

Acts 15:38-41

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[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word and turn to our text for this morning, which is Acts chapter 15, verses 36-41.

Before we take a look at this morning's text, I would like to give a brief recap of some of the recent events recorded by Luke in his account. We're not going to go all the way back to chapter 1, but we're going to back up to chapter 11.

Luke's account, I've said to you before, I like to call the Acts of the Risen Jesus, because it is a record of the extension of Jesus' earthly ministry.

He is now ascended, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, but he is working by the agency of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the church.

This recap will serve our understandings of this morning's text by setting a stage with the characters contained within it. It's an interesting text before us.

[1 : 03] So let's begin our recap halfway through chapter 11. Chapter 11, if you'd like to turn back a few pages, beginning in verse 19. Luke writes, Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen.

Luke's referring to Stephen, the first Christian martyr, martyred in Jerusalem. He's arrested, put on trial, makes audacious accusations to the Sanhedrin, and they have him stoned.

And because of this event, a great persecution arises in Jerusalem. And by that, God swings open the gates of Jerusalem and the gospel goes forth to the known world.

Luke records, chapter 11, verse 19. Because of the persecution, they traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists. And the Hellenists were Greek converts or Gentile converts to Judaism.

[2 : 22] They spoke to the Hellenists also preaching the Lord Jesus. Verse 21. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose.

For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas, because of the great many people, Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul.

It is not until chapter 13, verse 9, that Saul is introduced as Paul, which was his Roman name.

Verse 26. And when he had found him, Barnabas finds Saul, who we know as Paul.

He brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

[3 : 30] In the following, after verse 26, a prophet named Agabus informs the church in Antioch of a coming famine. A great famine that would plague the land.

So the church decides to send aid to Jerusalem by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. So Barnabas has journeyed. He's gotten Saul. He's brought him to together for a year.

They've ministered to the church in Antioch because it's grown in number. Too much for Barnabas to handle by himself. He brings Saul along. So Barnabas and Paul begin their formal recorded ministry together in Acts chapter 11.

Then in chapter 12, Luke kind of jumps location of narrative. Now we saw right at the end of chapter 11 that Paul and Barnabas are sent with aid. So this is the bridge to back in Jerusalem.

What's going on back in Jerusalem? Luke tells us of the martyrdom of the apostle James and the arrest of Peter. The miraculous deliverance of Peter from the prison and the death of Herod.

[4 : 37] And then in Acts chapter 12, verse 25, Luke says, And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.

So it appears that Barnabas and Saul have been in Jerusalem for this entire event. If you're familiar with the story, there's a great number of believers gathered together praying for Peter as he's imprisoned.

It's likely that Barnabas and Saul are there in that house ministering amongst the saints and praying for Peter. So, at the end of chapter 12, we see that Barnabas and Paul are joined by a man named John Mark.

And all we know about John Mark up to this point in Luke's narrative is what he tells us in Acts 12. When Peter realized that the Lord had rescued him from Herod, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John.

There's lots of Marys in this day. Mary, the mother of John, whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. So, we learn that Mark, John Mark, is a brother.

[5 : 55] And he's likely, he doesn't say it specifically, but he's likely at this place meeting with the fellow believers and making earnest prayer for Peter. And that brings us to our text today.

So, a little bit of background. And we'll get more into some events that happened with Paul and Barnabas and John Mark. But to kind of bring us up to our text for today, Acts 15, verses 36 through 41.

Beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

And I start reading in verse 36. And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are.

Now, Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

[7 : 03] And there arose a sharp disagreement so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. This is our text for today. And it's a difficult text for our study this morning.

Not because its meaning is unclear. There's not some deep theological meaning that we must unravel from it. It's laying there on the surface for us.

It's easy to discern. But it's difficult because its application is difficult to discern. What do we do with such a text?

I want either its exclusion. This is in my flesh. Either its exclusion. Can we just jump over the fact that they disagreed and just say, and they went separate ways. Or, man, I want more details.

[8 : 02] How exactly did this sharp disagreement go down? Many commentators I have read over the past couple of weeks only give a couple of sentences or a very short paragraph to this text.

Much to say about all of the events leading up to it and all of the events that follow. But very little. Typically just a repetition of what the text itself says. And there was a disagreement. And they went separate ways.

And you go, great, thank you guys. One commentator I use fairly often just skipped it all together. And when, with all their pages falling out of the comment, they just skipped it and didn't talk about it at all.

In our belief as a church that verse-by-verse exposition is the best habit for preaching, a text like this becomes a test of that conviction.

This is not what's been on my heart this week. Other things have troubled me. And then this text. In our belief in the inspiration of the Scripture, that is that God wrote this text.

[9 : 12] He wrote it. Luke carried along by the Spirit. Through his pen, God wrote this letter. And he included certain details.

And he excluded certain details. We must pick it up and turn it over and wonder why God has inspired such texts for us today.

It means something. It has bearing on our lives today. I love verse-by-verse exposition because it presses me to this.

I'll tell you that if I just picked text, this is not a text I would preach. I might use it as some kind of a support to something else, but I would not pick this as a main text. So this morning I'll do my best, certainly by grace, to answer that question for us.

Why? Why did it happen? And why did God inspire the record of it? To help us pick up a text and see the glory of Christ contained within it?

[10:18] I'm going to structure our study in the following way. So for your note-taking benefit, these are going to be the three points this morning for Acts chapter 15, verses 36 through 41. First, and I'll go back to these first, the occasion for the disagreement.

We'll look at this in verses 36 through 38. Secondly, the nature of the disagreement. The first half of verse 39, so 39a.

And thirdly, the result of the disagreement. In the last half of verse 39, 39b through the end of our text in verse 41. So firstly, the occasion for the disagreement.

So note first, at the outset of our text today, the desire of Paul and of Barnabas to strengthen the church.

The text begins with Paul saying to Barnabas, let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are.

[11:29] Now what he's talking about is their first missionary journey. The church in Antioch commissions Paul and Barnabas to go on the first missionary journey. It's often referred to as Paul's first missionary journey.

Barnabas accompanies him on it. And they go on a trip that we read about and have discussed along the way. Full of trial. Full of conversions. Many churches are established along the way. They've returned to Antioch. Then they've traveled to Jerusalem. And we see in Clay preach for two weeks on the Jerusalem council. What happens there? What's established concerning Gentile believers?

Whether or not they should be circumcised? And then they carry a letter back to the church in Antioch. And that's where we find them. They've now been in Antioch for many days.

They've been preaching, strengthening that church. And Paul turns to Barnabas and says, hey, let's go back to where we went before. It's been quite some time now. And let's be sure that they're doing okay.

[12:29] Let's see how they are. Now recall that Paul is commissioned by Jesus, specifically by Jesus, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul is known as the apostle to the Gentiles, which he desired to do in broadening ways. He takes this one short trip, beginning his first missionary journey.

His next two are much larger. He desires at the end of his life to take the gospel all the way to Rome and to preach it there. Always pressing further.

Always going beyond. In Romans 15-20, Paul says this, I make it my ambition to preach the gospel. Not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation.

So there's this longing in Paul's heart to go further, to go to the unreached of the earth, to preach the gospel in places where the gospel of Jesus Christ has never been preached.

[13:33] Paul is a church planner. Paul is a missionary. He's a frontiersman going out and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. But he did not neglect the greater command of Jesus.

Matthew 28, verses 18-20, Jesus said to the disciples, And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Paul is desirous of this. Not just to see converts, but to see people grow in their depth of knowledge.

In fact, often in our narrative, we miss how much time he spends with the churches that he establishes. Sometimes it's not much time at all. The place that he shipwrecked, the island he shipwrecked on, history holds it that a church was established there.

He was there three days. And they got passage on from that place. But many of the places that he went, he stayed on for some years. The church of Antioch is one example of that to deepen the believers there as well, to teach them all that Christ had commanded.

[14:52] We see that in his concern to return to these churches. Some time has gone on. How are they doing? Has any error crept in? Are they still being faithful to the teachings of Christ?

In 2 Corinthians 11, after Paul is given a long list of suffering that he has endured for the sake of the Gospel, he concludes in verse 28 this.

And this is astounding to me after all of the things he lists, the shipwreckings, the beatings, the stonings. He says, and apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

A desire to see them grow in godliness. And so he has this desire. And Barnabas has the same desire. Verse 37 confirms that for us.

Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. So in a very brief way, Luke records for us, Barnabas agreed, right? They made a plan to go. And Barnabas adds to that that he would like to take John Mark along.

[15:58] Who we learn in Colossians chapter 4, verse 10, that John Mark is likely Barnabas' cousin. And I say like because we don't know for sure because the word in the ESV translator for cousin can also be used to mean uncle and it can also be used to mean nephew.

Often Greek is so incredibly precise. It's a much broader language, more precise language. In this case, not so much. So most scholars guess that he was his cousin.

Could have been, his uncle could have been his nephew, I suppose. That's also possible. But likely his cousin, right? And he wants to bring him along in order to give him a second chance.

In order to give him a second chance. But why did he need a second chance? If you back up a bit in our narrative to Acts 13, 13, you get more of the detail of what Paul is referring to in Acts 15, verse 38.

Paul says, we've read this already, but Paul thought best not to take with them one, being John Mark, who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

[17:17] So Acts 13, 13, Luke records for us, now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos, which is on the island of Cyprus. They've been on the island of Cyprus, right?

They've seen some resistance to the gospel there. They've also seen many churches planted in this place. So they sail from Paphos and they came to Perga in Pamphylia. So another city.

They land in the port city of Perga in Pamphylia and John left them and returned to Jerusalem. And that's what we know of this event. So we don't know for certain the reason that John Mark left them. That's the record we get. John left them and returned to Jerusalem. But we can surmise that he likely left because he was afraid.

The journey that Barnabas and Paul take heading north from Perga was through a mountain area that was riddled with danger. In fact, back to the little bit of text I read to you from 2 Corinthians 11, all of the dangers listed before that, dangers in the wilderness, dangers from rivers, dangers in the mountains, dangers from thieves, like all of that is likely about this journey that he took heading north.

[18:32] A very treacherous journey. And John Mark has already seen resistance to the gospel. And what his guess is that he was seeing the possibility both of physical danger as well as spiritual danger that was ahead.

And we know that Barnabas and Paul encountered that, right? Paul is stoned almost to death. They presume he's dead and they drag his body out and leave it outside of a city.

He gets back up and continues to minister the gospel of Christ. Further, Paul's desire to not take him along certainly speaks to some measure of moral failure on John Mark's part.

It wasn't like John Mark needed to go back and attend to the church and that's why he left. There's a reason that this particular leaving carries weight for Paul. And Paul says, no, he didn't go with us to the work.

He left us. The word translated withdrawn in chapter 15, verse 38, and left in chapter 3, verse 13, can also mean abandon or desert.

[19:39] So I think it's a safe assumption to make that the reason John Mark left was because he was afraid. He abandoned the work that was ahead of him because he was afraid.

And Paul wants no part of John Mark on this return trip. Barnabas wants to give him a second chance. Now remember, this is the same Barnabas that defended Paul back in Acts chapter 9.

You remember Paul was a persecutor of the church. He was dragging people out of their homes and sending them to prison so that the church had reason to be afraid of him.

He could have been playing a double agent and trying to infiltrate the church by pretending to be a follower of Jesus Christ. But back in Acts 9, verses 26 and 27, Luke records this.

And when Paul had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples and they were all afraid of him for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord who spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

[20 : 53] And so Barnabas is the one who had come to Paul's defense. Barnabas is not actually his given name. This is another Joseph of the Bible.

But the disciples gave him the name Barnabas, which means son of encouragement. He seems to be an uplifter of those who are downtrodden.

And so he wants to bring along John Mark. And Paul wants nothing to do with John Mark on another journey back through the same region.

So who was right? I don't know. I don't know. I think that they both had good desires. I think both of them had kingdom advancing desires.

I think part of Barnabas' desire in going back to see the churches and taking John Mark with them was the strengthening of John Mark who's part of the church of Christ.

[21 : 56] It's difficult to say if it was proper to take along John Mark or not. And Luke doesn't seem to make any judgment on the matter whatsoever. Some commentators suggest that he does.

Verse 40, but Paul chose Silas and departed having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. Some suggest that this is Luke's account, that the church agreed with Paul because you see that Barnabas and John Mark just leave.

The record just says and they departed. But Paul chose Silas and departed having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. I don't know if we can jump quite that far. I think probably verse 40 is recorded that way because Paul is and will continue to be the main character in Luke's narrative. Luke's traveling with Paul. So I think he's giving us greater detail about what happened after they went separate ways.

So I can't say that that is his intention found at the end. So that's the occasion for the disagreement. That's what brings about this disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.

[23 : 04] Secondly, let's look at the nature of the disagreement. Oh boy. The nature of the disagreement. The first part of verse 39 says, and there arose a sharp disagreement so that they separated from each other.

Now, in English we have a phrase which is a single word in Greek. Sharp disagreement. And the word is in Greek paroxysmos which is the root of the English word paroxysm.

Does anybody know that word? If I say that English word paroxysm, anybody's like, oh yeah, paroxysm. I learned it this week. I'm like, oh, the English word paroxysm? Okay. You may want to use it in the coming week.

Let me tell you what it means in English. paroxysm. A paroxysm is a sudden attack or violent expression of a certain emotion. So this word in Greek carries a massive weight.

It's not any kind of gentle disagreement that they have. Paul didn't go, I don't think so. I'm not so sure that's the best thing. John Mark, you know, we're probably going to have to pay for passage for him to leave again.

[24 : 12] He's kind of proven his merit on trips like this. Barna goes, wow, come on, man, give him a second chance. This is not the kind of disagreement that they have. Again, this is why I want details.

What was said? The word would lead us to believe that they were yelling at each other, right? A sharp disagreement, right? They got in a fight about whether or not John Mark should go on this journey.

So, are we to learn from this that there are appropriate times for such disagreements? If you look at this text, you go, oh, Paul and Barnabas, look, they got in a sharp disagreement, right?

They got in a screaming match over something and then they left each other, so that's appropriate in some cases in the church. I don't think so. I don't think so. But let me say this, as we're thinking about this and kind of building it out together, that anger is not necessarily the enemy of righteousness.

There is such a thing as righteous anger. Ephesians 4, 26 and 27, Paul writes this, be angry and do not sin.

[25 : 26] So it's possible to be angry and not be sinful anger. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down in your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

So there's a proper way to be angry. We don't have time to talk about that at great length. But let me kind of sum up the only way that it's okay to be angry.

To be righteously angry is to have your anger aimed at offenses against the glory of God.

So not offenses of yourself. No righteous anger when somebody pulls out in front of you on the road and they slow you down. That's not righteous anger. Even if you're headed to church, it's not okay. I'm going to be late now because of you. You should have left earlier. It's not their fault. The world does not revolve around you. But anger at heresy being taught in our communities can be rightly motivated.

[26 : 32] Righteous anger funneled at things that are an offense to the glory of God. So could that be what's happening here? So there is a type of anger.

There's a time in the life of a Christian where you might find yourself in a sharp disagreement with someone else. Is that what's happening here?

I don't think so. I don't think so. Luke gives us no hint that Barnabas was sinning by taking John Mark with him. He doesn't give us any idea that that would be the case.

That Paul would be defending the glory of God, the advancement of the kingdom of God, because Barnabas wanted to give John Mark a second chance.

I can't get there that that's what's happening, that Paul's anger is righteous. I suggest to you that Paul and Barnabas entered into a sinful argument concerning a matter of personal preference and opinion.

[27 : 39] Now, if that feels unsettling to you, it does to me a little bit too, because in so many ways, Paul should be our hero, but he's not Christ.

And we see the moral failing of almost every biblical character presented to us. Not every one. Some of them come and go quickly, and it's just righteousness and that's fantastic. We get so little account of their life.

So many of the great fathers of our faith, there's record of their failing. And I believe that God pins this for us intentionally. So here's part of the answer.

Why did God inspire this text? Through the pen of Luke, that we wouldn't worship Paul. He wasn't perfect. To be emulated in so many respects.

Here he is early in his ministry, I believe, sinfully arguing a matter of personal preference and opinion. Beloved, we look to Christ for our supreme example of righteousness.

[28 : 42] Right? Our supreme example. Who was angry at times? The story of Jesus making, weaving together, taking the time to weave together.

He's not shooting off the cuff. He takes the time to weave together a whip so they can drive money changers out of the temple. Why? Because it was an offense to the glory of God.

There is such a thing as righteous anger. I don't think that's what we're observing here. Listen to some of Paul's later writing concerning our conduct with other believers.

I think Paul indicts himself. Colossians 3.13, he says, bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another, he does not say yell at each other and then part ways.

He says, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. So we as having been, if we're now in Christ, having once been enemies of God, being in sharp disagreement with him, God graciously extended to us a hand of reconciliation in the personal work of Jesus Christ.

[30 : 00] He's forgiven us in him and Paul is saying in Colossians 3.13, you need to forgive in the same way. You extend a hand of forgiveness in the exact same measure that forgiveness has been given to you.

Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1 through 3, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

So walk in a way that exhibits what God has done for you in a way that's worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Verse 2, with all humility and, do you know the text?

Gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. Verse 3, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So if there was a proper thing to do concerning John Mark and this trip, I think Paul is suggesting here to us and even to his past self that he could have walked patiently with Barnabas, led him to the proper conclusion rather than screaming in parting ways.

[31 : 21] Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, not just for married couples, this is written to a church, verses 4-7, love is patient and kind, love does not envy or boast, it is not arrogant or rude, and I love this in verse 5, it does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

So I suggest that these two brothers who had ministered alongside each other for as many as five years, and just catch that, right? Luke's narrative is so punchy sometimes that you miss the time that's gone on, right?

So depending on the approximations of dates and who you're reading, somewhere between three and five years, Barnabas and Paul have been together all of that time, right?

Dear brothers, partners in ministry, they have fought in the trenches together. They parted ways over opinion and preference. Now there is an appropriate time for the parting of fellowship amongst followers of Christ.

It will come to that, right? There are brothers, that I have in this community, that I am happy to fellowship with on some level, partner for the gospel in our community, but we could not fellowship in a church together.

[32 : 54] We disagree on particular doctrines, right? And amiably, we can disagree. Yeah, I just don't see it, right? I can't see that in the scripture. I think it could be dangerous.

I'm not saying that you believe heresy, but maybe you shouldn't be a member of our church. These things happen, right? There's times for that, for believers to go in separate directions, but I do not think this was one of them.

The evidence for me is the use of the word *paroxysmos*, sharp disagreement, sharp disagreement. I think Luke, inspired by the Spirit, uses a very particular term to tell us this is not the way, this should have been handled, right? Not with sharp disagreement.

Righteous anger is expressed in godly ways. On your bulletin, Charles Spurgeon, quote of the day, Satan greatly approves of our railing at each other.

[34 : 01] Oh, he loves it. He loves it when the church is fighting over preference and opinion. He greatly approves of our railing at each other, but God does not.

Now, I am very happy to report that the relationship between Paul and Barnabas appears to later be repaired. We don't get much hint of that. Barnabas is nowhere else found in the book of Acts.

It drops out of the scene. Paul is definitely the main character throughout the rest of Luke's narrative. I'm sure that Luke didn't even know what was up with Barnabas and John Mark as they traveled around.

But there is a hint of this in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 6. Paul is making a case for ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ to receive their living by their ministry.

And he just says this. It's a very small hint at this, but in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 6, he says, or is it only, this is tongue-in-cheek, or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

[35 : 06] So that's a rhetorical question. Is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? So there's this mention of Barnabas, and at very least, as Paul's writing to the Corinthian church, Paul is commending Barnabas' ministry.

It would seem that the Corinthian church knew who Barnabas was. He's not just some random character that Paul brings into the scene, but they knew who Barnabas was, so he mentions him in this. So at the very least, it's that.

He's commending Barnabas' ministry to the Corinthian church. At most, and I'd love to think this, they ministered together in Corinth. They met back up somewhere along the way, and he's referencing a brother who he ministered alongside when he says, is it only Barnabas' who have no right to refrain from working for a living.

Paul's relationship is also restored with John Mark. In Colossians 4.10, I mentioned earlier, we see that Mark is with Paul in his Roman prison.

He's alongside him. He's now joined back up in the mission that Paul had set God on. And we know that God sees fit to use Mark to pin one of the four gospel accounts.

[36 : 20] It's a wonderful picture of restoration of one who was a deserter being back very close at the center of God's work and his advancement of the kingdom. Okay, so the occasion for the disagreement, the nature of the disagreement, and thirdly and finally and briefly the result of the

disagreement.

The result. The last part of verse 39, we know what happened. We've said it now a few times. They separate, Barnabas takes Mark with him, and they sailed away to Cyprus.

That's where Barnabas was from, and this was the beginning of Paul and Barnabas' ministry. But Paul chose Silas, who we'll talk about more in some coming weeks, and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Churches prayed for him, they've said, God, you're in control, you are working in the life of Paul and now Silas. They committed to the grace of the Lord, and he goes through Syria and Cilicia strengthening churches.

So what's the result? They go separate ways, but we see missionary multiplication. One missionary team turned into two missionary teams.

[37 : 38] Men that have grown in the grace of Christ together, learned much on their journeys together, part ways and bring along new disciples that they train up and equip so that they can continue to send them out.

I'm reminded of the words of Joseph to his brothers. You remember Joseph's brothers throw him in the bottom of a well because they hate him. They change their mind, they pull him back up, they sell him into slavery. He ends up in Egypt in charge of all of the grain in Egypt through a lot of fantastic events.

And his brothers find themselves in the midst of a famine and they come to him, not knowing who he is, not recognizing him, realizing who he is, they fall down at his feet and he says to them, what you meant for evil, God meant for good.

Nothing escapes the good grasp of our sovereign God. He is never not in control. He providentially reigns over all things, even our failing, even our sin, God reigns over all of that.

Nothing escapes the good grasp of our sovereign God. Please never grow tired of Romans 8, 28. I always fear quoting things that you guys should be familiar with.

[38 : 59] Don't grow tired of this. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. God is bringing about good even in the midst of our failures.

That doesn't mean that we should be careless concerning our own failures. That is not to say to Paul and Barnabas, that's cool guys, God's got it, it's alright, no, no, repent.

If I'm reading it right, and I believe I am, that they're being sinful here, repent, turn back, be burdened by your separation. We shouldn't be careless concerning our own failures, leaning on the promise that God will work good, but in our failures, when we do and we will, we should be confident in God's promise of good.

Boy, this thing has not turned out the way I thought it should. Praise God, he is sovereign and working good in all things. So we saw the occasion for the disagreement, the nature of the disagreement, and the result of the disagreement.

Mission, multiplication, what they likely meant for evil, God turns to good. So what does it mean for us?

[40 : 17] Here's some application. I'm going to ask a series of questions. Take a little time just to consider these questions for your own soul. Number one, do you have any concern for strengthening the church?

If we can learn something here from Paul and Barnabas in the positive, they had a concern for the strengthening of the church. They're in Antioch now many years, two years they've been there, ministering the Word of God to God's people.

And their desire to go from that place is to go back to the places and to strengthen the church. Is your intention in being here to serve others with the gospel of Jesus Christ or to just be served? And you should be served as it's my desire and other people's desires to serve you. Is your motivation in coming here to sit down and consume nom nom nom nom and not turn around and invest anything in anyone else?

Number two, do you need to give someone a second chance? could you have a John Mark? A John Mark that God intends to do wonderful things with and you just blew them off?

[41 : 39] You fail to follow through with somebody who's walking through hard times. An axiom, beloved, is that when people are going through difficult times in their lives, their walk with Jesus Christ, they are the least likely to seek you out and ask for help.

I wish that wasn't the case. People withdraw inside themselves when they're going through difficult times and it takes pursuit of people. You've got to drag them kicking and screaming out of their little place of isolation and bring them out into the light and minister the gospel of Christ to them.

Is there someone in your life that you need to give a second chance to, that needs your investment for the sake of response to the gospel of Jesus? And along the same lines, this is still question two, second question of question two.

Do you need to cut someone loose? Often Clay and I have conversations as we're working at discipling young men, it's always nice to have a second opinion when someone is just not following through.

You've asked things of them, basic things, Christian things, not extra burdens, but just the commands of God. Next week I get to talk about how Paul required Timothy to be circumcised if he was going to go with him.

[43 : 03] We're not asking any of you to do that. Just to be obedient. Just to do the things that God has commanded you to do, and they're just people who will not. As much as we try to pursue, they will not.

And it's always nice to have that second person that goes, it's time to cut them loose, man. You're wasting your energy right now of an individual. And the time comes for that time comes for it. Sometimes people need to go off and feel the own weight of their sinfulness, and not have you crutching them up all the time. So ask yourself that question. Can you give someone a second chance, maybe play the Barnabas, do you need to cut someone loose, as Paul did?

I've got to think, this is an aside, I've got to think that in some way, for John Mark, there was a motivation birthed in him when Barnabas said, Paul wants nothing to do with you, because you bailed on us, you abandoned us, we could have used you and you left us, that there was a weightiness to that accusation, and I hope John Mark's response.

Number three, do you need to repent of any unrighteous anger? anger? I can tell you, unless you spent time recently repenting of unrighteous anger, that the answer to that question is yes, you do.

[44 : 29] Most of our anger, the vast majority of our anger, which we cloak in other words like frustration, I do that a lot, I say I'm frustrated, I'm angry, we make lots of justification for the way we feel, but in most of those cases, I know for myself anyway, that when I'm angry it's because I'm functionally believing that the world revolves around me, that I should be placed at the very center of it, and then something happens that disproves that, that shows me otherwise, and it makes me mad.

Stop getting at my worship of myself is what my anger is communicating outwardly. So beloved, there's much room for repentance of our anger.

You need to recognize that firstly and for mostly, our anger has a vertical offense, it's unrighteous anger, you need to repent first to the Lord, but so often our anger comes out of us, and it has a horizontal offense as well, and you may find that your repentance requires you go to going and confessing that sin to somebody and making apology for it.

I'm really thankful that for the most part, our church feels unified, see a lot of love, a lot of togetherness, I hear very little about dissensions, but maybe I just don't know, it's very possible that I don't, and I would encourage you to labor to maintain the unity of the spirit, and the bond of peace. Fourthly, do you believe that you have been delivered from God's wrath in Christ? Do you believe that you've been delivered from God's wrath in Christ?

[46 : 20] Even as you may be feeling some conviction for unrighteous anger on your part, can you stand knowing that you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ, that he is your sufficiency before God?

Romans 8, 1, there's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Beloved, those of you who are followers of Jesus, this is great motivation for confession, for seeking reconciliation with those that you have sharply disagreed with.

Unbeliever in the room today, I always think of a crowd this size, it's not a massive crowd, but I always got to think there's someone who believes they're a follower of Jesus Christ, but is not.

The judgment and the guilt you may be feeling now may be the conviction of the Spirit in your life. Look to Christ, his perfect sacrifice on your behalf.

Let's pray together.