

MAXIMUM IMPACT IN OUR WORLD

December 13, 2009

SERMON TITLE- ACTS-traordinary: God's Middle Men

Acts 9:10-31

NOTES BY BILLY GROSS

A survey of the powerful redemption/transformation of Saul (Paul) . . .

ACTS-traordinary: God's Middle Men (Ananias & Barnabas)

Keith highlighted the significant "middle man" roles that Ananias and Barnabas played in Paul's life, accenting that God delights to work through ordinary, behind-the-scenes people to influence others and further His kingdom in this world.

Edward Kimble was an ordinary shoe salesman, but also a faithful follower of Jesus. He took initiative one day to share his faith with a co-worker who came to faith in Christ. That co-worker was Dwight L. Moody, one of the greatest evangelists of the 20th century. In his wake, were many people, prominent and obscure, who influenced others for Christ . . . FB Myer – Wilbur Chapman – Billy Sunday – Mordecai Ham, who had a primary influence on BILLY GRAHAM. What a legacy of faithful "middle men".

Ananias was instrumental in establishing Saul's conversion:

- God told Ananias *specifically* who he was sending him to: "a man from Tarsus named Saul". Ananias knew this was the man who was attacking the church and imprisoning Christians.
- Ananias *willfully, obediently, trustingly* did as the Lord asked, and went to visit Saul. Yes, he was afraid, but his love and devotion to Jesus were greater than his fear.
- He greeted Saul . . . "**My brother Saul . . .**" Powerful words of love, forgiveness, acceptance – that further deepened the conversion of Saul's heart. Those words confirmed the reality of his transformation from Saul the persecutor to Paul, ambassador for Jesus.

Barnabas was instrumental in establishing Paul's ministry:

- Unlike Ananias, the apostles in Jerusalem were struggling (in their doubt and fear) to accept Paul.
- But Barnabas was willing to put his own reputation on the line and stand with Paul, vouching for his conversion and calling.
- Acts 11: 24 – Insight to this middle man, Barnabas:
 - o "Full of the Holy Spirit" – God's work through us is always by **His** Spirit and not

of our **own** resourcefulness.

- o “Full of faith” – but we must participate with God's Spirit through faith and obedience. This is our part.
- o “a good man” – a man of character; full of the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Barnabas was willing to take risks to support others (here with Paul and later with John Mark)
 - He had an eye (of faith) for the potential in others. He believed in who people could be. He was known as the “son of **encouragement**”.
- o We often see others with eyes of judgment and criticism, typically because of our own wounds and insecurities. Our own healing enables us to believe more freely in others.
 - He could see with these eyes of faith in others, even when they had failed (like with John Mark – Acts 15: 36-41)

May we be such middle men and women, who can believe in the potential of others, encourage them, come alongside them, even risk our own reputations for them, and thus be channels of the grace of God in their lives.

Reflections:

1. Are there people in your circle of influence that you see with judgment and doubt? Pray that God would give you Barnabas eyes of encouragement to see and believe in their potential.
2. Are their people in your “sphere” that are under the scrutiny of others? Can you come alongside them and stand with them? What do you risk if you do so?
3. Are you carrying personal wounds of rejection, failure, or inadequacy that block your heart from supporting others? Pray for God's revelation and healing in these things. Perhaps you need to ask some others to pray with you around these hurts.

Billy