

# When Christians Quarrel

“After some days Paul said to Barnabas,

‘Let’s return and visit the brothers and sisters in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.’

Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

But Paul was of the opinion that they should not take along with them this man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. Now it turned into such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another...”

Acts 15:36-39 (NASB)

**T**he argument between Paul and Barnabas is a sad moment in the life of the early church.

Paul owed his place in ministry to Barnabas. It was Barnabas who risked his reputation by commending the feared Saul to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27).

Paul proved worthy of the risk Barnabas took. Then, after Paul had to flee for his life to Tarsus from Jerusalem, it was Barnabas once more who found Paul and brought him to a center of Christian ministry (Acts 11:25-26).

Barnabas saw potential in people that others missed, Paul being a prime example. He was convinced that John Mark had what it took to become a leader in the church. Thus Barnabas sought a place for his cousin (Colossians 4:10) in the missionary work.

What Paul thought about taking the young man on the first journey we do not know. All Paul knew was that when the going got tough on the first journey the young man flickered in a crisis and ran home to Jerusalem and his mother.

The result of the dispute over John Mark was that Paul and Barnabas never worked together again—as far as the record shows. In 1 Corinthians

9:6 Paul refers to Barnabas kindly, so Paul rose above holding a grudge and gives us a good lesson on how to handle people with whom we disagree.

Mark was undoubtedly humiliated at being the cause of the two giants in the infant church quarreling.

He and Barnabas disappear from the narrative in Acts. Later Mark proves to be of service to Peter and Paul (1 Peter 5:13; Philemon 1:24; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11), so Barnabas’s assessment of the young failure was vindicated.

It is wonderful that Paul called for the man he trashed in life as the one he wanted with him as he faced death. Paul had Barnabas to thank for growing John Mark into such a wonderful man of God.

So, when inevitable disputes rise among us, may we have grace to encourage the rejected and help the down trodden to rise up and find a place among the Lord’s people. Then, like Paul, may we never hold a grudge against those with whom we disagree. Rather may we have grace to embrace those with whom we have quarrelled. This is the Christian way to handle our disputes and show the love of Christ to believers and the world.

Sadly, the world sees many unresolved disputes among Christians.

In the early church the world marvelled at the love among God’s people. Our Lord said, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

May the Lord’s people learn the lessons from the early church and prove whose followers we truly are, because we not only love the Lord’s people, but we also love our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

We are one in the Spirit  
We are one in the Lord  
And we pray that all unity  
May one day be restored

And they’ll know we are Christians  
By our love, By our love  
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians  
By our love

We will walk with each other  
We will walk hand in hand  
And together we’ll spread the news  
That God is in our land

- Fr. Peter Scholtes

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