

MARK IS USEFUL  
Text: 2 Timothy 4:6-11

INTRO: Paul is in prison. Death is just around the corner, vs. 6-8. He needs the companionship & help of men who are courageous & trustworthy. And who does he send for? John Mark? Profitable? Let's back up about 23 years, from 68 a.d. (our text) to about 45 a.d., Acts 13:13

I. ON THIS EARLIER OCCASION, JOHN MARK HAD DESERTED, & EVEN AFTER 6 YEARS HAVE PASSED, PAUL HAD REFUSED TO HAVE FURTHER ASSOCIATION WITH HIM.

Now when Paul & his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; & John, departing from them returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13, 45 a.d.)

READ ACTS 15:36-41 (51 a.d.)

- A. Keep in mind that Barnabas was perhaps Paul's best friend.
1. He had befriended Paul when others were afraid of him, Acts 9:26-28.
  2. Later, when Barnabas was having a very fruitful work in Antioch, he went & searched for Paul, found him & brot him to Antioch to help with the efforts there, Acts 11:22-26.
  3. Still later, after Paul, Barnabas & Mark left on their first preaching tour, Barnabas stayed with Paul even tho his cousin, Mark deserted.
  4. Paul had every reason to love & respect Barnabas & no doubt he did so, but he would rather go on his preaching mission without Barnabas than to have to take Mark who "had not gone with them to the work" (Acts 15:38). Paul considered Mark worse than useless--he would be in the way.

B. But in our text, 17 years after he had refused to take Mark

along, Paul says, “Get Mark & bring him with you, for he is useful to me.”

II. NOW, LET US LOOK FOR A MOMENT AT A QUESTION THAT HAS PLAGUED BIBLE STUDENTS EVER SINCE THE 1ST CENTURY: Why had Mark deserted?

- A. We are not told the specific reasons or excuses, but we that it was not
  - 1. Because Paul & Barnabas had mistreated him or had wanted to be rid of him. It would have pleased them both if he had stayed.
  - 2. Nor because he was not needed. “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few” (LK 10:2).
- B. As Paul & his company loosed from Perga, where Mark deserted them, they faced hardship, hunger, danger, persecution & perhaps homesickness. There might be dozens of excuses for turning back but there could only be one reason. Mark became a quitter for the same reason anyone becomes a quitter: lack of devotion to the cause. READ LUKE 9:23-25

III. WHY THEN, HAS PAUL CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT MARK?

- A. We can be assured it was not because Paul has lowered his standards. As noted before, he knows certain death is just around the corner. Certainly Paul was no less demanding than he had been 23 years earlier.
- B. The obvious answer: Mark has changed. And what are some of the factors in that change?
  - 1. The patience & persistence of Barnabas was prob a great influence. No man could associate with Barnabas very long without being a better man.
  - 2. Mark had from time to time come under the influence of Peter, who may also have helped to

stabilize him in the cause.

- a. "Mark, my son" 1 Pet. 5:13
  - b. It was to the home of Mark's mother that Peter first went when the angel released him from prison, Acts 12:11-12.
  - c. A very old tradition says Mark wrote his account of the gospel under the influence of Peter's reminiscences.
3. But it could well be that the most notable & powerful influence in the change of Mark was Paul himself. Mark had needed a sharp rebuke. It was Paul from whom it came.

NOTE: In 62 a.d., 17 years after the desertion, Paul had written: "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).

#### IV. SOME LESSONS FOR US.

- A. We have all sometimes fallen short of what could rightly be expected of us. We have quit when we should have kept going. We have all needed rebuke similar to that which Mark received from Paul. Rom 3:10; 1 Jn 1:8-10
- B. Just as Mark was able to rise above his previous mistakes to reach new heights in service to God, so can we.
- C. The grace of God that turned a quitter into an evangelist & writer of an inspired account of the gospel of Christ, can transform us into good & faithful servants, & give us a new start every day.

Thru the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23).

La Porte, TX, December 28, 1980  
Exton, PA, October 21, 1990  
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, December 13, 1998  
Shiloh, Mexia, TX, January 3, 1999