

TO MY SON

An Expositional Study of II Timothy

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN -

SNAPSHOTS OF SIX SOLDIERS

II Timothy 4:9-12

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia,

11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.

THE old warrior has now definitely retired, and has here been writing to his young fellow soldier - a word he actually uses of Archippus in Philemon 2 - exhorting him to acquit himself well in warfare, "**endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ**", (2:3). And now, as he finishes up his letter to him, he mentions some of the other soldiers who have shared in the campaign - as it were, he encloses a few snapshots, which Timothy will love to see. We, too, will perhaps be interested to take a look at them. Here's the first; but - what is this written on the back?

A BASE DESERTER

"**Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.**" That had possibly been coming on for a long while. In Philemon 24, Paul had said, "**Demas . . . my fellow-labourer**" - as if he had shared as fully as any of the others in the work; but in Colossians 4:14 he wrote, "**. . . and Demas**" - with no added encomium, or remark of any kind, as if, according to Dr. James Spence, "he was beginning to suspect him, to mark worldliness creeping over his spirit." Ah yes

(a) A worldly spirit - what damage that has done to Christians, and to the Church. I wonder what form it took with Demas? I wonder if John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is right in holding that it was money? You remember the incident of the silver mine. Of course this spirit manifests itself in many ways. Sometimes it is, as Bunyan suggests

(i) *Possessions* - a lust to get, a policy of grab. Many an earnest believer, beginning to get rich, has been spiritually ruined in this way. Money in itself is not wrong - many wealthy people have been outstandingly godly; but money ill-gotten is "**filthy lucre**" (Titus 1:11), and money loved is

"**the root of all evil**", I Timothy 6:10. It is the believer's wisdom to be on his guard about this.

(ii) *Pleasure* - how reasonable a thing, to be sure; but how ruinous it can become. It makes for good health, both physical and spiritual, to allow room for relaxation and enjoyment; one of the rare aids to poise and balance is a capacity for fun. Yet, how completely it can run away with us, if we are not careful. We may, think, legitimately enjoy our pleasures provided they are of the right kind, at the right time, and in the right proportion.

(iii) *Popularity* - it is nice to be popular; it may, indeed, be a help in our Christian service if we are popular; but what a snare! Many a Christian has done wrong things, has left undone right things, because of the fear of losing a too-much prized popularity. After all, it is not what "**they**" will think, but what He will.

(iv) *Pride* - a thing peculiarly ugly in a believer, but which a worldly spirit will so readily engender.

(v) *Present life* - the habit of looking at things from the viewpoint of the present. It is really surprising how many Christians have acquired this "squint". You can understand it in the worldling; but it is dreadfully out of place in a believer. It was because he restricted his vision to what was "**under the sun**" that Ecclesiastes found himself in such perplexity.

You will observe that this worldly spirit in Demas was accompanied by

(b) A cowardly spirit - he "departed"! The Greek word is an entirely different one from that which we studied in verse 6 last time. There was nothing splendid, ennobling, enriching, about this man's going.

(i) *Why did he go?* Well, the persecution of Christians was in the air; to have abode with Paul, to have been known as one of them, was to court trouble; better go while the going was good. So he "**departed**" from Rome.

(ii) *Where did he go?* To Thessalonica, where was a body of believers. That, to my mind, indicates that Demas had no intention of ceasing to be a Christian: all he proposed to himself was that he should no longer be an out-and-out Christian.

Yet, did he but know it, he was letting himself in for a very uncomfortable time by going there of all places; for at Thessalonica the Christians were very keen; and, besides, they were great friends of Paul's. We have only to read between the lines of I and 2 Thessalonians to discover both those facts. But, then, a half-hearted Christian always will be uncomfortable wherever he is. Like a man with a headache, who doesn't want to lose his head, but it hurts him to keep it; so this Christian doesn't want to lose his religion, but it hurts him to keep it.

Thus wrote H. W. S. in *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren's summing up of Demas is, "He was a religious man who had not religion enough to resist the constant attractions and seductions of the present." I will only add that, through the hole made in his consecration, his courage also leaked away. But enough; let's

look at another "snap": what does it say? Oh yes -

ONE OF THE RANK AND FILE

"**Crescens to Galatia.**" Never heard of him! No; he was only a private, only an ordinary soldier; but here he is, Mentioned in Despatches.

(a) How much GOD's cause is advanced by ordinary, unknown people. I was so struck the other day, in reading Hebrews 11, to notice how, after the recital of those great and ever-glorious names, there follow "**and others**" (verse 35), "**and others**" (verse 36) - just anonymous heroes of the faith.

Or, think of the prestige and powers of that distinguished company in I Corinthians 12:28, "**GOD hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings . . . governments, diversities of tongues.**" An important group: but what have ordinary folk to do with such? There seems little room for us among them.

But wait: that vacant place we have left in the list is occupied in the text by "**helps.**"

Why, the rank and file can be that! Have you ever heard of Hanani? No? You have heard of Nehemiah, then? Yes; but you wouldn't have done if it had not been for Hanani: It was he that lit the flame in the famous man's heart: Nehemiah was a Torch, a flame for GOD, but Hanani was the Match that lit the Torch.

Who was Edward Kimball? You don't know? Of course not: he was only a shoemaker, and a humble Sunday-school teacher. He, too, was a Match; and his Torch was D. L. Moody!

Maria Millis, whom I am sure you have never heard of, was another. She was an old-fashioned family nurse. She loved GOD; and she loved the little boy, Ashley, in her charge. In his heart she planted the seed, and tended it. You have not heard of her, but you have heard of him - Lord Shaftesbury!

(b) How many such have advanced the cause. Crescens was that sort, one of the rank and file. Now, another "snap": this is inscribed

A DISTINGUISHED OFFICER

"**Titus unto Dalmatia.**" This was no ordinary man.

(a) He was a leader. We, badly need such: those who, in the church, or in the home, or in the office, or in the workshop, or in any group, will set the tone, give a lead, in a nice, clean, healthy, strong, wise, godly, direction. No need, here, to be for ever "preaching": just a touch, a word, a look, an attitude. Let us not leave leadership to the devil and his agents. Titus had an exalted sphere for his leadership, he was Bishop of Crete; we may exercise ours in humbler realms - but let us, wherever we be, take pains that we lead life in right, and in Christian, channels.

The secret of Titus' successful leadership was

(b) He was led. Joshua became Moses' successor, because he had been such a success as "**Moses' minister**" (Joshua 1:1); he led so well, because he had learned to follow. Mark how Titus was led, and you will not be surprised that he was a leader.

(i) First, *he was led to CHRIST.* Paul did that for him (Titus 1:4) as he did for Timothy, I Timothy 1:2.

(ii) Then, *he was led for CHRIST.* The apostle followed up the work of grace in his heart, nurturing him for the Master, and leading him on in His service. The Epistle to Titus is part of the wonderful preparation he gave him for his task.

(iii) And so, *he was led by CHRIST* into all kinds of service, and into rich depths of spiritual experience. It was with Titus, as it would be for any, that because he followed so closely, he led so well. It is a pity we have to hurry over these pictures, that there is so little space to enlarge on them; but, after all, they are only snapshots. Well, pick up another: what's this it says? -

THE M.O.

"**Only Luke is with me.**" Do you remember

(a) When he first joined the Army? It seems to have been at Troas, where Dr. Luke had a General Practice. If we may try to reconstruct the scene: one day he was called out to see a patient, a visitor to the town, who had been taken ill. It was a man named Paul. When the doctor got to the house where he had taken lodgings, he found the man feverish and shaking and pretty bad. He quickly diagnosed malaria; and we can well imagine what this meant to this restless, tireless, man. It troubled him all his life; for this was, I think, following Sir William Ramsay as I do, the "**thorn in the flesh**" from which he was never freed, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

However, as always happens to the true Christian's circumstances (Romans 8:28) the Lord overruled this attack for his good: it brought Dr. Luke to Paul, and Paul brought Dr. Luke to CHRIST. Thus the good doctor enlisted in the Army of the Lord, and was a member of the Expeditionary Force that embarked upon the Macedonian Campaign. Note the "**we**" of Acts 16:10.

See (b) What he contributed to the campaign - pre-eminently, of course, his medical gifts, for he was the M.O. of the regiment, and the first medical missionary; then, too, there were his literary gifts, for he had a vivid, and often intensely beautiful, style of writing, which proved of great service to the cause - who can measure the extent of the usefulness of his Gospel, and of his Acts; and we may not forget his personal gifts, the charm of manner, the attractiveness of personality that he very evidently possessed. All he had, and all he was, was gladly thrown into the cause.

May we stay a moment to ask ourselves whether such complete abandonment to GOD marks our Christian life?

Note (c) What he meant to the C.O.

First, in fidelity.

From Troas to Philippi, where he was stationed for a while to nurture the young believers; afterwards, back to Jerusalem, up to Caesarea, on the sea during the terrible storm and shipwreck, across to Rome during the first imprisonment, and now under the awful conditions of the second imprisonment; Luke scarcely left his side; and, for the moment, he is the "**only**" companion he has. What a help it must have been for him to have a doctor on the mission party all those years.

Then, in affection, how much he would mean.

Unless I am greatly mistaken Paul set great store by the loving-kindness of his friends. Over and over again you see, in his Letters, expressions of his gratitude for their help. and gifts. And when, in Colossians 4:14, you read, "**Luke the beloved physician**", you can detect the deep mutual affection that existed between these two. But, alas, we have spent as much time as we dare over this attractive man. Let us pick up another snapshot: it is inscribed -

A CREDIT TO THE REGIMENT

"**Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.**" But surely I have seen this young man somewhere before? I seem to remember something rather shady about him. Yes, you are quite right: there was

(a) His past failure. There is no burking it, he had been a disgrace to the regiment. Do you recall how enthusiastically he had begun?

Soon after his conversion, which happened through Peter, as I Peter 5:13 seems to suggest, he was introduced to Paul by his uncle Barnabas, and thenceforth he threw all the virility of his ardent young manhood into the cause, joining, as Acts 13:5 shows, the first missionary party. They had a grand time in Cyprus - the equable climate, the Christian adventure, and the spiritual triumphs, combined with the daily companionship of the two great men to make it for Mark an unforgettable experience.

And then, alas, the tragedy happened. They crossed over to Pamphylia, which the young enthusiast quickly discovered to be a fever-laden area. I suspect that this was where Paul picked up his malaria germ. Mark was too scared to go on; and, begging to be excused the remainder of the tour, he returned home to his mother at Jerusalem.

There is no need here to recall the sad consequences of this defection; for we must hurry on to

(b) His present condition. By the grace of GOD, and perhaps through the tender handling of Barnabas, he climbed out of the morass, and has actually become a credit to the regiment - "**he is profitable to me.**" Paul had already used that word when, in 2:21, he spoke of the man who was "**meet for the Master's use**" - useful to the Master, and now, Mark, useful to His servant, useful all round.

That is a quality which we might all covet, to be ever ready to help both Him and His. It is very delightful to observe the change that has come over the relationship between these two. Paul had, very firmly, and, as I think, very rightly, refused the employment of the younger man; but now he is re-instated. A work of grace had been going on - possibly through Barnabas' behaviour, for I think that he also was right. Paul now badly wants the very man that once he wouldn't have.

Another thing, as I look at his snapshot, I am reminded of is

(c) His prospective honour. We never can tell what GOD has in mind for the returning backslider. For Mark it was something unspeakably honourable: GOD had chosen him to be the writer of the Gospel according to Mark. If any of my readers has, like Mark, wandered from GOD, and deserted His service, will he, also like Mark, come back? You will not be commissioned to write a Gospel, but you will be expected to live one.

"You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By all that you do, and all that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless, or true,
Say, what is the Gospel according to you?"

"**This honour have all His saints**," if I may dare to adopt the words of Psalm 149:9, spoken in a very different connection.

So, ere we put the little snapshot down, let us take notice of one further point,

(d) His perennial lesson. It is, that there is always a way back home for the backslider. Think of Jonah, renegade and runaway. He was offered the inestimable privilege of going to a heathen people to proclaim the message of repentance unto salvation; but his insensate prejudice forbade him, and he ran away from GOD!

But, of course, when a man runs away from GOD, then GOD runs after him. In miraculous ways, GOD, at great pains, turned him back, and, greatest miracle of all, He offered him again the same task: "**The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time**", Jonah 3:1.

Or, again, think of Peter. How earnest he was in the Master's service. He meant every word he said; yet, at the testing time, he failed terribly, and "**went out and wept bitterly**", Luke 22:62. Was that the end? "**I will heal their backsliding**," is His promise, through Hosea 14:4, to every truly repentant soul.

He did that for Peter, and for Jonah, and for Mark; He will still do it for any of His children who stray from Him, however deep they have sunk.

"Have you sinn'd as none else in the world have before?
Are you blacker than other creatures in guilt?
Oh, fear not, and doubt not I the mother who bore you
Loves you less than the Saviour whose Blood you have spilt.
Come, come to His feet, and lay open your story

Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
And the joy of our Lord to be true to His Name,"

Faber's intensely moving lines are blessedly true, as a myriad could testify. Just one more snapshot -

THE COLONELS BATMAN

"**Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.**" There is a fuller portrait of this man to be seen in the Group Photograph in Colossians 4:7-14, where Paul outlines his character as

(a) "**A beloved brother** - brother, because Master and servant each were alike children in GOD's family, through "**common faith**" (Titus 1:4), in CHRIST; beloved, because he had learned his true worth, and esteemed him highly. And

(b) "**A fellow servant**" - if Tychicus was Paul's servant, both of them were the Lord's servants, "**fellow-servant in the Lord**" But dwell just now on the middle point,

(c) "**A faithful minister**" - the word used seems to signify his personal servant, almost his valet; in military language, his batman. Paul had long since discovered how utterly trustworthy he was, and sent him on many a delicate mission. For example, when he had written the Epistle to the Colossians, this was the man to whom he entrusted its safe delivery: incidentally, he arranged that Onesimus, bearing the letter to Philemon, should travel with Tychicus, so that if Onesimus "funked" it at the last moment, he might prevent his running away again.

And now he has sent him "**to Ephesus.**" That was where Timothy's headquarters were, and Paul wanted Timothy to come to him. I surmise that Tychicus went to relieve Timothy and, in some degree, to hold the fort till he returned, But, in that case, what was Paul to do in Tychicus' absence for the more personal service that he needed? I suggest that that was why Timothy was asked to pick up Mark on his way to Rome and bring him along with him - "**for the ministry**": it is the same word, in the Greek, as is applied in Colossians 4:1 to Tychicus.

May the Master, Whose "**fellow-servants**" we are, find us as "**faithful**," in every duty, and on every day, as those two were to Paul.

And now, as we close, let us drop all this military metaphor and go back to those poignant and pathetic words with which the portion opened. "**Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.**" They are the urgent message of a dying father, who hasn't long now to live, and who so greatly longs to have one last look, and touch, of a beloved son. "Do your very best to come to me as quickly as ever you can" - anyhow "**before winter**", he adds in verse 21.

The mantle of that intimate relationship was spread over the opening passages of the Epistle, and at its close we find it extended again. I don't think we have gone far wrong in the Title we have given these Studies.

~ end of chapter 16 ~