

UNDERSTANDING THE LOVE OF GOD SERIES

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PAUL & BARNABAS

I Jn.2: 3-5 *“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandment. He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word; truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”*

I Jn.4: 6-11 *“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

It tells us very clearly here that when we say we love God and when we say we abide in God, that our vertical relationship is tested by our horizontal relationship. It's not possible to say that we love God without saying that we love those whom He has begotten. So let's ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal to our lives of His love.

We know that in salvation when we are born again we have a new revelation of God. We understand God better and we have a new relationship with God. Our eyes are opened to know God. We received a revelation of God. In the same way salvation also involve a revelation of fellow man just as we see God with new eyes.

We began to understand that God is a God of love. He is not a God who seeks our destruction but a God who seeks our edification. So when our eyes are opened to know this mighty God our Father, our eyes also are opened to know our fellowman. A revelation of God always produces a revelation of our fellowman. We will see others in the way God sees them if we truly have a revelation of God. By this we can test all revelation because all revelations that comes from God is born of His nature. His nature is love. For every revelation of God always produces a new revelation of man and it causes us to relate to man better, to relate to our fellow brethren better. See a false revelation that comes to people produces a lack of relationship. That means it produces pride. They claim to be this, they claim to be that but it ends up isolating themselves from their fellowmen. It ends up isolating themselves from loving others. But a true revelation from God will cause you to be more loving to others for the source and the end of all revelation is love. Revelation is born of love and revelation leads you into love. They are one and the same spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We need to build our horizontal relationship because if you are not able to love others it hinders your relationship with God too. In fact the bible calls us a liar if you say you know God and love God but do not love others. The two go together. They are developed proportionately. So we look at some bible examples to understand on relationship.

Human relationship is one of the most difficult areas for people to handle and there is no way you can get out of it because in this life you will have to relate. Everything you do you relate to people in various categories and how much more to relate within the body of Christ. So we are going to specifically look into relationship in the body of Christ. We have said that an inability to love is because of an inability in yourself. Not so much the other person but yourself. So we should judge ourselves and not judge others for Jesus was able to love everybody. Many times as we walk in our Christian life, we reach a time we feel we are not able to walk in His love. At that point you should recognize that it is not the other person who is at fault but your own self is at fault. Your own inability to draw grace; draw love so you could walk in a new way and in a new realm.

Acts 9 Paul was born again, baptized in water, and baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 9: 19 *“So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.”* He started preaching the Word. Paul was a doctrinal man. He was a man who was very analytical about it and when he was born again, he started looking at Christ in a new way. He is very well grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures so he could relate it all to his experience of Jesus Christ. And we see how people try to kill him. He was let down in a basket. In verse 22, *“But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”* Now Paul is quite a new Christian but you can see that he started preaching from the time he was born again. The reason is because it's a gift of God in his life. He was called to be a teacher. So from the time he was born again the gift started operating in his life. Do you know that the gifts of God operate in your life regardless of your maturity in Christ because they are gifts to you? They are by grace not by works. However the operation of those gifts if you grow more mature in Christ they become more refined. But the moment you are born again you can operate in the gifts of God. They come by grace. Paul started preaching and he was growing in strength. That means spiritual strength and he confronted all the Jews. That was a gift operating in his life.

Verse 23, *“Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.”* So they let him down in a basket. After he came down from the basket, between verse 25 and 26 is about 3 years, it's not mentioned in the bible but in verse 25 & 26 if you read it as it is, it looks as if the disciples took him by night and let him down in a large basket and when Saul had come to Jerusalem, it looks like immediately he went to Jerusalem but there is a large gap between verse 25 & 26. Gal. Chapter 1 it says about his conversion in verse 16 *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among then Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and return again to Damascus. Then after 3 years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter.”*

So it was three years after his conversion he went to Jerusalem and that was the first time he met Peter and all the apostles. So by the time he landed in Jerusalem in verse 26, he was three years old as a Christian, a three years old believer. So in verse 26, Saul, three years old Christian came to Jerusalem and he tried to join the disciples but they were afraid of him and did not believe that he was a disciple. Imagine three years had passed, they must have heard that he was

born again but suddenly here comes Paul the one who was known as the persecutor, the one who caused a lot of havoc among the churches. In verse 26, they did not believe that he was a disciple. And so here a beautiful partnership begins between Barnabas and Paul. Barnabas was different. Imagine all the other Christian will not believe. Here comes this Barnabas and of all the people he reached out to Saul. That would be considered dangerous work by the rest because if Paul was not really born again, Barnabas was heading for prison. He must have spent some time talking to Paul to find out the true situation.

What would you have done if you were in that situation? The bible tells you to love. Most people go by the majority. They don't find out things by themselves. In the vast body of Christ many people go by what other people say. They never take note and bear witness for themselves. They don't examine the facts. Their hobby is jumping to conclusion, which is very wrong. This attitude is of the world. We must get this kind of attitude out of the kingdom of God. Always examine the facts yourself. No matter what story you hear you must examine it yourself otherwise you could end up among one of those who hinder others from moving on with God. By not examining the facts we can end up as stumbling block to others. The bible calls those scandals, those who stumble others from further progress. We must watch out that we do not become scandalous.

Barnabas was different. He examined the situation. He had a talk with Paul and brought Paul to the apostles. He found he was genuine. He had a good rapport with the apostles. In chapter 4 we find that he was the one who became a leader among the people. He was among those who started the giving movement. Chapter 4: 36 *"And Joseph, 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 money and laid it at the apostles' feet."* So he was an encourager. That was his nature. So Barnabas comes and encourages Paul and takes Paul to the apostles and he declares in verse 27 how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had spoken to him and how he had preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus. So when that happened, in verse 28 Paul received the right hand of fellowship.

Now that is the ministry God has called all of us to be. We should be

peacemakers and not dividers. We should be bridge builders and not wall builders. Do you know it is easier to build a wall than to build a bridge? A lot of Christian subconsciously become wall builders. When two people are sitting there, they will build a wall between them. How do they build a wall? By their words. By their actions. They end up isolating everybody. Isolating from others whom Jesus calls the sons of peace. They are the ones who build relationship between people and Jesus pronounces a blessing on these people. They are the bridge builders. They build bridges for people to reach to one another in love. So we are talking about the horizontal relationship and in building bridges. We have to understand some principles so that we know how to build bridges. So he built a bridge and Paul's ministry started. Paul could fellowship with the apostles freely all because of the man Barnabas. Why was Barnabas able to do that? Because he had love. He was a man of the individual. He was a man who was concerned about injustice being done. Paul was having injustice. Three years as a believer he came to join the people. No one wanted to join him. Now that was discouraging. He was an encourager so he poured encouragement inside that situation. If there was no Barnabas, the world may not have seen Paul.

Acts chapter 11, in case you do not know it, in Acts chapter 10 there is no more mention of Paul because in Acts 9 towards the ending, the opposition in Jerusalem and also the unbelievers try to kill Paul. Acts 9: 30 *"When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus."* Tarsus was his hometown. So when persecution started against Paul in Jerusalem, again all the brethren took him and sent him back to his hometown. And for the next chapter there is no more news about Paul. It was about ten years later in Acts 11, all bible scholars call that the ten silent years, nothing is heard about Paul. Some of you are preparing for your ministry in your life but you are not prepared for the silent years. There will be a time when nobody knows you but that's the time when you prepare. By the time people knows you, you won't have much time. Many times people in their silent years make a lot of noise. They will ask, "Why don't people use me? Why don't somebody recognize me?" Well you are still in the silent years. Let God promote you. Don't promote yourself. Have you heard of people promoting themselves? I can do this and I can do that. I am good here and I am good there. I mean all these are self-promotion. That will hinder more than help. Paul went through ten silent years. Nobody heard of him. But there is one guy who never forgets relationship. There is one guy who always remembers people. People are not numbers to him. The Jerusalem church probably numbered about 20000 or

30000 people but there is one person who never forgets the individual. He loves people as they are. That is Barnabas.

In Acts 11: 20 see there was a revival that broke out in Antioch in verse 20, *Some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they came to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.* Revival broke forth. After the revival the first thing you must bring is the teacher. World revivals come and go because of the lack of teachers. The revival in many places died off because they didn't bring in the teachers. Then it wanes and then there is another revival again. But if they don't bring in teachers the revival can never be tapped. They can never be consolidated to move on to greater things. So the moment there is a revival they bring the teachers in.

In verse 22 *"Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord."*

Again you see the word encourage. Why does he do it? He is an encourager. He is called the Son of Encouragement. How can you encourage? Because of love. He is a man of great love. He loves people personally. Then it says in verse 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."* See he helped to continue the revival. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus. Tarsus was where Paul was enjoying his silent years. Barnabas remembered there was a man who was a good teacher. He never forgets how Paul preached the moment he was converted. Paul made an impression on Barnabas. Let me tell you that you have to be faithful wherever and whatever God tells you to do because there are eyes that are looking at you. There are eyes of God and they are men of God who can pick up those small things. Men of God don't look at big things you put forward and the mask you put forward but they look at what is inside because God is the one who look at the inside. If you are a man of God, you look at the inside of people and not the outside.

In verse 25, *“Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Paul.”* He never went anywhere. He was a great teacher, a preacher. But there was no open door for his ministry. Imagine Paul’s ministry started so insignificantly, so quietly but God has His ways. Wait upon God. Don’t rush ahead of God. Some people they get prophecy on Sunday, within the next Sunday they must start their ministry. We think in term of days and weeks but God thinks in terms of years. Don’t worry you are ninety years old. God can add another ninety years to you. It makes no difference to Him. So don’t worry about that. God is watching. I have found out something of God. God always think in terms of year. So when God says something, you better hang on to it. It may take years for it to come to pass. Don’t rush ahead of Him.

In verse 26, *“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. 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.”*

Paul and Barnabas started their ministry together. That was a nice relationship they have formed with one another - a relationship of love, encouragement and ministry. Now they are partners in the ministry together. Remember Paul was a great person. When it comes to argument he is a person that deals with doctrine. You can see that in Acts 9: 22 *“Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews.”* Confounded means he defeated them in debate. He is a great speaker. He defeated them and out argued them. He is a great man when it comes to argument and apologetics that is the defense of the faith. Then in verse 29, *“He spoke boldly in the name of Jesus and disputed.”* He argued with them regarding the doctrine. So he was a doctrinal man. He was a man who argues the Word, a man who will put line upon line, precept upon precept. Barnabas was a guy who looks more on a person than the doctrine. He is a guy who looks at the individual. He likes to encourage them. He likes to love them. To bring them out like from a seed, to a plant, to a flower. That’s the kind of guy he is. That was his strong point. Paul’s strong point was that he was a great man when it comes to doctrine. Barnabas’ strength was that he was a great man when it comes to encouraging individuals. So they worked together very well. One guy does the doctrinal and the other guy does the follow up. Very well matched. They flow together like twins.

When they went on their first missionary journey, they went together. In Acts 13: 2 *“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”* So here starts the first missionary journey. They have been associated together for many years. They have known each other for about twelve years. They even worked together in Antioch church for about one to two years before they went out. So they have known each other weakness and strength and personality.

Do you know that every one of us has a different personality and God works through your personality? He will keep changing your personality by His Word, by prayer and the years come, the years go, He will keep changing you. Your personality changes with the years and experience. The anointing also changes your personality. But there is a basic characteristic to each one of us. Just as the fingerprint, every one of us is different. That is why it makes it more difficult to love. Now you understand why to love is an important thing to learn because you confront all kinds of character. People with weakness here and there. Some with strong points here and some with strong points there but everyone have strong point and weak point.

One day after their first missionary, Paul and Barnabas came back. They both have strong points and weak points. It's a different thing to meet each other in the church and say, *“I love you with the love of the Lord,”* and after you have stayed under the same roof. You have seen all the sharp ends of the other guy. You have seen all the weaknesses in the other guy. The next time you come to church, when it comes to singing the song, *“I love you with the love of the Lord,”* you will turn the other way. You will say, *“I rather love someone else.”* When you stay together in the dormitory, you meet all kinds of character. Sometimes a guy who is a great preacher, he could preach until heaven come down and hell open up but in the dormitory they behave like some dumb Alec. You meet all kinds, strong points, weaknesses that is where when we gather together as a body of Christ we talk about horizontal relationship. Sometimes it is easier to love people whom you don't know that well. You only see all the good points about them. And you say, *“I love you with the love of the Lord.”* And after you have stayed together for one

or two years, you look at each other and say, "I cannot see in you the glory of the Lord but I have to love you with the faith of the Lord." It's harder to love the people when you know their weaknesses. But yet the love of God remains the same. Do you know that before you express anything, when God loves you, He saw your weaknesses and your strong points?

There was this guy Lyon Fox, he was taken in the spirit to heaven and he was brought before the throne of Jesus Christ. He was kneeling at the throne and that was the first time he met Jesus face to face. Jesus was sitting at the throne looking right at him. He could feel the love of Jesus and Jesus never spoke one word. Jesus looked at him and studied him. Jesus looked at all his inward life. Looked at his character. Looked at every part of him. And he could see Jesus' eyes looking at him with love. Then Jesus starts looking at all his bad points. He could see Jesus' eyes changed. Then after Jesus' eyes was filled with love again. Jesus knows everything good about you and He knows everything bad about you. But He still loves you. That is what Jesus wants us to be like. You can know everything good about the person, everything bad about the person and still love the person.

So in Acts 15, the two comrades who were buddies just before they start their missionary journey, now by this time they know each other for about 15 to 17 years. In verse 36, *"Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing. Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark."* Paul in verse 38 *"insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work."* You see, one was determined and the other was insistent. When you come to relationship, you have one guy determine and one guy insist, you might as well put them in a boxing ring. Now these are born again Christians. They are apostles. If apostles quarrel, they were fighting over one guy. If you understand the story in Act 13, when they went on their first missionary journey, they went to Cyprus. Mark intended to go with them the whole journey but Mark did not keep his words. Mark also did something wrong. He did not follow through on what he said he would do. He was like what Jesus said that I will do but didn't do. Paul did not like people who are inconsistent. He did not like people who say I don't do. He wants people who say I do. He was a man of the word. He insisted not to take Mark but Barnabas said can. Lets analyze what's happening here. There are a lot of principles you can

learn from here how to love each other.

See here was a situation where there was a clash. It was a personality clash. That's no.1. Paul was a man of principles and doctrine. Mark has broken the principle. That principle is 'you say it you do it'. He said it but he did not do it. Paul did not want this kind of inconsistency in the ministry. He had a point. Barnabas was a guy who was an encourager if you give him a chance. Now here you see their characters were clashing. Second, it was a clash over the issue and the issue was Mark. That was no.2. Then no.3. There was a clash of principles also. Barnabas's principle is based on his understanding of being an encourager. Paul's principle was based on his understanding on doctrine. So there was not just one clash. There were three clashes. Now Barnabas could have also been learning on his relationship with Mark. Sometimes when people cannot love each other, it could be due to personality. They cannot see as the other person sees. The moment you start quarreling, you are saying I don't see the way you are seeing. It's not easy to try to put yourself in the other person's shoes but God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit has the ability to get into your shoes and see as you see. It is a skill to be able to see as the other person sees. Sometimes if you are in a middle position, if you are the middleman, it's easy to see both sides. But when you are involved it's not as easy. So they were quarreling over a personality, quarreling over a subject. Actually the quarrel is over the subject and they were quarrelling over different course of action. Barnabas says to continue taking Mark. Paul says don't take him. So what did they do? The bible tells us that in verse 39, "*And Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus but Paul chose Silas and departed to Syria.*" They took two different directions. They split and they went two different ways. Why did Barnabas take Mark to Cyprus? He was revising with Mark the whole journey. Taking him through all the hardship that he did not want to face. That is Barnabas. He makes sure you go over the same areas that you failed until you overcome. Paul did not want anything to do with that. He went on to fresh ground that is Syria. Nothing is mentioned after that about Barnabas.

From that incident we see a few things here, that they kept their disagreement to the issue. See their personalities are different. But they never ever bring it into the realm of the personality. They kept it to the issue. The issue was to take Mark or not to take Mark. Sometimes when people quarrel, they begin to take it out of the issue and bring it to the personality. When people are quarrelling

instead of keeping to the issue, let say they disagree on predestination or free will, so they quarrel over the doctrine. Sometimes they quarrel so hard that they can go off and say that guy is proud. Now what is happening here? They have taken it out of the issue and taken it to involve personality to form a conclusion about the other person. Or the other person could come out and say, that guy is a deceiver or that guy is a snake. And I find that people who are the worst at relationship are those who jump at concluding on another person's personality. They are very fast to conclude. These are the people who have a difficult time loving others and who also others find hard to love. These are the people who, once they quarreled they are forever separated. They never want to see the other person's face anymore. When you meet that person in the street, you quickly turn the other side. These are the people who write off others. You are not obeying the bible that says love each other with the love of God. What is the key here? Keep to the issue. That is where we come out with this phrase, 'you can disagree without being disagreeable'. In other words, you can agree to disagree. Now you cannot do that with essential doctrines. You cannot go to a Jehovah Witness and say never mind, lets just all go into the same boat. There are essential doctrines that the bible tells you don't even entertain people who run down Jesus Christ. In fact in the epistle of John, it says don't even eat lunch with that person. Now there are certain standard in the bible that says about heretics and people who are against the gospel of Jesus. You don't encourage them. But there is certain non-essential doctrine, for example it's not very important whether you believe you are going to be rapture before the tribulation or half way through the tribulation. Not that important for you so that you won't have to hate each other. Or for example, in ministry, whether to lay hands this way or lay hands that way. There is nothing to quarrel about. We need to develop a great degree of tolerance.