

A Sad Sequel



Acts 15:36-41

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Some time later



Here the author of Acts, Luke, skips some matters that had a part in the previous section. Considering that in the letter to the Galatians, Paul does not mention the Jerusalem Council, these events probably took place before (or led up to) the visit to Jerusalem. James had sent some men to Antioch, probably to help the Jewish believers. However, these men appear to have been rather over-zealous.

Galatians 2:11-12 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

Some time later

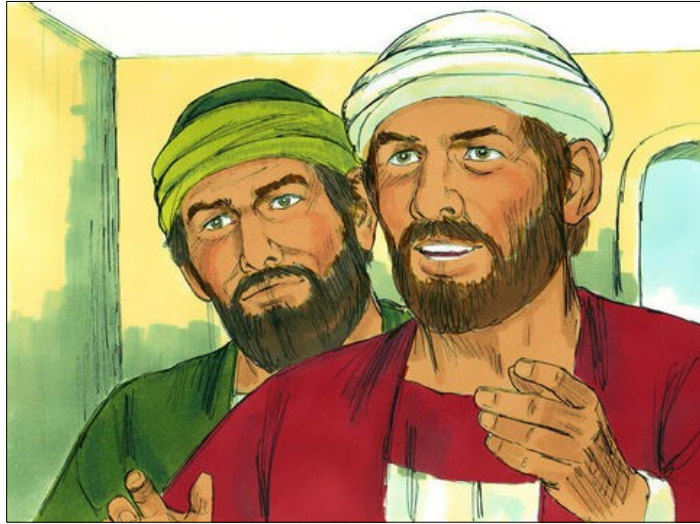


Even Barnabas had been ‘persuaded’ by the visitors, so Paul takes them to task.

Galatians 2:13-14 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with Peter , so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Barnabas had been convinced and had joined with Paul to go to Jerusalem.

Some time later



The relationship between Paul and Barnabas had been strained when Barnabas sided with the Judaizers in Antioch when Peter came to visit (Galatians 2:13).

But things seem to have been resolved –
and so Luke omits these details and continues with the account.

Paul said to Barnabas,



Paul appears more now as the prominent one of the pair, and it is Paul who suggests the next mission.

"Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

Paul suggests a joint mission again – let US go



He was concerned for the spiritual life and progress of the new believers. Not only was he concerned for evangelism, but he had a pastoral concern for the disciples.

Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them,

Barnabas was John Mark's cousin.

Being older, he was more like an uncle figure.

John was his Hebrew name and Mark his Gentile name

John Mark had returned prematurely to Antioch during the first mission. Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance – his name means 'encourager'. Of course, as a relative, he also had a personal interest in Mark's welfare.



but Paul did not think it wise to take him,

Paul probably thinking of the dangers they had already encountered, thought that revisiting those dangerous places again would cause Mark to let them down again.



because he had deserted them in Pamphylia

(Acts 13:13)

In this statement, Luke makes it quite clear that Mark had left them. This may have been because of fear of the dangers that they might encounter.



because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

Paul maybe saw this as a lack of commitment to the work of mission, since he had not been prepared to face the dangers.



They had such a sharp disagreement



This was not a gospel issue, but feelings ran deep.

These were men with strong personalities and both could see the rightness of their particular stand. Besides, from Barnabas's view it was a personal matter too.

So who was right?

that they parted company.

This time there was no James present to offer some compromise solution, although it is difficult to see what could have been done. We see that the best of men are only men, subject to the same passions as we are.

Perhaps there were faults on both sides in how it was handled.

Only Jesus is perfect.



that they parted company.

As Christians, we are commanded to resolve relationship problems with others before we come to worship God.

Matthew 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

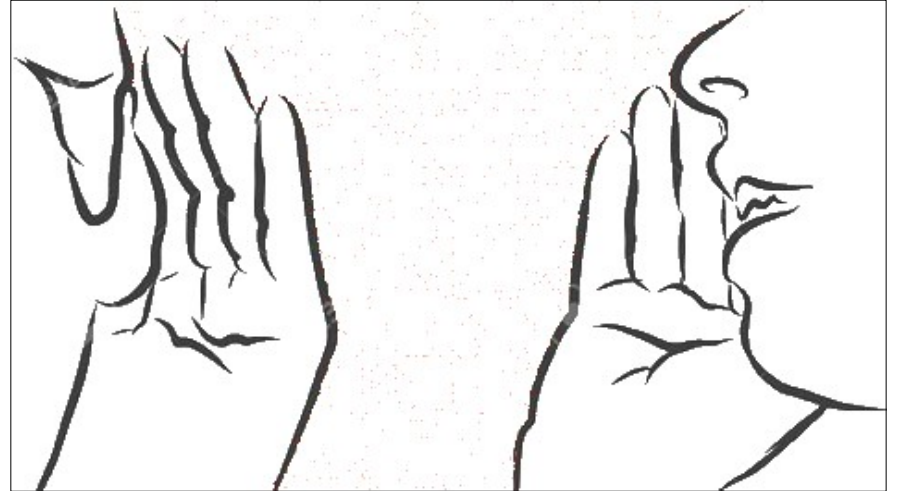


How would they have felt about it over the next few days?

An important consideration when brothers fall out.

A wise quote from Matthew Henry:-

Many who dwelt at Antioch may have heard little of the devotedness and piety of Paul and Barnabas, but they probably heard of their dispute and separation; and thus it will be with ourselves, if we give way to contention.



What about the honour of the Name of Jesus?

Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,

Barnabas and Mark left town. They went back to Barnabas's birth place. Did they begin mission work there?



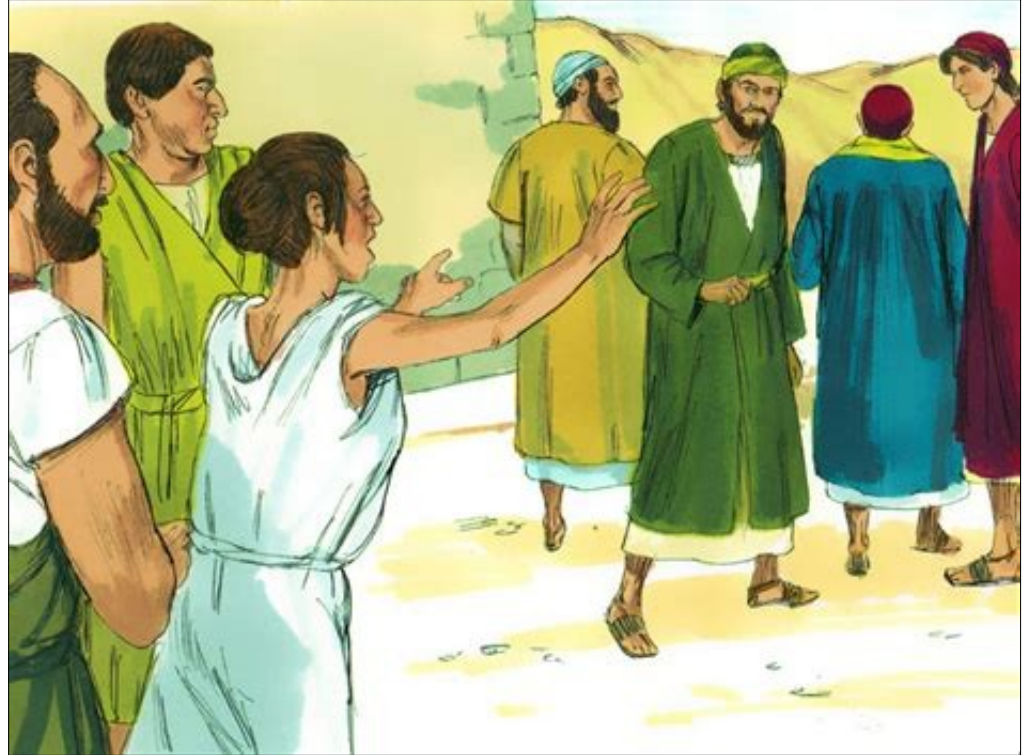
but Paul chose Silas and left,

Silas is also called *Silvanus* (*his Roman name*) in several passages. He had returned to Antioch and as a representative of the Jerusalem council would have been able to support Paul as he took the decision of the Council to the churches in the area.



commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.

The church at Antioch gets behind the 2nd mission
This was going to be both a pastoral visit for the previously established churches and evangelistic in reaching out into new areas.



He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.



But they first went to areas where the issue over circumcision had spread. The Letter from the Council included these areas in the address.

This was the pastoral work, sharing the Council decision and providing further ministry in teaching and fellowship.

God moves in a mysterious way

Instead of one mission,
we now see two missions!

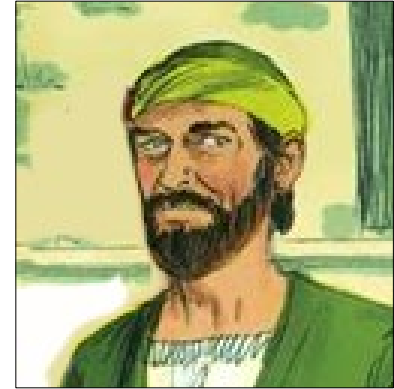
But this example of God's
providence should not be
used as an excuse for
Christian quarrelling!



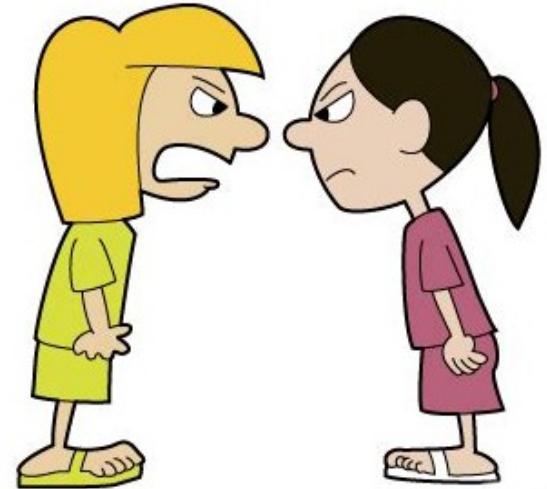
Paul or Barnabas had to get this right with God and each other.

What about Paul?

A long time later he wrote to two ladies in Philippi. Perhaps his experience with Barnabas helped him to advise them.



Philippians 4:2-3 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.



What about Barnabus ?

We don't read any more about him in Acts but they continued their work for the Lord.

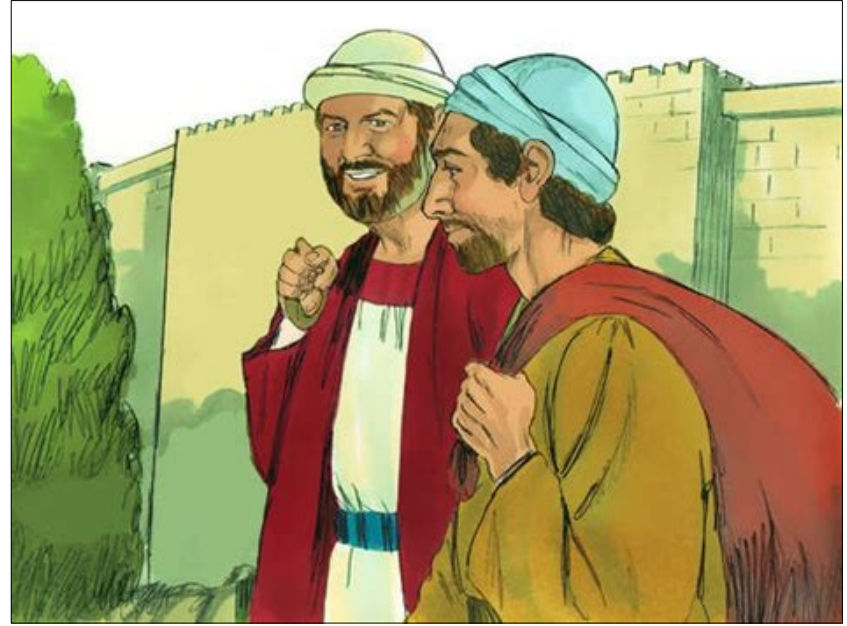
And later Paul speaks of him to the Corinthians



1 Corinthians 9:6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

What about Mark?

John Mark had been among the believers from early on, if as is widely believed, he is the young man mentioned here.



Mark 14:51-52 A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

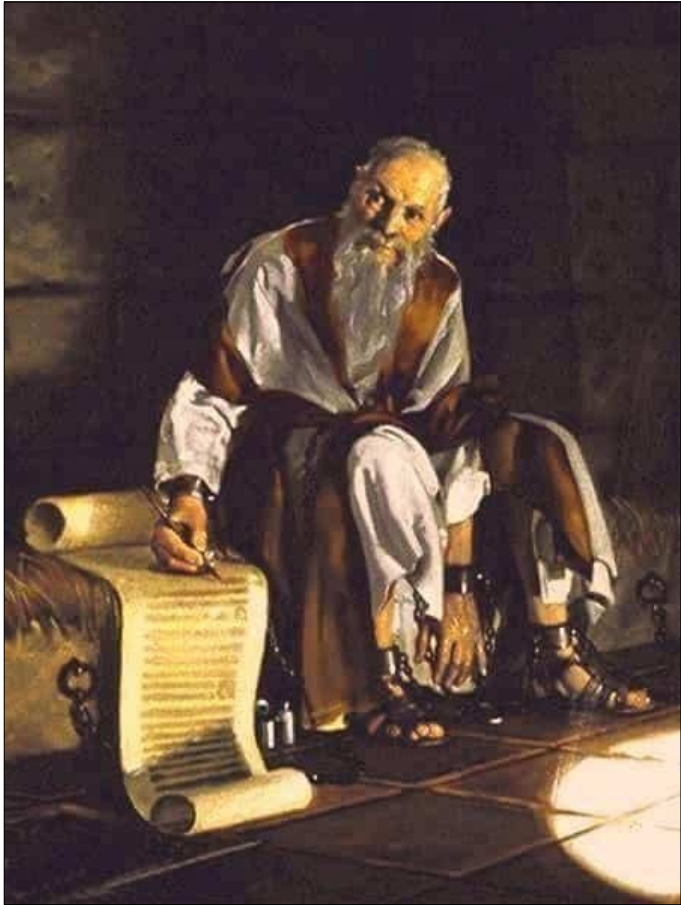
Healing happened

Later while Paul was writing from a Roman prison he says that Mark is there with him and is commended by Paul.



Colossians 4:10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)

Finally in Paul's last letter before his execution he writes:-



*2 Timothy 4:11
Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and
bring him with you, because he is
helpful to me in my ministry.*

We don't know if it was just Mark who changed or Paul as well.
Probably God worked in both of them!

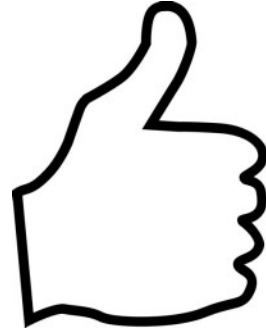


How would Mark have felt at first?
A failure, not valued by the pioneer missionary, Paul ?



REJECTED

*1 Peter 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does **my son Mark**.*



Peter had known Mark from the very early days. As well as helping Paul in the ministry, he was associated with Peter too.


The gospel of Mark (written in collaboration with Peter) is another proof that Mark made good.



Perhaps the Lord had called him to be more of a writer
than a pioneer missionary.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this,

*He Who Began a Good Work in You
Will Bring it to Completion...*



until the day of Christ Jesus.