



### St. Barnabas.

"Thou hast with Paul in labours stood,  
Blest bond of brotherhood!  
One in the mandate sent from high,  
And one in charity."

Among the many worshippers who frequented the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, there was one who was distinguished by his devotional manner, and regular attendance on the worship of God. He was not indeed a native of Judea, although he was of the tribe of Levi, but he was born in Cyprus, to which island his forefathers had fled in order to escape the troubles occasioned by Antiochus Epiphanes, the cruel king of Syria. Daily might he be seen bending his steps towards that holy place where God had from of old recorded His Name, and returning with a calm and cheerful brow. He was conscious that he had performed his duty to the Lord, and he returned with an humble trust

that his services had been graciously accepted. This youth was no other than that servant of God who was called Joses, and afterwards Barnabas.

At the period to which I am now referring he was a fellow student with Saul, afterwards called Paul, who, as he himself informs us, was instructed by a learned doctor of the law, named Gamaliel.\* While the heart of Saul remained hardened against the doctrines which were now beginning to be preached by our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, Barnabas felt that it was his duty to listen to them; and again and again would he withdraw from the company of his fellow students for the purpose of drawing near to JESUS, and witnessing the wonderful miracles which He performed. It was not likely that so devout and so humble a person as St. Barnabas was, would long resist the convictions which the miracles of JESUS CHRIST were sure to carry with them to a mind which was sincerely desirous of receiving the truth, and whose earnest prayer was that he might be led in the way to everlasting life. Thus every miracle which our LORD

\* Acts xxii. 3.

performed, awakened a fresh feeling of assurance that He was the Son of God, and drew the heart of His youthful follower closer to Himself. No sooner was St. Barnabas persuaded that JESUS was indeed a Teacher sent from God, than he resolved to devote himself to his Divine Master, and to enrol himself among His followers. He did not, however, remain satisfied with the devotion of himself to the service of his LORD, but he immediately informed his sister Mary that he had found the MESSIAS whom the Jews were then anxiously expecting; and she, together with her son Mark, was persuaded to listen to the new doctrine; and they both immediately afterwards became true and faithful followers of our LORD. It was in her house that JESUS oftentimes met His disciples, and in the same place the members of the early Church used to assemble after their LORD's ascension into heaven.

We may form some idea of the amiable character of St. Barnabas, from the fact of his being called "The son of consolation," a name which is said to have been given to him, either because he had great skill in soothing and raising up troubled minds, or

else because he liberally relieved the wants of those who were in distress. His liberality is particularly noticed by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles,\* where it is said that "Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation, a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet." Cyprus at that time was famed for its riches; and it is probable that the parents of St. Barnabas while living there had acquired riches, which their holy son devoted to the use of the Church.

The death of St. Stephen, which happened shortly after this liberal gift of St. Barnabas, caused the disciples of JESUS CHRIST to be dispersed far and wide; for they were as eagerly sought after by their enemies as if they had been wild beasts. They would not, indeed, through fear of death deny the religion which they professed, but they thought it would be for the benefit of the sacred cause in which they were engaged, if they could avoid persecution by lawful means. Thus they wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented,

\* Acts iv. 36, 37.

they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.\* During these hard and trying times, St. Barnabas had his full share of the afflictions which befel the faithful followers of the LORD. But he well knew that He in whom he had believed would reward him in heaven for any pains or sorrows which he had suffered on His account upon earth. Thus, moreover, were all the faithful servants of JESUS CHRIST supported, and have become to us "a great cloud of witnesses."† Nothing is related of St. Barnabas during this dispersion of the Christians, until he went to St. Paul after his wonderful conversion, and introduced him to the Apostles.

But while the Christians were thus scattered abroad, they were not forgetful of the importance of conveying to others a knowledge of heavenly truth: and therefore wherever they went the Gospel was spread. When numbers had thus been turned from idolatry to serve the living God at Antioch, the Church which was at Jerusalem determined to send St. Barnabas down to strengthen the new converts, and to confirm them in the faith of CHRIST. There he long exerted him-

\* Heb. xi. 37, 38.

† Heb. xii. 1.

self in the service of his Divine Master ; and there the disciples first received the name of Christians. We again find St. Barnabas busily engaged in collecting relief for the Church in Judea, and conveying the alms of the faithful at Antioch to the perishing Christians at Jerusalem. The time was now come when St. Barnabas was to be employed in the conversion of more distant heathen nations, to which service he and St. Paul were set apart by command of the HOLY GHOST. They commenced their extended ministry at the city of Seleucia, which was situated on the river Orontes, where that river empties itself into the Mediterranean sea, from whence they sailed to Cyprus, St. Barnabas' native country. Here wondering crowds listened to the preaching of the Apostles, and many wonderful miracles were performed in sight of all the people. It would take long to relate all that these two servants of God did, or to mention all the places to which they travelled. Sometimes they were cruelly treated ; and at Antioch in Pisidia, a city far distant from the Antioch which has before been mentioned, they were actually stoned by the very people who a short time before

believed that they were Jupiter and Mercury, two of the heathen gods!

At length, however, these companions separated, and pursued their way in different directions. St. Paul, taking Silas with him, visited the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, while St. Barnabas, accompanied by Mark, proceeded to Cyprus. This faithful servant of his LORD being desirous of spreading as far as possible those truths by which alone we can become wise unto salvation, was not contented to remain in Cyprus, but sailed to other places as the messenger of JESUS CHRIST. In the course of his travels he is said to have visited Rome, and to have been one of the first that made known the Christian faith in that city. The arrival of one who had been a personal attendant upon JESUS CHRIST while He was upon earth, caused a great concourse of people to assemble, and although when he addressed the people who were met together, his speech was laughed to scorn by the philosophers of those days, yet it made a deep impression upon the hearts and minds of those whose hearts were ready to receive the truth. "O ye Romans, give ear," said he; "the Son of God has appeared

in the country of Judea, promising eternal life to all that are willing to embrace it, and to lead their lives according to the will of the FATHER who sent Him. Wherefore, change your course of life, and turn from a worse to a better state; from things temporal to those that are eternal. Confess that there is only one God, who is in heaven: and whose world you unjustly possess before His righteous face. But if you amend and live according to His righteous laws, you shall be translated into another world, where you shall become immortal, and enjoy the unspeakable glories and happiness of that state. Whereas, if you persist in your infidelity, your souls, after your bodies perish, shall be cast into a place of flames, where they will be eternally tormented under the anguish of an unprofitable and too late repentance. For the present life is to every one the only space and season of repentance." With breathless anxiety the crowd listened to this plain, but awful speech. At first a deep silence prevails, each man looking at his neighbour with astonishment and alarm. By degrees, however, the silence was broken by many a hurried whisper, in which a determination to attend to the Apos-

tle's teaching was expressed. A little way off stood a band of solemn looking men, who were engaged in earnest discourse. These were the philosophers of Rome, who had been listening in scorn to the teaching of St. Barnabas. The truths which he had spoken found no place in their hearts; God's truth was to them folly; and being wise in their own conceits, God sent them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.\* Everything belonging to the religion of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST was so very different from what the philosophers considered to be proper, that in the hardness of their hearts they could not bring themselves to believe all that God had at sundry times, and in divers manners spoken. But our Apostle was not daunted by their sneers, nor checked in speaking to the people by the opposition which was raised against him by these proud and headstrong men. He knew in whom he had believed: he had seen the opposition which had been raised against his Master's discourses, and he was, moreover, cheered by the recollection of that memorable saying of his LORD: "In the world ye shall

\* 2 Thessalonians ii. 11.

have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."\*

St. Barnabas, however, did not long remain at Rome; he felt much interested in the people of Cyprus, and again returned to his native country. Here was the end of his journeyings, and here he was called to his rest; for here he was enrolled in THE NOBLE ARMY OF MARTYRS. On his return to Cyprus, he was unwearied in his endeavours to turn his heathen countrymen from worshipping dumb idols to serve the living God. His preaching was listened to by many; and again and again some might be seen returning from St. Barnabas with a fixed and steady determination to turn unto the Lord. Satan, however, did not like to see his servants taken away from him. He well knew that ere long his kingdom must give way, but he wished to preserve it as long as he could; and therefore stirred up all the evil passions of our corrupt nature in order to support his sway in the world. It was on this account that he caused some Jews from Syria to fall upon St. Barnabas as he was disputing in a synagogue. These men being full of fury

\* St. John xvi. 33.

were not in a fit state to be convinced of the error of their opinions: they would not even listen to the arguments of the holy man; and being unable to contradict the truth of what he said, they thought they should best silence him by shutting him up. They accordingly made a prisoner of him in the synagogue, and kept him in confinement till night, when they thought that no one would see the deed of violence on which they were bent, and that therefore no one would call them to account for it. They forgot that there was an eye ever upon them; that the darkness is no darkness with God, but the night is as clear as the day: that the darkness and light are both alike to Him.\* Although St. Barnabas was fully aware that he was in the hands of cruel enemies, he felt no fear. The hours of his confinement passed pleasantly along, because he knew that whatever his enemies might do, he was under the sure protection of One who would never leave him nor forsake him. The recollection of his Divine Master gave him very great encouragement, and he looked forward to death with pleasure because then all his troubles would be ended,

\* Psalm cxxxix. 11.

and he would then enter into the joy of his LORD. When he was shut up from all his earthly friends, he had the joy and comfort of knowing that he still had the spiritual presence of a Friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

At length the shades of night began to spread around the lonely isle of Cyprus, and when a thick gloom had rested on the works of man, the servants of Satan began to stir abroad, being eagerly bent on accomplishing the deed on which they had previously resolved. They hurried to the synagogue, and quickly dragged their victim from his confinement. After torturing him with every painful torment that they could think of, they made him kneel down, and then stoned him to death!

It might have been supposed that when life was departed from the body they would have left their victim. But it was not so. When the spirit had fled they endeavoured to destroy the lifeless body, and accordingly threw it into a fire; but the flames seemed to have more pity than man, and refused to consume the mangled remains of the saint. There it lay, the flames burning with violence

around it, without doing it the least injury ! And when his cruel persecutors found that the elements would not minister to their vengeance, they left the scene of their murder in vexation and anger. John Mark, who had been a faithful friend of St. Barnabas, watched at a distance the murder of his kinsman, and when all was still, and the murderers had departed, he and a few other Christians, who were fondly attached to the martyr, carried off his body, and privately buried it in a cave not far distant from the place of his martyrdom. His friends deeply felt his loss, and bewailed with many tears the death of their dearly beloved companion : but in the midst of their sorrows they were comforted by the assurance that although he was removed from them, he was gone to that blessed place which his heavenly Master had prepared for him.

