
5. Paul's Second Journey

Acts 15:36-16:40

Acts 15:36-40

³⁶ And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ³⁷ Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Disagreement splits friends

Outline of Events

Saul and Barnabas spent a lot of time in ministry together. Remember we discussed a few weeks ago Barnabas and how much of a role he played in Saul's acceptance into the early church.

- We first met Barnabas in Acts 4
- His name means Son of Encouragement
- He was one of the early converts in Jerusalem
- He sold land that belonged to him and offered it to the Apostles to help the needs of the poor.
- When Stephen was stoned to death many scattered – fulfilling the command to go into all of the world
- Acts 11 tells us that a great number of people came to the Lord in Antioch of Syria and the report of this came back to the Apostles in Jerusalem so they sent Barnabas up to them to encourage and verify their doctrine.
- Barnabas went to Tarsus and found Saul and brought him back to Antioch
- They stayed there for a year with the new church at Antioch of Syria.
- Acts 11 - The church in Antioch of Syria wanted to send a gift to Jerusalem in anticipation of a famine. They sent Saul and Barnabas to deliver it.
- Acts 12:12 Peter is thrown in prison (in Jerusalem) and when the angel releases him he immediately goes to Mary (the mother of John Mark) house. This might show a connection between Peter and John Mark – i.e. friends.
- Acts 12:25 Saul and Barnabas return to Antioch – bringing with them John Mark.
- Acts 13 Saul and Barnabas (With John Mark) sail to Cyprus and preached the word throughout the island of Cyprus.

Acts 13:13

Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,

- Paul and Barnabas finish the first missionary journey and return to Antioch. There they stayed for some time (Acts 14:38), again with the church at Antioch in Syria.
- Some men from Judea came up to Antioch and told the Gentiles there that they needed to be circumcised to be faithful to the Gospel.
- The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss this with the apostles. There was much discussion until the apostle James speaks (Acts 15:13-21) suggesting that they tell the Gentiles to abstain from ritualistic idolatry and sexual immorality.
- The Apostles send Paul, Barnabas, and Silas back to Antioch with this proclamation (Acts 15:23-29)
- Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch again for some time.
- Paul and Barnabas separate over John Mark
- Barnabas chooses John Mark and returns to Cyprus (His homeland) and shares the Gospel and strengthens the churches
- Paul and Silas take the land route to Derby & Lystra and Iconium from their first journey. It would seem as if Paul changed his plans to avoid Barnabas and Mark – Cyprus was the first place they went on their first journey

Who's right? Who's Wrong?

I don't want to make too much of this story, and I don't want to read into it any more than what the text offers, but it seems as if this short passage is showing us something here that I believe happens today in many ways between Christians, so I don't want to miss it.

Paul and Barnabas split up over this man John Mark (possibly Barnabas's cousin – we'll see later). He evidently left the mission to return to Jerusalem and Paul considers him unworthy to go with them on this second missionary journey.

I'm intrigued that there is little said of this altercation and almost no explanation of the separation of Paul and Barnabas.

(Q) – Is there a right and wrong in this story?

Is Paul right in not taking John Mark?

Paul wasn't worried about being under-manned on this journey because He disagreed with taking 3 people (Paul, Barnabas & Mark), and decided instead to go with only two (Paul & Silas)

Jesus told a potential follower who said, Lord I will follow you, only let me go settle my earthly affairs first (and bury my father) that nobody who follows Him and turns back is worthy.

Luke 9:57-62

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹ To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ And Jesus^[g] said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But

as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Does that scare you? Not worthy? Does that sound like we can lose something – our salvation? Isn't the point of Grace that we all are not worthy?

I think Jesus is telling these potential followers that a real repentance and understanding of the Gospel cannot be put on the shelf for a later time. It needs to be acted upon immediately, and results in fruit – fruit that changes our lives and those around us.

Does this apply to Paul and John Mark? Is John Mark a believer here or is his turning back evidence of a lack of believing faith in the beginning? We don't know – all we know is that God gets ahold of John Mark and uses him with Barnabas on Cyprus and later as a fellow prisoner with Paul.

Is Barnabas right in fighting for him?

Paul does not want John Mark with them because he turned back. We don't know why Mark turned back on the first journey, but evidently there was some reason that Paul did not agree with. Paul seemed to find this reason so significant that he did not want to witness with Mark.

Jesus disciples asked Jesus about some that casted out daemons in Jesus' name but were not part of the group that followed Jesus during His ministry. Jesus answer is a little surprising

Luke 9:49-50

⁴⁹ John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.”⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.”

Later in Paul's life in Philippians 1 he writes this about people that are preaching the Gospel out of selfish reasons.

Philippians 1:15-18

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

John Mark is not a heretic here, just because the story line of Acts follows the journeys of Paul and Silas not Barnabas and John Mark does not mean that Barnabas and John Mark are in the wrong.

- The story of Acts follows Paul & Silas – mostly because the author joins them in Acts 16:10 – 10 verses later.

Restoration

Mark and Paul are restored at some time later and we find Mark in prison with Paul for the message of the Gospel.

Colossians 4:10-11

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

Paul is at the end of his life – ready to be killed for the Gospel (2 Tim 4:6 – poured out) and he writes to get Mark and bring him to him.

2 Timothy 4:11

¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

In I Corinthians Paul makes the argument that He and Barnabas are servants of the Lord and that they have a right in ministry to make a living from that work – Paul identifies with Barnabas as equals – not as rivals.

1 Corinthians 9:1-5

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? ² If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³ This is my defense to those who would examine me. ⁴ Do we not have the right to eat and drink? ⁵ Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife,^[a] as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

Conclusion

- **God uses all types of sinners to accomplish His plans**
 - Mark turned back on his calling and later returned to the work committed to the Gospel
 - He ended up in prison with Paul and wrote the Gospel of Mark
 - Paul received more grace than most (as the chief of sinners) but could not display grace to one who turned back on their calling for missions.
- **God works in amazing ways through our sin**
 - God multiplied the missionary journeys because of the division between Paul and Barnabas.
 - Paul went to Philippi and witnessed to Lydia, a possessed girl, and a jailer – these were the plank owners in the church at Philippi and the recipients of the letter to the Philippians.

- It's interesting that the instruction that Paul later gives to the church at Philippians is to get along (Philippians 4:2-3)
 - Barnabas and Mark spent unknown years in Cyprus – tradition tells us more than two years with Barnabas becoming a leader in the church in Cyprus.
- We will not all agree as believers. The early church is loaded with disagreements
 - The Hellenist widows are not being fed (Acts 6)
 - The Jews from Judea are preaching circumcision (Acts 15)
 - Paul and Barnabas split (Acts 15)
 - Paul rebukes Peter for hypocrisy (Galatians 2)
- How we handle these disagreements is crucial – it our testimony

John 17:20-23

²⁰“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

How do we deal with Disagreements?

Luke 6:29

To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.

Romans 12:16-21

¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.^[h] Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^[i] to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.