

## God's Faithfulness through Hardships

2 Tim.4:9-18

Life is about joy and sadness, success and failure, encouragement and disappointments. Sickness and health. Following Jesus is not for the fainthearted; the enemy will tempt you to stop running your race. You will be tempted to quit and if you have not learned to deal with disappointment you will throw the towel and quit. Serving God will bring you moments of loneliness and disappointments. The apostle Paul can tell us about disappointments in ministry and how he dealt with it. **How do we cope with disappointments?**

When Paul became a follower of Jesus, he had a good friend named Barnabas. Barnabas introduced Paul to the church in Jerusalem. They both planted a church in Syria (**Antioch. Acts 13**) They were two of five leaders of this church who are listed by name in **Acts 13**. It was this church that sent Paul and Barnabas on their first mission trip throughout the Mediterranean Sea. These two men took the gospel to regions it had never gone before around 48 AD. A year later, Paul suggested to Barnabas to go back and visit those places where they preached; they had a huge disagreement and chose to go different ways in ministry.

### **Acts 15:36-41**

**This was a personal issue.** Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, but Paul didn't think it was a good idea since Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia. Mark had abandoned them and Paul was disappointed with Mark. Paul didn't consider Mark reliable for this type of missionary work. *Paul and Barnabas had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. (v.39).*

**Disagreement will happen in any area of life.** In our society and in church some people don't know how to disagree with others. *Paul and Barnabas' dispute wasn't a matter of salvation or even theological. They agreed in their theology. Their disagreement was a matter of personal preference.* Since they could not reconcile their differences, they chose split; they chose to go different ways. Barnabas took Mark and Paul took Silas.

**The church commended them to the grace of God (v. 40).** They church supported this decision and commended them to the grace of God. The church prayed over them and sent them off on their missionary journey. **God used this conflict for his glory.** Paul continue to bring the gospel to the Gentiles and God brought more people, with the same type of passion, alongside to help him accomplish the mission.

**In serving God, *the people you serve with may change.*** (Your team may change). *It's hard to serve in a ministry or an event when those involved are not on the same page. Disagreement over preference, when either party is not willing to compromise leads only to separation.* Paul and Barnabas parted ways, but this didn't stop God's plan to reach the Gentiles. God is faithful to accomplish his will and purposes even when brothers disagree about preferences. **God is bigger than any conflict you and I can encounter in our serving him.** Paul didn't let this disagreement with Barnabas stop him from accomplishing the mission Jesus had given him, to go to the Gentiles with gospel. So, he chose another partner and went about his business to accomplish God's work in the Roman Empire. *Sometime, God uses conflict to challenge us and move us from the comfort zone, to grow our faith and to teach you to rely on him and not on those we serve with.* **In his ministry, Paul had a lot of people whom God placed on his path to encourage him, support him and help him in his missionary endeavors.**

About 17 years after the incident with Barnabas, Paul was in a prison cell; from there he wrote two letters to his young protégé Timothy. In his second letter Paul asked Timothy to come and visit him. He was dealing with discouragement and disappointments and needed Timothy to be by his side. **Read about Paul's joy and disappointment in his ministry.**

### **2 Tim.4:9-18**

**-Some will abandon you.** Demas deserted Paul when Paul needed him the most. (Col.4:14; Philemon 1:24)

**-Some will stick with you till the end:** "I am with you till the end of the line"  
Bucky (Luke, Timothy, Titus, and others)

**Paul requested Timothy to bring Mark because he is helpful to his ministry. (v.11)**

Mark had deserted Paul before; there was a time that Mark wasn't helpful to Paul and his ministry. However, Mark has grown and he proved himself to Paul during those 17 years. Now Paul wanted him by his side because "*He is useful to me in my ministry*"

**Paul told Timothy about the opposition he endured and warned him to be on his guard against people who would oppose the message. (v.14-15)**

**In serving God disappoint and betrayal may come. (v.16)**

When Paul was brought before trial the first time, the believers in Rome didn't support him. They didn't stand by him. **"Everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them." (v.16)** Paul was abandoned by the church in Rome during his first defense. **But God stood by him.** ***"The lord stood by my side and gave me strength.....I was delivered from the lion's mouth."*** (v.17)

God's faithfulness is evident even when people around him abandon you or hurt you. *God will continue to be with you through it all.*

**What kept Paul going despite being betrayed, abandoned?** What kept him going during persecution and disappointment? God; God provided him with the strength. The Lord stood by his side when no one else did. God is faithful. God delivered Paul from the lion's mouth.

**Paul's conviction: (v.18)** The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever amen.

You will encounter disappointment in this life; close friends will leave you. But God is faithful, he will bring you new ones. Some will betray you, but some will stick with you through thick and thin.

***God is faithful to carry you through whatever it is you are going through right now.*** He will stand by you when no one will. He will protect you from the evil attacks.

**Do you know why Paul didn't quit when the going was rough?** Because his strength was in Jesus. Things changed in his life, people came and went in his life, but one thing remained the same. ***Jesus was still his focus and the center of his life.*** No wonder he said, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

You too will be able to go through anything in this life, when Christ is your focus. He is faithful.