



# I ♥ MY CITY

Part 4 • November 16, 2025 | Pastor Jason Smotherman

## LOOKING FOR SAUL

*ACTS 11:25–26 (NKJV)*

*Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek (look for) Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch."*

**The Hidden Ones:** There are "Saul's" in every city, church, and region.

Men and women who carry greatness on their lives but have been hidden in the shadows. The shadows are many. Some are self inflicted. Others are not. Everything from fear, insecurity, to sin. Others have been deemed as threats the status quo of broken church.

They've got oil (anointing for the work), but no opportunity. They've got a call, but no confirmation. They've got revelation, but no recognition. And if you're not careful, you'll think hidden means forgotten, but it doesn't. Hidden doesn't mean God said no. Hidden means God's still getting you ready.

By the time Barnabas went looking for Saul in Acts 11, some scholars state that it had been almost ten years since Saul's conversion on the Damascus road. Ten years!

Ten years since that blinding light, since he heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am the one you're persecuting." Ten years of silence. Ten years of obscurity. Ten years where heaven was shaping him while earth was overlooking him. Ten years of silence. Ten years with no pulpit, no crowd, no stage, no followers, no confirmed conversions, miracles, or letters. Ten years where nobody was calling his name. Ten years where the only voice he could hear was God's.

Think about that. Ten years: that's over 3,600 days of obscurity. That's over 86,000 hours of wondering, "Lord, what are You doing with my life?" Some of you can barely handle ten weeks of waiting: Saul endured ten years. Ten years of hearing about revival happening in Antioch: but not being there. Ten years of watching others get promoted while he sat in Tarsus, unseen and unknown. Ten years of preparation that nobody celebrated.

**But here's what I love, while Saul was hidden, heaven was busy.**

God was preparing a man named Barnabas to go find him. And after ten long years, the text says: *"Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul."*

**It means God had an appointed time for his reappearance and no amount of silence could cancel his calling.**

Some of you know what that feels like. You've been called, but you've been sitting. You've been anointed, but nobody's asked you to do anything. You've been waiting, not because you missed it, but because God's forming you in private before He reveals you in public.

Saul didn't rush the process. He painstakingly was being trained and transformed. Waiting sometimes means development, it can also mean disobedience. The waiting ends when God sends the release. Our world desperately needs the Spirit of Barnabas, so that we can release the Saul's of our generation.

### **POINT 1: BARNABAS SAW WHAT OTHERS IGNORED**

#### ***ACTS 9:26-27 (NKJV)***

*<sup>26</sup> And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.<sup>27</sup> But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*

When Saul first got saved, the church didn't want him. They were afraid. They said, "We don't trust him — he used to be the one killing us." But Barnabas stood up. Barnabas took him in. Barnabas said, "No, this man really met Jesus." **Barnabas saw what others ignored.** Because while the church was remembering Saul's mistakes, Barnabas was recognizing his miracle.

Becoming an echo chamber of what the enemy has done requires no faith, becoming an echo chamber of what God is doing requires faith. Barnabas acted with wisdom and patience. He waited for the honeymoon to be over, the process of sanctification to do its work, and then Barnabas stood with Saul. But after that moment, Saul goes silent again.

Galatians 1:16-22 tells us he went into Arabia for three years, not preaching, not traveling, just being trained by the Spirit of God. Then he comes back to Damascus and they try to kill him. He escapes in a basket. He goes to Jerusalem and they send him home to Tarsus. And he stays there for seven more years. Ten years of formation. Ten years of obscurity. Ten years of waiting for someone to call his name.

Sometimes the best thing God can do for your development is hide you. **Because, before He uses you, He's got to undo you. You must allow God to undo you, so he can move through you.** Before He trusts you to carry influence, He's got to make sure the old you won't rise up when the lights come on.

Barnabas saw a man who wasn't lost, he was in process. And somebody in this

room needs to hear this: **You're not behind. You're becoming.** Surrender and sanctification is a daily decision.

## **POINT 2: BARNABAS WENT WHERE OTHERS WOULDN'T**

### ***ACTS 11:25 (NKJV)***

*Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.*

Antioch was in revival. People were getting saved left and right. The Holy Ghost was moving. If it were some of us, we'd have stayed right there. But Barnabas must of said, "Revival isn't complete if Saul's still in hiding." So he leaves the fire to find the forgotten. You are going to get marching orders today.

Revival doesn't happen until it compels you to reach the forgotten. Revival isn't a stagnant stationary awakening. It's an explosion. You know right now, who is hiding in this community that has rejected the church, rejected the politics of religion, who God is going to call you to be a Barnabus to find the Saul's.

Tarsus was not a short trip, it was about 100 miles from Antioch. That's roughly a week's journey on foot. But Barnabas said, "It's worth the trip."

Because God will always send somebody to come find you when it's your time. You can't network your way into destiny, but God will work to get to you. And when it's God's time, He'll make sure someone leaves the crowd to come get you.

***That's what grace does. Grace will travel miles to find you.*** Grace will walk into your Tarsus (season of obscurity) and say, "It's time to come home." Grace seeks, searches, and finds us when we think we can't be found.

Some of you thought your life was over, but it's just your Barnabas season. Somebody's coming for you. Somebody's looking for you.

You've been in hiding long enough and God's about to pull you out.

## **POINT 3: BARNABAS BROUGHT SAUL INTO HIS PURPOSE**

### ***ACTS 11:26 (NKJV)***

*And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch."*

Don't miss this, Barnabas didn't just find Saul, he brought Saul. He didn't just identify the calling, he made room for it. He said, "You're not staying in Tarsus, your coming with me."

We need to normalize full cars again. GO GET THEM! The Bible says, and for a whole year they worked side by side. Barnabas gave Saul what no one else would give him, a chance. And the moment Saul stepped into that opportunity, the world changed.

Because hidden inside of Saul was Paul. Hidden inside of the man everyone avoided was the apostle who would write 2/3 of the New Testament. Hidden inside the years of waiting was a word that would reach the nations.

Don't despise your hidden season: it's proof that God's still writing. And don't

ignore the Saul's around you: the next Paul might be sitting in the shadows right now.

**A Call to Go Looking:** There are Saul's in our city, sitting in silence, waiting for someone to see what God already spoke. They're not lazy. They're not lost. They're in formation. They've been through hell. They've made mistakes. They've been misunderstood.

But when God says, "It's time," He'll always send a Barnabas who's willing to go find them. **Go looking.** Go looking in the places the church forgot. Go looking in the places that feel too far. Go looking for the ones who think they've been disqualified.

Because when you find your Saul, you might just unlock your Paul. And when you pull someone out of hiding, you partner with heaven's plan. Barnabas went looking and history was changed. Who are you willing to go looking for?

**Your Tarsus Is Temporary:** Some of you in this room today, you are Saul. You've had the encounter, you've had the calling, but lately, it's been quiet. Heaven's been speaking, but people haven't been calling. You've been wondering, "God, did I miss it? Did I mess up too bad? Did You change Your mind about me?"

God doesn't change His mind about His call. He might hide you, but He'll never forsake you. He might delay your platform, but He never cancels your purpose.

**Your Tarsus is not punishment, it's preparation. He's been building the character to match your calling.** He's been stripping pride, healing wounds, reshaping motives, teaching you to trust His timing.

You thought you were forgotten, but God's been forming you. And I hear the Lord saying right now, I am your Barnabas. Your name is being called. You're about to recognize what's on your life. There's about to open a door you thought was sealed shut. But before that happens, you've got to surrender this season. You've got to lift your hands and say, "God, I'll stay hidden until You call me out. I'll wait until You send my Barnabas. I won't rush what You're building in me."

Because when you come out of Tarsus, you won't come out the same. You'll come out as Paul full of revelation, full of authority, and ready for assignment.

If you've felt overlooked, underused, or forgotten If you've been in the shadows wondering if your time is ever coming I want you to step out and come to this altar. Because the same God who sent Barnabas to Saul is about to meet you right here.

**He's reminding you that He still knows your name. He still remembers what He spoke over your life.** And even in the silence, He's been shaping you for the stage He's about to give you.

Your Tarsus was temporary. Your Barnabas is coming. And your Paul season is next.