

Never Waste a Good Conflict**The Gospel in Motion**[Acts 15:36-41](#)

Our passage this week draws out a conflict between Paul and Barnabus, which takes place immediately after the previous conflict in Acts over whether grace was enough for Gentiles to be allowed to enter into the family of God. Paul and Barnabus had been working well as a team, but suddenly their relationship splinters. Paul, unhappy about previous actions of Mark, decides not to take him on the continuation of their journey. This begins a sharp, divisive disagreement between Paul and Barnabus - Paul and Silas head to Syria and Cilicia, while Barnabus and Mark head to Cyprus. Their personal disagreement comes as a surprise to us, given our tendency to idealize Christians past and present. We know that we are called to reconcile conflicts, but it goes against our human nature to do so. **What current or unresolved conflicts are you wrestling with?**

Paroxysm is the actual translation of the word describing the eruption of anger between Paul and Barnabus. Beyond this, we don't know many other details. We do know that Mark was Barnabus' nephew, which likely added to the delicacy of the situation. Three things we can learn and know to be true about conflict are the following:

- 1) **Conflict is NORMAL.** Conflict is normal for both Christians and non-Christians, but when it happens especially in the church, we are mortified because we think the church is somehow spared of this normal human reality.
- 2) **We are BAD at conflict.** We avoid conflict, even to the detriment of others and situations.
- 3) **God is not ABSENT from our conflicts.** One reason conflict can feel like failure is we assume God does not exist within conflict.

Even though the Holy Spirit was apparently not consulted in this dispute, we know that God did not leave them despite themselves. We see both their ministries to be blessed by God: Paul and Silas go on to Philippi and found the first Christian church in Europe. Barnabus and Mark go to Cyprus, where they ministered and Barnabus mentored Mark in his native land. God did not abandon them and reconciled them in the long run. **Where do you need to see God in the midst of a conflict? How can you pray differently about this conflict so that you are able to more clearly discern how God is redeeming it?**