

Lesson 1: A Second Chance

Monday, July 1, 2024

Ryan Day

Read Acts 15:36–39. Why did Paul reject John Mark, and why did Barnabas give him a second chance?

³⁶Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing.” ³⁷Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. ⁴¹And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.—**Acts 15:36-39**

The reason for Paul’s rejection of the young man is given in Acts 15:38. Mark had withdrawn from them and not continued in the work of ministry. Paul’s attitude is understandable, if blunt. Missionary life, particularly in the ancient world, was rough and demanding (*compare with 2 Cor. 11:23–28*). Paul depended on his fellow missionaries to help carry the burden of such challenging work and conditions. In his perspective, one who deserted so quickly did not deserve a place in a missionary team fighting hand to hand against evil forces.

Barnabas disagreed. He saw potential in Mark and did not want to leave the young man behind. Such a deep dispute arose between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark that they parted ways. Paul chose Silas to go with him, and Barnabas took Mark.

Acts does not explain why Barnabas chose to take Mark with him. In fact, this passage is the last place that the two men appear in Acts. But interestingly, it is not the last place Mark is mentioned in the New Testament.

ILL: Disagreements within ministry...

¹⁵ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.—**Matthew 18:15-17**

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.—**Ephesians 4:31, 32**

¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled—**Hebrews 12:14, 15 (ESV)**

Read Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24, and 1 Peter 5:13. What details about Mark’s recovery do these verses suggest?

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)—**Colossians 4:10**

¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.—**2 Timothy 2:11**

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ *as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.—**Philemon 24**

¹³ She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and so *does* Mark my son. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.—**1 Peter 5:13**

An amazing transformation seems to have occurred in Mark. In these passages, Paul indicates the value of Mark to him and to ministry. Paul counts him as one of his fellow workers and wants Timothy to bring him with him. First Peter indicates that Peter as well had a close relationship with Mark. These books by Paul and Peter were written likely in the early A.D. 60's, some 15–20 years after the experience in Acts 15. Mark clearly recovered from his failure, almost certainly through the trust that his cousin, Barnabas, placed in him.

Consider a time when you or a friend failed and were given a second chance. How did that experience change you and those who helped you? How did it modify your ministry to others?