

Acts 15:35 – 16:5

Multiplying the Ministry

- I. 15:35-41 Division and Multiplication
- II. 16:1-5 Timothy Joins the Team

- I. 15:35-41 Division and Multiplication

A. Barnabas and Paul were both right, revealing the two ways to look at all Christian work:

- i. Paul was focused on the work (v.38), and that is a good thing. Listen to Jesus:

Luke 9:62 (NKJV) ... "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
[This is exactly what John Mark did in 13:13.]

- a) Serving the Lord is work, so we need to be faithful in it. It's a responsibility, a stewardship, entrusted to us. It's not always easy, but it should be fulfilling and joyful work. Perhaps most importantly the work of the ministry is "good".

1 Timothy 3:1 (NKJV) This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

- Specific aspects of ministry are described as work. Here are a few examples:

Colossians 4:12 (NKJV) Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJV) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:5 (NKJV) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- The whole body of Christ should somehow be involved in Christian service:

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

- And lets not forget the Bible's simple emphasis on "good works" – not as a means of salvation, but as an inevitable result of it.

Titus 3:8 (NKJV) This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Hebrews 10:24 (NKJV) And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.

ii. Barnabas had a different approach; he was focused on the person.

a) This was apparent when he first introduced the new convert Paul (Saul of Tarsus) to the apostles in Jerusalem:

Acts 9:26-27 (NKJV) ²⁶And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he [Saul] had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

b) It was apparent again when Barnabas first came to Antioch:

Acts 11:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

c) Moreover, in this case, he and John Mark were relatives. Paul writes:

Colossians 4:10 (NKJV) Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

B. Which leads into two more important points.

i. Paul and Mark eventually mended their relationship. Paul wrote Colossians later in life from a Roman prison. Mark, though not a prisoner, was with Paul sending greetings to the church in Colosse. He is mentioned in Paul's letter to Philemon in the same way:

Philemon 1:23-24 (NKJV) ²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

ii. Mark grew and became an important figure in the ministry of the early church.

a) Toward the end of Paul's life, he asks Timothy to visit him and asks him to bring Mark along.

2 Timothy 4:11 (NKJV) ... Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

b) Perhaps more than anyone, Mark became a valuable part of Peter's ministry. In 1 Peter 5:13 he calls him "Mark my son," which is how Paul referred to Timothy. It's believed that Mark's Gospel is a written record of the stories he heard working alongside Peter. He was probably too young in Jesus' time to write from memory.

C. God used the separation of Barnabas and Paul to multiply the work.

i. If the contention was too sharp (v.39), then perhaps they can be faulted for that.

ii. Nonetheless, differing thoughts about ministry need not be competitive; they can be complimentary, leading to a multi-pronged attack on the devil's domain.

a) Note: Barnabas was originally from Cyprus (4:36), Paul from Cilicia (21:39).

II. 16:1-5 Timothy Joins the Team

- A. 16:1 *Derbe and Lystra* This is now the same area that Paul and Barnabas traveled on their first missionary trip.
- B. Timothy probably became a Christian when Barnabas and Paul came through this area the first time. He eventually became Paul's closest assistant. 1 & 2 Timothy, which comprise the bulk of the *Pastoral Epistles* were both written to him. Paul was able to write to the church in Philippi:

Philippians 2:19-24 (NKJV) ¹⁹But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²²But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. ²³Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. ²⁴But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

- C. Timothy's mom was a believer. This underscores the importance of Christian parents. Paul speaks of both Timothy's mother and his grandmother having an influence on his faith:

2 Timothy 1:5 (NKJV) when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

- D. And how did they influence him? By making sure he knew the Bible:

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that **from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- E. 16:2 Notice Timothy's good reputation. Others knew he was a high quality guy.

- F. 16:3-4 Why circumcise Timothy? To avoid controversy over his chosen ethnic identity. Within Jewish tradition, tribe was determined by father, but overall Jewishness is to this day determined by mother. Mother Jewish? How about mother's maternal grandmother? Yes? Then you're Jewish.

- Illustrated by the orthodox Jewish “evangelists” back east who walk around carrying *tefillin* (“phylacteries” in the NT) and ask this question, “Mother Jewish? *Grandmother* Jewish?,” trying to encourage men of Jewish heritage to practice their faith.

Given the fact that Paul & co. were delivering the decision of the council in Jerusalem – that the Gentiles need not be circumcised, etc. – Timothy's lack of circumcision, as a Jew with a Greek father, would only have muddied the waters. It might have seemed to the Jews that he was denying his heritage. It was much clearer for Paul & Timothy, both circumcised Jews, to speak with authority on matters involving Jewish or non-Jewish customs.

- G. 16:5 This was the result of their efforts.

Principles for Multiplying Ministry

- Ministry can be multiplied through disagreement. This is not the ideal, but the point is God can use it, especially if the disagreeing parties can disagree without being overly disagreeable.
- Ministry is work – good work, that the entire church can and should be involved in according to the individual gifts of each person.
- Much of the work within ministry needs to be focused on people.
- Those who already have ministry responsibilities should always be praying for and looking for others to mentor within their sphere of ministry.
- Those who have no responsibilities as yet should seek to come under someone else as an apprentice. This pattern was followed by Jesus and by the early church:
 - The mentor does the work while the apprentice watches.
 - The mentor and apprentice do the work together.
 - The apprentice does the work while the mentor watches.
 - The apprentice then goes out to do the work, while seeking to mentor others.
- Consider Paul's words to Timothy written shortly before the apostle's death:

2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.