

July 24, 2022

I Will Encourage By Rebuilding Relationship

Dublin Baptist Church

Acts 15:36-40 (page 1024 in Pew Bible)

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 ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.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.

Seasons of Change

There is the passage of time (after some days) however years of ministry and God working in both the life of Paul and Barnabas is on display.

Paul displays the heart of a church planter/missionary. He desires to see the churches and how they are doing,

Barnabas wanted to reinvest in his cousin John Mark for the work of raising up another worker for the Kingdom.

In v.37 the phrase “wanted to take” is in a unique verb tense (ingressive aorist) and is only used in reference to Barnabas here in the book of Acts. It indicates a strong desire, such that Barnabas is “stuck to it”.

In v.38: the verbs tied to Paul are in an imperfect active and indicate a multiple positions of opposition. Barnabas is singular in his desire to take Mark, Paul has multiple reasons not to take Mark.

Paul's positions are evident with the use of "withdrawn" as the image of a quitter, "not gone" as a picture of apostasy, and "to the work" in a negative form to indicate that Mark did not engage in the task.

When God works in our lives to grow us, it can mean that He is taking us in a new direction. We must hold Biblical principles tightly and human strategy loosely. When God leads a brother or sister in a new direction, unless we see it as unbiblical or have a clear word from God to the contrary, we should not allow it to divide us.

Struggle of Conflict

We can understand something of the division here. The position of Barnabas is connected to the heart, while Paul appeals to the mind and strategy. We understand Paul's position, and we feel for Barnabas.

The problem is that the two men are unwilling to give in to the other or seek some sort of compromise. Luke describes it as a sharp disagreement, the Greek word is "paroxusmos" only used in the New Testament in one other place. The root word means to sharpen as in a blade or a spirit.

"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." Hebrews 10:24

This continual division creates such a separation that division is the only option.

This is not the first division between Paul and Barnabas. When Peter showed up in Antioch, he began to favor the Jews over the Gentiles and Paul confronted him about it. But Barnabas was leaning toward the position of Peter.

"And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy." Galatians 2:13

v. 40 The language around Paul's choice here is drastic. "Chosen" is tied to Barnabas and not Mark. Silas is a replacement for Barnabas and not the role that Mark would have played. Paul is indicating that not only would he not work with John Mark, but he would not work with Barnabas anymore either.

The term for commended indicates the heart of the church at Antioch. The believers sided with Paul and not Barnabas.

The parting of Paul and Barnabas is difficult because it is full of anger and sorrow. Paul owed more to Barnabas than to any other man, and Barnabas was leading the greatest spiritual leader of that time.

Division and conflict should hurt us and wound us, because it does not reflect the unity of the Holy Spirit and it hinders our witness in the world.

Sovereign Plans

I believe this was part of God's plan. It could have been handled better, but God was working in both the life of Barnabas and Paul. Instead of just one missionary team, we have two. Because of Luke, the rest of the book of Acts, and the letters of Paul, we know what happened to Paul. We do not know what happened to Barnabas, but we know it changed the life of Mark.

When God is in the midst of stirring two hearts in different ways, then we will eventually see both spiritual fruit and reconciliation.

Barnabas and Mark sail out from the port in Antioch. This is the last time Luke mentions Barnabas.

Mark ends up being mentored by Peter

"She who is at Babylon, who is likewise is chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son." 1 Peter 5:13

And Paul will reach out to Mark later to have him serve again with him.

"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)." Colossians 4:10

"Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry." 2 Timothy 4:11

Silas also is promoted to a place of leadership and is mentored by Paul. Silas was seen as a leader in the Jerusalem church.

“Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers.”
Acts 15:22

When there is worldly division, the emphasis is upon “us and them” or “winners and losers”. When there is a Godly division the emphasis is upon “what God is doing in our lives” and how the “Kingdom of God could grow”.

Is your conflict rooted in personal pride or Biblical principles?

Is there a place God is leading you? Are you scared to take that next step because people may not understand and the fear of conflict looms?

Is there someone you need to reconcile with? Can you see how God has grown you and them? Can you see how the Kingdom of God grew?