When Spiritual Leaders Separate…

INTRODUCTION: What happens when spiritual leaders have conflicts, and separate? How will their ministries be affected? We have an example of these conflicts and their results in the Biblical story of Barnabus and Paul.

1. BARNABAS BECAME A SPIRITUAL FATHER TO PAUL:

A. Barnabus 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. Barnabus later invited Paul to help him with the church at Antioch, Acts 11:22-26.

He was the senior Pastor, and Paul became his assistant pastor!

C. Barnabus was the leader of the missionary group that started out, Acts 13:1-3, & 7.

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. In 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 Barnabus and Paul had received before they started their first trip in

Acts 13:2-3). Paul was more careful with his preparations after Barnabus hurredly left:

Paul chose Silas, and also waited to receive the prayers and blessing of the brethren,

Acts 15:40. Paul continued to relate to his home church, Acts 18:22-23.

E. When Barnabus left Paul, he did not take with him another mature minister, to work as

a balanced team. (Paul took a mature prophet with him, for balanced team ministry).

Barnabus only took along his cousin, Mark, as an apprentice, Col.4:10. Barnabus no

longer had any strong checks and balances upon his ministry from either his home

church, or his team!

3. THE RESULTS:

A. Paul went on to have a much greater future ministry, but Barnabas is never heard from

again in the New Testament. He left the “cutting edge” of what God was doing.

B. Barnabus remained an apostle, who established Cyprus as a Christian nation (He had

originally led the apostolic team that had evangelized the nation in Acts 13).

However, Barnabas did not go past the apostolic attainments that he had achieved

with Paul, he settled down to only be an apostle over one nation. Paul continued to

grow in his apostolic ministry, and became an apostle who established the Church in

many nations.

C. Paul wrote many apostolic letters which were received as the pure Word of God, and

were included in the New Testament. Barnabus probably wrote one apostolic letter which is

accredited to him and is still in print today- but it was judged to be imperfect, was not included

in the Bible, and is little studied today.

D. Barnabus was successful in discipling Mark (his younger cousin that he had already

started to train) but he did not disciple any more notable spiritual sons. (However, Barnanas

did not complete the training of Mark- that was done by the Apostle Peter, who later claimed

Mark as his own spiritual son, 1 Pet.5:13. Paul went on to disciple many more notable spiritual

sons, including Luke, Timothy, Titus, Onesimus, and others.

E. The results show that Paul went on to develop a much greater, multiplied ministry after he

separated from Barnabus. However, while Barnabus retained the ministry that he had

already developed before the separation, he did not further develop beyond what he had

already attained.

CONCLUSION: The lessons we can learn from Barnabus’ separation, and his lack of continued

development, are:

1) Respect the team ministries that God gives you, to balance you, Eccles.4:9-10.

2) If you travel or are involved in ministries outside of your local church, stay connected with your local home church.

3) Do not let earthly family ties hinder you from being in proper relationship with the family of God. Barnabus chose his cousin, Mark, instead of remaining with Paul.

4) Do not be “partly right” during divisions and ministry splits, like Barnabus. Make sure that your ministry will be able to continue to grow and develop.