

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

LESSON ELEVEN: BARNABAS – A GENEROUS STEWARD

I. INTRODUCTION

It is important to be a faithful steward. This is non-negotiable. However, to be a generous steward is an optional choice. It is another level of spirituality altogether. The poor widow who was commended by the Lord Jesus (see Mark 12:41-44) gave her two mites which were everything she had to the treasury of the temple. That was very generous of her, even though it was little in monetary value compared to others. No one forces her to do it. It was optional yet she chose to do it. What was her motive? The Bible did not say. However, from the Lord's commendation, it was implied that she had given out of love for God, not withholding anything from Him. She gave her all, even that which sustains her life. Her generosity was forever engraved in Scripture and certainly accepted by God.

Barnabas was another generous steward of God. His testimony is found in Acts 4:36–37. “And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

Barnabas never wrote a book of the Bible. He never preached a sermon that was recorded in Scripture. He was not remembered for performing miracles. Yet his influence upon the early church was significant. His generosity strengthened believers. His encouragement restored discouraged servants. His faithfulness helped shape the ministry of the Apostle Paul. His stewardship left a lasting impact upon the kingdom of God.

Barnabas sold a piece of land and gave the proceeds to support the work of God. At first glance this may appear to be a simple act of charity since many others also did the same to care for the needy. But when we look more closely, we discover profound lessons about stewardship from the generous stewardship of Barnabas.

II. A GENEROUS STEWARD SERVES GOD

Barnabas was rich enough to own land. This may not be his only piece of land. He may have other lands. The issue is not possession but perspective. Barnabas chose to sell a piece of land he had and gave the proceeds for God's work. This was his service to God. He could have kept the land for his own benefit. Yet as a faithful steward, he wanted to be generous towards the service of God. He used his land to serve his God.

The example of Barnabas has shown that the work of God is more important than holding on to possession of wealth and property for self-benefit. This action revealed the condition of his heart. His treasure was not in the land. His treasure was in the Lord. One of the greatest challenges believers face today is material attachment. The world constantly encourages us to accumulate more. Yet stewardship reminds us that everything comes from God and therefore He is Owner, not us. Barnabas understood this reality. Therefore, he could surrender his possessions without hesitation. His security was not found in what he owned. His security was found in God Himself. A faithful steward will always want to serve God with what he has.

III. A GENEROUS STEWARD TRUSTS GOD'S PROVISION

The act of giving always reveals what we trust. When people cling tightly to possessions, questions of fear arise: "What if I need this later?" "What if I face financial difficulty?" "What if I don't have enough?" Such concerns are real and understandable. Yet Barnabas demonstrates a different attitude. His confidence rested not in his possession but in the Lord. Giving required trust. Once the land was sold, it was gone. Yet Barnabas trusted God's provision.

Barnabas believed the God who provided yesterday would provide today and tomorrow as well. He believed that God's resources were greater than his own. This kind of trust builds stewardship. Instead of hoarding resources, faithful stewards hold them in such a manner that they are ever ready to be used for the Lord. Instead of asking, "Will I have enough?" they ask, "How can God use what I have?"

The same challenge confronts believers today. Many desire financial security before they will serve God fully. They desire perfect circumstances before they will obey. Yet stewardship often requires trust before certainty. God calls us to trust Him. Our confidence must never rest in savings accounts, investments, careers, or possessions. All these things belong to God in the first place. Barnabas understood this. Therefore, his generosity flowed naturally from his trust in God. The more we trust God, the more freely we are willing to use our resources for His glory.

IV. A GENEROUS STEWARD ENCOURAGES GOD'S PEOPLE

Barnabas was not only generous with his substance, he was also generous with his encouragement. He was so closely associated with encouragement that the Apostles gave him a new name. Acts 4:36, "Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation." The name "Barnabas" carries the idea of encouragement, comfort, and exhortation. What a testimony!

Whenever people thought of Barnabas, they thought of encouragement. He strengthened believers wherever he went. His generous stewardship included the ministry of encouragement. This is especially significant because encouragement is often overlooked. People notice large donations. People notice public achievements. People notice visible accomplishments. But encouragement often happens behind the scenes. Yet its impact can be significant. A timely word may strengthen a weary servant of God. A kind gesture may restore a discouraged believer. A faithful friend may help another Christian persevere through trials.

In Acts 11:23, Barnabas "... was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Barnabas strengthened the church by pointing them not to himself but to God. He encouraged believers to remain faithful to the Lord. This was stewardship. Barnabas used his spiritual gift of encouragement to bless and strengthen God's people spiritually.

Encouragement goes beyond just words of comfort. It is full of action. The Bible records how Barnabas encouraged Paul by action in at least two occasions.

- A. When Saul of Tarsus was converted and given the new name Paul, believers were understandably fearful of him. After all, Saul had before persecuted and killed Christians mercilessly. Many questioned whether his conversion was genuine. Most kept their distance. But Barnabas was the only one who saw what others could not see.

Acts 9:27, "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles." Barnabas opened a door that otherwise might have remained closed. Barnabas saw what others did not see. He believed Paul's conversion was genuine. And he proved by his action by speaking up for him before the Apostles.

- B. Later, when the church at Antioch began flourishing, Barnabas sought Saul and brought him into ministry. Acts 11:25–26 records this event. “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Imagine how different church history might have been if Barnabas had not been an encouragement to Paul in action.

V. A GENEROUS STEWARD SEEKS GOD'S GLORY

After selling the land, Barnabas simply brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet. There was no indication that he sought recognition. There was no indication that he desired men's applause and attention. There was also no indication that he expected special treatment or a position of leadership among the Apostles. He simply gave.

The contrast with Acts 5 is striking. Immediately after the account of Barnabas, the Bible records about Ananias and Sapphira. They also sold their land and gave to the Apostles. However, their motives were entirely different. They wanted the appearance of spirituality. They wanted admiration. They wanted recognition. Barnabas sought God's glory. Ananias and Sapphira sought personal glory. That is the difference.

The generous steward does not serve in order to be seen. He serves because he loves God. He gives because he loves God. He sacrifices because he loves God. God's approval is better than man's recognition. Barnabas understood this truth. Throughout his ministry, he consistently worked behind the scenes. When Apostle Paul became more prominent, Barnabas did not compete with him. When others paid less attention to Barnabas, he was not discouraged at all. His concern was always the advancement of God's kingdom and glory.

VI. SUMMARY

Barnabas stands before us as a faithful example of a generous steward of God. His life teaches us lessons that remain relevant today. First, he serves God with what he has been entrusted. Second, he trusted God's provision rather than earthly security. Third, he used his resources to encourage others. Fourth, he sought God's glory rather than human praise.

The remarkable thing about Barnabas is that his influence continues long after his earthly possessions disappeared. The land he sold is gone. The money he gave has long since been spent. But the spiritual impact remains. Spiritual lives were strengthened. Churches were supported. God's people were encouraged. Ministries were advanced. The gospel spread. That is the power of biblical stewardship.

Earthly resources are temporary. Using them to serve God is eternal. One day every believer will stand before the Lord and give an account of his stewardship. The question will not be how much we have accumulated and possessed on earth. The question will be how faithful we used what God entrusted to us. We can also choose to be generous like the poor widow, Barnabas and all those who love the Lord, with no holding back. Instead of giving the minimum (which is not wrong and sinful), let us be encouraged to give the maximum (as a matter of choice and not by constraint). May we trust God fully and completely. May we use our resources generously. May we encourage others faithfully. May we seek God's glory above all else. Amen.