**Learning To Fight A Spiritual War**

Hope Chapel Honolulu

Acts 15:36-16:40

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37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.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.

(Acts 15:36-41, ESV)

**Introduction**

After Barnabas and Paul disagree about Mark and go their separate ways, the focus of Luke’s narrative turns to the work of God in, through, around and eventually beyond Paul’s life. Although it will be years later before Paul is reconciled with Mark (see 2 Timothy 4:11) and Barnabas is only mentioned twice more in the New Testament writings, Mark is eventually entrusted with helping Peter chronicle his experience with Christ in the nine-day account we know as the Gospel of Mark. This indicates that Barnabas’ extension of grace to his nephew later resulted in faithfulness and fruitfulness in the young deserter’s life.

**1. A sharp disagreement occurs between Barnabas and Paul. (Acts 15:36-16:5)**

 a) Whether Barnabas chose to err on the side of grace or family, Paul sharply disagreed.

 b) Paul’s somewhat confusing choice to circumcise Timothy after the Jerusalem Council decision.

**2. Learning to recognize and follow the Holy Spirit. (Acts 16:6-24)**

 a) Holy Spirit, Spirit of Jesus, the Lord, Most High God and the Name of Jesus Christ.

 b) Discerning between the activity of the Spirit of God and other spirits (2Corinthians 11:1-15).

**3. Responding to persecution with prayer and praise. (Acts 16:25-40)**

 a) The faithful response of Paul and Silas to persecution invites God’s presence and help (Psalm 77).

 b) The marvelous response of the prisoners, the jailer and his household to the grace of God.

**Conclusion**

While we might have seminaries, bible schools and even schools of mission today, it seems that very few of us have the same kind of success in spiritual warfare as we read in the New Testament. Our problem seems to be less a problem of knowledge or faith than of trust, obedience and personal experience of God’s power, love and faithfulness. However, when Barnabas and Paul were first sent out from Antioch, they had neither personal experience of Christ nor the example of missionaries having gone before them. What can we learn here to help us fight and overcome an unseen enemy by the power, love and faithfulness of God?

**For our prayerful study, discussion and application:**

1) Read Acts 15:36-16:5. Based on Luke’s narrative, how would you compare Barnabas and Paul here?

2) Read Acts 16:6-24. What can we learn about spiritual discernment and conflict from this passage?

3) What are the Word, Spirit and People of God showing and telling you about spiritual warfare?

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