Hi,

Happy Monday!

Here are today’s updates:

* In keeping with this new virus-schedule**, my Monday class (Matthew) will be at 3pm today** and **my Tuesday class (Genesis) will be at 11:45 tomorrow**. Both will be [on my Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* People without a Facebook account have been unable to access my personal page for the Facebook Live class events. So . . . [if you don’t have a Facebook account you will have to view the class on my YouTube channel.](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) I will make sure all recordings are up and ready for viewing by the end of the day of the class. (YouTube willing!).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://www.scottengle.org/). All of this week’s recordings and podcasts are posted.
* Keep sending in those movie and book recommendations.

Here is the last of the friendship stories. This is a story of friends in conflict: Paul and Barnabas.

***Acts 9:26-30***

**When he [Paul] had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He spoke and argued with the Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill him. When the believers learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.**

***Acts 15:36-41***

**After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.**

Friendships are sometimes difficult. They can be threatened by disagreements and hurt feelings. Paul and Barnabas were close friends and co-workers empowered by God’s Spirit. Nonetheless, after many years they would come to a crisis that would threaten to blow their friendship apart.

*Barnabas*

Barnabas was originally from Cyprus, a large island in the eastern Mediterranean about 60 miles west of Syria. By Jesus’ day there was a substantial Jewish population on Cyprus. Barnabas was a Jew from the priestly tribe of Levi. It may have some priestly business that first took him to Jerusalem, the home of the temple and the center of the priestly system. In any event, not long after Jesus’ death and resurrection, Barnabas embraced Jesus as Messiah and Lord, even selling a field that he owned and giving the money to the apostles for distribution (Acts 4:36-37). Barnabas went on to become a leader in the Christian community in Jerusalem.

Barnabas met Paul soon after Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. When Paul, the former persecutor of Christians, made his way to Jerusalem, Barnabas rose to defend him (today’s first passage from Acts). Despite Barnabas’ defense, there was so much heat on Paul that he headed for his hometown of Tarsus (in southern modern-day Turkey) while Barnabas continued his own work in Jerusalem.

Barnabas and Paul would meet again about six years later in Antioch (also in southern Turkey). Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire and home to a large Jewish population. Fleeing persecutions in Jerusalem and Judea, some Greek-speaking followers of Jesus had headed to Antioch. Luke records that it was in Antioch that disciples of Jesus were first called “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Because some of the new Christians in Antioch were from Cyprus, the leadership in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to keep tabs on things. Though Barnabas was pleased with what he found, he needed help. So he turned to Paul and asked him to come to Antioch. For a year, Barnabas and Paul worked together in Antioch, even collecting some financial assistance for the Christians in Judea which the two men personally took to Jerusalem. They returned to Antioch afterwards and prepared it to be the Christian “base of operations” for the missionary effort westward.

*The missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul and John Mark*

In AD48 or so (more than ten years after Barnabas first defended Paul in Jerusalem), the Holy Spirit and the church leaders commissioned both men for a new initiative (Acts 13:2). In this, they would be joined by Barnabas’ cousin, John Mark. Over the next three years, they would travel to Cyprus and then throughout Asia Minor preaching Christ and founding Christian communities.

Barnabas and Paul’s relationship changed during this journey. For the first ten years of their friendship, Barnabas had been Paul’s defender and mentor. He had been the “senior” of the two in the growing movement. But during this long missionary journey, Paul took on the dominant role. Despite this change in roles and the tensions that probably resulted, Paul and Barnabas worked hard and endured much for the sake of the gospel. After completing their work in Asia Minor, the two men returned to Jerusalem where, together, they would argue successfully that Gentiles did not have to obey Jewish law, such as circumcision, in order to become Christians.

*The friendship is threatened*

Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with a copy of a letter from the council in Jerusalem. Together, they “taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord” in Antioch. Then Paul suggested it was time for them to check up on churches they had founded during their missionary journey together. Barnabas was all for it . . . but there was a problem. Paul didn’t want to take John Mark with them again because, in Paul’s view, John Mark had bailed out on them. Paul had no interest in taking someone he deemed unreliable. But John Mark was Barnabas’ cousin and Barnabas insisted that John Mark accompany them. Paul would not relent and as Luke writes, “the disagreement became so sharp that they parted company” (from today’s second scripture passage). Barnabas took his cousin with him and headed for Cyprus. Paul took another friend, Silas, and headed back to the young churches in Asia Minor before going on to Greece.

Luke never mentions Barnabas again; all his attention is on Paul’s missionary work. However, writing to the Christians in Corinth in 54AD or so, Paul speaks of Barnabas as a fellow apostle who, like Paul, had foregone the financial compensation to which they were entitled (1 Cor 9:6). Writing to the Colossians, Paul even has nice things to say about John Mark (Col 4:10)! Paul and Barnabas might have had a falling out, but they were both Christians. They understood that in Christ, our friendships must transcend transient disputes and hurt feelings. In all his letters, Paul insisted that Christians embrace unity and harmony in the body of Christ. Christian friendship is modeled on a covenant and, like marriage, it is an aspect of our discipleship. Even though Paul and Barnabas had a passionate and even bitter argument over John Mark, we can be confident that each man would have found his way back to peace and good will toward the other, even as their work took them in two directions.

*Movie recommendation*

Josie Teter sent in a recommendation that made my chuckle. I saw a bit of this film not long ago: *Oh God!* With George Burns and John Denver. I wouldn’t go to this movie to deepen your understanding of the Triune God, but it is fun.

*Book recommendation*

Here is an interesting one: *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science*. The co-authors are Dennis Venema, a professor of Biology, and Scot McKnight, a well-regarded Christian theologian from Northern Seminary. How do we regard the work on the human genome and how might it shape our understanding of Scripture? Not a light read, but written for lay-people. I read it a couple of summers ago and found it quite thought-provoking. As you might guess, the Amazon reviews on this book are wildly varied; there is a lot of “heat” around this topic in some circles.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott