

Do I Help or Hinder?

“And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he: take him. And straightway he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Rabbi; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, do that for which thou art come. Then they came and laid hands on Jesus, and took him” (Matthew 26:47-50). The actions of Judas rewarded him with a name unprecedented in the annals of history: even Judas hanged himself. Religious and non-religious alike know well that Judas is a name awarded to those who betray, and in the case of the Lord, his “Friend.” Although Judas is known for this ultimate act of betrayal, what of others that fail to come to the aid of those devoted to, and/or persecuted for the gospel’ sake?

When the Apostles Paul and Barnabas set out on their evangelistic journey, “and they had John as their attendant” (Acts 13:5). As they journeyed, they came to the region of Pamphylia, where “John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem” (Acts 13:13). Although the scriptures do not identify why John Mark departed, before Paul began his second journey, “Barnabas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark. But Paul thought it not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And there arose a sharp contention, so that they departed asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cyprus: but Paul chose Silas, and went forth being commended by the brethren” (Acts 15:37-40): this is the last mention of Barnabas by Luke. It is evident that the actions of one may affect the relationship with another. Whatever the reason, Paul apparently perceived John Mark a detriment to his purposes, but at a later date, Paul says to Timothy, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering” (2 Timothy 4:11).

When the Apostle Paul, describing his condition as, “already being offered, and the time of my departure is come” (2 Timothy 4:6), he said, “Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica” (Vs. 10), Paul further described his condition, saying, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will render to him according to his works: of whom do thou also beware; for he greatly withstood our words. At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account” (2 Timothy 4:14-16). How bitter it must have been!

As the Apostle Paul reflected upon the time of his “first defense” he recognized two conditions: (1) Those who forsook him would be brought into account. (2)

“But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:16-18).

Remember the words of the Lord, saying, “Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me” (Matthew 25:45). ret