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*This article is inserted in the absence of Question Box*

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## **DEMAS**

Oh, if we could travel one year with the apostle Paul; how strong we would be. He could point out our weaknesses, correct our slight errings, answer all our questions, and help us plot a course of life. Yet what do we find?

**"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you"** (Col. 4:14).

**"Epraphas, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers"** (Phil 23,24).

**"Give diligence to come shortly unto me for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world"** (2 Tim. 4:9,10).

How could it happen? What dark shadows lurk in a man's soul to cause him to fall violently, even while he associates with an earthen vessel that was such a great treasury of God's truth? What sweet melodious chords of the heart may Satan strum with the hand of a master, to so lure Demas as a dumb brute to the inevitable slaughter? Besides the love of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17), the call of the wild, what may cause us to lose our soul? The drift of the questions, it is the design of this article to answer,

#### ANSWER NUMBER ONE

Contemplate first, the damnable notion that we are more religious than we actually are. Paul charges each man, "**not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**" (Rom. 12:3), and that he "**that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall**" (1 Cor. 10:12).

We suppose we hate sin, know truth, and are fully able to resist any onslaught. Yet we scarcely know what we are up against. Our enemy is dreadful. He is subtle (Gen. 3:1), a wicked enemy (Matt. 13:9; Matt. 13:39), a murderer of the worst type (Jn. 8:44), a liar (Jn. 8:44), a prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 14:30), full of devices (2 Cor. 2:11), a god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and he hungrily seeks to devour all (1 Pet. 5:8,9).

Now is not the time to suppose we are all right, assume we are strong, and let our guard down. How many nations have crumbled, how many armies destroyed, and how many Christian soldiers were destined to hell, because the troops were green, unwary, unknowing, unarmed and unwatchful?!

If we run a race, let us not run uncertainly, but as if only one can get the prize (1 Cor. 9:24,26). If we fight in the ring, let us not waste a moment beating the air (1 Cor. 9:26). If we face our own body, let us bruise it piteously, and lead it about as a prisoner of war (1 Cor. 9:27). If we enlist as a soldier, let us disentangle ourselves from the world (2 Tim. 3:4), and suffer hardship (2 Tim. 2:3). If we approach the hour of battle, let us put on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:11). If we join in battle; "**Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong**" (1 Cor. 16:13). I know of no quicker way to die, than to make the dreadful assumption that we are more religious than we are. Regarding Satan and eternal damnation, nothing we have witnessed in the Christian life has given me grounds to be lax and careless. Our enemy is a horrible opponent, utterly experienced, and he knows each of us as a book. Take care! Take care! Or, fallen, be forever ashamed.

#### ANSWER NUMBER TWO

Consider, too, what a dreadful effect the mistaking of good feelings for real religion has on our lives. What an awesome gap there is between feeling and acting.

What do people think when they amble down the broad way through the wide gate (Matt. 7:13). I visualise them pausing, looking sincerely back, vowing that tomorrow they will make changes. They shuffle along, say noble things to each other, finding courage through the sheer number of company they have.

Notice how Balaam revered God in his speech: "**If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God to do less or more . . .**" (Num. 22:18). What a grand wish he had: "**Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his**" (Num.23:10). But he died the death of an enemy of God (Num. 31:8). Did he make the tragic mistake of mistaking good feelings for good deeds?

Certainly an important verse is " Corinthians 13:5.

**"Try your own selves, whether ye are in faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless ye indeed be reprobate."**

Yes, let us love God, feel good intentions and fine notions. But let us always have the custom of trying ourselves by specific works. Good feelings are never the down payment nor the proof of real religion.

### ANSWER NUMBER THREE

We must never be guiled by past devotion, as if one good deed is the pledge of another. Thinking that past accomplishments take care of future requirements is certainly a cause of unfaithfulness. As Yogi Bear says of a baseball game, "It ain't over till it's over."

How grand it is to be of the house of Christ. But the Holy Spirit says, "**whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end**" (Heb. 3:6). And again he says, "**for are we become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end**" (Heb. 3:14).

Saul was head and shoulders above the people of Israel (1 Sam. 9:2). How humble he was before Samuel. He did not feel worthy to be king, since he came from such a small tribe and tiny family (1 Sam. 9:21). Our hearts leap with joy at his faith and decisiveness in stopping the arrogant, cruel Nahash of the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11). But it is all downhill from there. His past devotion did not prevent his ignoble end (1 Sam. 15ff).

Remember the seed that fell on the rock (Lk. 8:13). They receive the word with joy, but in time of temptation fall away. One good deed is not the pledge of another.

What else might the Bible say of Demas? Like the dreadful, ominous toll of a funeral bell, we hear over and over, "**he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear**" (Matt.11:15; 13:9; 13:43).

J. MOFFIT.

## LET US GO ON TO PERFECTION

(Heb. 6:1)

From time to time we sing a prayer titled "Higher Ground" and this hymn expresses the desire that we do not want to stay "where doubts arise and fears dismay." Our Hebrew text endorses that principle of not wanting to stay in a condition where we must continually go back over the basic teachings, never really being sure of what we were taught, as if we were to remain in kindergarten all our Spiritual lives.

The "*perfection*" we must all aim for is a faith which is so strong and perfect that even if we might sin, all doubt and fear is removed and allows us to continue in full confidence of the love and forgiveness of our Lord, and the unshakeable knowledge that if we are faithful (full of faith) and have no fear of confessing our sins, "**that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins**" (1 John 1:9).

Some brethren have not yet attained perfection of their faith and are continually living in a cloud of doubt, and believe that they cannot know for sure. Those who seem to prefer to flounder around, emphasising that they cannot understand, are those