

GOD'S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Lesson Seventeen

IN ACTS: Mark's Failure and Silas' Selection

Burden to Impart:

Although we may sometimes fail the Lord in fulfilling our Christian responsibility, it does not mean that we should quit or give up. In God's calling it is not how we begin that counts, it is how we end. So if we fall, we should rise up and go on again.

Memory Verse: "Luke alone is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for the ministry." (2 Timothy 4:11).

Facts to Teach:

1. When the church in Jerusalem was suffering during a great famine, the church in Antioch sent them money for relief through Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:28-30).
2. Barnabas and Saul decided to bring Mark (or John Mark), a young disciple in Jerusalem who loved the Lord, back with them to Antioch (Acts 11:25). Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Col. 4:10).
3. When the Lord called Barnabas and Paul to go out on their first journey of ministry to bring the gospel to other lands, they brought Mark along with them as their attendant (Acts 13:5). Mark was a young man, so he came along to help Barnabas and Paul, who were older. To accompany two older Apostles and servants of the Lord on such a mission should have been considered a great privilege and opportunity for Mark.
4. However, Mark did not last long. They firstly sailed to the island of Cypress (about 100 miles). Then they passed through most of the island by land (about 90 miles), preaching the gospel. They met some opposition (Acts 13:6—12). But compared to the very fierce opposition Paul later met with, it was almost nothing. The journey seemed to be too tough for Mark, for at this point he left Barnabas and Paul and sailed back home to Jerusalem where his mother lived (Acts 13:13; 12:12).
5. When Paul and Barnabas were later going on their second journey of ministry, Barnabas again wanted to take his younger cousin Mark with them. Paul, however, would not agree. He did not feel that it was suitable to bring Mark with them (Acts 15:35-39). Perhaps Mark left them the first time because he was not grown up enough to bear such a burden or to endure such hardship, as was required by the Apostles.
6. The contention was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark along with him and sailed away to Cypress. Paul chose another young disciple, Silas, join him in the gospel work. The brothers prayed for Paul and Silas and sent them out with their blessing to carry on the Lord's work of establishing the churches (Acts 15:40).
7. Though Mark left Paul again, he was later recovered and came back to Paul. Perhaps he was strengthened in the Lord through his close fellowship with Peter (1 Pet. 5:13). Mark became a faithful co-worker with Paul and was useful to Paul in his ministry even until Paul's imprisonment and death (2 Tim. 4:11). Mark eventually even became one of the writers of the four Gospels.