

Fruits On The Plate Of Disagreement

“Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.’ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthened the churches.” (Acts 15: 36-41)

In any parliament all over the world, the way to adopt a law forwarded to the government is to first discuss the bill thoroughly and then next they will vote on it according to the regulation of the parliament. The agreement to adopt the law depends on a certain percentage of vote in support to that bill or by reaching any percentage above 50% of the total number of the members of that parliament. Sometimes the members will not reach an agreement and they will keep that law suspended or set aside.

In keeping two different things together we have this experience: *either* one accepts the other, *or* one attacks or rejects the other. In a case of an organ transplantation where one organ from one body is transferred to another body, to avoid organ rejection the doctors will give multiple medications. To a plant implants, where a small bud from one kind of tree is grafted to another type of tree but of the same species, the result will be a tree that produces a mix quality of fruit.

In the common social, family, or work life the people are exposed to certain situations that they need to agree or disagree, to accept or reject, or to discuss with mates in the decision making process. All are happy when they reach an agreement, but with disagreement the situation will have another dimension. Disagreement by itself is something painful, at least to one of the poles who are sitting at the negotiation table when they fail to pass their demands to the other members. Disagreement also gives unpleasant sensation to any one who hears it. The first thing that comes to the heart is the feeling of frustration. Disagreement in our minds is a negative pessimistic matter even to the hearer who does not have relation with the dispute. Then as a result, we link such dispute with mis-achievement or regression in the work. For example, if we hear two persons living together and separated because of disagreement we feel sorry for that and we will ask, “why that happened? They were doing fine.” The same feeling you will have if you hear that a prosperous company is going to split and cleave.

Today, we are going to speak about two different things or opinions that they are right but unfortunately are incompatible to co-exist with one another. I am not speaking about division which I hate but about disagreement.

The passage for this week is from the book of Acts that speaks about this topic. As the reader moved through the Bible he or she will notice that Paul and Barnabas as two apostles of Christ had a good and lovely period of time staying together in their service to the Lord. Barnabas was the one who smoothly introduced Paul to the apostles telling them how he fearlessly preach the name of Jesus. Also, Barnabas is the one who brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch after Paul left Jerusalem. Both of them stayed together for about one year in Antioch before they were set apart by the Holy Spirit to work for what God had called them. From that day Paul’s first missionary journey started with Barnabas. They sailed to Cyprus and they went throughout the Islands. Then they left to reach Asia Minor where they proclaim the word of God at Pergea, Pamphilia, then to Pisidian Antioch. From Pisidian Antioch they went to Iconium and finally reach Lystra and Derbe. Then they move to Attania and from there they return to Antioch Syria. That journey was fruitful. Churches were opened in different cities and there were many converts through the hands of these two men.

Sometime later in this passage, Paul suggest to Barnabas to revisit the towns where they preached the word of God to see how the brothers and the new believers were doing in those areas. Barnabas agreed but he wanted to bring his cousin John who was also called Mark. Paul disagreed because Mark has

deserted them in Pamphilia and returned to Jerusalem. That idea brought sharp discussion that caused them to separate ways and depart their company.

The triumphant procession of the first missionary journey maybe well discerned to the reader up to this point. But alas maybe given to the temporal separation of Paul and Barnabas because for some that separation is a failure or the descending face of mountain climbing. But that is not true, for the victorious climbing is still noticed in this passage of the bible for the following reasons:

1- Paul is right: As spiritual shepherd he is concerned about the success of the revisiting journey. He needs more help that he cannot expect from a young man who had deserted them behind. His previous experience gave him the conclusion that Mark is irresponsible and Paul showed his irreconcilable opinion at that time. The blood relation of Mark and Barnabas also pushed Paul to a deep Psychological motive to refuse Mark’s accompaniment.

2- Barnabas is right: Personally knowing Mark better, he knew the sincerity of Mark’s repentance and his new true commitment.

3- A Worker is restored: The passage of the Bible proved how Mark made well even in the eyes of Paul as in Colossians 4:10 and II Timothy 4:11. (Please read from your bible how Paul commended Mark). The Point that Paul point against Mark and showed his lack of commitment, that could be a reason for Mark to know his previous shortcoming and an opportunity for him to repent and walk faithfully with God.

4- Two areas pastured at one time: Their situation resulted to two works done at a time. As two competent leaders and apostles, Paul and Barnabas worked on different churches doing the same work they were doing together. We would noticed from the passage that both of them revisited the areas where they belong: Barnabas from Cyprus and Paul from Tarsus Cilicia, and these gave better results for they knew the background of their own people.

5- Opportunity opened: Silas, a new competent companion was put under Paul’s authority and by this a new active evangelical worker was raised.

6- A New Missionary journey opened: Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that disagreement was the beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey to preach the Gospel mainly in Macedonia and Greece.

7- Paul and Barnabas after that continued to have one spirit for the Lord: Paul in his letter to the Corinthians commended Himself and Barnabas when he said, ³ **“This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴ Don’t we have the right to food and drink? ⁵ Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?”**(1Corinthians 9:3-6) So they did not separated forever and the churches were not divided; still they were under the same leadership.

Those were the fruitful aspects of what is seemed externally as a tragic separation. The shaft of the tree in certain stages of development will split into two or three branches and by this the tree is taking a new pace of further growth and development. If we compare the passage with this example, we can grasp how the church is growing even when there is sharp disagreement. The negative look toward disagreement should be changed and the feeling of failure should be replaced by the look of success. Both sides input at the time of disagreement will edify the church and keep the church growing. The above extracted points can be applied not only in the church but also in our daily social or work life. As well can be applied by the people who are under the canopy of God’s love in the pros and cons situation that they faced in their life.

My Dear and Beloved: Whether you are Paul or Barnabas, still you can not tell what is to come after the next step. But being under God’s love, in facing any disagreement, let us feel His assurance from this verse: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28**

My Prayer: *Dear Lord God, I trust in your hand all the aspects of my life and what I am passing through. Lead me with your Holy Spirit through this turmoil that I am passing through. Lord sustain me with your plan and will, and watch over my steps and lead me to the way everlasting, this is my prayer in Jesus name Amen.*