

## **Bi134 Acts**

### ***Lesson Bi134-28 Paul's Second Journey Begins***

In the work of missions, what is more important, the work or the worker? This is an important question, and it is not so easy to answer. Today's story from the Book of Acts teaches us that both the work and the worker are important.

Paul and Barnabas delivered the important letter from the Jerusalem Council to the saints in Antioch. They continued to fervently preach and teach the word of the Lord there for quite a while. That is when the Spirit of the Lord began to stir Paul's heart. One day he approached Barnabas and said, "Now is the time for us to revisit all the places where we preached the word of the Lord. We should check and see how the disciples there are doing."

Barnabas wanted to take his young cousin John Mark with them. You will remember how John Mark had gone with the two apostles on their first missionary journey. However, part way through the mission, he had abandoned the work and returned home. Because of this, Paul did not want to take Mark with them. A big argument broke out between the two missionaries, with neither one willing to back down. Their dispute became so heated that they finally agreed to go their separate ways. Barnabas would revisit Cyprus and Paul would go to southern Galatia.

So Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas as his new associate. The brothers in Antioch entrusted them all into the Lord's care and sent them on their way. Paul and Silas headed through northern Syria and then westward into Cilicia. Everywhere they went, they took time to strengthen the churches (Acts 15:30-41).

From the New Testament we learn that the focus of Paul's ministry was reaching the unreached Gentile nations for Christ. He once testified, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known" (Rom 15:20). Because of this, he was always going to new places to preach the good news about Christ.

We must not think, however, that Paul's concern for the churches ended once he had established them and moved on to a new location. He wrote the believers in Corinth telling them of his "deep concern for all of the churches" (2Cor 11:28). Whenever he had opportunity, he always returned to these churches to strengthen and encourage the Christians there.

This is what happened in today's story. 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." Paul's motive for revisiting the churches was to strengthen the brothers and sisters in those places. For this same reason, he wrote letters to the churches. Paul wanted every church he planted to emerge as a Spirit-empowered missionary church—one that could extend itself into the surrounding region. We today must have the same goal for our churches.

From the story of the controversy between Paul and Barnabas, we learn three valuable lessons concerning the work of the Lord. The first lesson we learn from Barnabas, the second we learn from Paul, and the third we learn from both apostles.

From the actions of Barnabas, we learn the value of trusting people and giving them a second chance in ministry. During Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, Mark had forsaken the work and returned home. Because of this, Paul did not want him to join them on their second journey. Barnabas, however, saw potential in his young cousin. He wanted to give the young man a second chance, so he took Mark with him to revisit Cyprus.

Barnabas was right in giving Mark a second chance. For ultimately the young man did well. We know this because, years later, Paul referred to Mark as his "fellow worker" in the work of the Lord (Phil 1:24). When Paul was in a Roman prison, he wrote Timothy and asked him to "get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2Tim 4:11). Mark would eventually go on to write the gospel that bears his name. So, from Barnabas we learn the importance of trusting people and giving them a second chance in ministry.

We also learn a valuable lesson from the actions of Paul on this occasion. From him, we learn of the importance of fulfilling our God-given mission. While Barnabas was concerned about Mark, Paul focused on accomplishing the mission. Christ commissioned him to plant his church among the Gentiles. Paul was so devoted to fulfilling this mission that he refused to allow anything to hinder its accomplishment. During the first journey, Mark had proven to be an unreliable partner. Now, Paul was afraid that his presence on the team would hinder the work.

Paul was right in guarding the mission, for reaching the lost is the church's most important duty. Possibly Mark could not have endured the great hardships that Paul and Silas were to face. During this long arduous journey into Asia Minor and pagan Europe, their lives were in constant danger. They traveled great distances over bandit-infested roads. They were mocked, beaten, imprisoned, and driven out of cities. However, to Paul, none of these things mattered. What mattered to him was accomplishing the work that Christ had given him. He would allow nothing to deter him. From Paul we learn that reaching the lost is so important we should not allow anything to hinder us from fulfilling our mission.

We learn a third important lesson from the actions of both Paul and Barnabas on that day. We learn that whatever happens, we must stay with the work. After their heated debate over John Mark, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways. Barnabas sailed for Cyprus with John Mark, and Paul headed for Asia Minor with Silas. What is important, however, is that neither man abandoned the work. Both continued as active missionaries. Rather than allow their argument to stop the work, they entered into a strategic agreement concerning who would go where. Thus, the work expanded; one effective missionary team became two.

At times Christian brothers and sisters will disagree. When this happens, we should not be tempted to abandon the work God has given us. Like Paul and Barnabas, we must be mature enough to agree about how each will continue in the work. If we will remain kindhearted and mature in our attitudes, in time even greater unity and agreement can come.

This lesson is **important** because it helps us to know what to do when disagreements arise among brothers and sisters about how the work of God should be done.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that both the work and the workers are important. It is important that we see the potential in Christian workers. Even when they fail, we should give them a second chance. At the same time, we must remain focused on accomplishing the work of reaching the lost for Christ. We should never let anything distract us from that all-important task.

Let's **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. What caused the controversy between Paul and Barnabas at the beginning of their Second Missionary Journey?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that they disagreed on whether they should take John Mark with them, you are correct.
2. What important lesson do we learn from Barnabas?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "From Barnabas we learn the importance of trusting people with the work of God and giving them a second chance when they fail," you answered correctly.
3. What lesson do we learn from Paul?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that we learn from Paul the importance of the work of mission and necessity of remaining focused on that mission, you are right.
4. What lesson do we learn from both apostles?
  - A [PAUSE] If you answered that from both apostles we learn that, whatever happens, we must stay with the work, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson several more times until you can tell someone else the story of the controversy between Paul and Barnabas at the beginning of their second missionary journey. Has the Holy Spirit brought to your mind someone who needs a second chance in ministry? Ask God to help you to be a Barnabas to that person, so that the mission of reaching the lost can go forward.