

THE LESSON OF DEMAS

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I WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THE LESSON OF DEMAS. DEMAS WAS A FELLOW WORKER WITH PAUL, AND WAS WELL-KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH AT THAT TIME. IN FACT, WHEN PAUL WAS CONCLUDING HIS LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS, HE SENT GREETINGS FROM LUKE AND DEMAS.

JUST A FEW YEARS LATER, WE FIND, IN II TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4, AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MAN. WHEN PAUL WAS WRITING, HE REALIZED THAT HIS TIME ON THIS EARTH AS A PHYSICAL BEING WAS ABOUT UP. HE FELT VERY STRONGLY ABOUT THAT. IN VERSES 9-10 HE SAYS, "DO THY DILIGENCE TO COME SHORTLY UNTO ME: FOR DEMAS HATH FORSAKEN ME, HAVING LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD, AND IS DEPARTED UNTO THESSALONICA...."

DEMAS, HAVING MADE A GOOD START OUT OF THIS WORLD, SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, HESITATED, LOOKED BACK AND JUST FELL HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE AGAIN WITH THIS PRESENT WORLD. THE REALITY IS THAT IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANY OF US, IF, AFTER RECEIVING THE TRUTH, WE DON'T DEPART FROM THE ATTITUDES AND THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE.

MR. ARMSTRONG ONCE MENTIONED IN A CO-WORKER LETTER HOW HIS ILLNESS IMPRESSED HEAVILY UPON HIS MIND — MORE THAN EVER BEFORE — THE WORTHLESSNESS OF THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD. BUT WHY IS THAT SO HARD FOR US TO SEE? WHY IS THE WORTHLESSNESS OF THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD SO HARD FOR US TO UNDERSTAND? FOR ONE THING, OUR WORLD IS RATHER NICE. OUR GROCERY STORES ARE FILLED WITH FOOD, OUR HOMES ARE FULL OF MODERN CONVENIENCES, WE HAVE COMFORTABLE FURNISHINGS, WE HAVE CLOSETS FILLED WITH SEVERAL CHANGES OF CLOTHING, THINGS ARE REALLY RATHER NICE. WE HAVE MANY, MANY BLESSINGS. BUT IF WE'RE NOT VERY CAREFUL, WE CAN GET SO COMFORTABLE, SO HAPPY AND SO THRILLED WITH ALL OF THESE PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL BLESSINGS, WE CAN EASILY FORGET

THAT WE ARE LIVING IN AN AGE OF RANK SPIRITUAL DARKNESS!

THE DANGER, OF COURSE, IS WHEN CHRISTIANS IMBIBE MORE OF THE PHILOSOPHIES AND THE ATTITUDES OF DARKNESS THAN OF THE TEACHINGS OF LIGHT; THEN THEY ARE BEING FORMED AND FASHIONED BY LIES RATHER THAN TRUTH! SO, GOD'S COMMAND TO US IN THIS AREA IS VERY POWERFULLY STATED IN ROMANS 12:2. PAUL STATES, "... BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD: BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND..." HOW DO WE DO THAT? IT'S SO EASY TO JUST GO WITH THE FLOW, TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE CURRENT OF THIS PRESENT WORLD AND JUST CONFORM TO BEING ANOTHER PEA IN THE POD ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER PEAS! IT IS THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD TO DO.

HOW DO WE AVOID THIS DANGER OF CONFORMING? I WOULD SUGGEST TWO THINGS TO YOU. ONE: REFUSE TO LET THIS WORLD CLAIM YOUR ATTENTION. HOW DO YOU DO THAT? YOU DO THAT BY RIVETING YOUR ATTENTION UPON THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. YOU DO THAT BY LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD TO COME RATHER THAN THIS PRESENT WORLD. TWO: REFUSE TO LET THIS AGE CAPTURE YOUR AFFECTION. INDEED, THERE IS MUCH TO BE DESIRED IN THIS WORLD, HUMANLY SPEAKING.

THE APOSTLE JOHN, IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE, SUMMED IT UP SO BEAUTIFULLY, IN TERMS OF WHAT HE CALLED THE LUST OF THE FLESH, THE LUST OF THE EYES AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE. I PREFER TO SIMPLIFY IT SO I CAN REMEMBER IT, BY CALLING IT THE THREE PEAS IN A POD. OUR PASSIONS, OUR POSSESSIONS AND OUR POSITIONS. DON'T WE LOVE TO EXERCISE OUR PASSIONS, HEAP UP OUR POSSESSIONS AND MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OUR POSITIONS TOO OFTEN EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS, IF THAT'S WHAT IS NEEDED? BUT THAT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

LIKE DEMAS, IT'S VERY EASY FOR US TO

JUST FALL IN LOVE WITH THIS PRESENT WORLD, AND CONFORM TO IT, WITH ALL THE LUST OF THE FLESH, THE LUST OF THE EYES AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE. IT IS ALL LUST, ALL GREED, ALL GET, ALL VANITY. IT IS VERY EASY TO DO, BECAUSE IF WE LET THIS PRESENT AGE CLAIM OUR ATTENTION, THEN IT WILL SOON CAPTURE OUR AFFECTION, AND AS A RESULT OF THAT, IT WILL SOON BE CONTROLLING OUR ACTIONS. THAT'S WHY, IN MATTHEW 7:20, CHRIST SAID, "...BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM." YOU WILL KNOW WHAT HAS CLAIMED THEIR ATTENTION, YOU WILL KNOW WHAT HAS CAPTURED THEIR AFFECTION BY THEIR FRUITS, BECAUSE THIS IS THE WAY WE WORK; THIS IS THE WAY WE ARE. OUR ACTIONS ARE A RESPONSE OF THE WAY WE THINK; OUR THINKING IS A RESPONSE OF OUR TEACHING AND OUR TEACHING COMES FROM WHAT? WHERE DO YOU GET THE PRINCIPLES THAT YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE BY? WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR VALUES? WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR ETHICS? WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR MORALITY? DO YOU GET IT THROUGH THE DAILY IMBIBING OF THIS WORLD — THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE — OR THROUGH THE DAILY IMBIBING AND STUDYING OF GOD'S WORD, WHICH COMES STRAIGHT FROM THE MIND OF GOD? YOU SEE, THAT'S THE QUESTION, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD AS TO WHETHER WE ARE CONFORMING OR BEING TRANSFORMED. IT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

THE ADVERTISING PROFESSIONALS KNOW THIS VERY WELL. THAT'S WHY THEY GIVE US ALL THE ACTION, ALL THE COLOR, ALL THE FLASH — TO GRAB OUR ATTENTION. I RECALL A BILLBOARD WITH A BEAUTIFUL LADY WEARING A BEAUTIFUL, BLACK EVENING GOWN THAT WAS LOW-CUT. SHE WAS HOLDING A BOTTLE OF BLACK VELVET WHISKEY. SHE MUST HAVE BEEN 45 FEET LONG, RIGHT THERE AT THIS INTERSECTION! I WAS OFTEN AMAZED THAT THERE WEREN'T A LOT OF ACCIDENTS AT THAT INTERSECTION, BECAUSE IT HAD A WAY OF ATTRACTING ONE'S ATTENTION, AND OF COURSE, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY HAD HOPED TO DO. THEY WANT TO ATTRACT OUR ATTENTION IN HOPES OF GETTING OUR AFFECTION, AND THAT, IN TURN, WILL THEN AFFECT OUR ACTION TO HOPEFULLY BUY THEIR PRODUCT.

GOD BEGINS HIS TRANSFORMATION

PROCESS IN THE SAME WAY. FIRST HE HAS TO CLAIM THE ATTENTION OF OUR MINDS. THEN IF WE RESPOND, GOD'S WAY BEGINS TO CAPTURE OUR AFFECTION, AND SOON IT WILL DEMONSTRATE ITSELF IN OUR ACTIONS. WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT, IS IT ANY WONDER THAT GOD TRAINED HIS END-TIME APOSTLE IN ADVERTISING BEFORE HE PUT HIM TO WORK IN HIS CHURCH? IF YOU ARE GOING TO PREACH A GOSPEL MESSAGE TO THE WORLD, THE FIRST THING YOU HAVE TO DO IS GET THEIR ATTENTION! YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO DO THAT, BECAUSE IT ALL STARTS IN THE MIND. THE INITIAL AVENUE OF ALL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE BEGINS IN THE MIND! THAT'S WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR US, IN GOD'S CHURCH, TO GET A CONSTANT, DAILY DIET OF THE WORD OF GOD. YOU CAN NEVER GET ENOUGH OF THE WORD OF GOD! IN ORDER TO PREVENT OUR MINDS FROM BEING ATTRACTED TO THIS PRESENT EVIL AGE, WE HAVE GOT TO SATURATE IT IN THE WORD OF TRANSFORMATION FOR THE RENEWING OF OUR MINDS.

THIS IS WHERE DEMAS, AND ALL OF THE OTHER THOUSANDS OF DEMASES AFTER HIM AND BEFORE HIM, FELL SHORT. THEY SUCCUMBED, FELL IN LOVE WITH AND CONFORMED TO THIS WORTHLESS WORLD. IN THE PROCESS, THEY THEMSELVES BECAME WORTHLESS TO THE VERY PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD HAD CALLED THEM.

THE LESSON OF DEMAS IS SIMPLY THAT THERE IS NO WAY THAT WE CAN REJECT THIS WORLD'S CONSTANT ATTEMPTS TO PRESS US INTO ITS MOLD WITHOUT AN ONGOING PROGRAM OF MIND TRANSFORMATION. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE JUST SUCH A PROGRAM GOING ON DAILY IN OUR LIVES. IF YOU DO, IN THIS PROCESS OF MIND TRANSFORMATION, YOU WILL DISCOVER SOMETHING THAT IS ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC.

LOOKING AGAIN AT ROMANS CHAPTER 12, BEGINNING IN VERSE 2, "...BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD: BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, THAT YE MAY PROVE WHAT IS THAT GOOD, AND ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD." THERE IT IS. DID YOU GET IT? IN OTHER WORDS, DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE A LIFE THAT IS PLEASING TO GOD? DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT SKIRT LENGTH? DO YOU WANT

TO KNOW ABOUT HAIR LENGTH? DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES OF MAKE-UP? DO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW TO HAVE HAPPY MARRIAGES, RAISE HAPPY CHILDREN AND LIVE YOUR LIFE IN A WAY THAT IS PLEASING TO GOD? HE SAYS YOU DO IT BY NOT CONFORMING TO THIS WORLD, BUT BY GETTING INTO A PROGRAM OF MIND TRANSFORMATION, AND THEN YOU WILL KNOW.

THAT'S WHAT GROWING IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH IS ALL ABOUT. IT'S SIMPLY COMING TO KNOW, THROUGH THE MIRACLE OF A TRANSFORMED MIND, WHAT IS THE GOOD, ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD. THIS ONLY COMES THROUGH THE TOTAL REJECTION OF THIS GODLESS, AND THEREFORE, WORTHLESS WORLD, AND THE TOTAL ACCEPTANCE OF AND SURRENDER TO THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF GOD WORKING IN OUR MINDS AND PREPARING IT FOR THAT SOON COMING WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL WORLD OF GOD.

DEMAS LOVED THIS PRESENT WORTHLESS WORLD, BUT HE LEFT US A POWERFUL LESSON. LET'S NOT FORGET IT.

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