

Passing the Baton
Barnabas & Saul
Acts 9:19-31 (11/20/2022)

The history of the church is the history of people most of whom remain anonymous. Such a person was Adam Wallace. Wallace was the parson of a church in Marbottle, Scotland. He was arrested in 1550 and brought to trial at Blackfriar's Church in Edinburgh. Wallace was set before a large panel of priests, bishops, archbishops, professors and civil authorities. He looked like a simple and poor man when he was brought in. His accuser was a man named John Lauder who was dressed in a surplice, which is in the form of a white tunic, and a red hood. Lauder was Scotland's Public Accuser of Heretics. The reformer John Knox wrote of Lauder's extreme cruelty. Foxe's Book of Martyrs tells what happened at Wallace's trial. Lauder began, "Adam Wallace, you are accused of the following heresies. First, you have taught that the bread and wine on the altar are not the body and blood of Christ after consecration." Wallace replied, "I never taught or said anything but what I found in this book, which is the Word of God." Other such charges were brought forth. Wallace was condemned to burn to death and the sentence was carried out. As he stood tied to the stake he called out to the crowd, "Don't be offended by my dying for the truth's sake. The disciple is not greater than his Master." There are many such unsung heroes of the faith that we will meet in heaven. Paul in [Romans 16](#) names a number of people that we find nowhere else in the Bible. There are many unnamed people "of whom the world was not worthy", [Hebrews 11:35-38](#). Two of the early Christians that we do know much about are Barnabas and Saul. We are considering certain principles for every disciple of Jesus.

Every disciple is to belong to and become involved in a local assembly of believers.

Barnabas' name first appears in scripture in the initial days of the early Church. [Acts 4:36-37](#), "And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Barnabas was a generous believer. Luke cites Barnabas as representative of those Christians who were selling property. They would bring the money to the Apostles to distribute to the needy. When Barnabas became a Christian he joined with other Christians and began sharing with them. Christians are not to be "Lone Ranger" believers. The idea of a Christian who is not baptized and joined to a local assembly is foreign to the New Testament.

Every disciple is to be concerned for others and seek to minister to them.

The apostles gave him the nickname Barnabas which implies the type of person he was. The word "encouragement" is *paraklesis* a compound word meaning called alongside to help. This is a form of the same word, "Helper" that Jesus applied to the Holy Spirit in His ministry to Christians, [John 14:16 & 26](#). The word can also mean exhortation, comfort and consolation. [Hebrews 10:24-25](#), "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

➤ Barnabas became a blessing to the Apostles.

Barnabas cared about people and ministered to them. [Galatians 5:13](#), “...through love serve one another.” We discover that Barnabas and Mark were related, [Colossians 4:10](#). Also Mark’s sister, Mary, lived in Jerusalem and her home was a meeting place for the Jerusalem church, [Acts 12:12](#). Who am I serving? Who would say that I am a blessing to their lives?

Barnabas and Saul

The advent of Barnabas and Saul begins a new phase in Luke’s history. Saul is introduced by Luke in connection with the stoning of Stephen the first Christian martyr. [Acts 7:58](#), “And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” Luke then adds that “Saul was consenting to his death”, [Acts 8:1](#). Saul then began to persecute the Christians, [Acts 8:3](#). The risen Jesus appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus **MAP** in [Acts 9](#) and Saul was saved. [Acts 9:9](#), “And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”

Every disciple is to do the Lord’s will no matter how difficult it appears.

The Lord gave a command to one of His disciples named Ananias. [Acts 9:11-12](#), “So the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.’”

This command is clear and detailed yet Ananias was hesitant.

[Acts 9:13-14](#), “Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.’”

Ananias obeyed and Saul received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. We often do not know the far reaching impact our simple obedience can have. Think of the impact of the Apostle Paul’s ministry and Ananias was privileged to play a part in it. Saul was immediately baptized and joined with the disciples in Damascus, [Acts 9:10-19](#). Saul began at once to preach in the synagogue that Jesus “is the Son of God”, [Acts 9:20](#). At this point Saul went to Arabia, an area south of Damascus **MAP**, for three years, [Galatians 1:17-18](#). He returned to Damascus and the Jews hatched a plot to kill Saul but “the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket”, [Acts 9:25](#).

Every disciple needs to learn to see people for what they could be not just for what they were.

Barnabas interceded for Saul with the apostles in Jerusalem.

“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem **MAP**, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple but Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus”, [Acts 9:26-27](#).

Barnabas saw Saul not for what he had been but for who Saul was and what he could be. We need more people like Barnabas in our church. This involved an investment of time and effort.

Barnabas didn't direct Saul or send Saul but "took" Saul. He was the human connection to Saul's ministry in Jerusalem.

Acts 9:28-30, "So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus." Saul spent almost eight years in Tarsus **MAP**. Luke does not record what Saul was doing during this time. This surely was part of the Lord's preparation of Saul for what lay before him. Acts 9:16, "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Every disciple needs to learn to not despise the day of small beginnings.

Saul at this time was not widely known especially in Judea.

Galatians 1:21-24, "Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me." This was all part of God's preparation for Saul to become the Apostle Paul.

It is valuable to think back from time to time and trace God's hand in your life. Where has the Lord brought you from? What experiences has God used to mature you? God continues to work in us as long as we are alive. Philippians 3:12, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on..." Saul's experience at this point was in a Jewish context. The news that the Gospel was for the Gentiles per Peter's experience in the home of Cornelius, Acts 10-11:18, was something new. Jesus had commanded His disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..."

Matthew 28:19. God in His providence permitted persecution of the Christians to scatter them from Jerusalem. Acts 11:19-21, "Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch **MAP** to see what was happening.

Acts 11:24, "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord."

Every disciple needs to recognize that the Lord's work is greater than just them.

Acts 11:25-26, "Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus **MAP** to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch."

Barnabas was having a tremendously effective ministry. Many people were being saved and a church was being planted. Barnabas would certainly have been the prominent person in that setting. He was the right man to send as he was from Cyprus where some of those in Antioch had come from. Barnabas being full of the Spirit understood that he needed Saul. Saul was raised a strict Jew, a Hellenistic Jew being from Tarsus and a Roman citizen. Acts 11:26, "So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." In Acts 11:30 these two men become identified as "Barnabas and Saul." They become God's choice as the first Christian missionaries. Acts 13:2, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

➤ On the island of Cyprus **MAP** an event occurred where Saul began to take precedence over Barnabas.

In Acts 13:6-12 they encountered a Jewish false prophet named “Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.” The false prophet tried “to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit...” confronted the false prophet and blinded him.

Every disciple needs to yield to God’s humbling work.

1 Peter 5:6, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” Beginning in Acts 13:43 through 15:36 they are listed as “Paul and Barnabas.” There are two exceptions where it is “Barnabas and Paul.” One is in Acts 14 when Paul healed a man at Lystra. Acts 14:8, “And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.” In the Oriental mind the leader sits silently while the assistant speaks. The second is at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 which in a Jewish setting followed seniority.

Each disciple is responsible to fulfill their assigned roles.