

Sermon Title: Be Ready To Minister (Part 2)  
Scripture Text: Acts 13:3-13 (Acts #30)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 11-26-23

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Come with me to the Book of Acts, where we have reached Chapter 13. I said last week, as we just began what is a paragraph here, I wanted to cover the first 13 verses but couldn't do it all at once, so we just did a little introduction last time, and we are going to finish all 13 verses today.

We come to the section where there is now a new primary character in this book: It is the Apostle Paul. We saw last time how the church at Antioch—the first sending Gentile church in the world—they launched Saul and Barnabas. And in these first 13 verses of this chapter, there are many applications that we can make concerning how we minister, how we contribute to the spreading of the Gospel in the world.

This is kind of a dangerous sermon—at least, as I have outlined it—because I have told you that you need to pay attention to a swarm of "Be's": Be This, Be That, Be Willing to do this. And the reason I say that that's dangerous is that all these things are good things to do, but this is *not* "How To Be A Christian"—"How To *Become* A Christian." This is *presuming* you have heard the Gospel, you have put your faith in Christ, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13); *here* is how to be *maximally* used in ministry.

So we will see these eight points as we work our way through this:

1. Be In The Right Place
2. Be Ministering
3. Be Willing To Go
4. Be Ready To Work
5. Be Prepared For Opposition
6. Be Ready To Stand Strong
7. Be Ready To Harvest
8. Be Ready For Discouragement

We just looked at two verses last time: "Be In The Right Place"—that was the church at Antioch, where "there were" in that church "prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul" (vs. 1, NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted). The first lesson was: Be In The Right Place: Be where the Word of God is taught (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2); be where there are godly servants and teachers working together as a team (Titus 1:5-9). It is not insignificant that all five of those men are mentioned. And the Holy Spirit said, "I want you to take two of your best five and send them"—and that was a matter of Being In The Right Place.

And then the second point was: "Be Ministering." In Verse 2—"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' " The important takeaway there is that God sends people who are *ministering*; He doesn't take dusty, crusty old Christians off the shelf that haven't moved for six years, and give them something important to do. Be Ministering—be *servicing*, be *doing*—and you will see God *continually* moving you and directing you as He would have it to be.

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And notice, they are described as "ministering *to the Lord*." Now, *all* of their ministry was to one another in the Body of Christ, but it was *all* done because this is what we do *for the Lord* (Heb. 6:10); we do it for His "glory" (1 Pet. 4:11). So, ministering *by* the Holy Spirit to the Lord.

Now let's move on, and let the rest of the "Be's" buzz around your mind this morning.

Number 3: Be Willing To Go. Verse 3—"Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

I took a short side-trip last week to talk about fasting. We are *never* commanded to fast anywhere in the New Testament, and only once a year in the Old Testament. But fasting is a matter of setting aside earthly things like food, intentionally—foregoing that to focus on spiritual things in favor of praying. And it usually was and is associated with a momentous decision, a significant activity, a great time of grief—something like that.

So, after "they had fasted and prayed"—probably prayed publicly and in private, and both in the gathering of the church and the gathering of the leaders, and in their own individual prayer times—they "laid their hands on them..." That is how they visibly showed they were obeying God's instruction to commit Barnabas and Saul to their ministry.

We saw the early church do this back in Chapter 6 when they chose the first deacons. After they went through the selection process and then confirmed them, "they laid their hands on them" (vs. 6)—that means they stood up in front of everybody, put their hands on them, and prayed for them. That symbolizes *affirming* them; it symbolizes *supporting* them, identifying with them, saying, "We are not all going, but you are going on our behalf." And that way, they visually set aside Saul and Barnabas.

The word "sent" is literally a word that means "released" or "set free"—the idea that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. "We are setting you free. We are not going to get in your way; we are going to be behind you; we are going to be rooting for you, praying for you, encouraging you."

So, Be In The Right Place; Be Ministering; and then, like Saul and Barnabas were: Be Willing To Go. And then: Be Ready To Work Hard.

As they left, they immediately implemented a strategy, and this same strategy was followed by Paul and all of the various ones who served with his team during all of this missionary work in the Book of Acts: The first priority was *always* to go to "the synagogues of the Jews" (vs. 5). Jewish custom, providentially, always made it possible for traveling Jews like Saul and Barnabas to be heard in synagogues (Acts 13:15); so it was a built-in opening for the Gospel.

As a matter of fact, when Paul, some years later, would write his magnum opus on the Gospel—the Book of Romans—he said this, in Romans 1:16—"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

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So, not only *historically* did it begin in Jerusalem and then spread to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8), but everywhere the Gospel went, the Jews were *always* given first opportunity to hear. So, look at Verses 4 and 5—"So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper."

Now, you *probably* know where Antioch and Seleucia and Salamis are, but *just in case*, here is what they did: "They went down to Seleucia..." That's about 16 miles from Antioch, and they went there because it is the nearest seaport. It happens to be at the mouth of the Orontes River—of which I had never heard until I was studying this. They booked passage from there on a ship of some kind to get to the island of "Cyprus."

Now, remember that we heard that Barnabas is a *native* of Cyprus, so there is an obvious connection: They were saying, "We are starting from Antioch. Where shall we best go to reach Gentiles?" Barnabas says, "I know some people in Cyprus. Let's go there." Maybe that happened; I don't know for sure, but it was an obvious connection.

The sailing part of that trip was about 130 miles. Obviously, it was necessary that Saul and Barnabas—and all who, since then, have been used to spread the Gospel—had to be willing to go. But also: *It is not easy!* This was *hard work!* "Let's schlep everything we need 16 miles down to the seacoast. Let's take it on a ship with us, and then we will take a hundred-mile trip overland, going week by week by week, from synagogue to synagogue."

The first place they went was "Salamis." I will admit that I do not know if people from there are called "Salamis" or not—could be; we will find out when we meet some of them in Heaven. They walked the length of this entire island of "Cyprus" from "Salamis" to "Paphos"—most likely, just walking. Preach in the synagogue; lead as many Jews as you can to Christ; preach to as many Gentiles as you can; pick up, move on: next city, next synagogue, next Jews, next Gentiles, over and over.

We are not told how long this took. This is obviously a *very* compressed narrative. We are also not told how long they spent in any given place; it would have depended on how much response there was in the synagogue, whether they got invited back or invited *never* to come back, and then what may have happened with the Gentiles. We don't know. But I *can* tell you this: It *was not* an easy thing to do.

And there was a *team* involved; you are going to see that mentioned a little bit later. And they specifically took a guy who was the designated "helper"—"John," or "John Mark" (Acts 12:12, 25), the one who wrote the Gospel of Mark, eventually. We know he was a "cousin" of "Barnabas" (Col. 4:10), and he was *their* helper, so he may or may not have been regarded as one of the evangelists; probably not, it would seem. But we will see more about him in a few minutes.

But just think about the rigors of the travel. If you are going to be used as fruitfully as possible by God, then you need to Be Ready To Work Hard.

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The next "Be" that is going to buzz you: Be Prepared For Opposition.

Now, fast-forward to the western end of the island. We are just *not told* of exactly what happened there. You will see references to Cyprus later, but we don't know exactly what it was *at that time*. But when they got to the other end of the island, something happened which is meant to draw our attention so that we can learn by principle what happens when the Gospel goes somewhere it has never gone.

Look at Verses 6 and 7—"When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God."

Well, now they have traversed the entire hundred miles overland, stopping at every synagogue. They finally get to Paphos—which, at that time, was the Capital of Cyprus, and therefore it was the Roman seat of government; so there would have been some sort of official governor's office or governor's palace or governor's residence, or something like that. The modern Capital of Cyprus is Nicosia, which is closer to the other end of the island. But at that time, [Paphos] was the biggest city; that was the "happening" place.

And in Paphos, two characters come on the scene. The first is named "Bar-Jesus." That literally means "Son of Salvation"—but he was not true to his name. The description of him is actually quite detailed. In the Greek, think of this as one strung-together, hyphenated description of this guy: "A man a certain magician false prophet Jew to whom the name is Bar-Jesus." Boy, how would you like to have *that* recorded about you in the Bible, for all time?

The word here is "magician"; the noun form is here—the same word that we saw in verb form back in Chapter 8, Verse 9: Remember that guy named "Simon," who wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit from the Apostles? This word, be it noun or verb, is used to describe occult practices. They were called "magic"—we are not talking "sleight of hand"; we are not talking about somebody making it *appear* that they made an elephant disappear, or cutting the assistant in two and putting her back up on the stage. We are not talking about those things; we are talking about occult practices—"dark arts" and the people who perform them (cf. Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18; Is. 47:12).

The second man here is this "Sergius Paulus"; he was "the proconsul." We don't use that term very often—we don't use it *at all* in our days—but that is the Roman governor of the region. And interestingly, he is called "a man of intelligence."

Now, it is obvious that Barnabas and Saul were *making an impact* as they traveled through Cyprus. Sergius Paulus had probably heard of them before they got there, because he seemed quite ready to entertain them and to explore what they were saying. He probably considered it his civic duty to check out the teaching of these men, so he summoned them to wherever it was that the proconsul entertained official guests to hear what they had to say.

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It would *seem* that Sergius Paulus *probably had* some interest in spiritual things, because he kept this Bar-Jesus dude around; and even though he was a "false prophet," it said he "was with the proconsul," so [Sergius Paulus] has *something* that has made him open to wanting to hear what Paul and Barnabas had said. And probably, the news had reached him: "These two guys are going synagogue by synagogue by synagogue, and people's lives are being changed," and so *he wants to hear*. I think it would be cool: It *might be* that Paulus had some *misgivings* about Bar-Jesus. Maybe he had heard a little bit about these lives being transformed, and he was saying, "I've had Bar-Jesus around for a *long time*, and nothing good has happened to me from *him!*" Maybe he was just curious.

But for whatever reason, he arranged this meeting, and touched off a face-to-face confrontation of an occultic "false prophet" versus God's two choice spokesmen for the Gospel. Look at it in Verse 8—"But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated)"—it is not actually a translation, it's an equivalent; "Elymas" is the transliteration of the Arabic word for a practitioner of magic or the dark arts—"Elymas the magician...was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith."

Now, if Bar-Jesus was an authentic Jew, he would have been *thrilled* to have Saul and Barnabas come. But he was an *occultist* wrapped in a dignified disguise, *as if* he was a prophet of God; but here, all he cared about was "seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith." He was doing the bidding of his *real* master, who was *not* Sergius Paulus—he was Satan (Jn. 8:44; Eph. 2:2).

You see, Satan does not care *what* you believe—he has a *smorgasbord* of different philosophies and religious and ideas and alleged methods of salvation (Acts 17:16; 1 Cor. 8:5). He does not care what you buy into, or if you reject them all, *as long as* you believe *anything other* than the Gospel of salvation through faith in Christ alone (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9; cf. Prov. 30:12; Col. 2:18). *Anything else* is completely fine to him; he is *into* "diversity" (see Prov. 14:12; 2 Cor. 11:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:1).

The lesson we should learn from this about the service of the Gospel is: Be Ready For Opposition. It is not likely to be an occultic "Jewish false prophet" that *you* are going to encounter, but there will *always* be voices shouting or whispering to people to reject what we have to say (see Lk. 8:12; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Thess. 2:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:26).

My friends in Russia see this all the time. They go and put on a week of outreach; they will do food distribution campaigns or service projects during the day; they will walk around, they will talk to people, they will hand out flyers and invite them to a concert that night, bring them some really good music and present the Gospel to them and invite people to become Christians—and more times than I can remember, they will go through one or two days of that, and *pretty soon* they are arranging for their concert that night, and the police car rolls up with the local Russian Orthodox priest in the back seat, pointing out to the policemen: "Arrest him, him, him, her, and her," because those that *claim* to be spokesmen for God are often *the most vicious opposers* of the Gospel (Matt. 27:18; Acts 9:22-23; 13:45; 14:2; 17:5, 13; 19:24-28; 20:3, 19; 21:27; 22:22; 23:12; 25:2, 7; 1 Thess. 2:14-16). All this guy cared about was: "Make sure my boss doesn't become a Christian!"—nothing about him being interested in the message of these two guys.

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Let me remind you again that we are looking at the Book of Acts, which is the historical record of this *transition time* from the Old Covenant—before Christ—to the New Covenant and the era of the Church (Matt. 16:18; cf. Heb. 8:13). And during that time, things happened which are not normal now. Sometimes, there was direct revelation to the Apostles or to their close associates, such as what you are about to see.

You and I *do not* have the power to perform "the signs of a true apostle" as Paul did, like Second Corinthians 12:12 says. But you are going to see God direct him here to Be Ready To Stand Strong.

Now, notice how he described this false teacher, this man who was this alleged prophet: Just like Paul was full of the Spirit—controlled by the Spirit—he says this guy was "full of deceit." He was a deceiver. The root of the word "deceit" is the word for "snare" or a fishhook. Fish are not crazy about fishhooks. People put tempting morsels on them, and get them to swallow the morsel, and they get the hook; that is being "ensnared," and that is what this guy did. Bar-Jesus was *not* what he appeared to be in the eyes of the unsuspecting victims of his spiritual charade.

Notice also: He was "full of...*fraud*." That is an interesting word as well. It translates a word that only occurs once in the Bible, and this is the place. It has a real sinister meaning, and it has a sinister sound to it; it's *rhadiourgia*. And I'm sure that before Paul said that, he ate garlic: [with disgust] "*Rhadiourgia*!" It describes someone who is skilled at manipulating and turning people the way you want them to go. It came to describe unscrupulous recklessness and wickedness.

Bar-Jesus' name means "Son of Salvation," but he was *nothing* of the kind. Paul calls him "you son of the devil." He did the bidding of his spiritual "father, the devil" (Jn. 8:44; cf. Matt. 13:28b; 1 Jn. 3:8, 10, 12), and that is what was going on here.

And anyone who tampers with the Gospel, anyone who tries to *keep* someone from the Gospel is, as he says, "the enemy of all righteousness."

I think I skipped reading a verse: Verse 9—"But Saul, who was also known as Paul..." Here is where the name is *officially* changed. From here on, the only time you will see the name "Saul" is when Paul is recounting his conversion a couple of times later in the Book of Acts; and so he is going to be known as "Paul."

And here is what he said. I love this, when it says in Verse 9—"Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, *fixed his gaze on him*..." Now, I don't know what that "gaze" looked like, but I bet it burned holes in his soul! When I get to Heaven, I'm going to say, "Paul, show me how you stared at Bar-Jesus!"

And that is where he said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?" What false teachers and false prophets do is: They do not "cease to make crooked" what God says is "straight"!

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Remember John the Baptist's commission? Go preach. "Make *straight* the way of the Lord" (Jn. 1:23)—smooth the path, clear it out. It's a simple message: You have a sin problem (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). God sent His Son to take care of your sin problem (Jn. 3:16) so you can be forgiven (Acts 10:43; 13:38; 26:18) and redeemed (Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:14) and transformed (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Titus 3:3-5) and be "a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17) and be part of His family (Eph. 2:19). Straightforward message—and false prophets *love* to twist it up (Jer. 23:36; Lk. 11:52; Acts 20:30; Gal. 1:7).

Now, there have been a few times that I have ended conversations with someone sinister and deceptive—someone who is attacking the message of the Word of God (1 Tim. 6:20), or someone who is attacking the shepherds of the flock (1 Tim. 5:19). And I have actually said—a few times, with some fear and trembling—I have said something like, "That message is not welcome here, and I am asking you to leave."

I did that when someone falsely accused another pastor of trying to do him harm. I knew that could not be the case. I did it when someone told me that God had told *him* to come tell *me* to tell all the elders of Heritage Bible Church that we were collectively in sin for how we handled a situation. And I said, "God didn't talk to you. God did not give you that message. And if you really are going to persist in that, the exit is right over there."

I *hate* doing that. We have said that same thing to the man who has come here on more than one occasion; he will stand on the sidewalk and stop cars entering and leaving our parking lot to hand out literature to try to convince people that the Earth is flat, and therefore everything that goes on here is false teaching. Those are not pleasant encounters.

Sometimes it would be nice to be able to speak as Paul did to Bar-Jesus. *Do not* try this at home on your own, but here is what happened. He says: " 'Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.' And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand."

Isn't that ironic, that after the way Saul was converted, God allowed him to tell this guy, "You're not going to see anything for a while"? Like I say, don't try this at home, but learn the lesson: When you are involved in the ministry of spreading the Gospel, and *direct* opposition comes—and sometimes it comes from the most *religious* people on the block—Be Ready To Stand Strong.

Now, you cannot invoke blindness on people, but you *can*—and we *must*—"speak the truth in love" without compromise (Eph. 4:15; cf. 5:11). When you get criticized for the message of salvation (Is. 30:9-11), you *do not* modify the message to make it more acceptable (Deut. 5:32; Ezek. 2:7; Gal. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:2-4), because it is black and white; it is "straight"—don't make it "crooked"!

So, next lesson to learn: Be Ready To Harvest. There is a high point in this incident, and here it comes: Verse 12—"Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord."

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"He saw what happened." His quack of a "false prophet" was stricken with blindness. God used a miracle to confirm the authenticity of the Apostles, and that sometimes happened in the Book of Acts (14:3; cf. Heb. 2:4).

But notice an important subtlety here. It says two things about Sergius Paulus: "He *saw* what happened"—that refers to the miracle—but he "believed...being amazed at the teaching of the Lord." He did not put his faith in the miracle. He did not put his faith in the miracle *worker*. He "believed...the *teaching of the Lord*." It is *never* a miracle that *saves* anyone (Lk. 16:31; Jn. 12:37); it is the Gospel applied by the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3, 5; Acts 16:14; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5). When you see someone advertise a "miracle service," you know for sure, *beyond a shadow of a doubt*, it is a false teacher! *No* worker of miracles in the Bible *ever* advertised, "Come see a miracle!" They *preached the message*—they talked of God, they talked of His Son, they talked of salvation, they talked of righteousness—and God "confirmed" their message by giving a miraculous sign to validate who they are (Mk. 16:20; Acts 4:29-30). It was "the teaching of the Lord" that brought this guy to salvation (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 1:13)—the teaching applied by the "power" of "the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:5).

There are many sources of opposition to the Gospel, but never give up! Be Ready To Harvest. God is *still* saving souls, one at a time (Jn. 6:37a; 45; Acts 13:48; Rev. 5:9). Political position or power or wealth or fame, or poverty and shame and dereliction—they *don't make any difference*! The *message is the same*! "The teaching of the Lord" *is* "the message of the gospel" (Eph. 1:13; cf. Acts 15:11; Gal. 1:8-9).

Finally: Be Ready For Discouragement.

We have been working through the Book of Acts. We have seen some glorious things—thousands and thousands of people saved. We have seen some horrible things. Remember the murders of Stephen, one of the first deacons; and James, one of the first Apostles. Remember the imprisonment of Peter and John, and later Peter again. Remember them being called names, falsely accused. Stuff like that is *really hard*. Persecution is *real*, and it *always* hurts. And remember Second Timothy 3:12—"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus *will be persecuted*."

But attacks against those who play a role in the ministry of the Gospel don't *always* come from outside; sometimes, they come from *inside*. Earlier in Acts, we have had the *one* that was an inside job: Remember the horrible pothole in the history of the early church with "Ananias" and "Sapphira" (Acts 5:1-11), and God was showing them that "I take seriously your integrity in the Body of Christ."

Well, *here* came an *inside* discouragement to Paul and Barnabas. Look at Verse 13—"Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem."

We will pick it up with the travelogue next time; I'll give you another piece of the map, Lord willing, to get you from "Paphos...to Perga in Pamphylia," but would you notice two things here:



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Notice the phrase "Paul and his companions"; and it is in the plural. There was a *team*. Paul was *never* a lone wolf! (e.g., Rom. 16:21; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; Philem. 24) He kind of got hung out without his team when he was in the city of Athens, and he did some speaking there. But he was *always* serving with a team, and he built a team from the beginning. Yeah, it was Saul and Barnabas, or Paul and Barnabas, but "companions" in the plural—*not just* John Mark. We will see that as we move along.

But for now, focus on the end of that verse: "but John left them and returned to Jerusalem." Sometimes, the most discouraging things come from our own side. Sometimes, the attacks come from people very close by. Even well-intended people can lose focus or be distracted or waver in their faith, somehow. And in this case, it was their beloved "helper." We are not told what he *did*, specifically, but he *helped*. And without the "helper," the job was harder. He stopped helping; he abandoned his post. When we get to the end of Chapter 15, you are going to see what a blow this actually was, and there were ripples that lasted a long time.

Now, notice: John Mark did not abandon the faith. He didn't do like what is the hobby of so many people today: start a podcast to tell people how to deconstruct from this silliness of Christianity. No, he turned around; he went back to Jerusalem. He went back home. That is where his mother lived. We know that it was in his mother's house that they had this sweet fellowship in her home. That's where the "ferve prayers" were being made for Peter when he was in prison (Acts 12:5, 12). That is where he had known the life-changing power of "the Apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42).

There is no indication that John Mark suffered any kind of moral failure. He did not get into false doctrine, he wasn't seeking anything sinister, but he "left them." He did not complete the mission. He wasn't apparently ill. It doesn't say he was angry. But he quit.

He had heard all that was said about, "Send Saul and Barnabas." Clearly, he had been willing to go; and he, too, would have been part of that commissioning service—they would have "laid their hands on" him as well because he agreed to go as their "helper," and helpers are *really important!* To lose a helper causes hurt, and it hampers the mission. It is disappointing. It is discouraging. It diminishes what the team can accomplish.

But here is an important lesson to learn: In addition to overt, external opposition from sworn enemies, Be Ready For Discouragement from people on *our* side. For whatever reasons, people stumble; some of them quit.

Everyone who survives in ministry knows what a blow it is. When something gets started, and you build a team; and people you trust and people you lean on *give up*. Now, it is true: Sometimes people get sick, and they can no longer do what they are doing; that happens. Sometimes, a family crisis demands somebody's undivided attention, and they have to make a hard choice to step away from some ministry responsibility—at least for a while. In our world, we have a problem they did not have in the first century, where a job change can impact people involved in ministry, and they have to move. Things happen. We *know* that.

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But it is *quite a different thing* when someone simply quits and walks away to go back where it is more comfortable. Know that there will *always* be people who lose their nerve and who turn back from the task. *Just don't be one of them!* And don't let it distract you when you see people abandon the work. I can tell you from *lots* of experience: It *always* stings! Be Ready For Discouragement.

But *also*, know that God's "grace" is always "sufficient" for every day, and know that His "strength" is "made perfect" in our "weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9, NKJV)—and sometimes, our weakness is manifested when someone lets us down. But don't make the mistake John Mark made.

He later got it straightened out. If you don't know the ending yet, stick around; there is a happy ending to all of this. But in the process, he *wounded* the work of the Gospel, and *discouraged* the leaders of the ministry. In two more chapters, you are going to find out *how much* that hurt Paul.

Well, we aren't through with John Mark, but we are through for today. Please pay attention to that swarm of "Be's" around your head. To be used by God to the fullest, by the power of His Holy Spirit, let these "Be's" continue to swarm in you:

- \* Be In The Right Place—where you have *godly leadership!* (Titus 1:5-9)
- \* Be Ministering. *Be serving where you can!* God doesn't take dusty, crusty old Christians off the shelf and dust them off to give them something important to do. He calls us all to be serving and constantly one-anothering (Eph. 4:12; 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:11).
- \* Be Willing To Go—even if it's, *get up and go to work tomorrow!* That is your mission field (Eph. 6:5-7; Col. 3:22-24; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:18-20).
- \* Be Ready To Work Hard. Ministry isn't always easy; it isn't *usually* easy (2 Tim. 2:3).
- \* Be Prepared For Opposition from sworn enemies (Prov. 3:25; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 12:17).
- \* Be Ready To Stand Strong. Sometimes you just have to say, "No, we are not having this discussion anymore! The truth is what God says, and here it is. Get on board! The invitation is open!" Stand Strong (Eph. 6:10-13).
- \* Oh, and Be Ready To Harvest. There are *always* the Sergius Pauluses of the world who *do* come to faith through the Gospel (Acts 13:48; 2 Tim. 2:25; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23).
- \* And Be Ready For Discouragement. Don't let somebody else abandoning their post lead *you* to abandon *yours* (2 Tim. 4:7). In other words: Be Ready To Minister.

Let's pray:

*Our Father, we want to cry out with Isaiah: "Here I am! Send me!" Where You send us is tailor-made by Your providence. We know it involves our neighborhoods, our schools, our jobs, our families, our friends; and it might involve going someplace else in the world, and learning a different language. Whatever it is, we know we have, in the Gospel, the words of eternal life. So make us useful, we pray, for Your glory. Whatever might be in any of our lives that is holding us back from taking the next step of obedience in service, sweep it away, we pray, and give us wisdom to see what it is, and boldness to obey You. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*