

## A Biography of St. Barnabas

The first reference to Barnabas in Scripture is Acts 4:35-37. His given name was Joseph and he was a Levite from Cyprus. It's not known when he became a believer, but we are told that following his conversion, he sold his land and gave the proceeds to the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36). Due to this gesture of generosity, he was nicknamed Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement" by the apostles.

Acts presents Barnabas as a model of integrity and character, calling him a good man (Acts 11:24), a prophet and teacher (13:1), an apostle (14:14) and one through whom God worked miracles (15:12). He was known for seeking out and assisting others, especially those on the margins. Instead of ostracizing them, Barnabas welcomed them warmly. Barnabas was also the first to believe Saul had truly been converted (9:27). In the face of many objections, he offered Saul/Paul the chance to co-lead a new church in Antioch, which grew under their joint leadership.

Barnabas was also known for his missionary work, particularly with new converts, and especially amongst the Gentiles. He spoke at the Jerusalem Council on their behalf, asserting that God welcomed Jews and Gentiles alike into his kingdom. Barnabas attested to the fact that they, like himself and other Jewish converts, believed in the radical new faith in Jesus Christ and saw their conversion as evidence of the work and grace of God.

It is not clear from Scripture what became of Barnabas. Many believe he was martyred in Cyprus, where he did much of his work later in his ministry. However, what is known is that he had a significant impact on the formation of the early church. The annual Feast of St. Barnabas is June 11 and he is the patron of Cyprus, Antioch, against hailstorms, and invoked as peacemaker.