing the church in Asia today is the issue of integrity. People simply do not have integrity. They say one thing to your face and then something else to others. They make a mistake, wriggle their way out, and they will not accept their faults. One of the saddest things that I often hear from lay people is that the pastor made a mistake, but he would not accept his mistake. So he told a lie. They will not tell this to your face but what a hindrance to the Bible.

The Bible is open to the idea of a possibility for holiness. People are not truthful in public reporting; they talk of commitment to a group and all the things we are going to do as a group and at the same time they are secretly looking for another job. In today's society such people can succeed and do well because this is the age of the entrepreneur. The church is structured in society, and what succeeds in our society will succeed in the church. So a motivated capable ambitious person can climb; they can build their empire. Later they are found out as not being people of sincerity and integrity. What a great dishonour!

I think most of the successful entrepreneurs in the church are evangelical, because modernism is so spiritually unattractive that it will not drop jaws anymore. People have discovered its emptiness and have left the churches in droves. I am sad to say that many seminaries are turning out modernists to build more empty churches. However, I think another serious problem exists in the church: when bad people preach the right gospel, they might succeed, but when they succeed, people in the end will reject the gospel that they have preached. At the turn of this century, liberalism nearly destroyed the church. At the end of the century, its lack of integrity will triumph to do the same thing. Unless we attack this soon, we will have a spiritual Dark Age in the church in the years to come.

When people are cynical about the possibility of a genuine Christianity they give up the biblical message. Already we are seeing the harvest of cynicism and bitterness in the church. You have seen it and you struggle with it. It is something I struggle with everyday - of being bitter and cynical. People have been hurt by the badness of other Christians and they can't trust anyone anymore. Therefore, they do not reach out to fellow Christians in love. Perhaps they reach out to the poor and to the down trodden. Since the poor and the down trodden are too weak to hurt us, they will not reach out in love to fellow Christians, to fellow Christian leaders. That is very dangerous because bitterness destroys the love of Christ, and the love of Christ is only way to do Christian ministry. You might do many things for the kingdom, but unless you do it with the love of Christ, it will be useless from the perspective of eternity. In Christian life and ministry the keys to success are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Those are the keys to success from the perspective of eternity.

Well, is there as answer for people who have been hurt? Can we overcome the temptation to be bitter, angry, cynical, conniving, and cunning? Is there an answer? I would say yes, yes, yes and how. Look at Jesus. He was good. He was a good shepherd. The word translated for good shepherd is "Halos." It is a word with a little more heart to it. A word that sometimes means beautiful. He was the beautiful shepherd. As we gaze at the beautiful shepherd, our bitterness is transformed to his beauty. 2nd Corinthians 3:18 says, "How, as we gaze upon him, we unveil his face and we are transformed from one degree of glory to another."

Psalms 27 is a good model for this. In our first session, I talked about Psalm 27 in which the enemies were scheming against David, where David speaks of his father and mother forsaking him. Yet, David, in spite of all the problems he had, was a person with a soft heart. You see that in his writing. He was a good man. How did this come about? Psalm 27:4 tells us how. "One thing I ask the Lord, that is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, to seek him in his temple." The last time I talked about seeking in the temple, today think a little about gazing on the beauty of the Lord. To gaze upon

the beauty of the Lord is to make us beautiful, unconsciously or subconsciously, not just having our devotional time but gazing at his beauty, enjoying his presence.

Let me tell you an experience I had a few weeks ago. A terrible blow hit us in our ministry. One of our workers had been living in sin and denied it. There were accusations made and we made every possible check. We thought that they could not be true, and we thought we could minister to him. I asked him and his wife to come into my home for three weeks, and there I taught him from the Bible, two to three hours a day. Shortly after that, we found that the accusations were true, and not only were they true, the truth was worse than the accusations. When I finally heard the story, I was as a person hit by some big force. That night, you can imagine, I could not sleep. I struggled in bed and I decided that I would never fall asleep; I'll just get up and go to my room. I went to my room and there was an unread fax. I opened the fax; it was from the organisers of the Urban Missionary Conference on the expositions that I was planning to do. One of the expositions was to be on Jesus The Good Shepherd. I thought, "Why not read it." I took my favorite commentator, Leon Morris, and I read what he had to say about the word 'Good.' My pain didn't go, my sorrow didn't go, but I think I won the battle with bitterness that day. I saw somebody beautiful, and when you gaze at beauty something of that beauty takes away your bitterness.

May God help us to be good people and to treat others with respect, to work for their welfare. Let us be lovers of goodness as Titus 1:7 says about a 'Leader.' Be Philagatos, lovers of goodness. When you love goodness then you are willing to hold back success if necessary to do the thing that you love. People are willing to do anything for the person they love. In the same way, we will give up anything for the joy of getting what you want. When we do what we love, we are happy people. So goodness is a bright word. Goodness is a word that is associated with happiness. People who give up goodness for the sake of success are fools. They revolt against their humanity, and when they revolt against humanity they end up as unhappy people. However, when the spirit of Christ is in you, there is a thirst for goodness. There is a Philagatos in you, or love of goodness in you. When you do what you love to do, you are a happy person. So good

people are joyous people, because they are doing what they want to do to be good. A person filled with goodness is full of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase, 'filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit,' in Acts, is sometimes used for the state or experience of rush of power to face a particular problem. A state being talked about is in this text. Barnabas was a person who others saw as being full of God. His actions, his behaviour, his nature all pointed to the work of grace in his life. When people observed him, they observed the Spirit at work in him. They said, "here is a man full of the Holy Spirit." Let's hope that is said of us all.

I think the key question that any minister of the Gospel should ask himself or herself is this: "Do I have the fullness?" Do I know the fullness of God's spirit? My colleague Adrian de Visser is here; once we were at a camp, chatting. I am approaching my mid-40; he is not in that level yet. However, this is the age when you see so many people suddenly beginning to drop out. They lose their glow, and they lose their ministry. We said that we hoped not lose it. I asked Adrian what his greatest fear in life was. He told me what his greatest fear was. Then I told him my greatest fear: the fear that I might lose the fullness of God's spirit. Because of my studies, because of my qualifications, I think I can go on ministering. We were reminded yesterday that 95% of the church activities can go on without the Holy Spirit. We can go on ministering, but we've lost it. We are cast away, 'disqualified' as Paul says. We need to bear fruit. As Paul said, I command my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others, I myself might be disqualified.

I heard a lovely statement from Jay Kesler, former president and pastor for Youth for Christ, and now President of Taylor University. Jay Kesler was speaking to somebody on preaching. He was talking about preparation for preaching. He said that when he was pastoring a church he would often plead with his wife in the parking lot to forgive him for sins because he couldn't get up on the pulpit as long as there was unconfessed sin. He wanted to bear fruit. Let us bear fruit. In addition, add sense. Let us have the sense of desperation: please, please, please, please Lord don't take away the anointing from

my life. But if it is gone, Lord, give it back, and I thank God it can come back. Thank God, that's possible. Notice that goodness and fullness go together here and they always go together.

You know, it's a mystery to me how some people can testify with the fullness of the Holy Spirit and not be holy. They can be unkind to their workers. Our Holy Spirit, our spirit is the Holy Spirit, and if you are filled with the spirit, you must be filled with goodness. I think one of the things that has happened is that we have confused giftedness with fullness even though there is fullness here, not for an event but for life. Gifts, after time, become part of our personality and I think now that this is really what it is. I'm struggling with how to say this, but I really think that because our gifts are part of our personality they stay on after the fullness has left us. As evidence, I give I Corinthians 13:1-3, which talks about people doing great deeds for God, exercising the fruits, gifts of the spirit but not having love, the supreme mark of fullness. Samson had the gift but he didn't have the fullness and then, after sometime, the gift also leaves him. Samson did not know that the spirit had left him. The fullness left him first, then the gifts, and then the position left.

My dear friends, let us bear the fullness. Then we are told that he, Barnabas, was a man full of faith. The question then is this, "What is faith?" Is it faith in God or faith in people? Well I think it looks to me that it is faith in God but faith in God gives you faith in people, and that helps you in the ministry of encouragement. Let me show how it works. To encourage people you must believe in them. However, it is hard to believe in people today because of dishonesty's presence. There are so few people of integrity. We can't believe that they can do those awful things. How can I trust anybody? That question came to me when this person whom I thought was walking in the light had been holding a bag of sin from me for four years. The question came to me as well. Can we do it anymore? Yes, we can trust in people because we can trust in Jesus. The Bible tells us that we must believe all things. But how can we believe in all things? Because we believe in the possibility of grace. Faith in the possibilities of grace, in the promises of God, helps us to believe that the promises of God can be practiced in people's lives. People can indeed do what the Bible says.

People are able to do it. So we believe and believing, we try to be an agent of grace in people's life. This is well said for us in I Timothy 1:18 where Paul says, "Timothy, I give you this instruction or command." Before Paul's eyes was this prophecy about Timothy. But Timothy was not that smart. However, he believed in the possibility of grace. In keeping with that prophecy, he, Paul, did everything that he could do to help Timothy become what that prophecy said he would become. So we pray for these people, we urge them, we rescue them when they are in trouble. We rebuke them, because we believe in the prophecy, in the possibility of grace.

Let me say that the daily reading of the Bible is what has helped me more than anything else to keep from being a cynic. My biggest theological battle, and I have had many theological battles in my life, is this: Can I expect people to act as Christians? Is it possible to preach holiness and should I preach holiness? What has helped me is the Bible. We read the Bible and come to know God is the one who has called us and he will give us what we need. He will do what he has promised. Therefore, we are encouraged in our faith as we gaze at the promises; promises that gives us faith to trust in the possibilities of grace in the lives of people.

So here are the qualifications of an encourager. What happens when the encourager comes? Look at the last part of verse 24: a great number of people were brought to the Lord. It tells us that God is interested in numbers. Not that numbers are a bag of success, but because numbers represent people rescued from hell and given salvation. We are interested in numbers because we want to grow. If we desire just to grow to be considered successful, then we show a triumphalism and begin using the wrong means. We use such means as sheep stealing, bribery, and manipulation.

And when we are driven by love for people, by a passion to rescue them for heaven, numbers help. We are restless until people come to know the Saviour. So let's not be ashamed to talk about numbers. Not so that we may glory in what we have done, but that we may rejoice with the saints in heaven when one person is converted. Why not make conversion of a person a source of joy in our lives? Whatever else we do, we must always go in search of the lost, and, as A.J. Gordon said, you evangelise or you fossilise.

Verse 25. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Paul. The word 'look' has the meaning of searching with some difficulty. It

must not be easy to look for Saul. Probably he had been disinherited because of his Christianity. Perhaps he was not in his ancestral home. Although, when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. For this trip of several days, he had to be motivated to do a thing like that. To make a trip of several kilometers is tough enough; he was taking an extended trip to bring a person who had greater abilities than he had. By selecting Paul, he was seriously jeopardising his position of leadership and prominence. He took the initiative and went on a long journey to find Paul.

Some people are not possessive because they are possessive for the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the kingdom of God then goes to somebody else. They will make use of that person. They do not thrive on being hero-worshipped; they do not try to protect their flock from the ministries of other gifted leaders. This is not always the case. Often we find people who become upset when their flock is thrilled by the preaching of some other person from another denomination. Encouragers, however, are not defensive people. They are always trying to prove the other person's ability. Barnabas was one such person. Some leaders are willing to have young inexperienced enthusiastic assistants under them, but capable colleagues threaten them. They are afraid that their position is going to be jeopardised. Such people will never be happy. Any threat to their position and they will lose control and act rashly.

Here's a typical example. There is a funeral, and the family of the bereaved has asked the former pastor to preach at the funeral, because he was very close with the person who died. The new pastor becomes angry. He does not show his anger, he simply brings up some rule in the church that says that the other pastor cannot do the service unless some technicality is fulfilled. This kind of thing happens frequently. People talk about it. Everyone says that the Pastor is jealous, but not to his face, of course. What a dishonour to Christ! Let Christ honour us. We'll concentrate on honouring Christ and other people. And I Samuel 2:30 says, "Those who honour me I will honour." That's enough. Barnabas took the initiative, he paid the price of a long trip, and he brought a colleague who finally overshadowed him, the one who became the great leader of the church. So here's the first part of our study of Barnabas and Antioch. Now, if there is one word that I wish would be left from this first part, it is that word - Good.