

Different Ways

Acts 15:22-41

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are setting out on mission. We have been watching the growth of the early community. Now a pivotal moment has come of being sent out to the Gentiles to witness to Christ the Lord.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from the Book of Acts

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole Church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us in assembly to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by

the brethren to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 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. And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Reflection

There are no individual Christians. Barnabas played a necessary role in Paul's life and mission. He sought him out in Tarsus and drew him into the community in Antioch, where he received his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. They completed a successful missionary journey together and represented the decision of the Church in Jerusalem back to the Christians in Antioch. Now they part and go separate ways.

The Lord clearly drew them together, even though their paths diverged. We surely can think of people who influenced and supported us for a certain season, even though we, at some point, went our separate ways. This is natural and, even if unfortunate, need not wound the unity of the Church. You may have seen this in your own fraternity, with some men joining for a time and then departing while others jumped in to take their place.

Paul and Barnabas were a great combo, but even after their falling out, the more fundamental realities of the faith endured. We will never have perfect unity on earth, but we must work for peace in the Church, even when disagreements arise. Do not allow the devil to take natural disagreements, such as fighting over a family member, like John Mark, drive a wedge into the practice of the faith itself. We are members of the Church because we believe in the presence of Jesus, not because of a friend or a particular priest.

We need support in the Church. Shifting friendships will always be a part of life. Stay rooted in God and trust in his providential plan to bring people in and take others out of our path. Continue to build your circle of support and mission by inviting others to join you, just like Paul drew in Silas.

Thank God today for those he has sent to support you in faith, and pray for anyone with whom you may have had a falling out.

Week 4 Action Items

Meditate on the Resurrection.

Get outside.

Continue to focus on Confession.