

The Mark of a Christ Glorifying Assembly

Here in the closing of Colossians, we have a short list of great heroes of our Christian heritage. Few Christians are familiar with most of these people but these are the truly great ones. These are the ones upon whom the Church was built.

Colossians 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings;

Aristarchus. A Jew with a famous Greek name. The Greek name means best ruler. He is from Thessalonica, a city in Macedonia to which Paul wrote two letters. He was a companion of Paul on his third missionary journey. We can follow this Aristarchus through the book of Acts. In Acts 19:29, spring of 56 A.D., Aristarchus was seized and nearly killed by a mob in Ephesus because of his association with Paul. He survived because God had a plan for his life that went beyond Ephesus.

This presents us with a very important principle: God has a plan for your life---everyone of you! Unfortunately, not every believer gets with God's plan for his/her life. They setup other priorities that counter and interfere with God's plan for their lives. Not necessarily sinful things, but things that counter God's plan. For example, some believers marry the wrong person and that sets the course of their lives. Others pursue financial gain. Even the desire for a geographical area can interfere with God's plan. But most of all, making the decision that His Word is not a priority in your life, that increasing in the knowledge of God and growing in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ is not a priority in their lives. These

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believers are satisfied with just a nice life. Oh, they may go to church on most Sundays and in their minds that is all they need. People, there is no reincarnation, you have one chance, one opportunity to glorify Christ, one life. So please remember: 'only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.' You may survive some very devastating things for this very reason, that God has something more for you. Being attacked by a bear, a critical wreck, death of someone, some critical illness etc. But you are still here, you are still alive, God has a plan for you! It may not be what you planned. Seldom is it. But it is a plan where you glorify the Son of God. But God's plan for your life calls for a few things: first being faithful: faithful in walking by the Holy Spirit by faith; faithful in the growth; faithful in spiritual love toward everyone; being consistent and persistent in the intake of the Word of God; being faithful even when you do not understand.

Then in 57 A.D., he accompanies Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He probably was carrying the collection from Thessalonica to help the Christians in Jerusalem.

In 59 A.D., he accompanies Paul on the ship from Caesarea (Acts 27:2). Now, here is one of those decisions that we might face in life. He had the opportunity of breaking off with Paul (after the riot in Ephesus) when the great shipwreck voyage began, but he made the decision to continue to travel with Paul. He had a great ministry of refreshment and encouragement to Paul and others.

In 60 A.D., Aristarchus is now in prison with Paul (Col. 4:10). He was as much an encouragement to Paul as Paul was to him. Ever think about this? That you are here to encourage others in their Christian lives. We

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have a large number of young people going to college, some for the first time. A note from you would be such encouragement to them.

Apparently, Aristarchus, like Paul, was martyred in Rome during Nero's administration.

Let's see what we can learn from a believer like Aristarchus, who was one of the foundations of the Church.

Aristarchus:

1. He was what may be considered a 'strong' believer. He was faithful to the Lord and therefore a faithful friend of Paul's.
2. He is characterized as one who loves the teaching of the Word of God and therefore stayed with Paul as often as he could even in difficult times.
3. He trusted the Lord even when his life was in danger as in the mob attack in Ephesus and in prison in Rome.
4. He is a perfect example of one who has 'put on' the whole armor of God that he might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the Devil, as per Ephesians 6:11 and remained 'strong' in the Lord, in the strength of His might as per Ephesians 6:10. Once we have completed our study of Colossians, we will study the book of Ephesians that we all may be spiritual warriors like Aristarchus. The time may be that you will have to be 'strong' Christians in America, standing firm against the schemes of Satan.
5. Aristarchus was also a prayer warrior, who prayed in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit as per Ephesians 6:18.

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6. He was controlled by spiritual love. He could easily travel with the slave Onesimus and be trusted to teach those in Colossae once he arrived there. He was able to be a blessing to others. His love of Jesus Christ encouraged others to love Jesus Christ. His love of the Word of God encouraged others to love the Word of God. His spiritual love encouraged others to love one another as Christ loves.
7. His Spiritual maturity enabled him to restore weaker believers as per Galatians 6:1-2. Instead of judging so as to keep a sinful believer down, he judged so as to lift them up in their own spiritual journey.
8. And very important to Christians in America today, he had the Biblical knowledge and spiritual fortitude not to be influenced by evil trends and the philosophy of man (Col. 2:4; 7-8).
9. Finally, the strong believers like Aristarchus have maximum effectiveness in the angelic conflict of their day.

I hope that everyone here at Spring Valley Bible Church desires to be like Aristarchus:

faithful believer,

faithful to the Lord,

faithful in growing in His Word,

faithful to others,

Not noticed by the world but receive special notice from the head of the Church, our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

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Colossians 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner sends you his greetings and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he come to you welcome him);

My fellow prisoner. The Greek word used here is not the normal Greek word for prisoner. It is used only by Paul when he was in prison. Some prefer to take this, not as though Aristarchus was actually in prison with Paul, but a prisoner of Jesus Christ with Paul. While he does often speak of being a slave of Christ regardless of circumstances, he never refers to himself or anyone as in prison for Christ, without meaning actually in prison. If he were not referring to being an actual prisoner in a Roman prison, he would have said 'a prisoner of Christ.'

Ok what do we learn here? Throughout the history of the Church, a multitude of people have been imprisoned or in jail for their stand with Jesus Christ. We know that some of the believers in the church in Smyrna were imprisoned for Christ in the first century of the Church Age. And throughout the now some two thousand years of the dispensation of the Church, a multitude of saints have been imprisoned or even martyred for Christ. This is going on throughout the world today. Eleven Christians are killed every day somewhere in the world: North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan (pray for Fasal), Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Nigeria, Sudan, Eritrea, India. Thirty three of the top 50 countries that kill people because they are Christians, are Muslim countries. Yet, here in America, we are voting Muslims into office.

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So, right from the start, those who believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior have suffered imprisonment. And we are to show love and benevolence to those in prison, especially in prison for their stand for Christ.

Hebrews 10:32 But remember the former days, (before salvation) when, after being enlightened, (by the gospel) you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

Hebrews 10:33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

Hebrews 10:34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners (because of their stand for Christ) and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, (because of your stand for Christ) knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. (in heaven)

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore, (looking forward to being with the Lord forever) **do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.** (At the Judgment Seat of Christ)

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Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Colossians 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner sends his greetings. The King James says ‘salutes you.’ This is common courtesy and practice throughout the world. This Greek word is used of customary greetings upon entering a house, meeting someone on the street or saying farewells. Now, the basic meaning of this Greek word is ‘to embrace.’ It could be embracing, kissing, offering a hand or some form of a salute. In the Roman world, at this time, there were various types of salutes, but they all conveyed greetings or departures. As important as courtesy is and as nice as it is to properly greet others, Jesus told those He sent out to greet no one on the way (Luke 10:4). The point is that this can become a distraction when you are on a mission. Aristarchus demonstrates a wonderful trait that no parent should fail in teaching their children: good manners! Good manners, proper behavior is often unnoticed while poor manners or no manners shouts attention. Good manners demonstrates humility and shows thoughtfulness of others. They also reveal self-discipline and respect of other people regardless of who they may be. Paul and Aristarchus are good friends, they have a comradery with each other in serving the Lord, they have a thoughtfulness toward each other. Parents, please teach your children to be thoughtful of others. This is what spiritual love does: it sees a need and then meets that need.

There are others on this team.

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Colossians 4:10 **Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark.** Well, we could spend a great deal of time here on Mark and Paul. Mark was the son of Mary of Jerusalem. Her home was where the first local church met in Jerusalem. But Mark was converted not by his wonderful mother but by Peter (1 Peter 5:13). The gospel of Mark actually presents Peter's account of our Lord.

Mark, accompanied his faithful cousin Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). However, Mark failed in this first missionary journey, departing from them before the journey was completed. He went home to his mother (Acts 13:13). As Paul and Barnabas began to make plans for a second missionary journey, they had a strong division. Barnabas insisted that they take Mark along with them while Paul insisted they not take him since he had in Paul's thinking, deserted them. The two great men split and God used this to His glory in now having two great teachers of Jesus Christ, going out, not together but in different directions. Barnabas treated Mark with spiritual love and took Mark, while Paul chose Silas to travel with him. Barnabas saved one of the future great heroes of the early Church. Paul failed this grace test and failed in spiritual love, but later does come around in spiritual love and embraces Mark as a faithful servant of the Lord (Acts 15:37-39).

People, we all fail in our Christian Walk. The issue is to get up and keep moving in the power of the Holy Spirit and not to worry about those who do not accept you. Neither Barnabas nor Mark allowed Paul's rejection of Mark to get them down, but went on serving the Lord. In fact, Paul, in mentioning Mark here as he does, uses his own failure to encourage

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Philemon and the believers in Colossae to receive the slave Onesimus and not make the same mistake he made.

Mark was in line to be a Jewish priest. But once he was saved, he decided to eliminate himself forever from being a Jewish priest, by cutting off the tip of his finger. The Mosaic Law said if you had any deformed parts or parts missing you cannot function as a priest. You had to be pretty to stand at the altar. I am thankful that is not a requirement to be a pastor-teacher in Church Age.

Some important historical principles we learn

1. The church at Antioch: there is nothing but praise for this church. While the local church in Jerusalem began the Church Age, it is the church in Antioch that really got things rolling at the beginning of the Church Age. They were the first to magnify spiritual love. In spite of Paul's legalism and failure in regards to Mark, this assembly did not choose between Paul and Barnabas. They simply left that matter in the Lord's hands and supported both Barnabas and Mark and Paul and Silas. They did not fail in this early crisis. They passed the grace test. They exemplified spiritual love. Paul was wrong but that was not for them to judge Paul or Barnabas. They recognized that Paul was an Apostle called by God and therefore not for them to judge. So, the local assembly of believers in Antioch gets a great deal of recognition for their spiritual love in Paul's failure.
2. This fantastic action of forgiveness and spiritual love on the part of Barnabas is the last major activity recorded of this great believer,

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Barnabas. He merely departs from the book of Acts as a great believer exemplifying spiritual love in action.

3. Historical tradition, however, associates Barnabas with Alexandria. And, because of his association with Alexandria, the academic center for Classical Greek and Jewish influence, it is suspected that Barnabas is the writer of Hebrews. But in final speculation, the writer of Hebrews remains anonymous. But, the last half of Hebrews is nearly all Classical Greek. Barnabas was well educated and as the historical records show, he pastored in Alexandria. But again, the Holy Spirit did not see it necessary that we know who wrote Hebrews.

God had a wonderful plan for Barnabas. It does not need to be recorded to have a significant impact on the early Church. Just like many of you right here in Spring Valley Bible Church. You are having a fantastic spiritual impact on Christianity today with your influence on young people, getting the Word of God sent out throughout the world. Your life is not recorded in Scripture, but you are having a wonderful, significant impact on the world for Christ, just like Barnabas.

4. Then we learn from Mark. Yes, he failed as a young man, but he did not let his failure prevent him from going on and being used by God. He went with Barnabas on Barnabas' second missionary journey. Later, he will hook up with Peter and write the gospel of Mark which is Peter's account. So, Mark was greatly used by God in the early Church. Don't you ever allow a failure on your part to prevent you from growing in His Word and being used by Him for

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His Glory and do not allow others to hold you back. Learn from Mark and from Paul.

Colossians 4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about/concerning whom (referring to Mark) you received instructions; if he come to you, welcome him;)

Here is what a wonderful believer like Paul does when he is wrong. He has already sent out a letter giving information that he was wrong in the great controversy with Barnabas over Mark. In this letter he informs everyone of the true soundness of Mark and when he comes through their area to receive him in spiritual love. Receive him, not as one who has failed, as I did, but receive him in warm hospitality as a leader in the Church. There is something really Christ-praising when a congregation demonstrates spiritual love together. It demonstrates the leading of the Holy Spirit. It demonstrates knowledge of the Word of God. It demonstrates a desire to glorify Jesus Christ in the assembly. Please understand that when spiritual love is present, pettiness, pride, vindictiveness, implacability, controversy and conflict are all blotted out by spiritual love. And when this happens to an entire group of people this is really powerful in the angelic conflict. It is always wonderful when an entire assembly is united on spiritual love. In any congregation, there will be members in all stages of spiritual growth. But when they are all empowered by the Holy Spirit there is a unity in love.

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This is a perfect picture of:

Colossians 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love (Spiritual Love), which is the perfect bond of unity. (What a contrast this local church is to the one described by Paul in Galatians 5:15.)

Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

And

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another envying one another.

But instead

Gal. 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

And so be it said of Spring Valley Bible Church.