

From the Pastor



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At the center of the swirling mass of stars, known as the Milky Way galaxy, exists a phenomenon known as a black hole. This cosmic garbage disposal has a gravitational pull so strong that stars, planets, asteroids, and even space itself cannot escape. What happens to the object that is sucked into this monster defies imagination: its mass is compressed by the forces of gravity to such extreme density that it disappears almost completely. A star becomes a nearly invisible speck of dust—still weighing millions of tons!

Black holes possess the irresistible ability to draw in whatever gets too close. Even if stars and planets possess the will to escape, they could not do so once within the monster's reach. The only reason the earth hasn't been sucked in is that it is much too far away to be at risk.

In the same we all are at risk of being sucked into a black hole of another sort - the spiritual black hole of unbelief. Most of us would surely claim nothing like that should ever come in our lives. But the story of Demas from the Acts of the Apostles is a good example for us to be rather watchful.

Demas was a close associate of the Apostle Paul, and someone who was widely thought of as a true Christian. But sadly his story ends with a huge disappointment to St. Paul. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul writes from a Roman prison, stating with profound sadness "... Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (see: 2 Tim. 4:9-10). Here was a professing Christian who got too close and was sucked into a black hole of worldly desires. I wonder - what was it about "this present world" that Demas loved enough to fall away from Christ and stop loving and serving Him with Paul?

Why he had abandoned the faith? Was it a business opportunity or a promise of riches? Was it his craving for social acceptance? Was it his preference for comfort and ease rather than suffering, and perhaps dying, with Paul? Was it an immoral habit? I don't know, except that he chose something over Christ and eternal life.

Demas didn't just wake up one morning and decide to dive into the abyss of unbelief. He allowed himself to get too close. His affections for the world grew stronger over time, and his affection for Christ weakened gradually. It can happen to us if we get too close to sinful desires. So, it's not such a bad idea to target those sinful desires we may be often finding ourselves getting too close to.

What is it that we may be tempted to value more highly than eternal life—the one thing we find ourselves loving in competition with Christ? We surely don't want other people one day say about us: "he/she was a true believer, but his/her love for ... (here we pick our weakness) ... sucked him into the black hole of unbelief"?

Whatever it is, whether money, possessions, physical comfort, family loyalties, sexual sin, alcohol, social acceptance, power, prestige, career, or even life itself - it isn't worth losing the salvation of our souls. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

+ *Father Roger*