

Demas the Deserter

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 00] Well, good morning again. So great to be here together, and I'm looking forward to our time of lunch together this morning. But we're going to be talking about a particular New Testament character this morning, and his name is Demas.

And unfortunately, he's pretty much known as a deserter. So we're going to be talking this morning about Demas the deserter. And some, in their following Christ, start off their Christian life very well.

They start, they run, and they finish well. One example of this is the Apostle Paul. When God finally got a hold of him, and during his, or subsequent to his conversion on the road to Damascus, the Apostle Paul had a great start.

He started learning about Jesus Christ, was taught by Christ himself, and continued, ran well, and finished his service very well.

Was a missionary pretty much his entire life. He was a good example of such a person that starts well, runs well, and finishes well. He had a dramatic conversion experience on his way to Damascus.

[1 : 13] He saw a bright shining light, fell off his horse, and was spoken to by none other than, we believe, Jesus Christ. And Christ got a hold of the Apostle Paul, continued running his race, and he had a very long and a very fruitful ministry, and ultimately died a martyr's death.

So Paul was a very good example of that. We had others. We have Timothy. We have many throughout the New Testament, throughout the Bible, that really started well, and accomplished very many things for God, and were very productive, and lived a great life for Christ, and finished a very fruitful and productive ministry.

So the Apostle Paul finished his race and did it well. Let's read in 2 Timothy 4, verse 7 this morning. We're going to be looking at a few verses today.

So as we start with 2 Timothy 4, and verse 7, toward the end of Paul's life, this is what he says. And would it be nice that we could all say this as we get older and end our walk with Christ?

He said, I have fought the good fight. I finished the race. Paul realized that he had come near to the end of his life, and he had accomplished what God had set out for him to accomplish.

[2 : 45] And he says, I have kept the faith. So Paul is finishing his life, says he has run well, he's fought a good fight, and he's finished the race, and he's kept the faith.

Now Demas, on the other hand, started off okay, did very well, and he was part of the Apostle Paul's first missionary journey.

And he did not finish well. He had a very promising beginning, but he had a very disappointing end. The Bible tells us he was a fellow laborer with the Apostle Paul.

We see that in Philemon 24, as the Apostle Paul was talking about his missionary journey, his missionary life, talking about those who had been with him.

And Paul is saying, talking about those who had been with him, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

[3 : 44] So imagine if you had been considered with Jesus or by Jesus as a fellow laborer, a co-worker, a co-laborer of Jesus Christ.

But Demas finally forsook the Apostle Paul. As Paul was in prison in his second missionary journey, Paul says that Demas left him in a lurch.

He deserted him. And so what went wrong? We might ask ourselves a question. What went wrong with Demas? And how might we look at the life of Demas and hopefully not make the same error, not make the same mistake that Demas had, and not have the same end to our Christian life, our following Christ as we are serving him as we go through our life.

And verse 9, we see in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 9 through 13, we see the Apostle Paul talking about this experience.

Verse 9, he says, Be diligent to come to me quickly. Verse 10, For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica, Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

[5 : 06] Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

And here's the Apostle Paul. He is imprisoned, and he has some needs of some things. He says, Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, when you come, and the books, especially the parchments.

So, I see the Apostle Paul explaining that as he needs these fellow laborers, Demas has forsaken him. He loved the world, or he has forsaken the Apostle Paul and the ministry of Jesus Christ for the pursuits of the world.

And Paul is needing clothes. Paul is needing some things to write with. And he's needing some of the books that he had that he was reading.

And so, Paul is in need of his fellow laborers. And he says, Luke is the only one that stayed with me. Luke apparently was coming in and checking on him from time to time, periodically, making sure that Paul had what he needed.

[6 : 16] Now, I find it interesting that the Apostle Paul never called Demas a heretic. And he never, excuse me, he never had any other ways to talk about Demas.

He just simply called him a deserter. So, it would seem by reading what the Apostle Paul had to say about Demas is that Demas didn't forsake the faith.

Demas didn't stop following Jesus Christ so much as he left for other pursuits. He left to either go back to work, he left to start a business, who knows what, but he left the missionary field.

He left the solitary life of being a missionary for Jesus to go back after other pursuits. And so, that's what the Apostle Paul said Demas was engaged in.

So, we ask ourselves the question, and what happened to Demas? Three things that I think we're going to see in the life of Demas and from the writings of the Apostle Paul that if we pay attention to it would keep us from having the same end as Demas.

[7 : 27] So, first of all, if you're taking notes, is this. I believe Demas' commitment was conditional. I believe when Demas was following Christ with the Apostle Paul on this missionary journey, as they were maybe suffering a little bit of want and they were lonely and all the things that go along with being a full-time missionary, I believe Demas' commitment was somewhat conditional.

Demas had been in good company and he was doing some good things. He was very possibly supporting Paul in the work, very possibly sharing his faith as well, very possibly preaching with the Apostle Paul.

Paul had counted Demas as a faithful friend and so he was serving. He had been with Paul during a time of great need. The Apostle Paul had suffered some hardship during that first missionary journey.

Demas was right there with Paul, serving him, being his trusted friend, supporter, and who knows what all Demas did to serve and to help the Apostle Paul during this first missionary journey.

So we have to understand that outward looks can be somewhat deceiving. Demas was serving, Demas was doing, but was Demas' full heart in the ministry.

[8 : 56] So his commitment, I believe, was somewhat conditional. Some will serve Jesus until it gets tough. Some will serve the Lord until it becomes uncomfortable and then will forsake the ministry or forsake completely following Christ for going back to becoming an occasional Christian or maybe an Easter and Christmas kind of person or someone who just simply is a Christian in name only and begins to serve the world, serve themselves rather than serving God.

So I believe he quit when things got tough and it was a little bit difficult. Some serve God for recognition.

Some serve God and when no one's looking and when they don't get the recognition that they believe they deserve, that's when they begin to slow down, that's when they begin to cool off. So some serve God for earthly rewards or earthly recognition.

Not everyone who's in the ministry has been called by God to be in the ministry, in the full time ministry and not everyone who is in the ministry is in it for the right motives. Some go in for recognition, some go in and we think well who goes into the ministry for money?

Well in certain ways depending upon how we go about it or how you go about it, there can be some monetary rewards.

[10 : 29] Look at all these TV preachers and people are sending in money and some of them if they're a charismatic enough speaker and an individual and they're personable enough, people will send in money that they can't afford to send in and there's a lot of money in that and there's some who serve for those reasons.

But Jesus warned, of those who serve and then when things get tough or when they don't get the recognition they think they deserve then they begin looking back.

Look with me if you will in Luke chapter 9, Luke chapter 9 and verse 62, Luke 9, 62, but Jesus said to him no one having put his hand to the plow.

He's using a farming term and when he says when you put your hand to the plow, he says no one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Now that might be a reference to the moment you put your hand on the plow and look back you won't have a straight row or it could very well be once you begin this work don't look back at a life of ease because this is going to be a difficult road and you have to continue in order to reap the harvest and so no one putting his hand to the plow Jesus says and looks back or longing looks back on a life of ease and decides to turn back or go back is really fit for the kingdom of God.

[12 : 09] So Jesus is saying if you want to serve me when things get tough just keep on keeping on. That's what Jesus is saying. So maybe they wonder about the value of eternal rewards.

There are some who weigh, well is it worth it? Are the eternal rewards worth all of this hardship on earth? And some say, well you know what?

I'd rather have a life of ease on earth because maybe they're not seeing the value of the eternal rewards. And that's very important because if we stop and think about it, how long do we have on earth?

when we compare to eternity. Now I know when you're in your teens and in your 20s, it seems like you will live forever. And it seems like 50 and 60 and 70 and 80 is an eternity away.

But as we get older, it seems like time is condensed, is it not? Time seems to pass more quickly. But even if we live to be 80 or 90 or 100, it's just simply a drop in the bucket when we compare to eternity.

[13 : 22] So if we trade serving Christ or if we trade doing what's right for a few years versus the eternal reward, so there are many who weigh those out and determine I would rather have my rewards on earth rather than wait for heaven.

and they finally, I believe like Demas, they will conclude that the world offers more than Christ. And we see this in the lives of many who profess Jesus. They start off well and they maybe live for a few years following Christ and living a pure life and living a life that honors and pleases Christ and looks at or like the farmer who puts his hand to the plow and looks back to a life of ease and leaves the plow there in the field and goes back to a life of ease, they conclude that it's not worth it and this world is more fun and doing things that please us is more fun, but we don't realize often that the pleasures and the rewards of this world don't last long because we need more and more and more to keep up the same kind of feelings.

So this is, I believe, where we see Demas. His commitment was conditional. Secondly, what I think we see is his love was lacking. His love was lacking.

Did Demas have a full-blown God kind of love, an unconditional love for Christ and for his service?

Now Paul found no fault with the labor of Demas. Paul, there's nothing that we see that Paul says, we know Demas wasn't this great of a helper. Demas wasn't. Paul had nothing negative to say about Demas.

[15 : 15] I find that very interesting. He simply says, he left me. He deserted me. He left me in a lurch. Obviously, Demas did his work well. Obviously, Demas was a good helper, a good guy to have around.

Demas was one that would have probably gotten very good scores on his evaluations, if that were the case. And so Demas did a good job, but Demas had an issue with completely being told out to what he was doing.

He evidently did his work well and saw him as one of trusted team. But I think as time went on, it proved that his lack of love, Christ, and his mystery, it revealed a true lack of love for Christ.

His love was poor because he was on this world rather than the age to come. Because notice what the Apostle Paul says about Demas in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse number 10.

For Demas has taken me, having loved the present world. So what was God's? Demas, God, until the point that he realized that he wanted the pleasure of this world more than he wanted to serve Christ.

[16 : 31] So he says, he's forsaken me, having loved this present world, departed for the night. So unlike Paul, Demas set his affection, his attention, his desires, and all of the things that he felt fulfilled him.

He set his aim on earth. He set his aim a little bit lower. This is what the Apostle Paul says that we are to do in Colossians chapter 3, verse 2.

Set your mind on things. Set your mind on things above. The problem with us today as human beings is we set our focus on stuff that really doesn't matter. We set our minds on things that will not last.

A toy, the things that this life offers. It's okay to enjoy hobbies, to enjoy the toys that we have, as long as those do not take the place, as long as those do not play off the things that are truly important.

And the Apostle Paul says that we are to set our affections, set everything that's important to us on things that will last.

[17 : 36] To realize that relationships will last, true relationships will last longer than Facebook friends.

Facebook friends. How many of you have more than 100 Facebook friends? Not many? Okay, yeah, I do.

And you probably do too. I think I've got close to 300. I think, I don't know, maybe a lot. You know what the point is? Some of those I've never met, I only know them through another friend.

But some of them that are my friends that I know, you know what? I might see them once a year. I might have met them at a conference before. I might have taught them at a conference before. And where will they be if I really need somebody?

What if I need a shoulder to lean on? What if I need someone to help me with my drum breaks at 7 o'clock in the night like some of us are engaged in, right?

[18 : 44] You know? Well, my point is, let's set our affections on things that last. Let's set our mind on things that are important and will last. There's no problem to be engaged in certain things, but the problem is if we put too much focus and too much attention and we, so to speak, put all of our eggs in one basket, and when that falls through, what about those who set their mind on their popularity and their looks?

Okay? I mean, granted, there are some who more naturally have a great personality, love people, and just things come easy for them.

But guess what? Things change. What about those who think about, well, you know what, I am strong and, you know, I'm athletic, and they set their mind on accomplishing physical feats like those, maybe they're going to be an athlete or they're going to be whatever, and they climb mountains, they hike, they do whatever, and that's what they say.

You know what? My life only matters when I'm engaged in this physical activity. Well, guess what? What happens if you get hurt and you can't walk anymore? I'm not trying to be morbid.

I'm simply saying, why should we set our mind on things that are eternal? And things that we may enjoy today may not be here tomorrow.

[20 : 25] Friends, family, job, health, vitality, these are fleeting, these are things that either are fleeting or we may have to do without here on earth.

So Paul says, set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Paul's not saying don't care about those things. He's saying in terms of importance and our values, let's set our mind on things that really, really matter.

Now, Paul's example, I believe, should have encouraged Demas to love Christ. Having seen Paul, having seen where Paul was, having seen what Paul gave up, and see Paul's passion for telling others about Jesus Christ, I believe, should have been contagious and Demas should have realized that if Paul forsook all that Paul had and all that Paul had going before Christ, well then, it must be so important.

And it should be important for me as well. So, what I believe we see is Demas' commitment was conditional, his love was lacking, and then thirdly, I believe his motivation was misplaced.

What motivated Demas to be on the missionary journey in the first place? I believe his motivation was somewhat lacking. I believe his motivation was not necessarily all it should have been.

[21 : 59] Let's take a look at Colossians 3, 17 through 23. What should motivate us? Why would you do what you do? If you were in school and your parents say, you need to do your best.

Well, if you have an internal motivation that causes you or moves you or motivates you to do your best because it's right, then I believe you're well on your way to have not only a good life, but also finishing well.

But if you do something just because somebody else wants you to do it, that's not a great motivation. Or if you do something because for only a short-term goal, that's not necessarily the best motivation either.

So let's take a look at Colossians 3, verses 17 through 23. And this is what we're told then. Whatever you do, what does that encompass?

us. Everything. Whether it's studying for an exam, whether it's cutting the grass, whether it's doing the dishes, whether it's changing a diaper, whether it's brake module or brake pads, whatever it is that we do, we're told to do whatever you do in word or deed, do all the name of the Lord Jesus.

[23 : 17] So everything we're doing, we should do it as we're doing it to Christ. Giving thanks to God the Father through him. Verse 18, Wives, submit to your own husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Others, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.

Bondservants, obey in all things. Your masters according to the flesh, my service as men pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. and whatever you do, there are some things that we do that are not exciting.

I mean, is it exciting to take out the garbage? Is it exciting to vacuum the floor? Is it exciting to they're probably a long laundry, I was going to say laundry list, laundry is not exciting, doing the laundry is not exciting.

How many of you do laundry? Only when you're told? Okay. So there are a lot of things that we do that are not exciting. But what if we undertook the task and said, you know what, I'm going to do it with gusto, I'm going to do it with all I've got.

[24 : 38] You know what, what if you hum the tune, what if you sang while you did the dishes, what if you whatever. Do it heartily.

And whatever you do, do with all your strength, do with all your might, do with excitement, I guarantee you it's going to change the way you look at things.

If you do it, now for me, I always have disliked yard work. Matter of fact, the only yard work that I will remotely engage in is cutting the grass.

grass. I look at trees and bushes as something that impedes cutting the grass. Who cares if it's pretty? If it were up to me, I would either concrete it or I would cut grass right over it.

Now that's just me, that's my personal. If you like little pretty flowers and you enjoy taking care of it, enjoy taking care of it, man, I would gladly give you the grass cutting job with all the I'm just saying.

[25 : 44] But here's what I do. When I cut grass, I have either music playing or I'm listening to a podcast. And so I'm either listening to a message, I'm listening to a how-to, I'm listening to something where I can learn and I enjoy reading and I enjoy learning.

And so what I'm doing is I'm doing a chore that I dislike, but I'm doing something that I enjoy as I'm doing it. And so therefore, it's one of those alone times that I have where I can do something that I feel is productive while I'm doing something that I feel is unproductive.

Because for me, cutting grass is unproductive because I could be doing something else more important. And so it allows me to redeem the time. I'm doing something that I don't particularly care to do, but I'm doing something that I believe is valuable and helps me even long after I get off the lawnmower.

And so, because think about cutting the grass, I'm going to have to do it again next week. And sometimes in the summertime, I'm going to have to do it twice this week. Same thing with everything else we do.

If we change our attitude while we're doing it, if we're doing something, whether it's singing, whether it's praying, whatever it is, if we can do something that we feel will lift our mood or doing something productive while we're doing something else productive, I believe it can change our attitude towards it.

[27 : 13] We may never totally enjoy it, but whatever you do, the Bible says, do it heartily as to the Lord and not men.

His desire, Demas' desire, was for earthly rewards and it finally caused his downfall. So as we bring all of this down to a close, what about our commitment to Christ?

What about why do we do what we do for him? Do we serve out of love for Christ? Will we help someone else because we love Christ?

Is our motivation so that God gets the glory? Or is our motivation so that others will look at us and say, oh, look how good a job they did. Look at what they did. Will we remain dedicated under pressure when things get difficult, when people start calling you names, when people start, making fun of you because you're serving Christ?

Are you going to stick with it? Or are you going to succumb to peer pressure? Or are we going to look back after we get started and say, I want a life of ease rather than this?

[28 : 20] And I believe the time in which we live, I believe the short amount of time we have before the Lord Jesus Christ comes back is a time for full surrender to the Lord.

Lord. So as we conclude our time together this morning, I think it would be a good time for us to reconsider our commitment. Is our commitment conditional or is our commitment to serving Christ unconditional?

Is our love lacking? And we're going to see tonight as we begin the study of the book of Ephesians. Paul didn't really have anything bad to say in the book of Revelation as he was speaking about these seven churches.

Ephesus, the church in Ephesus had apparently done a great job of keeping out the false teachers. They had done a great job. The thing is, he says, your love is lacking. You've left your first love.

You've left the passion that you had for Jesus Christ where you once started. So maybe it's renewing that passion for Christ. Demas' love was lacking, but also his motivation was misplaced.

[29 : 28] What motivates us to serve Christ? Let's pray. Lord, our prayer this morning, my prayer this morning is that you would encourage us to draw closer to you, that you would encourage us to live for you, live a life that pleases you simply because it pleases you and not because of anything that we might receive from it.

That we would realize that you love us and we are to live a life that is honoring to you, live a life that pleases you and eternity with you will make everything that we experience on earth so much more worth it because we're doing it for you and our rewards truly are out of this world.

We thank you for what you're going to accomplish in our lives. I thank you for each one here today. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Let's all stand this morning.

Thank you.