

Bimonthly Encouragement
for Sudanese and South Sudanese
Christian workers
from Pastor Colin Salter
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No.56 **What do you work for?** Matthew 25:14-30 & Acts various.

1st November 2018.

In the kingdom of heaven our life-priorities must be different from other people in the world around us. Our Lord Jesus told in a parable of three “servants” entrusted with their master’s goods while he was away for a “long time” vs14,19. Eventually the three were called to account by their master and two were told:

“**Well done**, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” Matthew 25:21,23.

Do you work for your Master’s “Well done”? You should. Anything else is merely ‘of this world’ and will be lost for ever when you die.

Ten months ago a man brought his family (a wife and two sons) to live in the house next door to our home. We have begun to know them during this year. We had prayed God would bring ‘the right people’ to be our neighbours once we knew the house was up for sale. He definitely did. Alex is a heart doctor¹, a Greek Orthodox from Cyprus. This reminded me about Barnabas in Acts. “Joseph called Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus” Acts 4:36. I’m presently reading Acts with a commentary in my daily quiet time and I believe God wants me to share this with you:

Three ways Barnabas showed his trusting faith in God by his actions while serving the Lord Jesus. May they all challenge us (writer *and* readers) to examine *what* we do and *why* we do it with our lives.

1. Barnabas showed that money and property were his servants. He did not serve either of them Acts 4:36-37.

In the Old Testament Levites were not to own land, see Numbers 18:20-24; Deuteronomy 18:1-8; Joshua 14:4. Ajith Fernando suggests this ‘plot’ Barnabas sold “may have been his burial place”.² Whatever it was, Barnabas sacrificed it for the good of other early believers, Acts 4:32-35. Doing this he helped to meet the practical needs of believers worse off than himself. He became an active part of God’s care for people with few or none of the necessities for life.

This shows Barnabas was quietly confident that God would provide for his own needs at the time when his own resources ran out. Years later his missionary companion Paul

¹ You may recall my wife Brenda has suffered from heart problems in recent years!

² Ajith Fernando *Acts NIV Application Commentary* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids) 1998, page 196.

would write to every believer, “My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus”, *Philippians 4:19*.

Brenda and I have found over 48 years of ministry only 14 years of which being paid any salary, that God always provides what we need, what our ministry needs, and He still enables us to help several others along the way. Glory alone to God!

2. **Barnabas led the apostles in accepting and trusting converts from dangerous opponents** *Acts 9:26-28*.

Newly saved Saul was a baby Christian needing protective and careful love to nurture his infant Christianity into growing maturity. Ananias of Damascus knew how hard Saul had tried to destroy the Church, *Acts 9:13-14*. Believers’ freedom and lives were at risk. Barnabas knew this too. But when “*all* the disciples were afraid of Saul”, “not really believing he had become a disciple”, *Acts 9:26*, Barnabas acted alone, risking his personal reputation, his own life and the safety of the apostles Peter and James, *Galatians 1:17-18*. That takes several steps of faith.

Do we welcome ‘intruders’? What we do and how we do it in *every* aspect of our lives reveals how like (or unlike?) these on fire early Christians we genuinely are.

With repentance I say I have known periods in my own ministry that if my friends and colleagues really knew what was going on in my heart, how many issues I dodged or when I made excuses for myself, they would not think well of me. And God knows more!

3. **Barnabas discerned how God was leading all believers in new steps to fulfilling the Great Commission** *Acts 11:22-26*.

Persecution scattered the church. God always has the last word even when His enemies think otherwise. Lay people spoke to all groups about Jesus, *Acts 11:19-21*. God loves and uses *all* Christians in ministry. Us ‘full-timers’ are **not** more important than others, nor is our daily ministry greater than theirs. Different, yes, but equal in value before God.

Barnabas was available to be used and had the Christian character necessary, *vs24*. He was of similar background to those involved in the mission, *Acts 4:36 and 11:19-20*. He confirmed events he saw were works of God. He urged complete commitment to the Lord Jesus by everyone, following the Lord in heart-purpose and actions *vs23*.

Barnabas did not forget Saul/Paul. Some 10yrs after Saul left for Tarsus, *Acts 9:30*, Barnabas started him in a ministry that will far eclipse his own in size and spirituality.

As I write this Encouragement, my Christian Discipleship book is being reprinted in Juba. Two languages will soon be available again – English and Arabic. God has provided funds for 10,000 copies altogether. All thanks to Him! (They are also available online if you have access www.colinsalter.net). The English is called ‘Raising the Standard’. In Arabic the title paraphrases as ‘Come and See – Discipleship that Makes a Difference’. May be, under God’s guidance, you can use copies to help form new believers into mature Christlike people. I hope so.

Sincerely and with respect
Pastor Colin