The Book of Acts Lesson 30

Acts 15:36-41

“Many Men One Mission”

Introduction: Many American farmers wake up at the crack of dawn. In the cool of the morning they make their way out to their fields in late summer or early fall to plant seeds. They do this with the expectation that they will grow and produce the crop that will sustain them and their families. The process of farming however does not end when the seed goes in the ground, it really is only beginning at that stage. The plants need to be watered, protected from weeds, insects, and even infections. Seeing that a plant grows and produces fruit is lots of work. In our passage this morning Paul and Barnabas start by engaging in the ministry like farmers. They didn’t just get things started, they were interested in the spiritual health and growth of believers.

1. Follow-up is part of the gospel ministry.
2. Paul and Barnabas had seen God work through them all throughout the region. Many lives had been transformed by the preaching of the gospel.
3. This show of interest in the condition of the believers they had influenced shows the sincerity of the ministry God had called Paul and Barnabas to.
   1. It has been said by some that the youth of today is part of the “me” generation. Self is often the first and highest priority in people’s lives. Loyalty, compassion, and generosity often take a backseat to individual comfort, pleasure, and entertainment.
   2. One of the marks of a genuine believer is that they will be driven by the love of God to care about others.
      1. We all need to take care of our needs and our family’s needs.
      2. We should be active in caring about others. This can be manifest in many ways:
         1. Courtesy; holding the door open for an elderly person.
         2. Generosity
         3. Encouragement; telling someone you appreciate them
         4. Forgiveness
         5. Etc.
      3. As Christians, I think we all try to do these things, but we should also try to be a help to those whose lives have newly been changed through a relationship with Christ.

Transition: Just as in many experiences that life has given us, we know that good intentions do not always equal good results. So what kept these two mighty servants from going on this noble and needful tour of the region?

1. Even great Christians can have disagreements.
2. The trouble came when they were deciding who would go with them on their journey. Branabas wanted to take John-Mark and Paul thought that was not a good idea.
   1. John-Mark had left them when they were in Pamphylia suffering persecution.
   2. In verse 36 we see that this became a serious issue between these two and they decided to go their separate ways. Although we do not know all the details, we can make some observations about the situation we see here.
      1. Although they did not agree on this, they are never recorded to have said a word against each-other. I feel safe in saying that it is very likely that if they met they would greet each-other in love.
      2. They did not become bitter and stagnant because of their disagreement, they continued on in the work.
      3. If you have ever had a disagreement with a fellow believer don’t think that you are the only one. Even Paul and Barnabas had moments. That does not justify contention and strife in your relationships, but it does remind us that we are not preceded by perfect men. Those who have accomplished great things for the Lord have merely been willing vessels to be used by Him.
   3. We are truly blessed to have the church family that is here at Hillcrest Baptist Church, but we have to remember that we are all people in bodies of flesh and there may be times when we do not agree with everything that others do.
      1. This is never an excuse to become angry or bitter.
      2. This should never keep us from doing the work that God has called us to do.

Transition: Even in the midst of a disagreement these two went on doing what they set out to do initially, visiting the believers in the region.

1. There are many men, but there is one mission.
2. Many people tend to think that there is one sort of person that God can use. Only; smart, outgoing, humble, confident, assertive, sensitive, amazing, and incredible people. The truth is that God uses all sorts of people. He wants to use all people. This means that people will be different than us.
   1. This is not to say that what they believe is different, the Bible is what unites us in doctrine. On these there can be no disputing. A church is to be united in doctrine and will work together to accomplish the goal of God in this way.
   2. Opinions however will vary from person to person about everything from the weather, to the paint on the walls, to the best size of the spaces in the parking-lot.

1. Part of being involved in God’s work requires that we learn to work with people.
   1. This means people from different cultures and backgrounds than us.
   2. Although we may hear others say things differently or do things differently than what we prefer, that should never keep you from getting involved in; soulwinning, choir, hospitality, Sunday school, nursery, and cleaning are ministries that require us to rub shoulders with people. Don’t let conflict or difference keep you from fulfilling the role that God is calling you to.

Conclusion: Both Paul and Barnabas were used greatly, but it is obviously not because they were perfect people. This may not have been their best moment, but they still kept their Lord and others at the front of their thoughts and actions. The rest of the New Testament shows that these men did much good in the lives of these new believers. If you experience continual strife with others, that could be a sign that you may not be thinking right about how you should treat or respond to others. But the reality is that because we are people, that means we are not perfect. Have you been letting others keep you from serving? Have you been letting your problems with people keep you from pursuing a relationship with God? Often conflict with others will reveal to us if we are more concerned with following God’s will or being and making people happy.