

Sermon Text: Acts 15: 36-41 (Paul and Barnabas Split)

The Issue: Launch Abort on a New Missionary Journey, Over John-Mark

- A. What was the setting? Peace and nourishment after resolution of the previous crisis. (Acts 15:30-35).
- B. Who was John-Mark? (Acts 12:12)
  - a. The son of Mary, whose house was used for the “Peter Prayer Meeting”.
  - b. Companion of Barnabas and Saul when they went to Jerusalem on a famine relief mission. (Acts 11:30).
  - c. Companion of Barnabas and Saul on their first great Missionary Journey, when the two were called by the Holy Spirit at Antioch. (Acts 13:5).
    - i. This call also followed a period of peace and nourishment after resolution a crisis (Herod turning on the Apostles).
- C. What was the new issue? (Acts 13:13)
  - a. John-Mark had deserted the First Missionary Journey and the two at Pamphylian Perga (right after the incident with Elymas the magician at Salamis), and had returned to Jerusalem.
  - b. Paul had felt led to suggest to Barnabas a Second Missionary Journey to renew acquaintances and check on those they had earlier visited.
  - c. Barnabas again wanted to bring along John-Mark, but Paul insisted that his earlier behavior pre-empted his present consideration.

- d. The disagreement between them became so sharp that they separated – Barnabas and John-Mark went to Cyprus; Paul chose Silas and (with the blessing of the Antioch Church behind them) went to Syria and Cilicia.

D. So, Who Was Right in the Dispute?

- a. The Scripture account follows Paul and Silas, while Barnabas and John-Mark disappear until much later.
- b. The Scripture specifically includes the host church's support behind Paul and Silas, but does not mention it was Barnabas and John-Mark.
- c. There are also reasons as to why neither (a) nor (b) necessarily denote God's displeasure with Barnabas and John-Mark:
  - i. There is not enough room in the Bible to record everything, so it may omit things merely to center on more important things. (John 20:30-31, 21:25).
- d. John-Mark eventually won back Paul's respect. (2 Tim 4:11).

E. What Does the Bible say about Disputes?

- a. The Lord Jesus exhorts that there be agreement in His church: same mind, same judgement, no internal divisions among us. (This is the backdrop upon which all other issues must rest).
  - i. How delightful it is when brothers walk in agreement together (Psalms 133:1).
  - ii. It is an abomination and something the LORD hates, to spread strife among brothers (Prov. 6:19b).

- iii. A factious man is to be rejected after a first and second warning, being a perverted sinner, self-condemned. (Titus 3:9-10).

F. Some Division in the New Testament

- a. Euodia and Syntyche of Phillipi (Phil 4:2-3)

G. What Are Some Motives That Cause Divisions?

- a. That “those who are approved” may become evident among you (1 Cor 11:18-19),
- b. Authorities puffed up in pride over supposed “giftedness” while being separated from the true Giver (Col. 2:18).
- c. Teachers enslaved to their own appetites. (Rom. 16:17-18).

H. Are Divisions Ever Used by God to Further His Kingdom?

- a. To reveal those whom He approves (by how they conduct themselves in divisive circumstances).
- b. To move people out of their comfort zones.
- c. To split up His leaders into new groups and areas.

I. What Are The Christian Doctrinal Hills Worth Dying On?

- a. That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures;
- b. That He was buried (i.e., genuinely dead);
- c. That He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures;
- d. That He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve;
- e. That He appeared to more than five-hundred brethren at one time;
- f. Then to James, then to all the apostles,
- g. And then, as to one untimely born, to Paul.

- J. What is the Truest Sign that Will Authenticate Your Witness to the World?
- a. Not tongues, not healings, not signs and wonders, not knowledge of the Scriptures, not great wisdom to understand mysteries, not faith to move mountains, not charity service, not social justice activism, not self-denial, not martyrdom. (I Cor 13)
  - b. John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, if you have love for one another.”
  - c. What is Love? What does it look like?
    - i. Patience
    - ii. Kindness
    - iii. Security
    - iv. Humility
    - v. Discretion
    - vi. Submission of Self-Rights
    - vii. Slowness to Anger/Get Triggered
    - viii. Forbearance when wronged/short memory/no grudges
    - ix. Not Defensive of Unrighteousness, but of Truth
    - x. Determined to believe the best in all circumstances.
      - 1. Bares, believes, hopes, endures.
    - xi. This personality definition will never wear out as the mark of one who knows God.