

Schedule of Meeting Times:

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM
Speaker, Robert Emerson
 Study Sunday 10:00 AM
 Worship Sunday 11:00 AM
 Worship Sunday 5:00 PM
Singing every 2nd Sunday evening
 Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." —Psa 119:105



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**Servants during December:**

Songleader: Peter (1), Dwight (8), Stanley (15), Larry (22), David (29)

Reading: Robert

Announcements: Marty

Table: Larry, Mike, Lakin, Stanley

Wednesday Lesson: Larry (4), Stanley (11), Kris (18), Larry (25)

Lawn Mowing (week starting): On Break...

Singing: TBA (29)

Area Meetings:

Hays Mill church of Christ

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

The Bible . Examiner

"Examine everything carefully..." —1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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How to Avoid Spiritual Failure

By Paul Earnhart

In his final hours in Rome, awaiting an inevitable execution, a very lonely apostle Paul suffered some additional heartbreak. "Demas," he wrote, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," 2 Tim 4:10. We are left to speculate as to the particulars—what dread fears or powerful allurements led this faithful friend and co-worker to abandon the kingdom of God and to forsake his burdened brother. It was not as though he had fled the field at the first approach of trouble. During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome Demas had evidently been a steadfast companion, Phile 24; Col 4:14. Now, unexpectedly, this heart-mauling betrayal and desertion. Only those who have had a trusted companion in Christ—one who has proven himself in many a crisis—to suddenly turn from God and run for the world can understand. It can numb the spirit.

What is it that can cause one who has invested so much in the kingdom to suddenly abandon everything? Some fade early because they have little understanding of the calling of God and even less commitment. The first approach of temptation and hardship devastates them, Lk 8:13. Others seem to have a deep commitment to righteousness but not an absolute one. Their price for betrayal is high but they have one nonetheless, and when it gets high enough they run. The wealthy young ruler who came to Jesus was like that. He was willing to give up a lot, but not everything, Mt 19:16-23.


Paul said that Demas "loved this present world." The "world" is many things. John describes it as a way of thinking where lust, materialism and pride abound, 1 Jn 2:15,16. What was it that got to the faithful Demas? Was it fear of death or imprisonment? Or was

it something more subtle like a nostalgic longing for the old easy ways free of constant unabating warfare? We are not told which one of these undid Demas but one of them found its mark.

Breaking points can come to us too if we are not very careful. A deep hurt we cannot find it in ourselves to forgive. A disappointing marriage. Failures with our children. Lost health or prosperity. Anything we had never imagined happening to us. And often it's just plain prideful stubbornness. At any rate, don't ever say you'd never do what others have done. You've never been all the places you could be. Peter learned a valuable lesson about that, Mt 26:31-35. It is far better that we know our own weaknesses and watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, Mt 26:41. Satan loves an arrogant and self-confident man.

Another lesson to be learned from the failure of others is that those who at last go back, at first look back. Departures of apparent suddenness are really the end of a process. Our Lord warned that those who put their hand to the kingdom plow and look back longingly at the world are not fit for the kingdom of God, Lk 9:62. The disciples who go back are those who first begin to cultivate again the values of the world and like the Israelites in the wilderness grow nostalgic amidst their trials for the fleshpots of Egypt. They forget, of course, the galling bondage that accompanies the life of sin. These are the ones who gradually cease to meditate upon God's word (Psa 1:1,2), then become prayerless (Jas 4:1,2), as God and Christ seem far away. First men cease to study, then to pray, and, finally, to care. Sometimes this all begins as a

casual flirtation, a few little compromises dismissed as harmless. Too much time with worldly companions, 1 Cor 15:33; too much interest in a job, 1 Tim 6:9,10; too much concern with being accepted and making our mark in the world, 1 Pet 5:5. Finally, it becomes a passionate love affair that makes us heedless of the injury we do to our Savior, ourselves and others.

Satan is the master of the "short step" method. Slow change is more effective in producing spiritual collapse than sudden departure. The danger of alerting the victim to what is happening is eliminated. We can be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, Heb 3:12,13. Warning flags need to start flying the moment we feel the slightest ebb in commitment. Beware the spiritual slow leak. The unfailing answer to this kind of spiritual failure is the daily discipline of an uncompromising dedication which admits of no exceptions and makes quick and humble redress for every transgression. Burn all your bridges and press on to the heavenly mark, Phil 3:7-14. And if, in spite of everything, you happen to stumble badly, don't let despair destroy you. Remember that everyone who has faltered has not ultimately fallen. We can all thank God for that. John Mark's disgraceful desertion in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13) was not the end of him because he didn't allow it to be. Paul sent for him during his last hours, 2 Tim 4:11, and the Holy Spirit chose him to record the gospel story. We don't have to be like Demas. In the mercy of God we have the privilege of being like John Mark or Peter, and, yes, even Paul. 

What's In It For Me?


By Steve Klein

The Lord described one of the shortcomings of the ancient Israelites as follows: "Everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them," Isa 1:23. Like many today, the people of Israel were not much interested in helping those who could not help them in return. The prevailing way of determining whether or not to be charitable and kind was apparently to ask oneself, "What's in it for me?" and "What am I going to get out of it?" And so it is today. Unless there is some prospect of being rewarded with pleasure, financial gain or praise, few will show much concern for the welfare of the needy and lowly.

It has been said that you can learn a lot about a man's character by observing how he treats someone who can do nothing for him. A person of quality will be kind to those who are in positions "lower" than his (e.g. waiters, cashiers, clerks, employees at work, underclassmen at school, etc.). He will

go out of his way to be helpful to those who cannot pay him back.

Jesus expects His disciples to "condescend to men of low estate," Rom 12:16. He explicitly commands us to do good to those who cannot or will not repay us. In Lk 14:13,14 Jesus said, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." And in Lk 6:35 He commands us to love our "enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High," Lk 6:35.

Note that in both of the preceding passages, the reward for doing good to others is not material, financial, or even emotional—it's spiritual and eternal. Let not our love and kindness be sold cheaply for the temporary rewards of this life. Rather, store up eternal treasures in heaven by showing courtesy and compassion to all. Make it your task today to do something for someone who cannot pay you back. 

Remember in Prayer

Lakin was very ill last Sunday with strep-like symptoms; **Dwight Presnell** is facing possible surgery; and **Anna** had her wisdom teeth out this past Wednesday. Remember both **Ruth Black** (Limestone

Health Facility) and **Madelene Britnell** (Valley View, 206); as well as **Lois Adams, Carolyn Dennis, Tim** and **Dot Hice, Polly McNatt,** and **Hazel Teeples.** 