

New Life in Christ — Son of Encouragement

At the beginning of the Christian era, believers were scattered throughout the known world. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, was one of many who were involved in the dispersion of Jewish believers. His priestly family background had special interest and ties to the priesthood and temple in Jerusalem. The distress and persecution of early believers was intense. After they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the multitude of believers grew rapidly, (Acts 4:30-32). Due to the dispersion, believers experienced many difficult days and suffered persecutions. God was doing an amazing work among the multitude of those who believed and great grace was upon them.

Acts 4:36-37 NIV84 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.

When the church needed encouragement, God sent Joseph, whom the apostles called Barnabas.

Joseph took extraordinary steps to encourage believers. When the numbers of believers continued to increase, the high priest rose up and all those with him and laid hands on the apostles and put them in prison, (Acts 5:17). By supernatural intervention, the apostles were delivered from prison and many signs and wonders were done among the people. Although the church was being persecuted, their numbers continued to grow. Because the need was so great the apostles appointed seven deacons to minister to the people. Steven, one of the seven, did great wonders and signs among the people. The high priest and the 'Synagogue of the Freedmen' were indignant at what was happening and stirred up the people against them. Saul of Tarsus was consenting to Stephen's death. With letters from the High Priest, he continued to persecute and imprison believers. As he journeyed to Damascus, Saul was stopped by the Lord Jesus and with much trembling came into the faith. Although he was dramatically changed, the disciples were afraid of him and did not believe that he was a disciple, (Acts 9:26-27). Ultimately, Saul came to Jerusalem and Barnabas took him to the apostles and encouraged Saul and the apostles.

Those who were scattered after Stephen's death travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch preaching Christ and a great number believed.

When news of Antioch reached the apostles, they sent Barnabas to encourage them in the Lord, (Acts 11:22-23). Acts 11:24 tells us Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. After ministering in Antioch, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul to Antioch, and they

ministered together for a year. When famine hit Jerusalem, the distress, persecutions, and needs of the people was intense, so Barnabas and Paul were sent with relief funds, (Acts 12:25). When early believer's faith was being challenged, God had a Son of Encouragement for the church.

Is there a Son of Encouragement in the house?

In 1 Samuel 18, David had gained a decisive victory against the Philistines and Goliath of Gath.

The story of David and Goliath is familiar to everyone. After the victory, women came from all the cities of Israel with tambourines and musical instruments and sang: *"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."* When Saul heard the song, he became very angry and the saying displeased him. The very next day, he tried to kill David with a spear. Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul.

1 Samuel 21:10 NKJV Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

Gath was the homeland of Goliath. In 1 Samuel 22, David departed from Achish and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

1 Samuel 22:2 NKJV And everyone who was in **distress**, everyone who was in **debt**, and everyone who was **discontented** gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.

King Saul's bitterness and hatred against David was so great that he killed 85 priests who had helped David.

1 Samuel 27:2 NKJV Then David arose and went over with the six hundred men who were with him to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath.

When David found favor in the king's eyes, he and his men were given the town of Ziklag. They lived there a year and four months, (1 Samuel 27:7).

About two years later, the Philistines gathered for war against Israel.

When the Philistine generals reviewed their armies and saw David and his men, they said, *"What are these Hebrews doing here?"* King Achish said, *"David has been with me these three years and I have found no fault in him since he defected."* The lords of the Philistines did not favor David, so they sent him back to Ziklag.

Have you ever been through so much that you thought you could take nothing more?

1 Samuel 30:1 NKJV Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire,

1 Samuel 30:3 NKJV So David and his men came to the city, and there it was,

burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive.

1 Samuel 30:4 NKJV Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

Their distress was so great they could not bear it. David's mighty men wept until they had no more tears.

Have you ever been so distressed that you cried until there were no more tears?

1 Samuel 30:6 AMP David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because the souls of them all were bitterly grieved, each man for his sons and daughters. *But David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*

The NIV says "*the men were bitter in spirit.*" The people who should have been with David were rejecting him and ready to stone him.

What do you do when life is against you?

"David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God."

Have you ever needed a Son of Encouragement in your troop?

You needed someone to speak the right words at the right time. You felt like you were standing alone and no one was standing with you. No one cared that you were going down for the last time.

David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

The original language means: "*David talked to himself.*" David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord. Everyone around David was talking about stoning him and David did not have a Barnabas in his crowd. All of his fighting men were distressed, in debt, discouraged, and discontented.

Everything they had gained had been taken away.

- What do you say to yourself when you are in trouble?
- What do you say to yourself when you have suffered loss?
- What do you say when everyone has turned against you?

David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord.

Instead of rehearsing and reminding yourself of your difficulties, remind yourself that God is on your side.

The text says, "David encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God."

You need to learn to encourage yourself in the Lord your God.

Listen to David's confessions.

Psalms 27:1 He says "The Lord is my light and my salvation, Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid."

Psalms 35:10 He says, “The Lord is my strength and my shield, My heart trusted in Him and I am helped.”

Psalms 91:2 “The Lord is my refuge and my fortress.”

Psalms 118:6 “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Psalms 23:1 “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Psalms 16:8 “He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”

You need to learn and know the Lord your God. Encourage and strengthen yourself in the Lord your God.

Speak God’s Word over yourself.

Isaiah 54:17 “No weapon formed against you shall prosper.”

Romans 8:37 “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Don’t go by what you see happening around you. Turn your eyes on the Lord and encourage yourself in the Lord. God is going to take you to something better. He can make a way where there is no way. What you are going through is not your destination.

Sometimes the only person you have to encourage you is yourself.

Stop speaking defeat and distress over yourself. Stop accepting what the enemy has done to you as final. Start speaking words of victory and power over yourself.

You can become the Son of Encouragement in your house.

Tell yourself, “The God that I serve is Almighty God.” “The Lord my God is fighting my battles.” “The Lord my God is my Deliverer and my Healer.”

Start making plans to come out of your discouragement and difficulty.

In 1 Samuel 30:7, David asked Abiathar to bring the ephod because he wanted to inquire of the Lord.

The Priest would put the ephod on over his clothes and would ask God for guidance and answers. David wanted answers and guidance from God. You need to know that you can cry out to God and He will hear you. You can bring your burdens and distresses to the God Who hears and answers prayers. Everything had been taken from David and his men that they loved and cared for.

1 Samuel 30:8 NKJV So David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?” And He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.”

When David did not have a Son of Encouragement, he inquired of the Lord.

You need to hear from the Lord about your distresses. Ask the Lord for direction and what steps you should take.

God told David, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all."

You need to hear what God has to say about your situation. So David started out with his 600 men, but before long, 200 of his men became so tired they could not go on.

Hold on now.

If no one goes with you, God is still on your side. If everyone gets tired and quits, God will fight for you. If all of your encouragers leave, God will not forsake you. If no one holds your hand, God will lift you up.

1 Samuel 30:18-19 NKJV So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all.

You need to hear God say: "I will not fail you." You can trust in the Lord. They went down into the enemies camp and took back everything that had been stolen. God is able to restore what the enemy has stolen from you.

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