

Picking Up The Pieces

*“Get Mark and bring him with you,
because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”*

2 Timothy 4:11 (NIV)

The man referred to as Mark (aka. John Mark) in our verse today had a most interesting journey through life. His home was a house of prayer (Acts 12:12) and he was likely born into a family of some financial means and influence. The great missionary Barnabas was his cousin (Colossians 4:10).

Mark had grown up in Jerusalem and so enjoyed the usual social and religious benefits of a thriving city life.

The apostle Peter knew the home of John Mark well and sought safety there when the Romans were after his life (Acts 12:11-12). Peter fondly referred to Mark as his “son” (1 Peter 5:13).

When Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch from a visit to Jerusalem they took along Mark who was undoubtedly excited to be with two such wonderful men of God. Then came Mark’s crowning moment when he was invited to go along with Barnabas and Paul on the first great missionary journey (Acts 13:5).

Sadly for John Mark, he failed the test on the journey as he

fled home to his mother and Jerusalem when the going got tough (Acts 13:13). This defection under duress caused Paul to be wary of John Mark and some time later when Barnabas and Paul decided to retrace their steps of the first missionary journey, Paul refused to have John Mark go with them (Acts 15:38).

It was much more than Mark being related to Barnabas that caused Barnabas to desire a second opportunity for Mark. Barnabas’s whole mission in life, it seems, was to bring people in from the cold, and present them with opportunity to serve the Lord. Twice (Acts 9:26-27; 11:25-26), Barnabas had brought Paul into a place of opportunity for ministry. Now Barnabas desired to do the same for Mark as he had done for Paul.

It seems tragic that Barnabas and Paul split from each other over Mark. It must have been humiliating for Mark to realize he was the occasion for a division between two such great people. We seem to see a hard hearted attitude in Paul over the fallen Mark. Apparently Paul was better suited to putting a person down than lifting them up. We still have

such a mindset in the church today. The gentle, forgiving, and generous spirit of Barnabas is readily seen in his determination to stay by Mark when Paul rejects him.

Barnabas left Paul and made a great man of John Mark. We do not have the history of how Barnabas built Mark up into such a towering leader in the church. But Mark not only wrote a Gospel named after him, but there is also the startling fact of Paul calling for John Mark when he comes to die as our verse indicates.

You may think your life is over because you have been a disgrace somehow to the Lord’s people. Remember John Mark and look for a Barnabas, a person who knows more about lifting people up than stepping on them. Get alongside that person and ask for their help in getting you back into a place for service to Jesus. As you “pick up the pieces” of your life you might even find that the Lord will make you into another John Mark. Also, there may be a Paul from your past who will call for you in his time of trouble.