

### *Good Endings*

There is an interesting character in the Christian scriptures that is mentioned only three times. His name is Demas. We hear of him first in Paul's letter to Philemon where Paul describes Demas as his fellow worker. The next place Demas' name appears is in Paul's letter to the Colossians, where Paul is less enthusiastic about Demas; he simply acknowledges his presence. Finally in Paul's second letter to Timothy, Paul claims that Demas has deserted him. A working relationship that began in such a promising fashion, ended very badly! Of course as a result, Demas has not become a beloved Biblical character. Clearly, no matter how great the start, neither people nor acts are remembered kindly if they are not associated with a good ending.

And don't we teach this lesson to our children and grandchildren? We tell them that what they start, they should finish. We tell them that if they have made a commitment, they should stand by their promises. We remind them that quitting when the going gets tough is less desirable than seeing a thing through to the proper end. We don't want our own record, or that of our children, to resemble the record of Demas, who could not stay the course.

And yet, how tempting it can be to "opt out" of a troubled situation. We have all witnessed agreements being broken, relationships ending, friendships being severed, families dividing. Sometimes a good ending appears to come at too great a cost, and we'd rather not bother. We'd rather give up and walk away, even from a project well-begun, than to endure the hardships we envision in completing the job and reaching the goal. Sometimes it's hard to muster the staying power required of us.

So what do you think makes for the ability to persevere to a desired end? What will enable us to work toward the good ending we desire, even when circumstances conspire to undermine our firmest resolve?

Let us suggest a possibility. It seems to us, that those people who have the greatest staying power are fueled by vision of something greater than their own needs and dreams. They appeal to an inner resource greater than themselves. Athletic teams who are victorious against superior teams frequently report they learned that the goals of the individual players needed to be secondary to the goals of the whole team. Soldiers and patriots dare and risk for the good of an entity greater than just themselves.

And even if we are not at present competitive athletes or noble public servants, we too can be motivated by something beyond ourselves alone. When we are captured by a cause, or a loyalty, or by a faith in One much greater than ourselves, we can overcome enormous odds. When we labor not for ourselves alone, but for something more, then we will draw strength from that sense of connection. In fact, that's the call of faith to people of God – not to give up and walk away like Demas, but be remembered as people with the integrity to see our goals through to completion, by drawing on the an enduring strength that God gives to all who follow.