

The Desertion of John Mark **Acts 13:5, 13**

Introduction:

1. We live in a culture and time in which it seems to be increasingly difficult to find people who will be faithful.
2. What does it mean to be faithful? Consider a few questions:
 - If I am true to my marriage vows 360 days per year, am I a faithful husband?
 - If your car works 20 out of 30 days per month, is it faithful?
 - If you are at work 3 out of every 5 days, would your employer consider you faithful?
3. I think we all get the idea, don't we? But how does the issue of faithfulness relate to our relationship with God? Does God expect faithfulness from us? Would God consider us faithful? Consider 1 Corinthians 4:2.
 - God does not require that His children be talented, intelligent, handsome, or perfect. But God is looking for one important character trait – faithfulness!
4. In our text, we have an example of **un**faithfulness. It involves a man by the name of John Mark. vs. 5
5. Paul and Barnabas had launched out on their first missionary journey. John quit on them and went back home to Jerusalem. vs. 13
 - The word “*departing*” carries the idea of “desertion.”
6. Have you ever had anybody quit on you when you needed them the most? This is what happened. John Mark quit on Paul and Barnabas and deserted them when they needed him the most. They were really relying on him. They were heading to a rough area geographically, and among hostile, heathen people.
7. John Mark's unfaithfulness was the reason why Paul later refused to take him with them on their next journey. 15:36-41
8. Mark's unfaithfulness had negative consequences both to himself and to others. Every believer must strive to live a life of faithfulness. Why?

First, because unfaithfulness always hurts others

1. Paul and Barnabas had brought Mark to Antioch when they came back from delivering the love offering to the Jerusalem saints. 12:25
2. When Paul and Barnabas left on their first missionary journey, Mark traveled with them as their minister. 13:5
 - This word “*minister*” means that Mark was their “assistant; attendant.”
 - Mark's job probably involved making arrangements for travel, food, lodging, and he may have done some teaching. This was all so crucial to their success.
3. After leaving the island of Cyprus and arriving in Perga, Mark suddenly just quit and left Paul and Barnabas high and dry (13:13). He went back home.

4. He obviously had agreed to be their helper and assistant, and then he suddenly quit.
 - This left the team short of help as they were about to enter some tough situations both in traveling and ministering.
 - This was very unkind, and Mark's desertion really hurt Paul. cf. 15:36-41
5. When we are unfaithful we do not simply hurt ourselves. We also hurt others.
 - Whether it is a worker who is unfaithful to do his tasks at work, or a husband or wife unfaithful to his or her spouse, or a church member who is unfaithful in his ministries at church, other people are affected and hurt.
 - This is why God said that He requires faithfulness in His servants. Unfaithful people really aren't much good in the service of Christ. God doesn't need flashes in the pan, He needs faithful people. He doesn't need flashy servants, but faithful servants.
 - **Illustration:** Abraham – Genesis 18:18-19; cf. Nehemiah 9:7-8. Every believer must strive to live a life of faithfulness.

Second, because unfaithfulness reveals a walk in the flesh

1. What are some of the causes of unfaithfulness in the Lord's work? Fear, burnout, laziness, sin, unresolved conflict, jealousy, pride, slothfulness, materialism, etc.
 - All of those things come very naturally to us because they are works of the flesh.
2. There are two different ways to live our Christian lives. We can live spiritually or carnally.
 - To walk spiritually means that I am walking in the Spirit.
 - To walk carnally means that I am walking according to the desires of my flesh.
3. Mark's desertion of Paul and Barnabas did not reflect spirituality. God doesn't appear to be anywhere in this. It was Mark's flesh acting. Maybe he got his feelings hurt. Maybe he had unresolved conflict with another member of the team. Maybe he was fearful of the road that lay ahead. Maybe he simply missed the comforts of home.
4. There are all kinds of forces at work in your flesh to keep you from being faithful in your walk with the Lord. The only answer for this is to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16
 - This is our only hope, otherwise we will end up doing what we **feel** like doing, instead of what we **should** be doing.
 - This is Satan's plan for the Christian. He desires that you live according to your feelings that are at work in your flesh, instead of living by your faith that is resting in God's Word.
5. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is faith and temperance. This is walking by faith (or in faithfulness), exercising control over our fleshly desires.
 - **Illustration:** Your flesh says, "I'm tired. I don't feel like reading my Bible, going to church, doing my ministry, praying, etc." As we yield to the Holy Spirit and seek to walk in the Spirit, we say, "My feelings aren't the issue. Christ is the issue. I will do it anyway."

- As we continually do this, we find ourselves having a testimony of faithfulness.
6. But unfaithfulness reflects carnality, and it always leads to more carnality. In the home, the church, at work, and in our relationships, when people are unfaithful it causes hurt feelings, problems, aggravations, quarreling, squabbling, etc.
 - **Illustration:** Paul and Barnabas had a huge contentious disagreement which even caused these good friends to part ways. But remember, if it wasn't for Mark's unfaithfulness, it would never have happened.

In Conclusion:

1. Have you ever had somebody ask you to do something and you simply did not have the ability or capability to do it? You simply couldn't do it, and maybe you felt guilty.
2. Your heavenly Father doesn't do this. He simply asks that you be faithful in your walk with Him and in your ministry for Him.
 - This levels the playing field for all of us because we can **all** be faithful.
3. Are there areas of your life where you have struggled with faithfulness? Allow God's Word to work in your heart today. Allow God's Spirit to show you these areas and help you to be faithful.
4. All throughout history, God's work has always been accomplished by unlikely people. But they had one character trait that was invaluable – they were faithful!