

Building Bridges

Acts 15:36-41

“Rebuilding the Broken Bridges”

Acts 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

37 And **Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.**

38 **But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.**

39 **And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;**

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Last week we began looking at the subject of “*Rebuilding the Broken Bridges.*” As we continue our theme this year of “*Building Bridges,*” we considered the Apostle Peter who denied the Lord Jesus three times as the Lord was facing the trial that would lead to His crucifixion. Peter’s denial was a *broken bridge*:

- There was a lack of FAITHFULNESS
- There was a loss of FELLOWSHIP
- There was a lean FRUITFULNESS

They learned from their failure, confessed it to God, and were often able to be used in even mightier ways.

The manner in which a leader meets his own failure will have a significant effect on his future ministry.

Rom. 5:20 “...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:”

Understanding the amazing grace of God and His incredible forgiveness and acceptance through Christ, **a mature Christian is one who has grasped the truth that his or her failure is not the end of an effective life with and for the Lord.**

Rom. 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Failure is a fact of life for the Christian community, but God's grace is more than adequate to overcome any situation. **The mature Christian is one who has learned to apply God's grace remedy for failure.**

- When Abraham should have stayed in the land and trusted the Lord, he fled to Egypt because of the drought. And this was by no means the last of Abraham's failures.

- Moses, in trying to help his people, ran ahead of the Lord and killed the Egyptian. Later, against the command of God, he struck the rock in his anger.
- When David should have been out in the field of battle, he stayed home, committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then plotted the murder of her husband.
- Peter, in spite of his self-confidence and his great boast, denied the Lord, as did the rest of the disciples who fled before the evening our Lord's arrest was over.

This morning we will look at another believer who began in service to the Lord with great potential for fruitfulness, but became a quitter, *Breaking the Bridge* by going home, tried to come back but was denied, but eventually *rebuilt the bridge* that he had broken with the Apostle Paul. His name was John Mark.

I. THE SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE AT HOME

Acts 12:12 And when he had considered *the thing*, **he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.** ...

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and **took with them John, whose surname was Mark.**

A. The Faithfulness and the Victory, Acts 12:1-12

- John Mark's mother was very instrumental in *building bridges* in the first church.
- John Mark saw his mother provide a place to meet for the special prayer meeting for Peter.
- John Mark saw God gloriously answer the prayers for Peter's release!
- John Mark had an uncle that was very influential in the first church – Barnabas.

Col. 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and **Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas**, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

- John Mark was privileged to have a family that was faithful to God during trying circumstances in Jerusalem.

B. The Focus of the Visit

- The Apostle Peter was incarcerated when Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem.
- Paul and Barnabas came to bring financial support to the church.

Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

- Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem to fulfill their ministry.

Acts 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, **when they had fulfilled *their* ministry**, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

II. THE SERVICE INTERRUPTED BY HOMESICKNESS

Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: **and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.**

A. The Discouragement of the Ministry

Acts 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

- John Mark's vision of adventure faced the hard reality of spiritual warfare.
- Paul's demeanor was blunt and not as conciliatory as Barnabas'.
- Paul dealt strongly with the adversaries, whether wicked or weak.
- John Mark had enough, and apparently discouraged, went home to Jerusalem.
- Discouragement is a device of derailment by the devil.

Num. 21:4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and **the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.**

Deut. 1:21 Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; **fear not, neither be discouraged.** ...

28 Whither shall we go up? **our brethren have discouraged our heart**, saying, The people *is* greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.

Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be **discouraged.**

Prov. 15:13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: **but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.**

Prov. 25:28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* **broken down, and without walls.**

- Prolonged discouragement leads to *broken bridges*.

B. The Departure from the Ministry – “...and **John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.**”

- John Mark had a *broken bridge* of service, fellowship and faithfulness to the Lord via his departure from serving with the Apostle Paul.

Acts 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

37 And **Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.**

38 **But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.**

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

- After John Mark left, Paul and Barnabas continued working together in the ministry.
- As they planned to return to visit the works of their ministry, Paul planned on continuing the ministry with Barnabas.

Acts 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, **Let us** go again and visit our brethren in every city **where we have preached the word of the Lord**, *and see* how they do.

- Barnabas wanted to take his nephew, John Mark.

Acts 15:37 And **Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.**

- Paul disagreed. John Mark “...went not with them to the work.”

Acts 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, **who departed** from them from Pamphylia, **and went not with them to the work.**

- The issue of John Mark created contention between Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 15:39 **And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;**

- Paul took Silas. Barnabas took John Mark with him to Cyprus.
- In essence, Barnabas took John Mark back to their relatives.

Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed **Barnabas**, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* **of the country of Cyprus,**

III. THE SPECIAL INSPIRATION OF HELPFULNESS

2 Tim. 4:9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. **Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.**

A. The Focus of the Ministry

- From Paul's perspective, what was the focus of John Mark's departure?

Acts 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and **went not with them to the work.**

- Paul placed great emphasis on the ministry.

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and **the ministry**, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 21:19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles **by his ministry**.

2 Cor. 4:1 Therefore seeing **we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;**

2 Cor. 6:3 Giving no offence in any thing, **that the ministry be not blamed:**

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, **for the work of the ministry**, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Col. 4:17 And say to Archippus, **Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.**

1 Tim. 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, **for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;**

2 Tim. 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, **make full proof of thy ministry.**

B. The Faithfulness in the Ministry

2 Tim. 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. **Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.**

- The Apostle Paul was facing execution as he pens his last letter to Timothy.
- Paul laments the departure of Demas. Perhaps that reminded him of John Mark's departure years earlier.
- Paul states that only Luke is with him.
- Paul instructed Timothy to get John Mark and bring him to where Paul is.
- Paul sees John Mark as "profitable" to himself... "...for the ministry."

Original Word: εὐχρηστος

Transliteration: euchréstos

Definition: useful, serviceable, very profitable.

<http://biblehub.com/greek/2173.htm>

- Paul looked beyond hurt feelings, disappointments, discouragements, and failures.
- Paul was focused upon what was **best for the ministry** and saw that John Mark had rebuilt the broken bridges of the past.
- God was using John Mark in spite of the past for he was, again, profitable for the present.

Conclusion

Mature believers understand that a Christian can become successful in spite of failure because of God's incredible grace and forgiveness.

The mature believer seeks to use failures as lessons for growth and change. Mature believers will act on two principles:

- (a) They understand that failures remind us of the consequences of our decisions. We reap what we sow. This is the law of harvest.
- (b) The mature believer recognizes that our failures show us what we should and should not do; they become lessons in where we went wrong and why.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/mark-17-wisdom-deal-failure>

When mature believers fail they:

- Acknowledge their failures and refuse to hide behind any lame duck excuses.
- Confess any sin to God when sin is involved in the failure.
- Study or examine what happened so they can learn from the failure.
- Put it behind them and move ahead (1 John 1:9; Phil. 3:13).

Mature believers grow through failure. They will know and act on certain truths:

- We are accepted in the Lord on the basis of Grace, not our performance.
- We are human and, as a result, we are not now perfect nor will we ever be.
- God still has a plan for our lives. God is not through with us yet, and we need to get on with His plan.

The mature believer will be one who understands there are different kinds of failure.

- There are those who have genuinely failed according to the principles of Scripture.
- There is a false guilt of failure because of a wrong view of success.
- There is another class of failure; those who mistakenly believe they are successes!
- There are many causes for failure.
 - Some are the product of specific acts of sin, but some are not.
 - Some are simply the product of ignorance or of circumstances beyond our control.
 - While David did recover from his sin and was still used of God afterward, there were lifelong consequences in his life and in the lives of others.

Psa. 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Jas. 4:5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, **God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.**

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.**