

Pastor's Desk 2026.5.10

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I Need a Second Chance

Looking back at my life, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and thankfulness. That someone like me—who since childhood struggled with rules, lacked diligence, and loved to daydream—could be called to embark on a lifelong journey of serving the Lord is nothing short of a miracle. Peter denied the Lord three times in a single day; my own record is not much better. If anyone stands in constant need of the Father's unceasing forgiveness, the Lord Jesus' renewed affirmation, and the Holy Spirit's continued companionship, I need it all the more.

This morning, as I drew near to the Lord using the devotional materials written by Pastor Maureen Chung, I found great release, encouragement, and revelation. Who among us is without fault? As a young man, Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but homesickness led him to abandon the team early. When it came time for the second journey, Paul and Barnabas clashed over whether to allow Mark to participate. In the end, Paul took Silas while Barnabas took Mark. The mission team split in two—and in God's sovereignty, this allowed even more people to hear the Gospel.

People hold differing views on who was "right" or "wrong" between Paul and Barnabas; it is hard to say for certain. However, we can see the Lord's meticulous handiwork and heart through the events that followed: Over a decade later, while Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the first time, he praised Mark as a co-worker who supported and comforted him, even urging the Colossian believers to welcome Mark (Colossians 4:10-11). During his second imprisonment in Rome, knowing his death was near, Paul asked Timothy to bring Mark to him because Mark was "very useful to me for ministry." (2 Timothy 4:11). Furthermore, Peter referred to Mark as his "son" (1 Peter 5:13), and the vast majority of biblical scholars recognize Mark as the author of the

Gospel of Mark. These facts prove that the "second chance" Barnabas gave Mark did more than just shape a preacher—it caused the Gospel to flourish and fulfilled the heart of God.

On the path of service, we must labor alongside others. When someone fails us, causes us loss, or even leaves us feeling wronged, are we willing to give them a second chance? If our focus is solely on the "efficiency" of the ministry, it becomes very difficult to offer grace to those who stumble. This is because our calculations are centered on how to "use the most suitable people" to complete God's work (or worse, to build our own careers). I am reminded of the words spoken by the Holy Spirit through Paul: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4).

To "count others more significant than yourselves" means to see others as more important than yourself. It means that providing someone else the opportunity to learn and grow is more important than receiving praise for yourself. It means that encouraging and building up another person is more important than the burden or blame you might have to carry. It means that someone else receiving a second chance is more important than your own loss or grievance. If we choose to follow Paul's command to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit," we must abandon our self-centered way of thinking. When we learn to decrease so that others may increase, we can truly look "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." And this "others" is not just anyone—this "others" is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. May we encourage one another in this.

Pastor Francis