
The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Comparing Ourselves with Ourselves

by Tim Nichols

In every generation, each individual life, in every particular congregation of God’s people there is a need to recall that our trustworthy standard is ancient. When questions arise and when answers are sought we have that standard to which we can and love to turn – the holy and inspired Scriptures. While we live in an every-changing world with ever-mutating values, claims, and yardsticks, the Scriptures remain our guide and it is reasonable to allow the changing times to swirl around us, overtake us and pass us by.

Anything and anyone taking the place of our true touchstone is out of place. Anyone who makes anything else his measure of right and wrong goes to the wrong source. All truth that has come down to this present generation has come packaged in the Bible. If journals, lectureships, faithful writers, faithful preachers, commentators, and others have helped us to find it there, then we are grateful. It comes to us, however, from the Scriptures when it comes to us at all.

Paul wrote of a category of brethren who “commend themselves” in foolish elitism. These seem to have collectively drawn their strength, approval, and authority from one another rather than from God’s revealed truth. They remind us of the Pharisees who had the idea that they, themselves, were the measure of what men ought to believe about Jesus Christ (John 7:48). The danger is always present for men to see some authority in their collective action and agreement. We’ve watched men work very hard to convince other men that certain things are true – and then point to the consensus, or even the unanimity, as evidence that it is true. Once this has been accomplished it becomes easier to compound the error by pointing others to the consensus and bypassing proof, argument, evidence, - and Scripture. Within such groups are men who would never be willing to individually stand up and personally claim to have the infallibility that they grant to their group. The man within the group who would not even consider standing up and commending himself, personally, is often prepared to heap unlimited commendation upon the band of men of which he is a part. Church councils may well be made of men who are individually quite humble, but collectively arrogant and presumptuous. They are not wise and Paul reminds us of their lack of wisdom. He did not want to be a part of such a category of brethren and neither should we.

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise (II Cor. 10:12).

The principle holds true for both the insider who counts himself one of the elite circle and for the outsider who must decide whether or not to accept the claims made by it. So the “group” might be composed of men long dead, men recently gone home to be with the Lord, men with academic degrees, men with little education, “conservative” men, “liberal” men, men yet in their prime, or men soon to pass from this world.

While we have immense respect and admiration for men in all of these categories (and others we failed to mention) we must always keep before us the one and only God-breathed measure of right and wrong and of truth and fallacy.

When I compare my behavior with others and say, “Hey, I’m not doing so badly compared to them!”; we are measuring ourselves by ourselves. When I suggest to you that some brother is guilty of some wrong thing because a great many of us feel that this is so (without reasons beyond this fact), then we measure ourselves by ourselves. God is not going to compare you, measure you, - judge you, using your brethren, the world, or specific brethren, as His standard. The fact that you commended yourself, or that you commended that group of which you were a part, - will carry no weight. Let’s not compare ourselves among ourselves or measure with the wrong scales.



Barnabas: He was a Good Man

by Mike Willis

Men constantly are writing biographies about the great deeds which someone has done. A browsing of the biographical section of the library will expose a person to many biographies, sometimes extending into multiple volumes, about men unknown to us. The Holy Spirit summarized the life of Barnabas in these few words: “For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith” (Acts 11:24). That is a good tribute for a life well lived.

Who Was Barnabas?

Barnabas is first introduced to us in Acts 4:36-37 when he sold a piece of property and brought the money received from it and laid it at the apostles’ feet for distribution among the poor. Later, Barnabas is mentioned as the man who introduced Saul of Tarsus to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). When news that the church at Antioch was preaching to Grecians was received, the apostles were concerned enough to send Barnabas to Antioch to check out the situation. Barnabas was so well received at Antioch that, when the church decided to send money to relieve the destitute in Judea, he was one of the men selected to deliver the funds to the elders at the various churches in Judea. The Holy Spirit set Barnabas apart with Saul to go on the first missionary journey in Acts 13. He participated in the so-called Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) and later went on a missionary journey with John Mark (Acts 15:37-39). We know much more about Paul than Barnabas, but we do know enough to see some lessons from his life.

to be continued

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16