

John Mark

I am usually called John although you probably think of me as Mark. You know, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? I surely don't feel worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as those three heroic characters. Saying their names is almost like thinking of Mount Olympus! Matthew was with our Lord from early on and being literate, kept notes. Luke, well, he was a physician and a scholar. He interviewed Mary and all the others to write a complete account of everything that happened. He even travelled with Paul. John? He was part of the inner circle. He saw and heard things the rest of us only got second hand if at all. I was the son of a follower of Jesus named Mary – not **the** Mary. For some reason there were a lot of Marys at that time.

Me? There was the inauspicious episode in the Garden, when Jesus was taken. I ran – leaving my clothes behind. I believe you now call it “streaking?” It is included in my account of that event because the Holy Spirit compelled me but allowed me to leave off the name.

Next, I was at my mother's house when Peter was miraculously released from prison. I will never forget Rhoda's tangled tongue when she came back from answering the door while we were praying. Even under normal circumstances Rhoda was hard to follow. I think you would call it “Valley Talk?” But she was almost incoherent and for a while nobody realized that Peter was actually at the door. But then he was also incredibly patient when we finally got there. That was probably an even greater miracle than the release from prison in Peter's case!

After going to Antioch, I was chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Barnabas is my cousin and put in a good word for me – I think he saw potential. So, I was doubly embarrassed for him, as well as myself, when I left the mission early. Why did I do it? Maybe I was homesick, but to tell you the truth, I was terrified when I saw the spiritual battle between Elymas and Paul. My faith was small, and during the encounter I even felt demons trying to enter **my** body, prevented by prayers of the saints and the guardian angels that accompanied Paul. I decided that I was not ready for that kind of warfare!

Then, I realized that I was actually responsible for the split of Paul from Barnabas. Now, of course, the Lord turned it into a good thing. For both of them ministered, and Silas was a great addition to Paul's team. But would I ever be worthy of anything again? Peter seemed to want to give me a chance. I think it had to do with his own difficult start. He had tried to battle the arresting officers in the Garden when I ran, but then denied three times that he even knew the Lord Jesus. But eventually he was restored and turned out to not only be bold and faithful but deeply compassionate.

I became his amanuensis – I had to look that one up, basically his personal secretary. But Peter was a plain speaker and I recorded his teaching. We never knew when he might be taken from us for the authorities were constantly threatening him and all the apostles. So, it was crucial that it all be recorded.

Eventually even Paul forgave me for my failure. It was a thrill when I saw the letter to Timothy saying, “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.” Timothy showed it to me when he invited me to come. Then when Paul wrote to Philemon, he wrote, “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.” Philemon copied that comment for me when I needed the encouragement.

So, let my life be an encouragement to you. Have you failed? It does not mean the end! Even a no-talent coward, who only got on the team because of family influence, was eventually allowed the

incredible privilege of being a tool in the hands of the Lord of us all! May His Kingdom increase until He returns to gather His own people. Many will be there because we carried the good news.

Mark 14:50-52, Acts 12 – 15, 1 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 1:23-24