

The Mission Multiplies **Acts 15:36-41**

This morning we have an opportunity to look at a good outcome following conflict in the Church. We don't have the detail as to how the conflict was handled but we do have a description of the positive outcome. At this point in time, the Church is about 20 years old and is on the brink of worldwide expansion. The mission will be in jeopardy if they can't get this right.

What we've seen so far in terms of the devil's war against the Church has been easy to spot.... Intense persecution....False adoration....And now ... Harmful division.

As you read Acts, it can feel as if it all blurs together in terms of time. Here's a very brief snapshot of Paul's three mission trips:

- 46-48 First Missionary Journey
1400 miles. With Barnabas and Mark (briefly).
- 48-52 Second Missionary Journey
3200 miles. With Silas and sometimes Timothy and Luke. 1 ½ yrs in Corinth.
- 53-57 Third Missionary Journey
3500 miles. Traveled with a group, including Luke. 3 yrs in Ephesus.

This passage in Acts can easily be read with the idea that Paul and Barnabas had a big fight and separated in angst. There is some support for that but I will suggest that it's not a fight and that Paul and Barnabas left on good terms. Did you notice verse 40?

Paul was commended to the grace of the Lord by the brothers.

Add to that...later in his life Paul refers to both Barnabas (1 Cor 9:6) and Mark (Col 4:10 and 2 Tim 4:11) in positive terms.

Here's the conflict in terms of a question:

Should we take Mark on a difficult mission trip given that he left us early on the first mission trip?

Paul puts the priority on the work. Barnabas put the priority on the individual.

They were both right. They were both wrong.

Here's where this can be practical for us today.

When these two men leave each other and create separate mission trips, it looks like they also leave their differences behind. What happened in the past did not carry forward into the future.

Here's something we can learn from this conflict...

What Paul, Barnabas and even Mark are able to do is to not let the present as well as the future be negatively impacted by the past. Whatever happened, whatever was said in this sharp disagreement was not allowed to live in the present.

Home Group Questions:

What did you read in this passage or hear in the teaching that stood out to you?

Why do you think relationships matter to God? Why do you suppose how we treat people is so important to God?

Have you ever carried old wounds, old hurts, old experiences from the past into the present?

What has helped you move forward following hurtful times?

Do you have a brother or sister in Christ who strengthens you? Do you have someone that you strengthen? Who could you strengthen this week?