



July 2, 2006

Being Profitable

The life of a New Testament Christian striving to be faithful to God is characterized by growth. As one studies the word of God and puts it to use in everyday life, learning occurs. We learn more about the scriptures, and more importantly, how to apply them accurately by teaching others. In the process of doing this we learn more about ourselves and what we need to add to our knowledge. In the scriptures we read on one individual who demonstrates this characteristic. In Acts 12 we are introduced to John, whose surname is Mark. Herod had killed James, the brother of John and had arrested Peter as well, intending to keep him until after the Passover to ***“present him to the people (Acts 12.1-3).*** Peter was delivered from prison by angel and we are told that Christians had gathered to pray for him, a prayer which was answered in Peter’s release. Following this intervention Peter thought about what had happened. ***“And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.” (Acts 12.12).*** This same man was later taken with Paul and Barnabas as they left for a second preaching trip. ***“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.” (Acts 12.25).*** We are not told what happened in the life of John but we find that shortly after this he left Paul and Barnabas to return to Jerusalem (Acts 13.13). Upon the completion of this trip, Barnabas had determined to take John Mark with them once more (Acts 15.37). This created a problem for Paul as we read, ***“And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus” (Acts 15.39).*** Over the years many reasons for this have been offered as to why this occurred. ***“But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” (Acts 15.38).*** Paul perhaps did not wish to depend on one who had shown that he was not fully committed to the work that they had set out to do. Later we find that this may have changed as Paul writes to Timothy. Paul stated, in the second letter to Timothy, only Luke was with him but instructed Timothy, ***“Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” (2 Tim 4.11).*** Many believe this is the same John Mark we read about in the book of Acts. If this is the case we can see that one who had been questionable in the work of preaching the gospel had now grown and become “profitable”. In our lives as Christians we need to think of our commitment to the work that is set before us. The time may come when we need to think about how profitable we are in the service to the Lord. Are we doing all that we are able to do? A better question to ask is are we doing all that we need to do. Christ stated, ***“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9.62).*** The writer of Hebrews stated, ***“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Heb 10.38-39).*** Satan exerts his influence in our lives in many ways. We may be affected by fear when faced with the world and it’s pressures. We may also be overwhelmed with disappointments that abound in life. The things that God would have us do are not burdensome. Christ stated, ***“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt 11.30).*** There are times when we may lose sight of the goal, a home in Heaven, for which we work. Peter warns us that the devil walks about as a roaring lion seeking to devour those who weaken and lose their spiritual perspective (1 Pet 5.8). Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the Corinthians who had not developed the proper faith and commitment to God. ***“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...” (2 Cor 4.17).*** Throughout the scriptures we see that the life that we can have in eternity is worth enduring whatever comes our way. We too, like John Mark, can remind ourselves of this and be renewed by reading God’s word and then acting on it thus strengthening our resolve to be profitable servants.

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