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HIGHEST**

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THE SPIRIT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

I had a hero when I was young. He was a leader in the church in Motherwell, Scotland where I grew up. His name was **Jimmy Wardrope**. He was one of the original builders of the church, was part of the diaconate for many years, and was an important businessman in the area. He was greatly respected by people in the church and in the community. I respected him almost as much as my dad. When he passed away, my dad (who knew him for many years and served with him on the diaconate of the church) was asked to write his epitaph. My dad quoted from **Acts 11:24** **“He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.”** What a tremendous epitaph for any Christian. Of course, this was originally written about another one of my heroes of the faith. His name was **BARNABAS**...and we first read about him in **Acts 4:32-37**

So, who was this man BARNABAS? What kind of spirit did this man have? We read about it in **Acts 4:36**. **“Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement)”**. **THE SPIRIT OF ENCOURAGEMENT** seemed to run through his life and it ran through the early church like an epidemic. Everyone seemed to catch it – and he was one of the major carriers!! He was the Super Spreader of this new religion.

How powerful is the spirit of encouragement? In the fourth chapter of the book of **Job** in the Old Testament we read about one of Job's discouraging friends **Eliphaz** speaks about God's faithful servant Job – whose faith in God was tested more than most. He says about Job in verse 4 of J.B. Moffat's translation **“Your words have kept men on their feet”**

Encouragement keeps us standing up and moving ahead – it's like the wind beneath our wings. It's amazing how a small word of encouragement - given especially when we are going through tough times – can go a LONG way!! Barnabas was key to the growth of the early church because he was an encourager. He is not given another title such as Apostle, Elder etc. What he brought to the table was as equally important as Paul or Peter's teaching...and that was a spirit of encouragement. **Why is this so important. Just as we can't**

survive without air, water, food, and sleep...so a church cannot remain healthy without that spirit of encouragement

It takes a moment to bring someone down with a negative word or comment - but you can build someone up by a simple word of encouragement!! I want to encourage you to be an encourager! Instead of seeing the negative about people...focusing on their faults and weaknesses...look for the positive...and speak encouraging words!! My prayer is that this church will be like that "Home On The Range" Gene Autry sung about...

'WHERE NEVER IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING WORD!!'