

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 13:4-28:31

2. Christ's Permitted Trimming Of The Disciplers For Effective Ministry

(Acts 13:13 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Though Christian service is open to all, not all Christians qualify for all kinds of service due to spiritual immaturity, requiring that believers qualify for various offices and ministries, 1 Timothy 3:1, 5-7.
- B. In its wide Scriptural context, John Mark's defection in Acts 13:13 et al. illustrates this truth (as follows):

II. Christ's Permitted Trimming Of The Disciplers For Effective Ministry, Acts 13:13 et al.

- A. Acts 13:13a reveals that when Paul and Barnabas sailed from Paphos on the southwestern coast of Cyprus, they went north and landed at Perga in the region of Pamphylia in what today is south-central Turkey.
- B. In a very brief report, Luke noted in Acts 13:13b that John Mark left them there and returned to Jerusalem.
- C. In the wider context, we understand this event marked a spiritual defeat for John Mark in the ministry:
 - 1. John Mark was a cousin to Barnabas (Colossians 4:10 NIV, ESV) whom Barnabas and "Saul" had met in his mother Mary's home while on a famine relief trip to Jerusalem, Acts 11:30; 12:12.
 - 2. Barnabas and Saul had then returned to Antioch of Syria, and they had taken John Mark along with them to help them in their ministry there, Acts 12:25.
 - 3. Later, when the Holy Spirit had told the Antioch Church leaders to separate Barnabas and Saul for their ministry outreach from that Church, He had not named John Mark to accompany them, cf. Acts 13:1-2. Nevertheless, John Mark went with them across Cyprus, and sailed with Paul and Barnabas to Perga in Pamphylia before deciding to leave them there and return to Jerusalem, Acts 13:13.
 - 4. We know from Acts 15:38 that John Mark's departure came under negative circumstances, that the Apostle Paul viewed it as "a defection and a fault," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 389.
 - 5. There are several possible *human* reasons why John Mark made this defection, *Ibid.*:
 - a. He may have been disillusioned with the change in leadership from his cousin, Barnabas to Paul to whom John Mark was not related. That might have left John Mark feeling angry or insecure.
 - b. The new emphasis on evangelizing Gentiles seen in the switch from Paul's use of his Jewish name "Saul" to "Paul" and Paul's strong interaction with the sorcerer, Elymas, might have been too hard for the very Jewish John Mark to handle; he thus might have left for Jerusalem out of cultural shock.
 - c. The road across the Taurus Mountains to Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14) was a dangerous one, a road Paul meant to take, so John Mark might have avoided this danger by returning to Jerusalem.
 - d. At Galatians 4:13, there is evidence that Paul became ill, possibly with potentially lethal malaria that was rampant in Perga, so John Mark might have been frightened by disease into leaving.
 - e. John Mark may have been homesick for his mother back in Jerusalem, and so left to be with her.
 - f. On the other hand, perhaps the combination of these various issues all mounted up to motivate John Mark to leave Paul and Barnabas and return to Jerusalem.
- D. Regardless what were his human reasons, John Mark was not spiritually mature enough for what he would face in his ministry with Paul and Barnabas, a fact the Holy Spirit realized when He did not direct the Church leaders at Antioch of Syria to separate him along with Paul and Barnabas for their outreach work!
- E. Thankfully, we learn Barnabas later took John Mark back to Cyprus where he had successfully remained with the missionary team, and there Barnabas further disciplined him, Acts 15:39 with 13:4-12. Later, Paul himself asked Timothy to bring Mark with him to minister to him as Mark had matured, 2 Timothy 4:11!

Lesson: John Mark was not spiritually mature enough for the missionary work God assigned for Paul and Barnabas, so God did NOT CALL him to perform it! Thus, he INITIALLY failed to stay at the assignment. Yet, by additional discipling, John Mark became equipped and mature enough to aid Paul.

Application: May we heed God's leading regarding who is mature enough and called of God to serve in a given ministry that the weak not fail to their harm and the harm of God's work, 1 Timothy 3:1, 5-7!