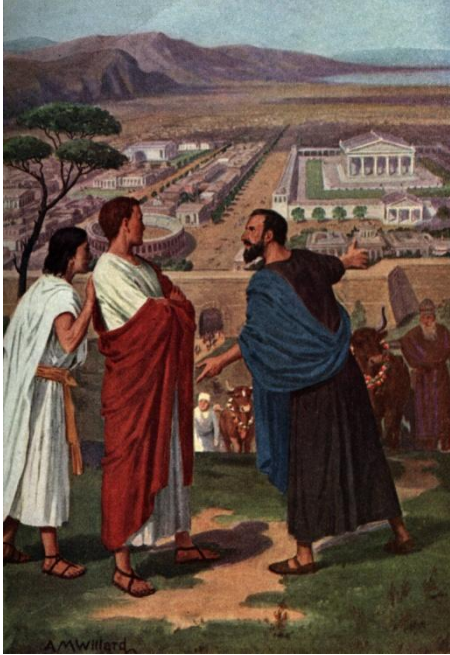


# SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

## LESSON 4



## A PROBLEM OVER JOHN MARK

*Scripture Text: Acts 15:36-41*

When Paul and Barnabas started on their second missionary journey, the question arose as to whether John Mark should accompany them. Paul said no; Barnabas said yes. This resulted in a sharp contention, and they separated. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul took Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia. John Mark needed to learn the lesson that we have to pay for our own mistakes and that to be a Christian takes courage. Paul was in a position to teach him those lessons, and he was the type of man who never flinched in the face of an unpleasant duty. Paul was right.

But Barnabas was also right. His talent was to reach out, draw in, and raise up young workers in the Gospel. Paul himself was one of those young workers and probably owed more to Barnabas than to any other human being for the place he filled now. Barnabas felt it dangerous to risk the loss of one such young life for lack of his encouragement. This was God's way for both Paul and Barnabas to go to work wholeheartedly

for Him. Mark was later restored to usefulness.

**MEMORY VERSE:** *And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

—Acts 16:5

### DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Ephesians 1:15-23 Pray for wisdom and knowledge.

Tue.—Romans 8:1-17 Life in the Spirit.

Wed.—Romans 12:9-21 Christian conduct.

Thu.—Hebrews 12:12-29 Christian endurance.

Fri.—Luke 12:35-48 Be a faithful servant.

**Devotional Reading:** Colossians 3:1-17 True center of life.

### A Difference Arises

**Acts 15:36-38** When the mission of the letter was complete, Paul, Barnabas, and Silas remained in Antioch for a time. It was a large, spiritual, active, and growing church. It was a good place for them to work and gain spiritual nourishment. But this could not go on for long. Paul had tasted of pioneer work out where they had never heard of Jesus. Restless to return where God called him and desiring to know how their converts did, He said unto Barnabas, **Let us go again and visit our brethren . . . where we have preached.** The plan suited Barnabas. The warm nature of the fatherly Barnabas gave him a further thought—to take with them John, his relative (John Mark). **But Paul thought not good to take him.** Why not? Because he had **departed from them** on the previous trip (Acts 13:5, 13). Why take the risk again?

For two men, both filled with the Spirit and undoubtedly loving each other, to differ so sharply means each had strong reasons. They faced a hard way, dangerous travels, and many enemies. Endurance, both physical and spiritual, was needed. Their burden was to win lost souls to Christ. John Mark had once quit. Paul thought it dangerous to risk the failure of their mission by taking along a quitter. Barnabas showed a great concern over the risk of losing the young John Mark for lack of his encouragement.

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### The Separation

**Acts 15:39-41** The contention was so sharp . . . that they departed asunder one from the other. The contention in this instance meant a statement or point that one argues for a true and valid position. Each was determined he was acting in the will of God and would not yield. **Barnabas took Mark** and took ship to Cyprus. That island was Barnabas' old home. He and Paul had begun their first missionary journey here.

**Paul chose Silas.** They were **recommended by the brethren**—commended to the charge of **the grace of God**. Committing them into God's hands, into His life and power— this was the best possible help and protection. Here we see a token of the church's confidence in all four of these brethren. Departing, Paul and Silas **went through Syria and Cilicia**—where Paul and Barnabas had been on their first journey. Cilicia was Paul's home area. Here we begin to see the hand of God in the moves. They went **confirming the churches**, not a formal ceremony. By preaching the Word and living the life, they strengthened, or confirmed, these people to continue living in the Lord.

Anger, selfishness, and malice did not enter into this contention. Paul and Barnabas could not have continued under the blessing and power of God as they did, had they fallen into these sins. Paul showed his approval of the hard work of Barnabas in his reference to him in **1 Corinthians 9:6**. We find no taint of resentment in John Mark. No, we cannot point to Paul and Barnabas as an excuse for animosity and quarreling. Anger, resentment, and revenge are sinful. Saved people can differ in opinion and judgment.

### Having Confidence

Sometimes one feels that these Bible people were a little above the human, that they occupied a place we cannot reach, or had spiritual gifts greater than God would give us. This incident is written to show us that this is not true.

John Mark needed to learn the lesson that we have to pay for our own mistakes and that to be a Christian takes courage. Paul was in a position to teach him those lessons, and he was the type of man who never flinched in the face of an unpleasant duty. But Barnabas was right too. This lovable man, who all through the New Testament stands out as one who was constantly doing someone kindness, was just the type of man to take young John Mark in hand and give him the kindly treatment he needed. Paul administered the rod on young John Mark, and he was right; the boy needed that. But he also needed kindly understanding, and this his friend, Barnabas furnished him. John Mark lost Paul's confidence by leaving them once, but that confidence was later restored. Some years later, we find references to Mark made by Paul and others which indicate that Mark was a good soldier for Christ. Read **Colossians 4:10-11**; **2 Timothy 4:11**. Mark became the author of one of our Gospel Books. Paul's severity and the kindly understanding of Barnabas combined to make possible the stability of Mark's life.

"Did you hear about Paul? I thought he was saved. But if he were, how could he deal so with Barnabas and Mark?" Sound familiar? Brother and Sister do not be too quick to lose confidence. We need not always understand motives. Our brother may see differently than we. He may be closer to God than we. We read of no repentance being necessary in this incident.

We live today in an age which too often takes sides with Barnabas against Paul. Parents today are prone to settle every dispute with their children on the basis of compromise and loving understanding. We need some of Paul's sternness in modern domestic life. When young people make mistakes, they need to learn that eventually they themselves have to pay for these mistakes. Parents are foolish to try to relieve children of this payment, and such children themselves grow up to be spoiled worldlings if their parents pass over every mistake and failure and forsaking of responsibility, attributing them all to the immaturity of youth.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.

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