

DISPUTE BETWEEN PAUL & BARNABAS

Text: Acts 15:36-41 [Don't Read]

INTRO: The early part of Acts 15 tells of a dispute between the inspired men in the early church & certain of those who were uninspired. Our text tells of a dispute between 2 inspired men. When Paul and Barnabas had left Antioch about 6 years earlier, John Mark had gone along with them to minister to them in certain ways. He had traveled with them to Seleucia, from which they sailed to Cyprus. They preached their way thru the isle of Cyprus & sailed to Perga in Pamphylia. As they prepared to make their way thru the hazardous path to Antioch in Pisidia, John Mark "departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:1-13).

Now some 6 years have passed & Paul & Barnabas plan to retrace their steps & check on the spiritual welfare of their converts.

READ TEXT

Altho we are not told Mark's reasons for turning back they were not satisfactory to Paul & apparently in this, there was no disagreement between Paul & Barnabas. Their difference was over whether to give Mark another chance.

There are many important lessons to be learned in this & related passages that will need to be remembered & applied in our situations from time to time.

I. WE LEARN SOMETHING OF THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE INSPIRED WRITERS. In the uninspired writings there is usually a tendency to cover up the failings of the heroes. Such is never the case in the Scriptures.

- A. Noah's drunkenness, Gen. 9:20.
- B. Abraham's deceit, Gen 12:13; 20:2
- C. David's adultery, 2 Sam. 11:4.

II. WE LEARN THAT THE INSPIRED APOSTLES & PROPHETS WERE NOT DIVINELY GUIDED IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE.

- A. The words they taught were inspired & infallible, but the men were not infallible in applying those inspired

words in their lives.

1. Peter taught in Acts 2:39 that the gospel was for the Gentiles--but he did not realize the proper application of that truth for 11 years.
2. On one occasion, Peter had to be rebuked to his face because he stood condemned, Gal 2:11.
3. John tells us as much. READ I JOHN 1:8-10

III. PAUL & BARNABAS DID NOT DISAGREE AS TO THE WORK THAT WAS TO BE DONE, vs. 36-37.

IV. THEIR DISAGREEMENT WAS OVER A MATTER OF HUMAN JUDGMENT--A MATTER NOT REVEALED, vs. 37-38. Barnabas thought one thing, Paul another. IF God had revealed what to do, both of these godly men would have complied.

V. WE LEARN THAT MATURE CHRISTIANS CAN DISAGREE OVER MATTERS OF HUMAN OPINION WITHOUT SINNING. NEITHER PAUL NOR BARNABAS WAS WRONG, for the matter over which they disagreed was a matter on which God had not legislated.

A. Mark later was profitable to the ministry.

Get Mark & bring him with you for he is useful to me for ministry. (2 Tim. 4:11). NOTE: This was written about 68 A.D., about 17 years after the events of our text.

B. Mark might never have become profitable had not Barnabas shown patience with him, vs. 39.

C. On the other hand, if Paul had not been firm in this matter, Mark might not have seen the need to change, vs 38-41

VI. FROM THIS TEXT, WE LEARN THAT BROTHERS WHO HAVE WORKED CLOSELY TOGETHER FOR YEARS CAN DIFFER IN SUCH MATTERS AS DID PAUL &

BARNABAS.

- A. They first appear together about 12 years before the events of our text when Barnabas uses his influence to help give Paul himself another chance. ACTS 9:26-27
- B. Then 4 or 5 years later--about 7 years before our text-- Paul had joined Barnabas in Antioch & they had been constant companions ever since, 11:25.

VII. FROM OUR TEXT, WE LEARN THAT MATURE BRETHREN CAN DISAGREE OVER MATTERS OF OPINION WITHOUT DEMANDING THE WHOLE BROTHERHOOD TO TAKE SIDES, vs. 39-41.

VIII. WE LEARN THAT MATURE BRETHREN CAN DISAGREE IN SUCH MATTERS & STILL RESPECT ONE ANOTHER.

- A. It was about 6 years after this incident that Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthians & the Galatians. These letters show his continuing respect for Barnabas.

Or is it only Barnabas & I who have no right to refrain from working? (1 Cor. 9:6).

And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with [Peter], so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. (Gal. 2:13).

- B. During Paul's 1st imprisonment, about 10-11 years after the incident in our text, Mark had proven himself worthy of the trust that Barnabas had in him & Paul admitted as much by having Mark as a fellow laborer.

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

- C. Finally, in Paul's last letter, about 68 A.D., about 6 years

after the Colossian letter & about 17 years after our text, Mark was still faithful & profitable.

Get Mark & bring him with you: for he is useful to me for ministry. (2 Tim 4:11).

- IX. FROM THESE RELATED PASSAGES WE LEARN THAT MATURE CHRISTIANS CAN HOLD STRONG OPINIONS IN MATTERS OF HUMAN JUDGMENT & YET REMAIN OPEN TO CHANGE THOSE OPINIONS WHEN THE EVIDENCE WARRANTS A CHANGE.
- X. WE ALSO LEARN THAT PAST DIFFERENCES NEED NOT KEEP US FROM WORKING TOGETHER WHEN WE CAN
- XI. FROM OUR PRIMARY TEXT, WE LEARN THAT THERE IS OFTEN A WAY FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO DIFFER IN MATTERS OF OPINION TO EACH DO WHAT HE THINKS IS BEST WITHOUT INVOLVING OR INTERFERING WITH THE OTHER, vs. 39-41.
- XII. FINALLY WE LEARN THAT WHEN DIFFERENCES ARE PROPERLY HANDLED, THE CAUSE OF CHRIST WILL GROW & PROSPER.
 - A. When there was a problem of murmuring in Acts 6, the matter was dealt with in a mature way & the cause of Christ prospered, Acts 6:7.
 - B. When there had been a problem with hypocrisy in Acts 5, it had been divinely solved & the cause prospered, 5:14.
 - C. When there was a doctrinal dispute in Acts 15, the problem had been faced squarely & deal with according to God's revelation & the cause prospered, Acts 16:5.
 - D. Likewise, tho the dispute in our text was a disagreement of a personal nature between Paul & Barnabas, when it was solved in a mature way that allowed each to do

what he thot best, without causing others to be divided into warring parties, 4 gospel preachers set out to preach & teach in 2 directions rather than 2 or 3 preachers going in only one direction, thus again, the cause of Christ was made to grow & prosper.

CONCLUSION: Every disagreement between 2 brothers or sisters in Christ need not become a church problem. When such disagreements are handled in keeping with the principles taught in God's word, they will not hinder the work of God, and in some cases, may even cause more work to be done for the cause of Christ.

La Porte, TX, May 13, 1979

Holly St., Denver, CO, March 30, 1980

Highway 29, Liberty Hill, TX, August 15, 1980 (meeting)

Exton, PA, July 18, 1984

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, December 6, 1998

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, August 1, 1999