

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE HELP LEAVES? Acts 13:13-41

**QUOTE:** *"We have three types of friends in life: Friends for a reason, friends for a season, and friends for a lifetime."* Author unknown

Friendships or Partnerships almost never last forever. And it hurts when good friends, good partners, or good helpers leave. I know - it has happened to me a few times. It's not always a disagreement or "bad blood" as the cause of someone departing - sometimes it's due to an opportunity that presents itself. Sometimes we just never understand.

In the book of Acts, chapter 13, beginning with verse 13 we read: ***"From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia [near Antalia, Turkey] where John left them to return to Jerusalem."***

As we read last week, Barnabas and Paul sailed together from Seleucia, near Antioch, to the Island of Cyprus. John Mark went with them as their helper. After their missionary work was done there they sailed North to Asia Minor - modern day Turkey. The town of Perga - the capital city of that area - located near about five miles from the seaport town of Antalia. (Side note- Antalia is the city that Margaret and I flew to when we visited Carolina when she was serving aboard the ship Logos II)

Luke writes that John left them - in Perga - and returned to Jerusalem. We are not told the reason for his leaving. The absence of a reason should raise an interest in our mind and we are left to use our imagination. It could

have been a disagreement. It could have been an illness. It could have been that John was homesick - missed his family. It could also have been that he was not cut out for the mission field. Whatever it was, all we are told is that he left.

In chapter 15 we read: ***“Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers 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,”*** Acts 15:36-39 NIV

Paul was not happy with the way John left. However, in 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul writes, ***“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark [John] and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.”*** What this indicates is that Paul got over it - he had forgiven him and realized how helpful John had been to him.

**What should one do** when a valuable helper, partner, or friend leaves?

Here's some brief advice from Daniel Fusco ([www.pastors.com](http://www.pastors.com)):

**LET** - Let them go. Release them and let God be God in the situation.

**LEARN** - Learn from the experience. Consider how you might handle these situations in the future.

**LOVE** - Love the person. Pray for and Bless them. Don't allow bitterness to creep into your life.

**LEAN** - Lean on the Lord. Remember, it's not really your helper, or partner, or friend you should lean on for help. Cast all your care on HIM. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

**LEAD** - Lead gracefully. Don't let others see any root of bitterness in you. Keep moving forward doing what God has called you to do.

With that said, let's take a look at what Paul and Barnabas did - starting at verse 14: They traveled to Pisidian Antioch. **THEY CONTINUED ON COURSE, LED BY THE SPIRIT.**

**NOTE:** Seleucius Nicator I, the successor of Alexander the Great, founded the city of Antioch of Pisidia (Pisidian Antioch). This city was located about 100 miles North of Perga, in the Taurus mountain region. The elevation was about 3500 ft and the city served as a military command center. **WHY DID PAUL and BARNABAS travel there, along the treacherous road up to the city? The only probable answer is that they were led by the Holy Spirit.**

As was Paul's usual custom, he and Barnabas went to the city's synagogue on the Sabbath - they entered and sat down to hear the reading of the Law and the Prophets. Then, Luke says that the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “***Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.***” How did they know who Paul and

Barnabas were? Was it because they were "visitors" and they stood out? Or was it something about their appearance - was there a Godly glow on their faces? Or, possibly as one commentary states, Paul may have been dressed as a Pharisee (because he was one - see Heb 3:5). Again, we are not told.

Now that Paul was given an opportunity to speak in the synagogue he took full advantage of the situation. He stood, made a motion with his hand (possibly to ask for silence among the crowd so they could hear the important message he had for them), and began to address the people in the synagogue. He first addresses the men of Israel - gives them honor; then he addresses the Gentiles that worship - or fear - God (proselytes). Then he begins to tell the story of Israel's history - possibly to establish his credibility with those in the synagogue who knew about the "fathers" of their faith. Paul continues speaking about Israel's time in Egypt, their exodus, and the wilderness journey. He covered about 450 years of their history, then spoke about Israel's judges, prophets, and kings.

THEN - Paul gets down to the most important part of his message - the promised Messiah, the Savior, Jesus Christ. He includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, forgiveness of sins, and justification apart from the Law of Moses. HE PREACHED JESUS - not rules or laws or some "custom" to follow.

I can almost see the look on the faces of those men - silently staring at this "visitor" to their synagogue. They had probably never heard a man speak with so much authority and power. Paul must have left them thirsting for more because when he finished speaking and he and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue the people invited them to speak further about this "Good News" on the next Sabbath. In fact, when they had been dismissed they followed Paul and Barnabas and talked with them. It was not Paul's eloquent speaking ability, or his beautifully outlined sermon with an introduction with three main points and conclusion with an altar call, or his great visual aids, or Power Point presentation . . . NO! He just preached Jesus Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit.

**In conclusion** - to answer my opening question "***What Happens When the Help Leaves?***" - the bottom line is that, even though helpers and partners and friends are important and often highly valued, **WE MUST CONTINUE TO TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL OUR HEART and CONTINUE DOING WHAT GOD CALLED US TO DO.** **I remember a very old song that goes like this:** *I have decided to follow Jesus . . . No turning back, No turning back. Though none go with me, still I will follow . . . No turning back, No turning back. The cross before me, the world behind me . . . No turning back, No turning back.*

**\*He [GOD] will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5)**

**Verse 38 & 39** - Paul said: "***I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through HIM everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from the Law of Moses.***"