

## Barnabas

There are two types of people in every crowd. There are the ones who are always negative. Gloom and doom. Nothing is going right, and besides all that, nothing will ever go right. Their motto is “expect the worst, and you'll never be disappointed.” They are the pessimist—the “half empty glass” kind of person. The worst thing about that kind of person is that they have a tendency to inflict others with their attitude. Others begin to display their pessimism and see the situation as hopeless, even if it isn't hopeless.

Then there are the positive people in the crowd. Their philosophy is “it could always be worse; what can I do to make it better?” They're the “half full glass” kind of person. They see difficulties as opportunities turned inside out. One of the best things about this kind of person is that their attitude is also infectious. Their philosophy seems to rub off on those around them. The world looks to be a more positive place because of them. With the right encouragement, seemingly insurmountable problems can be solved.

I've said all of this to ask this question: when it comes to Christianity and your personal situation, which one of the two types are you? Do you face the problems of this life with a “what's the use” view, or do you see them as just “opportunities turned inside out?”

After the church was established on Pentecost, problems almost immediately began to develop. Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin and told not to preach Christ anymore. Then there was the fraudulent behavior of Ananias and Sapphira. Then, more trouble with the Sanhedrin. Stephen is stoned, James is executed. A persecution of the church arose, and many forsook the church because of the seemingly insurmountable problems.

In the midst of all this, we are introduced to a young man named Joseph. In Acts 4:36-37 we read this about him: “Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement) sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.” From what little we read about this Joseph, there seems to be a good reason why he was called “Barnabas”— Son of Encouragement. Here, he, by his example, encourages people to be sacrificial.

The next time we see Barnabas, the church is hesitant to accept Saul of Tarsus as Paul, the soon to be great servant of Jesus Christ. In Acts 9:27, Barnabas goes about the task of encouraging the doubters to accept Saul. We know the eventual result. In Acts 11, the apostles are sent word that those who had been scattered from Jerusalem by Herod had preached to the Gentiles. Who do you think the apostles chose to go to encourage the new converts? Barnabas. (Acts 11:19-30) Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. (Acts 13) It was Barnabas' job to encourage those to whom Paul preached to live by those words. Barnabas is in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:43) and in Iconium. (Acts 14:1) Paul and Barnabas appointed elders and encouraged them to do the work of the Lord. (Acts 14:23) They preached effectively in Antioch of Syria. (Acts 15:15) Although Paul and Barnabas parted ways in Acts 15, Barnabas never ceased to be an encouragement wherever he went.

The question you need to ask yourself is this: Am I a Barnabas? Am I a positive influence in

the lives of those with whom I come in contact on a daily basis? Do I see problems and difficulties as “opportunities turned inside out?” If not, you need to reexamine your walk with God. Paul tells us in Philipians 4:13: “I can do all things through Him (Christ) who gives me strength.” Do you believe it? If so, live it.