

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING, REMEMBER PAUL, DEMAS, AND REVELATION 2
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"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

This is an age of "drop-outs," that has brought nothing new to our world. Viewers of television programs are accustomed to commercials that warn students against dropping out of school, stating that better jobs and brighter futures await graduates from institutions of learning. The Bible also warns people against similar dangers that await those who forget and forsake their religious commitments. Initial enthusiasm for Christ and His kingdom is of little value if a person forsakes the cause he or she once championed. If the Christian life is compared with a race, then the athlete must remember the finish line is not halfway down the course. A runner who desires a trophy must continue to the end!

Paul probably considered these facts when, sitting in his prison at Rome, he thought of his former companion, Demas. Regretfully, the apostle wrote to Timothy, saying, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). It is not known what became of the young backslider, but there is reason to believe that later he wished he had been a wiser man. It is challenging to read the words of the Lord spoken to the church at Smyrna, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). The Christian experience may be summarized under three words: commencing, continuing, and conquering. Unless the first is followed by the second, something precious is lost.

Evidently Paul's young companion had made a commitment to Christ; otherwise he would not have been with the apostle in Rome. His subsequent experience may be considered under four words: his delight, distraction, departure, and disappearance. Paul had some knowledge of each of these phases in the life of his young helper. Did Demas quit because of the difficult circumstances that surrounded him? Was he disappointed and disillusioned when things continued to deteriorate? Was he afraid of the future, or fascinated by the night life of Rome? When Demas forsook Paul, he walked into eternal obscurity. If he lived to be an old man, he was probably dismayed with his memories. He lost his contentment and his crown and became a drop-out from the greatest enterprise in the world.

Perhaps Paul was thinking of this when he wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Hence

20

forth there is laid up for me a crown (2 Tim 4:7-8). The apostle made mistakes, but from the day he met the Lord outside of Damascus until he met Him again in heaven, Paul never faltered. Maybe he would have appreciated the moral of the little poem:

Two frogs fell into a deep cream bowl;
One was an optimistic soul,
But the other took the gloomy view,
"We shall drown!" he cried without adieu.
So with a last despairing cry,
He flung up his legs and said, "Goodbye!"
Quote the other frog with a merry grin,
"I can't get out, but I won't give in;
I'll swim around 'til my strength is spent,
Then will I die the more content."
Bravely he swam 'til it would seem
His struggles began to chum the cream.
On the top of the butter at last he stopped,

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And out of the bowl he gaily hopped.
What is the moral? It's easily found,
If you can't hop out, keep swimming around!
Author Unknown

If diamonds could speak they might complain of harsh treatment received during their preparation to become finished gems. There is a great difference between the stone found in the mines and the jewel of exquisite beauty placed in a royal crown. There is an even greater difference between the rough, unlovely sinner, and the finished product mentioned by John. The apostle wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). If a diamond had the capability of dismissing its polisher, it would ruin the best plans ever conceived. That is true of any Christian who quits in the midst of God's redeeming operation. The Bible says, "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Never give up!

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