



Acts 9:26-30

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

29 He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him.

30 When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Special Music - I Won't Let Go - Rascal Flatts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBpDRor5oCw>

Fox News

RITZVILLE, Wash. – When stage 4 cancer stood in the way of farmer Larry Yockey reaping his wheat harvest for the first time in 50 years, dozens of his fellow farmers stepped up to save his crop.

Yockey is a 64-year-old fourth-generation farmer, working the same land in Ritzville, Washington, as his father and grandfather. He said his wheat crop accounts for nearly 100% of his income, and harvesting is usually a job that he does by himself.

In February, doctors diagnosed Yockey with melanoma, which has spread to his bones. That contributed to a broken hip and broken ribs, reducing the amount of time he can spend working in his fields and how much he can lift. For the first time in decades, Yockey feared that he would not be able to handle the harvest.

After he shared his concern with neighbors, they told him not to worry about it, and he assumed they were organizing some help. But last weekend, dozens of vehicles pulled up to his farm, along with farmers ready run the machines and work the fields.

Working together, they completed three weeks' worth of harvesting in about eight hours.

Without the help, Yockey says, “it would have been a mess,” leaving his crop vulnerable to wind and rain damage.

Miles Pfaff, one of the farmers who pitched in, said that “harvest bees” like this are rare and that it is not the sort of help a farmer would ask for or hope to need.

Pfaff also said the help went beyond fellow farmers. The local fire department and mechanics volunteered their time, while folks who weren’t working the fields brought food and drinks.

The scale of the operation reminded Yockey of the way he sees other communities come together after natural disasters. The people who helped with his harvest say they do not want to be thanked, but “ ‘thank you’ really doesn’t even do justice here,” he said.

Who is Barnabas?

1. First mention of Barnabas in the New Testament

a. Acts 4:32-37

32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.

33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all.

34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them

35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

36 For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus.

37 He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

b. Actual name was Joseph and he was originally from Cyprus

c. The apostles gave him the nickname Barnabas (Son of Encouragement)

d. He was a Levite, the tribe serving as priests for the Jews

e. He Lived and worked with the apostles in Jerusalem

f. Apostles held him up as an example because he had sold his land and brought the money to the apostles.

- g. We can justifiably see how Barnabas has extreme amount of street cred with the apostles. He has their ear.**

Paul's Situation

- 1. Let's take a minute and take a close look at Act 9:26**

When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

- a. When he came to Jerusalem**
 - i. Why would Paul want to do this?**
 - ii. He was sent on a mission to persecute and capture followers of "The Way" and bring them back to Jerusalem**
 - iii. Instead, he comes back empty handed and now professes to be a follower of "The Way"**
 - iv. Several divisions of Jews (think denominations)**
 - 1. Pharisees and Sadducees**
 - 2. Hebrew (Aramaic) and Hellenistic (Greek)**
 - 3. The Way (Christian)**
 - a. This is now a legitimate group**
 - b. This is well after Pentecost, which we read about in Acts 2, where 3000 people were baptized.**
- b. Paul must have been a pressing desire to align himself with the apostles.**

- i. He needed their instruction and input
 - ii. He needed their resources
 - iii. He needed their support.
 - iv. He needed their blessing
 - v. He knew that without these things, his commission of taking the message of Christ to the Gentiles and the Jews would probably fail.
 - vi. It should also be noted that he was used to receiving authority from those in charge. The Jewish religious leaders had given him papers and resources to persecute and capture Christians. There is a good chance that he felt that he needed the apostles to do something similar for him and his new mission.
- c. Paul finds himself in a very awkward position
 - i. **he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.**
 - ii. The Bible doesn't really talk about the other side of that fence where he has managed to burn his bridges and made enemies of the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem that had sent him on his mission to Damascus.
 - iii. He is a man that is unwelcome among the Jewish elite and also unwelcome among the Christians that he truly wants to embrace.

- iv. He is facing an uphill battle that few new Christians ever face.
- v. How do you prove that you are changed man when you can't even get anyone to talk with you?

Enter Barnabas

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

1. We don't know if Paul approached Barnabas or if Barnabas approached Paul
 - a. We can see that Paul isn't making any headway with the apostles but it is common knowledge that Barnabas has their ear so he may have reached out to him in hopes of gaining some support.
 - b. We can also appreciate that Barnabas probably knew of Paul's dilemma and he may have reached out to him to see if he could help. After all, he was "The son of encouragement."
2. Barnabas teaches the apostles a lesson in grace.
 - a. He brings Paul before them even though they have already rejected him
 - b. He doesn't ask permission to do that.
 - c. He speaks for Paul, explaining Paul's conversion experience, how Jesus spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus.

- d. He also tells them how Paul **preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus** while he was in Damascus
 - e. He does this because the apostles are not willing to listen to Paul himself. But they will listen to Barnabas. They respect Barnabas. Barnabas has earned their trust.
3. Barnabas is convincing because:
- a. **28 Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.**
 - b. Notice how Paul gets right to work
 - c. Notice also that Paul is free to move about the city once he gets things straight with the apostles.

Paul sent to Tarsus

1. Paul, in his zeal manages to get crossways in a debate with a group of Hellenistic Jews and they try to kill him
2. His newfound Christian friends in Jerusalem send him to his hometown of Tarsus to protect him.
3. This becomes important because Barnabas is sent by the Apostles to Antioch and when Barnabas becomes overwhelmed by the work in Antioch, he goes to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him back to help with the work in Antioch, which is the true beginning of Paul's ministry.

Standing in the Gap

- 1. We hear messages that tell us how important it is for us to stand in the gap for those who are less fortunate than us. That we need to:**
 - a. Feed the hungry**
 - b. Stand with the helpless**
 - c. Lift the broken**
 - d. Visit the sick**
 - e. Offer shelter to those in need of shelter**
 - f. Make a difference in the lives around us.**

- 2. But again, I ask you to turn it around because these messages are about strategic points in Paul's life that helped shape his ministry. What lessons can we learn from Paul?**
 - a. We need to learn to graciously allow people to stand in the gap for us**
 - b. We need to allow ourselves to be lifted**
 - c. We need to humble ourselves before God and in the presence of others**
 - d. We need to understand that God uses other people in our lives to create an environment that is conducive to our growth.**
 - e. That is so counter intuitive to us.**
 - i. Pride often gets in our way**
 - ii. We think that it is weak to ask for help**

**1. Remember in our story about farmer Rockey where:
“Miles Pfaff, one of the farmers who pitched in,
said that “harvest bees” like this are rare and
that it is not the sort of help a farmer would ask
for or hope to need.”**

**iii. But in truth, there comes a time in each of our lives where
we need to allow others to speak into us or help carry our
burdens.**

**3. In those times where we can't seem to get our grip, can't seem to move
forward**

a. We either hang onto our pride and let our fields rot

**b. Or we allow God to use the people in our lives to lift us up and
help us in our times of need.**

**c. We need to remember that it is not only a joy to serve others but
that others find joy in serving and helping us.**

4. Jesus is the ultimate example of standing in the gap.

**a. He did so by becoming the sacrifice for our sins so that we can
have a relationship with our Heavenly Father.**

**b. If we follow His example then we will stand in the gap for each
other, as He did for us.**

Y'all probably know this story that was posted by Leno Rios the other day Facebook in Everybody is Somebody in Fort Stockton, TX. But I want to read it to you anyway.

35 Yrs ago today my 3 yr old little brother, Luis Ramon Levario, would endure a 13 hour liver transplant in Dallas, Texas that thankfully would grant him an additional 17 yrs of life on earth. As the picture of all the Newspaper headlines across all of Texas indicate, none of this would ever have been possible if it had not been for the historic fund raising and charitable acts of many in the beautiful City of Fort Stockton, Texas. \$70,000 was deemed inconceivable for such a small community but as one kind lady, Judy Leverett, wrote "Money seems so unimportant when you compare it to a life and everyone can relate to a child who will not live without these funds being raised". This grand feat was achieved through benefit dances, chili bowl sales, tamale sales, bake goods sales, town bazaar/swap sales, garage sales but mostly through the private donations of generous individuals....the miracle happened. In a time where there is a need for communities to unite, come together in peace and prayer, I just wanted thank all the citizens of Fort Stockton who contributed in some way and all the prayers then – it was a true sense of community effort and proof that alone we can achieve many things but as a community we can conquer the unachievable. A very special thanks from my family to Connie Villareal, a teacher, who spearheaded so many events (if you know her give her a

huge hug from me) and to Cynthia Baiza of the Pecos County MHMR. Our deepest gratitude to the residents of Fort Stockton. God Bless.

The people of Fort Stockton understand the meaning of community more than most other cities. There is an “I’ve got your back” attitude here that goes beyond just words. We know how to “Stand in the Gap.” But we do have to remind ourselves that the fruit of our support may not be noticeable for many, many years. I’m pretty sure Barnabas did not realize how big of an effect his efforts of standing in the gap for Paul would have on the spreading of the Gospel around the world.

Let us praise God that we can stand in the gap for our neighbors and that we can love and appreciate those same neighbors when they stand in gap for us.

AMEN.