

## RESTORATION: WHEN BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS ARE HEALED

### I. Various Scriptures

A. Last Sunday we looked at two men whom God chose to spread the Gospel in the early years of the church. One was Saul, a former enemy before God made him a friend. His rampage against the church helped chase another man, Philip, from Jerusalem all the way to Caesarea. It's there that the Apostle Paul, formerly known as Saul, would actually be hosted by Philip the evangelist.

B. Today we'll look at a couple more contemporaries of Paul: Barnabas and Mark. These three once served together until a serious separation took place. Could God bring restoration? Once broken, could their relationships ever be healed?

C. While we know Paul, who was Barnabas? Barnabas was a Levite from the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean. His name means, "*Son of Encouragement.*" Besides living up to his name, he was a generous, sold-out believer. **Acts 4:32-37** (ESV) is Luke's introduction: **32** Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. **33** And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. **34** There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold **35** and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. **36** Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, **37** sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

D. Saul, once converted, escaped Damascus in a basket, and went to Jerusalem to try to meet up with the disciples. Barnabas makes it happen. **Acts 9:26-31** (ESV): **26** And when he (Saul) 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. **27** 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. ("**Hey y'all the terrorist has been regenerated!**") **28** So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. (**Greek speaking Jews**) But they were seeking to kill him. **30** And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. (**Sent him home!**) **31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

E. And so who is Mark, a.k.a. *John Mark*? For starters, he was Barnabas' cousin. Mark's mother's name was, *Mary*. Probably well-to-do, she hosted early church gatherings in her home. When Peter was led out of prison by an angel, he went to Mary's house where believers were praying for him as they thought he'd be executed like James. **Acts 12:12** (ESV) connects the dots: **12** When he (Peter) realized this, (**Was really free**) he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

F. Meanwhile, Barnabas is sent to Antioch. Later he fetches Paul to help. **Acts 11:19-26** (ESV) is Luke's account: **19** Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. **20** But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. **21** And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. **22** The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23** 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, **24** for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. (**Luke: 'Barnabas is a Godly man!'**) And a great many people were added to the Lord. **25** So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, **26** and when he had found him, 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.

G. Then Barnabas & Paul go to Jerusalem to deliver aid to those hit by famine. There they draft Mark. **Acts: 12:24-25** (ESV) says: **24** But the word of God increased and multiplied. **25** And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.

H. Now it's time for Paul's first missionary journey. Who gets to go? **Acts 13:1-5** (ESV) puts the three brothers together: **1** Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2** While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. **4** So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. (**Barnabas' home**) **5** When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John (i.e. *John Mark*) to assist them. (**From Acts 13:9 on Saul is called Paul!**)

**I. But while they are still early into this mission trip, Mark departs. Luke lays it out in Acts 13:13 (ESV):** *13 Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John (i.e. John Mark) left them and returned to Jerusalem... The text doesn't give us Mark's reasoning, but Paul views his departure as desertion. Paul & Barnabas continue on for a couple years, sharing the Gospel and planting churches in Asia Minor before returning to Antioch.*

**J. Roughly a year after returning, the brothers begin to plan their second missionary venture. While determining the roster, a row ensues. Luke tells it straight up in Acts 15:36-41 (ESV):** *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." 37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Aren't you glad this doesn't happen anymore?!)*

**K. So what are some takeaways?**

- 1) Good & Godly leaders sometimes disagree, even sharply.
- 2) Good & Godly people (who aren't leaders) likewise do the same.
- 3) Christians may disagree on important matters and unimportant matters.
- 4) Sometimes when parties disagree, both may seem right. Both may also seem wrong. However, the truth does matter. Proverbs 18:17 (TLB) says: "Any story sounds true until someone tells the other side and sets the record straight."
- 5) Sad but true, disagreements can lead to broken relationships.
- 6) Thankfully, broken relationships can be restored. And they should be!
- 7) When relationships are broken, God can still work through both parties. (e.g. Paul & Barnabas!) But restoration should be pursued and celebrated when it happens. Sometimes a restored relationship is stronger than the original one.

## **II. The story of Paul, Barnabas, & John Mark is not yet over...**

**A. Whatever transpired between Paul, Barnabas, and Mark? Did they go to their graves at enmity? Or did they reconcile? What do the Scriptures say? A dozen years after their separation and writing from prison in Rome, Paul exhorts the church in Colossians 4:10-11 (NLT):** *10 Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. As you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way. 11 Jesus (the one we call Justus) also sends his greetings. These are the only Jewish believers among my co-workers; they are working with me here for the Kingdom of God. And what a comfort they have been!*

**B. Then when Paul is in the Mamertine Prison in Rome, this time facing execution by Nero, he writes to his son in the faith, Timothy. It's something like his last will and testament. What will comfort him in that cold, rat infested, hellhole? 2 Timothy 4:11-13 (ESV) is the answer:** *11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. (To paraphrase Paul to Timothy: 'Bring yourself, John Mark, my coat, and my Bible!')*

**C. While Barnabas no doubt continued to be a vessel & voice of encouragement to the churches. Barnabas probably died a martyr's death on Cyprus. Early church writers have John Mark closely associated with Peter. (Peter knew something about failure & restoration!) 1 Peter 5:12-13 (ESV) reveals Peter's heart towards Mark:** *12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. 13 She who is at Babylon, (Code: Church in Rome) who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. (Peter's son in the faith!) 14 Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. (Mark will author the Gospel that bears his name, the scribe for Peter's eyewitness testimony. Tradition suggests Mark went on to become the bishop (pastor) of Alexandria. And he too would die a martyr.)*

**D. Paul, Barnabas, and Mark were all messengers of the Gospel. Luke, the good doctor and intrepid journalist & narrator, likewise was hip deep in the mix with these brothers. Their message was this: "Jesus Christ is**

**Lord!" Whether to Jews or Gentiles, whether together or separate, whether near or far, coming or going, their mission was to preach the Gospel and make disciples. And so they did!**

**E. The message of Jesus Christ is this: God the Father, compelled by His love for the world, sent God the Son-His only Son, to become the sacrifice for our sin. Instead of unleashing His wrath upon us, He unleashed it upon His Son on the cross. Instead of declaring us guilty of our sin, He made His Son to bear our guilt and shame. Instead of allowing us to wallow in sin and strive to make ourselves righteous, He imputes to us His righteousness (Jesus' right standing). Instead of leaving us dead in our trespasses and sins, He makes us alive in Christ. Instead of destroying us as His enemies, He makes us His friends. Instead of rejecting us as hopeless orphans under the parental bondage of Satan, He adopts us as His very own children and grants us an eternal inheritance. None of this did we deserve, none of this could we ever earn, and none of this will ever end!**

**F. Paul, Barnabas, and Mark gave their lives delivering this message. This is not only the message they declared, but also the one they embodied. And this is the message which is given to you and for all those you love. This is the message in which you've been entrusted. Embrace it with all your heart! And share it with everyone you know!**

**\* Close with Prayer...**

### **[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)**

#### **[Acts 4:32-37 \(ESV\)](#)**

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### **Proverbs 18:17 (TLB)**

**17** Any story sounds true until someone tells the other side and sets the record straight.

### **Colossians 4:10-11 (NLT)**

**10** Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. As you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way. **11** Jesus (the one we call Justus) also sends his greetings. These are the only Jewish believers among my co-workers; they are working with me here for the Kingdom of God. And what a comfort they have been!

### **2 Timothy 4:11-13 (ESV)**

**11** Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. **12** Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. **13** When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

### **1 Peter 5:12-14 (ESV)**

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### **Film Clips & Article Links**

**Why I Abandoned Seeker Church - Paul Carter - The Gospel Coalition (Thanks Mark!)**

<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/abandoned-seeker-church/>

**John Mark - Encyclopedia of the Bible - Bible Gateway**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/John-Mark>

**Barnabas - Encyclopedia of the Bible - Bible Gateway**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Barnabas>

**Mark, the Restored Deserter - John MacArthur (Full Sermon)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKHIXLyZfXs>

### **Bonus Stuff**

#### **Proverbs 17:9 (NLT)**

**9** Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.

### **Romans 12:9-21 (ESV)**

**9** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **10** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. **11** Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. **13** Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. **17** Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. **19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." **20** To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### **Galatians 6:1-3 (NIV)**

**1** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. **3** If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.

### **Ephesians 4:2-4 (NLT)**

**2** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3** Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. **4** For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

### **Quote by Thomas À Kempis**

"Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be."

### **Quote by Phillip Brooks**

"Forgive, forget. Bear with the faults of others as you would have them bear with yours. Be patient and understanding. Life is too short to be vengeful or malicious."

### **John Newton's Counsel - Reconciling with a Brother**

"The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore, you must not despise him, or treat him harshly. . . . In a little while you will meet in heaven. . . . View him personally as a kindred soul, with whom you are to be happy in Christ forever. At that meeting, you will not complain of the way by which the Lord brought you. . . . I hope to hear that all animosities, little and big, are buried by mutual consent in the Redeemer's grave."

- Quoted by Gaye Clark, article: "*When Your Reconciliation Doesn't Reconcile*", Dec. 16, 2017. To read the full piece, go to: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/when-reconciliation-doesnt-reconcile/>

### **John Wesley to General Oglethorpe**

General Oglethorpe once said to John Wesley, "*I never forgive and I never forget.*" To which Wesley replied, "*Then, Sir, I hope you never sin.*"

- Source Unknown

### **Quote by John Piper**

"Staying married, therefore, is not mainly about staying in love. It is about keeping covenant. "*Till death do us part*" or "*As long as we both shall live*" is a sacred covenant promise – the same kind Jesus made with His bride when He died for her."

- John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence*, Desiring God Foundation, 2008, p. 25.

### **Welcome Home Mr. President**

Maxie Dunnam

Hubert Humphrey was a former vice-president of the United States. When he died hundreds of people from across the world attended his funeral. All were welcome, but one – former President Richard Nixon, who had not long previously dragged himself and his country through the humiliation and shame of Watergate. As eyes turned away and conversations ran dry around him Nixon could feel the ostracism being ladled out to him. Then Jimmy Carter, the serving US President, walked into the room. Carter was from a different political party to Nixon and well known for his honesty and integrity. As he moved to his seat President Carter noticed Richard Nixon standing all alone. Carter immediately changed course, walked over to Richard Nixon, held out his hand, and smiling genuinely and broadly embraced Nixon and said "Welcome home, Mr President! Welcome home!" The incident was reported by Newsweek

magazine, which wrote: "If there was a turning point in Nixon's long ordeal in the wilderness, it was that moment and that gesture of love and compassion."

- Reported in Maxie Dunnam's, *The Workbook on Living as a Christian*, p.p. 112-113.

## **Renewing Your Mind**

By Lee Webb - Ligonier Ministries

In July, Renewing Your Mind with Dr. R.C. Sproul celebrated its twenty-fourth anniversary. The name of the program, which I have the privilege of hosting, is taken from Romans 12:2: "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*" Paul's brief exhortation provides us with the key to living as followers of Christ.

Conformity means going with the flow. So, in effect, Christians are swimming upstream by not conforming to the world. And that requires work. We're not talking about working our way into heaven. In this passage, Paul is addressing believers, those who have already been justified. And we're reminded that "*He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion*" (Phil 1:6). We're talking about our sanctification, which involves effort.

Paul described conformity to the world as "*living in the flesh*," and he warned, "*To set the mind on the flesh is death*" (Rom. 8:6). Charles Spurgeon was equally blunt when he said: "*If a Christian can, by possibility, be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate it must be so as by fire. Such a bare salvation is almost as much to be dreaded as desired.*" This transformed life involves a new way of thinking. And a good place to start is a candid assessment of what dominates our current thought life. You've probably heard the expression "*you are what you eat*." I think it's also safe to say you are what you think. Let me be the first to admit that I focus many of my thoughts on things that provide little nourishment for the soul. The psalmist reminds us:

*"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither."* (Ps. 1:1-3)

Dr. Sproul said, "*A renewed mind results from diligently pursuing the knowledge of God.*" He explained where we find this knowledge:

God gives us the revelation of sacred Scripture in order for us to have our minds changed so we begin to think like Jesus. Sanctification and spiritual growth is all about this. If you just have it in your mind and you don't have it in your heart, you don't have it. But you can't have it in your heart without first having it in your mind. We want to have a mind informed by the Word of God.

## **What Transformation Looks Like**

Such a clear admonition brings to mind a man we featured on Renewing Your Mind a few months ago. Lowell Ivey was sentenced to seventeen years in prison for armed robbery. He believed the only way he could survive behind bars was to join a white supremacist gang. Lowell conformed in every way to the group. He immersed himself in hateful, racist literature and began covering his upper body with tattoos that reflected his new identity and his hatred for people of other races. To prove his loyalty to the gang, Lowell tried to attack an African American prisoner with a homemade knife, an offense that landed him in solitary confinement.

But, one Sunday evening, while listening to a sermon on a local radio station, Lowell reached a moment of despair about the direction of his life and became convinced he was going to hell. He said: "*The tears were streaming and I simply fell on my knees before Him and I said, 'Lord, make me a Christian. Change my heart. Take this away and help me to follow You.'* And He did it."

Lowell would remain in solitary confinement seven more years, but he said that time was vital to his growth as a new believer. "*I used the time to read, study, and meditate on God's Word, and to pray. The Lord was growing me in my fellowship with Him. It wasn't wasted time.*"

Providentially, Lowell discovered *Renewing Your Mind* on the radio and says Dr. Sproul's teaching was key to his growth. "*I became more theologically mature mainly from listening to that program,*" he said. He also obtained a copy of the Reformation Study Bible, the same Bible he uses today to prepare sermons as the pastor of a church in Virginia. He is also a husband and the father of three children.

Lowell's transformation is so profound that, as I interviewed him, I could not believe that the person before me was the same one that he described before his conversion. Notice how he describes the transformation from his white supremacist identity in prison:

*"The Lord has delivered me so profoundly from the sin of racism. As I read His Word, and as my thinking and my affection are shaped by the Word of God, there I is no way I could harbor any animosity toward anyone."*

### **The Motivation for Living A Transformed Life**

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were reminded time and again of God's mercy in liberating them from slavery. *"For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45).*

Likewise, Paul bases his appeal in Romans 12 on *"the mercies of God"* (v. 1), which he detailed in chapters 3-11. He even reminds us of our liberation from slavery to sin (6:20-23). Lowell describes God's mercy in setting him free from sin: *"He has been so gracious. He has lifted me up out of the ash heap and the pit that I had dug for myself. And He's delivered me into the glorious kingdom of His Son, Jesus Christ."*

It is tempting to think Lowell's conversion is more amazing than ours. We do well to remember that, like Lowell, we were just as *dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1)*. But, like Lowell, God has shown us mercy. As Isaac Watts wrote in his famous hymn *"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"*: *"Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."*

- Lee Webb is vice president of broadcasting at Ligonier Ministries and host of *Renewing Your Mind*. This article is from the September 2018 edition of *Tabletalk Magazine*, Ligonier Ministries, 421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771. To subscribe or read other articles online, go to: <https://www.ligonier.org/>