

Bimonthly Encouragement to Sudanese Christian Workers

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Trusting God over people from other tribes and religions.

“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.”
Acts 9:27.

Sometimes you just have to stand out on your own! You have to stand against the accepted line everyone else is following. You have to be on your own – humanly speaking – because you believe God is doing something different. It may involve how you treat someone from a different tribe, another religion or an alternative social and economic rank.

In this Bible story the person who is trying to join the Christian church is the man who would later become the apostle Paul. At least 13 of our New Testament books are written by him. Yet, when he tried to join the Jerusalem church soon after his conversion “all the disciples” were afraid of him, verse 26. That means Peter, James and John plus all of the other Christian leaders did not trust Saul. Worse, it meant that they did not believe that their God could work a saving and transforming miracle in the life of this one they feared so greatly. They didn’t trust God! They knew of this man as Saul of Tarsus, the man who spearheaded the murderous persecution of the Jesus people. The one who hated Christians. THAT influenced their thinking more than anything else.

God challenges me in this verse. He challenges me about “trust”.

- God challenges me about putting my concern for myself before my concern for other people. *Why is my safety worth more to me than giving proper follow up to a brand new child of God?*
- God challenges me over why I seem able to trust Him for my eternal salvation but not for my human well being. *Why can I believe God for the invisible things no-one can actually see and not for the practical daily protection that would be such a positive witness to onlookers? I live this life not for this life but for the ultimate life which is yet to come.*
- God challenges me as to why I appear to limit His ability to save and totally convert whom He wishes to. *Why are there some infamous people, so notorious in their anti-Christian living and speaking, that I don’t pray for their salvation and I don’t do everything I possibly can to facilitate their salvation and Christian discipleship and development?*

I am aware that one reason against me acting like Barnabas and welcoming a “Saul” into my Christian circles is the reason of personal suffering. Of course I do not want to bring danger to myself, my family or my local church. I don’t deliberately go around eating poison just to show that my God will protect me from its effects. I avoid eating poison while I trust God to look after me if, by mistake, I do take some accidentally into my body.

But **suffering is part of Christian discipleship**. It is not always right to avoid it.

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ... continue in what you have learned”, 2 Timothy 3:12,14.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven”, Matthew 5:11-12.

“We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it. I urge you to imitate me”, 1 Corinthians 4:12,16.

Notice those **three great challenges to every one of us Christians who will live taking the risks God calls us to take**. These are in the three great doing words of those texts:

- **“continue”**, 2 Timothy 3:14
keep on going, don’t change course just because of circumstances. God’s word is stronger than any other words. God is Sovereign – prove it day by day.
- **“rejoice”**, Matthew 5:12
cultivate an inner happiness based on ultimate heavenly security. God is Heavenly Father – look ahead to the ‘out of this world’ meeting.
- **“endure”**, 1 Corinthians 4:12
take the bumps and the bruises which come as you follow Jesus Christ. God has scars in His hands, on His side and across His brow. We will view them throughout heaven’s eternity.
Like Thomas let us worship Jesus, saying: – “My Lord and my God”, John 20:25-29.

Remember there is a real difference between the way things seem to be and the way they really are. **Live for the invisible. It is the way to honour God.**

In our opening Scripture it was only Barnabas who stood out. He was ready to be different. Because he honoured God, Saul joined the church. After a while he became “Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ”. What a difference God can make when His people really and truly trust Him.

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(Please share these thoughts with others and refer them to my website for more study resources!).