

## ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

### XXX. Handling The Lure To Quit The Ministry

(Acts 13:13 et al.)

#### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 13:13 reports that John Mark ceased helping Paul and Barnabas in their missionary work and returned to Jerusalem. This event looms huge in Church History, for many servants of God have quit their ministries for various reasons. We view John Mark's defection for our insight, application, and edification:

#### II. Handling The Lure To Quit The Ministry, Acts 13:13 et al.

- A. After Paul with his companions Barnabas and John Mark sailed from Paphos in Western Crete north to Perga in Pamphylia, an area that is located in today's south-central Turkey, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem, apparently to be with his mother in whose home the Jerusalem Church met, Acts 13:14 with 12:12.
- B. We know from the later great disagreement between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-39 over whether they should take John Mark with them on their second missionary journey that John Mark had defected from the ministry here in Acts 13:13 due to a lack of faith in the Lord. Consequently, many reasons have been suggested as to **why** John Mark had faithlessly defected, and we offer some of them here:
  1. Some hold that he was disillusioned at the change in leadership from his cousin Barnabas to Paul, for Barnabas led the team until Paul confronted Elymas at Paphos as evidenced by Luke's shift from naming Barnabas first between Acts 13:2 and 13:9a to naming Paul first beginning at Acts 13:9b, Ibid., p. 388.
  2. Some believe that the new emphasis in this missionary journey on discipling Gentiles as opposed to Jews "may have been too much of an adjustment for a Palestinian Jew like Mark," Ibid.
  3. Others believe that John Mark "was afraid of the dangerous road over the Taurus Mountains to Antioch [in Pisidia, Acts 13:14] which Paul was determined to travel," Ibid.
  4. Still others think that since Paul preached to the people of Galatia "because of an illness" (Galatians 4:13), he may have become very ill in Perga with malaria, a city that was "subject to malaria infections," a hardship that might have frightened an insecure Mark into defecting from the missionary venture, Ibid.
  5. John Mark may have been homesick for his mother who may have been a widow back in Jerusalem, for the house where the Church met to pray for Peter's release was his mother's house, with no mention of his father regardless of the strong patristic culture in first century Israel, cf. Acts 12:12; Ibid., p. 389.
  6. Another reason might have been John Mark's disillusionment over the angelic conflict they had faced when Paul back at Paphos on Crete had confronted Elymas to evangelize Sergius Paulus, Acts 13:8-12.
  7. On the other hand, a combination of two or more or even all of the hardships named above might have overwhelmed a spiritually weak John Mark so that he faithlessly defected from the ministry.
- C. The solution to this problem for John Mark is also offered in Scripture (as follows):
  1. Later after Paul and Barnabas disagreed over whether to take John Mark on their second missionary journey, Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Crete to disciple him, Acts 15:39. This put John Mark back where he had been just before his defection so he might face and overcome his failure, Acts 13:4-12.
  2. After Barnabas disciplined John Mark on Cyprus, Mark entered a time of probation under the Apostle Paul where he was sent to Colossae north of Perga for a ministry with the Colossian believers, Colossians 4:10.
  3. John Mark eventually became so effective in his ministry that just before Paul's martyrdom, he asked Timothy to send John Mark to him since he had become profitable to Paul in the ministry, 2 Timothy 4:11.
  4. Ultimately, John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark in great triumph over his initial defection in the ministry, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the Gospel According to Mark: Authorship," p. 1397.

***Lesson:*** *Though John Mark in unbelief defected from helping Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, by returning to the point of his failure under the discipleship of his cousin Barnabas, then serving in probation under Paul's oversight, John Mark became a profitable help to Paul and even wrote the Gospel of Mark.*

***Application:*** *(1) To avoid defection from the ministry, may we trust God to handle all ministry hardships. (2) If we have faithlessly "quit" an assignment from God, (a) may we face and confess our failure to the Lord, and (b) heed required probationary oversight (c) until we prove to be effective (d) that we might achieve much for the Lord!*