

134 – Paul’s partners and their personalities

It can’t have escaped anyone’s attention that over the past few weeks, some of the members of our family of God, whom Barbara and I love like God loves, have been through the proverbial wringer. The goal is, as always, for Him to get the most and best from all our lives, get us as close as possible to Him *before* Jesus Christ returns, so that we are the highest display of the Father’s multifarious wisdom to the celestials. In that light, I want to begin tonight by reading something Paul wrote to the Colossian ecclesia:

Colossians 2:1-7

1 For I want you to perceive what the struggle amounts to which I am having for your sakes and for those in Laodicea, and whoever have not seen my face in flesh,

2 that their hearts may be consoled, being united in love, and into all the riches of the assurance of **[the]** understanding, into a realization of **the** secret of the God and Father, of **[the]** Christ,

3 in Whom all the treasures of **[the]** wisdom and **[the]** knowledge are concealed.

4 Now I am saying this, that no one may be beguiling you in persuasive words.

5 For even if, in **[the]** flesh, I am absent, **[but]** nevertheless, in spirit, I am **[together]** with you, rejoicing and observing your **[the]** order and the stability of your **[the]** faith into Christ.

6 As, then, you accepted **[the]** Christ Jesus, the Lord, be walking in Him,

7 having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith according as you were taught, superabounding in it in thanksgiving.

You’ll find that Paul is saying a whole lot in this section, if you’ll read it on your own several times. For now, look again at the last verse, **verse 7**:

7 having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith according as you were taught, superabounding in it in thanksgiving.

When I read this, I saw that each of us has been rooted and built up in Him, confirmed in **THE** faith according as we were taught, no matter whether we're being scourged or are resting today. Let me say it differently: You do not have to root yourself or build yourself up in Him; it's already been accomplished. The faith, residing in you already is confirmed, not by **YOU**, but you are confirmed in **IT**.

Rooting, building up in Christ, and **confirmation isn't** something you **still** have to **do**; it's been **accomplished**. ALL that remains – and it's no small thing – is to be superabounding in thanksgiving; and even **THAT** has been accomplished! This is hugely encouraging, to me, and I hope it is to you, because it suggests that the firmest of foundations has been poured, set and established, not to be uprooted or otherwise destroyed. In fact, it's all confirmed – indeed, YOU are confirmed – **IN THE** faith. Now, I think you would agree that the **superabounding in thanksgiving** is certainly ours to remember express **always** with our voices as well as in our hearts, whether we are experiencing the Father's love in his **awful** severity or the **sweetness** of His kindness and affection.

God works out His eonian purpose through people, growing them up into sons and daughters who are not only in His image and likeness, but also His **nature**. The Father knows everything there is to know about people and their personalities, wouldn't we agree? Our family of God today is probably no different from the family of God to whom Paul related, no matter where they were located. Interestingly, Paul had a "core team," of people – guys who came and went, while others stayed, and there were only a very few who were closest to the center of the action, so to speak.

Barbara has been calling our family of God, "the core team"; those who are also closest to the action in **this** day. We all have our personalities, just like the guys did in Paul's time, and, tonight, we're going to look at a group of four men who walked with Paul at one time or another: Luke, Barnabas, Titus, and Timothy.

LUKE

We won't talk much tonight about Luke, except to say that Paul refers to him in **Colossians 4:14**, as, "*the beloved physician*," who apparently came to know Paul while He and Barnabas were ministering in Antioch, and who went on to accompany Paul on his missionary journeys. Luke is the beloved chronicler of the Acts of the Apostles. We have no record of any acts of his own on behalf of the evangel of Jesus Christ. He didn't write anything about himself, and neither did anyone else during his life, except for the passing references that Paul made.

Here's something I found on Wikipedia, while looking for some historical record of Luke's life:

The next earliest account of Luke *[following the references to him in Paul's letters]* is in [a] *Prologue to the Gospel of Luke*, a document...only part [of which is] preserved in the original [Greek](#) – may have been composed in the late 2nd century:

Luke, a native of [Antioch](#), by profession a physician. He had become a disciple of the apostle Paul and later followed Paul until his [Paul's] martyrdom. Having served the Lord continuously, unmarried and without children, filled with the Holy Spirit he died at the age of 84 years.

Luke's writings are a truly priceless historical record, and he was a faithful observer and reporter, who alone stuck by Paul's side, apparently to the end of Paul's life.

Paul names Luke a "*fellow worker*" in **Philemon 1:24**. Interestingly, Luke was with Paul when he wrote his last epistle to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:11 – begin in **verse 9**:

9 Endeavor to come to me quickly,

10 for Demas, loving the current eon, forsook me and went to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

11 Luke only is with me. Taking Mark, lead him back with you, for he is useful to me for service.

12 Now Tychicus I dispatch to Ephesus.

Demas is probably the same man who, along with Luke, Paul referred to in **Colossians 4:11**, which was written between Romans and Philemon, and significantly before the 2nd letter to Timothy. Apparently, it was for reasons other than loving the current eon that Crescens left Paul for Galatia, and Titus for Dalmatia. It's also interesting to find Paul calling for Mark to rejoin him, who once was considered unworthy by Paul, and who was the object of division between Paul and Barnabas, as we will soon see.

As I said when earlier, God's purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord, He accomplishes **through people**, knowing full well their personalities and peculiarities.

BARNABAS

We learn about Barnabas early on, following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Barnabas was a Jew, whom the apostles renamed, and who first appeared, putting his money where his mouth was, literally, in **Acts 4:36-37**:

Now Joseph, who by the apostles is surnamed "Barnabas" (which is, being construed, "Son of Consolation"), a Levite, a native Cyprian, 37 selling a field belonging to him, brings the money and places it at the feet of the apostles.

The next time we meet Barnabas, he is bringing the newly converted Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem, after Paul's narrow escape from Damascus:

Acts 9:27

27 Yet Barnabas, getting hold of him, led him to the apostles and relates to them how he became acquainted with the Lord on the road, and that He speaks to him, and how, in Damascus, he speaks boldly in the name of Jesus.

I don't know about you, but when I read the book of Acts, it seems like time is compressed, during which the events take place. In fact, it took many years for all the events to occur. Paul's escape from Damascus, for example, was fully three years AFTER his conversion. It was perhaps at least 10 years later that Peter

preached to the Gentile, Cornelius, and his family in Caesarea. We discover in **Acts 11** that the evangel of Jesus Christ was being preached by many far and wide. When Peter tells the other Apostles about His vision that led to the heralding to Cornelius, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on those gathered with him, news of preaching by others elsewhere had also reached the brethren in Jerusalem.

The Apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch and, at some point after he arrived there, Barnabas went after Paul to help him. Let's pick up the story as Peter finishes telling the other Apostles about being sent to Cornelius. You'll recall that the Jewish Apostles were none too happy with Peter about his interaction with a Gentile. To Peter's credit, He stood for God's revelation to him; and to the credit of the others, they acknowledged that God had broadened the evangel to include the nations.

Acts 11:17

17 If, then, God gives them the equal gratuity as to us also, when believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I -- able to forbid God?"

18 Now, on hearing these things, they are quiet, and glorify God, saying, "Consequently, to the nations also God gives repentance unto life!"

19 Those indeed, then, who are dispersed from the affliction which is occurring over Stephen, passed through as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews only.

20 Now some of them were the Cyprian men and Cyrenians, who, coming into Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, evangelizing to them the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them. Besides, a vast number who believe turn back to the Lord.

Three quick observations here:

1. Throughout book of Acts and the Apostolic writings, we are witnessing the complex interplay of personalities, all of which God is using to accomplish His purpose. God is not distracted by our personalities; on the **contrary**, He used them **then**, and is using them **now**, to **advance His** purpose!

2. ***“the affliction which is occurring over Stephen,”*** in **verse 19**, indicates that a ferocious persecution had been underway for several years following Stephen’s testimony before the Sanhedrin (in **Acts 6**).
3. This is my opinion, now, but I believe that Peter was given the first opportunity to evangelize the Gentiles in a much broader commission than only Cornelius. His invitation to evangelize Cornelius, I believe, could have exploded a ministry to the Gentiles in a more significant way than we can comprehend since it never happened, except by Paul. I believe that he and Paul could well have been partners if Peter could have gotten past His Judaic loyalties – and the religious and legalistic requirements of Judaism.
 - a. As it was, Peter testified about the experience, but commissioned someone else, Barnabas, as we’ll soon read. Later, when Peter visited Paul, in the midst of an ecclesia in Antioch, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter played the hypocrite by eating only with the Jews. Paul called him on it in front of all and later wrote about the encounter to the Galatians.

Galatians 2:

11 Now when Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, for he was self-censured.

12 For, before the coming of some from James, he ate together with those of the nations. Yet when they came, he shrank back, and severed himself, fearing those of the Circumcision.

13 And the rest of the Jews also play the hypocrite with him, so that Barnabas also was led away with their hypocrisy.

We are seeing People sovereignly chosen by God, caught by a spirit of people pleasing and fear of man. They seemed to have forgotten the caution of **Proverbs 29:25**:

The ESV reads:

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

The CLV reads:

A man’s overanxiety becomes a trap for him, Yet he who trusts in Yahweh shall be made impregnable.

Galatians 2:

14 But when I perceived that they are not correct in their attitude toward the truth of the evangel, I said to Cephas in front of all, "If you, being inherently a Jew, are living as the nations, and not as the Jews, how are you compelling the nations to be judaizing?"

15 We, who by nature are Jews, and not sinners of the nations,

16 having perceived that a man is not being justified by works of law, except alone through the faith of Christ Jesus, we also believe in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by the faith of Christ and not by works of law, seeing that by works of law shall no flesh at all be justified.

- b. I know that Barbara has had much more experience than I with this, and has had to rebuke some famous Christian leaders for their hypocrisy. Even in our brief journey together, Barbara and I have had to withstand Christians to the face and hold up Heaven's view together, rather than go along with man's religious hypocrisy that dishonors and discredits God.

Back to the account in **Acts 11:22**

22 Now the account concerning them is heard in the ears of the ecclesia which is in Jerusalem, and they delegate Barnabas to Antioch, 23 who, coming along and perceiving the grace of God, rejoiced and entreated all with purpose of heart to be remaining in the Lord --

24 for he [*Barnabas*] was a good man and full of holy spirit and faith.

And a considerable throng was added to the Lord.

25 Now he came away to Tarsus to hunt Saul,

26 and finding him, he led him to Antioch.

Barnabas and Paul were later commissioned together to the Gentiles by the Holy Spirit, in **Acts 13:**

1 Now there were in Antioch, to accord with the ecclesia which is there, prophets and teachers, both Barnabas and Simeon, called Niger, and

Lucius the Cyrenian, besides Manaen, the tetrarch Herod's foster brother, and Saul.

2 Now, at their ministering to the Lord and fasting, the holy spirit said, "Sever, by all means, to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Barnabas, at this time, was Paul's "*partner, associate, comrade, companion, and sharer, in anything,*" but they parted company later, when Barnabas got his back up at one point about bringing John Mark along. Mark went back to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul, after the two men had brought financial help to the brethren in Judea from the ecclesia in Antioch. Apparently, Mark left Paul and Barnabas when he was needed (at least that seems to be Paul's perception).

We move on to **Acts 15** (we started in Antioch in **Chapter 11**, so either a lot happened in a short time to get to **Chapter 15** now, or we're looking at a lot of time spent there):

35 Yet Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and bringing the evangel of the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 Now, after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, "By all means, turning back, we should be visiting the brethren at every city in which we announce the word of the Lord,

37 to see how they are faring." Now Barnabas intended to take along with them John also, who is called Mark.

38 Yet Paul counted the man who withdraws from them from Pamphylia and comes not with them to the work -- this man not worthy to take along. **[In other words, Paul didn't trust John Mark]**

39 Now they become so incensed as to recoil from one another.

Besides, Barnabas, taking Mark along, sails off to Cyprus.

This is the last we hear of Barnabas in the chronology of NT, but, as we've already seen, Mark shows back up near the end of Paul's life.

Remember that tonight, we are looking at personalities, through which God accomplishes His eonian purpose, even when those personalities are acting other than in accord with His highest and best in them. God's going to get the job done,

and we are working **for** Him, whether we're being foolish or wise – whether we are in the midst of His severity or His kindness – at any particular time.

TITUS

Paul and Titus must have become close in Antioch, because Titus goes **with** Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, after Paul's absence from Jerusalem for 14 years.

Galatians 2:1-3

after the lapse of fourteen years, I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also along with me.

2 Now I went up in accord with a revelation, and submitted to them the evangel which I am heralding among the nations, yet privately to those of repute, lest somehow I should be racing or ran for naught.

3 But not even Titus, who is with me, being a Greek, is compelled to be circumcised.

Titus is referred to several times in **2 Corinthians**, where, Paul calls him, "my brother," in **2 Corinthians 2:13**. In **2 Corinthians 8:23**, Paul calls Him, "**...my mate and fellow worker for you...**" in. The term, "**my mate**," is particularly interesting. It means, *my "partner, associate, comrade, companion, and sharer, in anything."* In **2 Corinthians 12:18**, Paul says, "**Does Titus not overreach you? Walk we not in the same spirit? Not in the same footprints?**" That seems to me a very certain endorsement of Titus by the Apostle.

Titus was a Greek, we're told, and remained uncircumcised. One can only imagine how much consternation he caused among the Jewish converts to Christ, and certainly he was a major problem for the Judaizers who were attempting to impose the regulations of Mosaic Law on Gentile believers.

In his letter to Titus, written between Paul's first and second letters to Timothy, Paul calls him, "**a genuine child according to the common faith...**" (**Titus 1:4**). There's a sense of sincere affection for Titus in Paul's tone, even though Titus left the Apostle in Rome prior to His execution.

TIMOTHY

Finally, we come to Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father. That difference from Titus is probably what compelled Paul to circumcise Timothy. You can read that account in **Acts 16**.

Timothy must have been a quick study, because Paul left him and Silas in Berea, while Paul sailed to Athens. Later, Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul in Athens. In fact Timothy seems to go back and forth between Paul and ecclesias elsewhere, as we read in Acts 19, 20, both letters to the Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and both letters to the Thessalonians.

Paul writes quite the recommendation of Timothy in **Philippians 2**:

19 Now I am expecting, in the Lord Jesus, to send Timothy to you quickly, that I also may be of good cheer when I know of your concerns.

20 For I have no one equally sensitive [*equal in soul, or likeminded,*], who will be so genuinely solicitous of your concerns,

Solicitous comes from the Greek word which also means worry. It's odd, but THE CLV-KC says worry applies to oneself, while solicitous is toward others. Thayer's lexicon defines solicitous as, "*to be anxious; to be troubled with cares; to care for, look out for.*" Essentially, Paul is letting the Philippians know that Timothy is the only one he knows who will be as concerned for them as Paul is himself. That's big.

Then Paul continues in **Philippians 2:21-22**:

21 for all are seeking that which is their own, not that which is Christ Jesus'.

22 Now you know his testedness [*his proven, tried character*], that, as a child with a father, he slaves with me for the evangel.

Here's the greeting to Paul's first letter to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:2

Timothy, a **genuine** child in faith [*that is, a legitimately born child in faith*]

In **2 Timothy 1:2**, Paul calls Timothy, “**a child beloved.**”

Timothy had a truly special place in the Apostle’s heart. Paul trusted Timothy with the ecclesia in Ephesus, to whom he wrote possibly the most expansive revelation of God’s secrets and purpose.

When I read Paul’s letter to Titus this week, I saw some qualities that marked Paul – that set him apart from others, and which I believe would help us to keep in mind as we wait for the completion of this eon and the Day of the Lord Jesus.

Titus 1

Paul, a **slave** of God, yet an **apostle** of Jesus Christ,

A slave is more than a mere *servant*, who may go to his own home when his work is done. A *slave*, however, is someone who **belongs** to another. Paul says here, “***I belong to God. He owns me. Even so, I am Jesus Christ’s apostle; I’m Jesus Christ’s delegate or messenger, whom He has sent forth with orders.***”

Paul goes on to say, “***I am God’s slave and Christ’s apostle...***

in accord [*in agreement*] with the faith of God’s **chosen**, and a **realization** of truth, which accords with **devoutness**,

2 in expectation of life eonian, which [the] God, ***Who does not lie***, promises before times eonian,

3 yet manifests His word in its own eras by heralding, with which I was entrusted, according to the injunction of God, our Saviour,

4 to Titus, a genuine child according to the common faith: Grace and peace from God, the Father, and Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

Chosen [plural form]: “*picked out; choice, select, i.e. the best of its kind or class, excellence preeminent: applied to certain individual Christians*”

Realization: “*precise and correct knowledge*”

Devoutness: “*reverence, respect...towards God.*”

In verse 2, Paul says, “***[the] God – that is, the Father, Who does not lie, promises...***” Just look at that: “***The Father, Who does not lie, promises...***” Then

remember **Psalm 138:2**, “*You have magnified Your name, Your promise, over all else.*”

All may not be apostles, but You and I can certainly consider ourselves slaves of Christ, in accord with the faith of God’s **Chosen**: those who are, “*picked out; choice, select, the best of [our] kind or class, excellence preeminent*” – in accord with a realization – a “*precise and correct knowledge*” – of truth, which itself accords with devoutness – with “*reverence [and] respect...towards God.*”

So, here we are at the end of this entire study of personalities, through which God accomplishes His grand eonian purpose. Only now are we discovering who and what we are, and why we’re even gathering as we do twice a week as a family. Our agreement with Him and His purpose, including HOW He chooses to work it out in and through our lives and our quirky individual personalities, is assured by our reverence and respect toward Him at all times.

I suspect that as each of us studies the B.I.B.L.E. – the Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth – not just reads it casually, but with reverence and respect toward God, seeking His impartation, what He has already established in our spirits, we will engrave in our hearts and minds, and live out in our lives, for the laud of His Glory in Christ Jesus.

“Now to Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending, according to the power that is operating in us, to Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! Amen!” **(Eph. 3:20-21)**