

Differences but One Purpose – June 13, 2021

1. Introduction:

- a. This account would have taken place near the end of Paul and Barnabas' 1st missionary journey around 49 AD.
- b. Paul and Barnabas would have been together preaching teaching and suffering for nearly 2 years when a disagreement, a sharp disagreement arose between them (Acts 15:39).
- c. Question: How does it feel to have a sharp disagreement with a close friend?

2. Read: Acts 15:36-41 “And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and **see how they are.**’³⁷ Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.³⁹ **And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.** Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,⁴⁰ but **Paul chose Silas and departed,** having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.⁴¹ **And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”**



- a. After returning to Antioch Syria Paul and Barnabas had planned to revisit all the churches they had established on their missionary journey together.
- b. Question: Paul frequently returned to his “church plants.” According to verse 36, what was the reason for revisiting the cities where they had proclaimed the Word of the Lord?
- c. Question: We read in verse 38 that a sharp disagreement arose between Paul and Barnabas as to whether John Mark should be allowed to rejoin them. Why do you think this was an issue?
- d. Question: According to verse 39 what was the result of the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas?

e. Question: Can honest disagreements arise between believers? What should be done if this occurs?

f. But their dispute is not the end of the story! We know that Paul and John Mark were reunited and had their friendship and their ministry together restored. Years later, while in prison in Rome Paul would write in 2 Timothy 4:11, "Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry."

3. Read: Romans 12:16-21: "Live in harmony with one another. **Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.** Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far **as it depends on you**, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' ²⁰ To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will **heap burning coals on his head.**' ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

a. Question: How does not being haughty, but associate with the lowly help to resolve disputes? How does it help avoid disputes in the first place (cf. Proverbs 16:8)?

b. Question: What is the caveat found in Romans 12:18? "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

c. Question: Why is it so hard to remember, let alone comply with, the admonishment to leave vengeance to the Lord?

d. Question: What value is there in leaving vengeance to the Lord?

e. Question: What does it mean to heap burning coals upon another's head?

f. Question: When Paul wrote the letter to the Romans years later do you think he might have had his dispute with Barnabas and John Mark in mind?

4. A brief biography of John Mark: The son of a wealthy woman with a large house in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:12) John Mark was also the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). According to the early Church Fathers, this John Mark was the author of the Gospel bearing his name. Many, in the early church, including Papias, wrote that John Mark had a friendship and even traveled extensively with Peter and that the Gospel of Mark is an account of the life of Jesus and His ministry as Peter related it to John Mark. He went with Paul and Barnabas on their first journey (about 47 AD) but from some cause turned back. He had a close relationship with Peter. So close in fact that Peter called John Mark his son in 1 Peter 5:13. John Mark's relationship with Paul was restored and ultimately Paul would say of John Mark, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry." Tradition says that John Mark was the 1st Bishop of the church at Alexandria, Egypt.