

Timothy.
Acts 16:1-5.
Sunday, March 13, 2011.

I. The wise ways of God.

- A. Last week we explored the conflict that arose between Paul and Barnabas over their one time assistant John Mark. John Mark, for one reason or another, had grown discouraged and abandoned Paul and Barnabas once they got from Cyprus to Asia Minor, and returned to Jerusalem. Acts 13:13.
- B. Now that Paul and Barnabas have decided to re-visit the churches they founded in Asia Minor, Barnabas is determined to give John Mark a second chance, and to take him along. Paul is just as determined not to do so in light of John Mark's previous behavior.
- C. So sharp was the contention between Paul and Barnabas that they decided to part ways. Both will embark on a second missionary journey; Barnabas takes John Mark and sails to Cyprus where the work of the first missionary journey had begun, and Paul takes Silas and travels North-West, over land, into Asia Minor.
- D. How do we understand the inclusion of this conflict in the overall message of the book of acts?
 - 1. Not in terms of who was right, Paul or Barnabas.
 - 2. Rather in terms of what the Lord Jesus Christ was doing in the context of this conflict for the progress of the gospel and the history of Salvation.
The gospel of Luke is about what Jesus began to do and to teach; the book of Acts is about what Jesus continued to do as the risen Lord and Savior from the right hand of the Father.
- E. Last week we saw how the Lord honored the desire of Barnabas to give John Mark a second chance. The Lord redeemed the life of John Mark, making him an able minister of the gospel. He became the author of Mark's gospel, and the founder of a large and flourishing Christian community in Alexandria, Egypt. Later Paul would humbly acknowledge the work of the Lord's grace in John Mark, calling him a "fellow laborer," and "useful for the ministry."
- F. If this is all we can see in terms of what the Lord did in the history of salvation by Paul and Barnabas parting ways, we might conclude that Barnabas was right and Paul was wrong about not giving John Mark a second chance.
However the passage before us this morning shows us what the Lord did in the life of Paul as a result of not having John Mark alongside him as an assistant.
- G. The absence of John Mark seems to have left an empty spot in the heart of the Apostle Paul, who desired to take a younger person along with him in order to train the next generation of gospel ministers. He finds such a person in Timothy in the town of Lystra, where he previously had been stoned.
 - 1. It is likely that Timothy (who was shy and timid by nature), was a witness to Paul being stoned in Lystra, and also to his miraculous recovery; Paul telling Timothy later how he had carefully followed Paul's long suffering, afflictions and persecution in Lystra among other places. 2 Timothy 3:10,11.
 - 2. It is unlikely that Paul would have taken Timothy along if he still had John Mark by his side. What John Mark became among the churches of Alexandria,

Egypt, this Timothy would become among the churches of Ephesus in Asia Minor.

Application:

1. With hindsight we can clearly see that the important thing that came out of the rift between Paul and Barnabas was what Jesus as the risen, reigning Lord did in the history of salvation by way of the lives of John Mark and Timothy
2. We can also clearly see that that the question “who is right?” is a fruitless one.
3. Why then is it so important to us to be right in all the conflicts and difficulties in life?
 - What important thing is to be gained from being right?
Is it not so very often just another sacrifice on the altar of our ego?
 - What important thing is to be feared from being wrong?
Is it not an opportunity for us to die unto ourselves? (And that’s not a bad thing!)
4. In all the struggles and conflicts of life look and pray for the furtherance of the work of salvation in yourself and in others; the progress of the work of salvation as it is superintended by the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The wise ways of Paul.

- A. Timothy had a Greek father and a devout Jewish mother. Such a child was considered Jewish by the Jewish nation. However, Jewish tradition did forbid the circumcision of such a child as long as the father objected.
- B. Paul went ahead and circumcised Timothy who was now of an age where he could make these kinds of decisions for himself.
- C. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy when the Jerusalem council had just determined that circumcision was neither here nor there when it came to one’s standing in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ?
 1. Timothy’s family seems to have been well known in the area, and all knew his circumstances; being uncircumcised.
 2. Paul would take Timothy along, and he always would visit the local synagogues first.
 3. Timothy’s status was really problematic, for he was Jewish, having a Jewish mother, however, being uncircumcised, he stood outside the covenant with Abraham, and so was looked upon as worse than a Gentile.
- D. Timothy was circumcised, not to facilitate his standing before the Lord, or His Church, but his standing before the Jewish population where Paul always began his ministry. The gospel of Christ made circumcision a matter of Christian liberty. Gentiles did not have to become Jewish, but neither did Jews have to become Gentiles. There was nothing wrong for Timothy, having come of years, to claim his Jewish heritage, and there was much to be gained by it in terms of ministry. Here is an application of “To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews,” and “becoming all things to all people” 1 Cor. 9:20.

Application:

For Paul and Timothy the progress of the gospel in the lives of others (Jews here) was more important than insisting on personal privilege and comfort. Is that not the way the Lord Jesus walked? How can we be imitators of that way?