



# **Barnabas Encourages the Church**

**Acts 9:26-28; 11:21-26; 14:19-23**

Lieutenant Ruby Starlight sank down on a ledge and stared out the porthole into the blackness of outer space. Captain Yago had asked the Commander to send someone to visit his home planet and explain about faith in Jesus to his people. The Commander chose Ruby. "Those Pharisees are scary. Planet Pharis is the last place I want to go alone," she muttered to herself.

Suddenly, the computer's voice boomed over the deck. "Visitor arriving! Visitor arriving! In 5-4-3-2-1!" Ruby rushed into the teleport room just as Ambassador Nofutu appeared.

"Merry Easter! Happy Christmas, Lieutenant Ruby! Boogah, boogah, Kong-a-loosh!" Nofutu waved his arms in the air and then swooped Ruby up into a big hug.

Ruby gasped for breath. "Ambassador Nofutu! What are you doing here?"

"I heard you were feeling sad, so I am here to cheer you up," Nofutu announced.

"Thanks, but I've got orders to go to Planet Pharis. I don't think anyone could cheer me up."

Nofutu flopped down on the floor beside her. "Aw, then I will be sad with you." He leaned forward and rested his chin in his hands. After a few minutes, he jumped up and ran to the teleport. "Oh, I almost forgot! I brought you something." He presented a toy bus and a plastic dinosaur. "Here! His name is Barney!"

Ruby held one toy in each hand. "Uh...thanks? What are these?"

"They are to encourage you to be the best you can be!" Nofutu cheered.

Ruby put the dinosaur figure inside the bus. "How are these toys going to encourage me?"

Nofutu clapped. "I read in the Bible that Saul was encouraged by a bus full of Barney."

Ruby looked down at the toys and then up at Nofutu. "Are you sure?"

"No, but thanks for asking! Let's check!" Nofutu grabbed the Bible out of its box and opened to Acts 9. "Aha! Here it is! When Saul first became a follower of Jesus, the other disciples were afraid of him. They did not believe Saul had really changed. Read what's next!"

Ruby took the Bible and read the passage, "It says Barnabas brought Saul to the apostles."

**Nofutu snatched the dinosaur out of the bus and held them both up. "See! Barney. Bus. Barney-bus!"**

**Ruby tried not to laugh. "Oh no, Nofutu. Barnabas was a man, not a toy."**

**Nofutu shook the toys. "I beg your pardon, there are two toys."**

**"But, Barnabas was one man, a very godly man who encouraged Saul," Ruby explained. "He told the others how God changed Saul's heart to follow Jesus."**

**Nofutu dropped the toys on the desk. "Did they invite Saul to stay?"**

**"Yes! Saul stayed and led a great number of people to follow Jesus."**

**Nofutu pulled two brightly colored cheerleader pom-poms from one of his large coat pockets and shook them as he jumped up and down. "Saul, Saul, he's our man. If he can't do it no one can, go Saul!"**

**"You know, Barnabas was kind of like a cheerleader," Ruby pondered.**

**Nofutu held up the pom-poms. "You mean he had pom-poms like these?"**

**"I mean, he encouraged Saul. He encouraged everyone who followed Jesus. That's why they sent him to visit Antioch."**

**"Did he bring his pom-poms?" Nofutu asked, shaking the pom-poms in her face.**

**Ruby laughed. "I don't think so." She picked up the remote control. "Let's check the Virtual Bible to be sure."**

**Nofutu reached for the remote. "Ooh, let me do the beepity-boops!" Nofutu tapped the buttons and watched as the words from Acts appeared on the screen. He read out loud, "When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts."**

**Ruby pointed at the screen. "See that? Once again Barnabas was encouraging others."**

**"What did Barney do next?" Nofutu asked.**

**"He went to find Saul and brought him to Antioch. They stayed in Antioch for a year and encouraged the new church. That's where they first got the name Christians."**

**"Hooray! They are Christians!" Nofutu shook his pom-poms. "What does Christian mean?"**

**"Well, a Christian is someone who believes in Jesus and follows Him," explained Ruby.**

**"Where did they follow Him?" Nofutu asked.**

**"The Holy Spirit led them to preach His Word in many cities, like Lystra and Iconium and Derbe. Saul and Barnabas started many churches in many places. On their way back to**

**Antioch, they went back to visit and encourage the people in those churches,” Ruby said.**

**"What a guy! I want to be a cheerleader just like Barnabas!" Nofutu proclaimed.**

**"I think you already are. You certainly cheered me up," said Ruby, smiling at her friend.**

**Nofutu turned and looked straight at her. "So, you are no longer nervous about going to the scariest planet in the galaxy all by yourself?"**

**Ruby shrugged. "Well, no. I'm still worried about that."**

**Nofutu threw his arm around her shoulders. "Then, I will go with you and encourage you!"**

**She stared at Nofutu. "What? You will? No, I couldn't ask you to do that."**

**"You don't have to ask; I want to. I am your friend and friends are faithful to the end!" Nofutu said, with a giant grin.**

**Ruby looked confused. "I don't know what to say."**

**"Say what Barney would say!" Nofutu suggested, beginning to dance once again. "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever!"**

**Ruby smiled broadly. "Nofutu! You finally got it right!"**

**"Thanks for the encouragement!" Nofutu jumped into the teleport and waved for Ruby to follow. "Let's go!"**

**Lieutenant Ruby Starlight stepped into the tube. Within moments, the door slid into place and the computer announced, "Teleporting to Planet Pharis! In 5-4-3-2-1!"**