BARNABAS THE RISK TAKER

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Category: Observations

We all know the story of how Paul became a Christian and changed from being a persecutor of the Church into the Apostle of the Gentiles. However, like many things that we know well, we often donâ€™t stop to reflect on the implications.

Basically, Paul was a nasty piece of work. He was an extremist; a Jewish radical â€“ ready to kill other people for their faith. Think about the Taliban and you wonâ€™t be far away. This guy was well known and widely feared; itâ€™s no surprise that when Paul went to Jerusalem for the first time as a believer, the Apostles were worried about him. (Acts 9)

> *When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.*

Knowing what we know now, we might think that the disciples were being stupid, but they were really in fear for their life. Paul could just have been pretending to be a believer. If he managed to worm his way into the central group of disciples, he would have wiped out the Jesus movement in one go. It would have been a brilliant strategy â€“ and a pretty obvious one to try.

When Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles he was taking a big risk. At best, Paul was a new Christian; at worst he was a huge danger. But Barnabas took the risk and he introduced Paul to the apostles. Heâ€™d heard reports of Paulâ€™s conversion and was prepared to step out in faith. Of course, what he couldnâ€™t realise at the time was how much of a risk Paul was â€“ the church would never be the same once Paul got going.