

Sharp Contention *Between* **Two Men of God**

Acts 15:35-41



Paul and Barnabas had been faithful co-workers. However, in Acts 15 we learn of a strong disagreement between these two men which led to a parting of the ways. This serious dispute centered in the actions of Mark who had departed from the missionary team (Acts 13:13), an action which met Paul's strong disapproval. The sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas had nothing to do with doctrine, but only with policy. Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them; Paul did not. As a result, the great team of Paul and Barnabas which had served the Lord so well was now divided, and each went his own separate way. There were now two missionary teams instead of one (Acts 13:39-40).

Paul's position: "I will not endorse any missionary who is a proven failure. Mark had his chance to prove himself, but he let us down and deserted us."

Barnabas' position: "I am committed to the restoration of this man who has failed, especially since I know this man personally. He is not only my companion, but my relative (Col. 4:10)."

There is a sense in which both men may have been right. Barnabas was vindicated because Mark proved himself in the end and was the human author of one of the four Gospels. Paul had good wisdom because even though Mark eventually was restored, it did not happen immediately, and you must give a man time to recover and become a vessel fit for the Master's use. Also, both men could have been wrong. Perhaps Paul was too resentful against Mark, and Barnabas too eager to support his relative. Was Paul too hard on Mark and Barnabas too soft? We do not know all the facts, but God worked, Paul and Barnabas were reconciled (1 Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10), and Mark became profitable to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11).

~George Zeller: www.middletonbiblechurch.org

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