

Reading 2 Timothy 4...

This week you will finish 2 Timothy in our new summer reading challenge, which is now available on our website (under the ‘resource’ tab). 2 Timothy is a powerful letter, because it presents Paul’s last recorded words prior to his death. He penned this letter at some point during his house arrest shortly before he was martyred under Nero. Paul seems to anticipate his impending death in 4:6-8. Our ears always perk up, and rightly so, when we hear or read someone’s final words, because of their importance and heightened significance. So, what does he say to Timothy?

The entire letter is filled with many important things, but in chapter 4, verse 10, we get a brief but especially pertinent warning, by way of example—*“For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...”*

What makes this such a sad commentary on the life of Demas is that we get glimpses of him in Scripture, just a few years earlier, as a professing Christian who sends special greetings to believers through the Apostle Paul (Col 4:14; Phlm 24). Yet, here, we see him abandoning Paul and the faith, out of love for the world. A sad commentary, indeed.

In John Bunyan’s classic work, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Demas appears as a ‘gentleman-like’ salesman who calls to those passing by to turn aside and ‘come and see’ a silver mine. He invites Christian and Hopeful to see how they might richly provide for themselves. However, Christian recognizes the danger of that place, and recites Hos 4:16-19 to that effect. Demas says, with a blush, that it is only dangerous for those who are ‘careless.’ Christian sees through his plea and recites 2 Tim 4:10. Demas insists that he too is a believer and will go with them, after they check out the silver mine. Christian and Hopeful see that Demas is an apostate and after turning away from him they come upon a monument on the roadside with the words, “remember Lot’s wife” written on it (cf. Lk 17:32). They conclude that they had just been tempted by Demas to do the same as Lot’s wife, when she turned back toward Sodom and perished. Indeed, this is a fictional portrayal, but it carries a lot of biblical truth and exhortation with it.

So, how does all of this apply to us? The themes of perspective and perseverance are prominent throughout 2 Timothy. A key trait of true followers of Christ is that they persevere to the end and hold fast to Christ in faith (cf. 2:11-13, 19; 3:14; 4:7). Demas did not lose his salvation. His apostasy revealed that he never had it. Scripture is full of warnings related to the danger of turning back from Christ and making a shipwreck of one’s faith, out of love for the world. For example, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 John 2:15; cf. 1 Tim 6:15; Heb 6:6-12; 10:19-39; etc.). We can boil things down to one simple question: *are you cultivating a love for God or a love for the world today (not sometime in the past or future)?* This is a sobering question, but we must ask it and be honest with ourselves. Don’t be entangled, but rather run and finish the race—keep the faith (2 Tim 4:7), and keep reading!

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