



# Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

**—Proverbs 18:10**

## Paul's Fellow Workers

Paul rarely traveled alone. And while the names of his traveling companions are not as well-known as the names of the Apostles, they each have an interesting story.

**Barnabas** was a Jew of the tribe of Levi named Joseph. He got the nickname Barnabas, meaning “son of encouragement,” because of his generous deeds of charity (Acts 4:36–37) and his forgiving personality (Acts 15:36–40). When Paul was converted to Christ, Barnabas was the only one willing to take the risk to greet Paul, and introduced him to the brethren in Damascus (Acts 9:26–27). Barnabas later encouraged Paul to come from Tarsus to Antioch to work with the brethren there (Acts 11:25–26). Soon, both Barnabas and Saul preach the gospel in the surrounding cities (Acts 13:1–3). It is very interesting that on this first missionary journey Luke often lists Barnabas in first place. Whatever the significance of this order, Luke’s account soon focuses on Paul. Later in his epistles, Paul speaks of Barnabas’ efforts to preach and teach in affectionate terms (1 Cor. 9:6, Gal. 2:1, 9).

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**Timothy** is mentioned 26 times in the New Testament, and is generally considered to be Paul's closest traveling companion. He is listed with Paul in the opening to some of his epistles, probably delivered several of them, and is actually the addressee of two. Timothy was from Lystra, most likely the son of a Greek father and Jewish mother (Acts 16:1, 2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary journey, and continued with him throughout the rest of his travels, sometimes by the Apostle's side, sometimes on his own. Paul calls him, "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:17), "a servant of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:1), and "my fellow worker" (1 Thess. 3:2, Rom. 16:21).

**Titus** is mentioned 13 times in Paul's letters, though never in Acts. He was a Gentile convert to Christ, though unlike Timothy, he is never compelled to be circumcised (Gal. 2:1–3). Probably he was not going to be doing much preaching in Jewish areas. Paul calls Titus "my brother" (2 Cor. 2:13) and "fellow worker" (2 Cor. 8:23). Paul trusted him enough to leave him on the island of Crete to appoint elders in the various congregations (Titus 1:4–5).

**Silvanus**, also called Silas, was a Christian from Jerusalem (Acts 15:22, 32) who accompanied Paul and Timothy on the later missionary journeys (1 Thess. 1:1, 2 Thess. 1:1, 2 Cor. 1:19). He is later mentioned helping Peter as an amanuensis (1 Peter 5:12).

Paul identifies many other individuals as "**fellow workers**" who remain largely out of the spotlight, such as Prisca and Aquila (Rom. 16:3), Urbanus (Rom. 16:9), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Clement (Phil. 4:3), Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus (Col. 4:10–11), Philemon (Phm 1), Demas and Luke (Phm 24), and Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement (Phil. 4:2–3). He calls Tychicus a "fellow slave" (Col. 4:7) and Andronicus and Junia "fellow prisoners" (Rom. 16:7). And Paul mentions several others without necessarily discussing their role, such as Chloe's people (1 Cor. 1:11), Apollos (Acts 18:24–28), the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15), Phoebe (1 Cor. 16:1–2), and close to 50 other individuals.

This invites us to draw several conclusions:

**We stand on the shoulders of giants.** While Paul gets the attention as the Apostle to the Gentiles (and rightly so) Barnabas had a lot to do with encouraging him and pushing him. Luke's account doesn't give us enough information to be sure, but it is interesting to ponder what Paul would have been without Barnabas's companionship in those early years of ministry in Damascus, Antioch, Cyprus, and Asia Minor. His gospel came directly from God (Gal. 1:12) but his courage, devotion, love, manners, ways and means probably came from many who influenced him through the years. Even great preachers must pause to give credit to the parents and grandparents who imparted the faith (like Timothy's in 2 Tim. 1:5), wives who pushed them, older elders and preachers who molded them, and members who built up congregations and erected buildings long before preachers ever arrived.

**It takes all kinds.** Some of Paul's fellow workers were Jews, and some were Gentiles. Most were men, and more than a few were women. Some, like Timothy, were young (1 Tim. 4:12), and some were older. Some such as Prisca and Aquila were from the backwater "barbarian" lands near the Black Sea, and others like Apollos were highly educated scholars from cosmopolitan Alexandria. So many devoted and capable people were able to reach a diverse audience and spread the gospel. If the learning of Apollos sailed over one man's head, maybe the plain talk of Aquila, the unashamed concern of Chloe, or the kindness of Barnabas won him over.

**Everyone can help the spread of the gospel.** Are you the two talent man or the five talent man? The Paul or the Epaphroditus? It doesn't matter; God is glorified when you invest whatever you've got in the work of the Lord. Clearly, Paul could not have succeeded alone. He couldn't be everywhere at once, he couldn't respond to every need. He had to trust others, and there were many he could count on. Even in the smaller milieu of a single congregation, the work of the gospel would stall and crash without cooks, cleaners, helpers, callers, writers, photocopiers, prayer partners, encouragers, teachers, cutters and pasters, web designers. We are all fellow workers! —*John Guzzetta*