

When Spiritual Fathers Fail...

INTRODUCTION: What happens when a spiritual father fails? How can that affect his ministry and the ministry of his spiritual sons?

A. WHEN SPIRITUAL FATHERS CANNOT WORK TOGETHER: BARNABUS AND PAUL

1. Barnabas became a spiritual father to Paul:
 - a) He was named "The Son of Consolation" by the Apostles in Acts 4:36. He helped get Paul established as a young Christian, Acts 9:26-27.
 - b) Acts 11:22-26 Barnabas later invited Paul to help him with the church at Antioch. Barnabas was the senior Pastor, and Paul became his assistant pastor!
 - c) Barnabas was the leader of the missionary group that started out, Acts 13:1-3, vs7. He was such a great man, that he could step aside and let Paul become the new leader, Acts 13:13, 16, 43, 46.
2. The separation of Barnabus & Paul, Acts 15:36-38
 - a) Paul & Barnabus wanted to start a second missionary trip together, but they had an argument about whether they should allow John Mark to be their helper again, Acts 15:37-38. They separated and never worked as a team again.
 - b) Barnabus could argue that Paul was not being patient enough, in encouraging Mark to prepare for his ministry. Years later, Paul acknowledged Mark as having become a profitable minister who could help him, 2 Tim.4:11. Mark also went on to write the gospel of Mark. BARNABUS WAS PARTLY RIGHT!
 - c) Paul felt that Mark had not demonstrated the ability to overcome the trials that he knew would be ahead on the next missionary journey, Acts 13:13, Prov.25:19
 - d) Acts 15:38-39 The argument became so hot that Barnabus **took** Mark and went to Cyprus. Barnabus and Mark did not wait to receive the approval & blessing of the brethren (which they had to start their 1st trip, Acts 13:2-3). Paul was careful with his preparations: he **chose** Silas, and also waited to receive the prayers and blessing of the brethren, Acts 15:40.
 - e) The results: Paul went on to have a much greater future ministry, but Barnabus is never heard from again. Barnabus remained a spiritual father (to Mark) but did not grow in his personal ministry beyond the level he had already obtained.
 - * Paul became a much greater spiritual father than Barnabus, who had been his own spiritual father!
 - * But Barnabus' failure did not affect his ability to train John Mark, his next spiritual son, to become a great man of God...

B. WHEN SPIRITUAL FATHERS SIN: NOAH AND SAUL

1. Noah: Although Noah was very godly (Gen.6:9 & 7:1), he once sinned and became drunk, Gen.9:20-21.
 - a) His son, Ham, saw his nakedness & sin, and exposed his father's shame to his brothers, Gen.9:22. Because he did not properly honor his father (Ex.20:12) he & his sons were cursed to become servants, Gen.9:24-25.
 - * Our ministries can be cut short, or limited (to servanthood) if we react wrongly to our spiritual father's sins!
 - b) Shem and Japheth received prophetic blessings from their father (just after he recovered from his sin!) for their honoring their father & covering his sin,

Gen.9:23 & 26-27, 1 Pet.4:8. Shem & Japheth were given leadership over Ham's servant 'ministry.'

2. King Saul: Saul continually disobeyed the Lord, and God pronounced judgment upon his ministry, 1 Sam.13:13-14.
 - a) The Lord brought David to Saul, to become a spiritual son and learn from his ministry, 1 Sam.16:21-23.
 - b) Saul became jealous of David and tried to destroy him, 1 Sam.18:9-17.
 - c) David continued to serve Saul until he was driven away, but even then:
 - 1) David left alone, he did not spread gossip, he did not try to split the kingdom.
 - 2) David continued to honor Saul, even when David could destroy him, 1 Sam.24:2-11, 16-17, 20.
 - 3) God protected David and eventually gave him Saul's kingdom / ministry.
 - 4) David reaped what he sowed! He had mercy on backslidden King Saul, and God had mercy on HIM when he backslid, 2 Sam.7:14-16, Is.55:3.

C. WHEN SPIRITUAL FATHERS SEEM TO FAIL, BUT ARE IN GOD'S WILL

1. Job:
 - a) Job lost all his 'ministries' (flocks, servants, children, etc.) because of a contest between Satan & God, Job.1:8-12 & 2:3-6.
 - b) Job's 3 friends (leaders, fellow 'ministers') misjudged him and accused Job of sin, Job 11 & 22.
 - c) Job's friends were wrong and would have been judged by God except that they repented, Job 42:7-8.
 - d) Job regained a double portion and became very great, Job 42:10-17.
2. Jesus:
 - a) Jesus' ministry seemed to fail: He was betrayed, the Shepherd was struck, the sheep were scattered, and Peter denied Him, Mt.26:31-34, 47-56, 69-75.
 - b) God the Father allowed this 'failure,' to test the hearts of Christ's disciples, Zech.13:7-9.
 - Peter repented and became a great apostle.
 - Judas tried to remove his guilt by committing suicide!
 - c) This 'failure' became the doorway to promotion for Christ, Is.49:5-7, Phil.2:5-11, Mt.28:18-19.

CONCLUSION: God tests our hearts through our leaders, our spiritual fathers. We are tested not only by their successes, but through their failures! What do we do when they fail? There are great ministries & inheritances ahead for the faithful sons!