

Sermon: Abandoned Love (The Downfall of Demas)

Series: When Love Hurts (1)

Bible Passage: 2 Timothy 4:3-18

Our focus will be just a few verses, verses 9 and 10, but for the sake of the background or context, I'd like to read for us starting from verse 3 to verse 18. After I read this, we're going to pray again and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us, but for now would you turn your attention to God's word. 2 Timothy :3-18:

³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. ¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵ Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. ¹⁶ At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Would you pray with me?

Oh heavenly Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit teach us now. In the Bible, your son Jesus promises to send Your Holy Spirit to those who follow and put their trust in You and the Holy Spirit, as the third member of trinity, divine and holy in every way, is present with us and opens our eyes to spiritual things. Lord, open our eyes so that we may see the truth in this, in Your word today. Open our eyes so that we may see, accurately, the state of our own souls, of

our own hearts, of our own church, of our own world. We pray that this time be profitable for You, encouraging for us, challenging for us, and glorifying to Your name. In Your name we pray. Amen.

I want to thank you all for your prayers. A lot of you know that Steve and I were in the Philippines last week, serving in the Philippines with our friend Sharon and her husband Manny, who is a pastor training church leaders in Mindanao. When I came back, I was greeted by a very interesting headline; it's not the most important headline in the world. It was a headline that caught my attention because I often wondered about doing this myself: coming up on the 93 expressway south of Boston from Quincy, a state trooper pulled over a guy in the HOV/carpool lane. This man was driving in the carpool lane and his passenger in the front seat had a neck problem. The trooper pulled the guy over because "the neck didn't look right". It was a mannequin with eyebrows shaped in and a five o'clock shadow on his face. If you go online, you can see the video. The trooper asked for the mannequin even though I don't think he had the legal right to, and for some reason, the guy was totally willing to give it to him. The driver ended up getting a \$50 ticket for driving in the HOV lane without a second person.

I know now not to do this. I've always wondered about that. When I was reading this article, it made me think: what makes someone do that? I know why I would do that: because I'm late or just to see if I can get away with it. In fact, when my children were babies, I used to hide one of them in the back seat and drive boldly in the carpool lane hoping to get pulled over just so I could be vindicated when the police officer saw my child in the back seat. That never happened either – obviously our state troopers are very sharp, very intelligent people.

What makes someone do something that we might look at think "oh that's silly" or "oh that's actually really terrible"? The HOV lane is for people who trying to conserve energy and thus carpooling. People are just trying to cheat. Maybe you're one of the people who do that. Maybe I'm one of the people who do that. What makes people do things that, frankly, aren't right?

We're going to look at a character today that might fascinate us for the same reasons. I doubt that most of us have ever heard the name, or if we have, even remember the name. I doubt most of us have ever even heard a sermon about this character. His name is Demas. Maybe it's short for something else; it's hard to say. He is someone Paul talks about in Colossians 4:14 and Philemon verse 24; he is in Paul's inner circle, in the missionary team. If you go through the

book of Acts, the book of Philemon, the book of Colossians, when Paul introduces him and his team, he always includes a man named Demas.

I titled the message “The Downfall of Demas” because in these two verses, what little we have of Demas, is not flattering. Basically, as we read, Demas abandons Paul and we’re going to discuss why he does that. There’s a phrase in there that we’re going to talk about. In verse 9, there is something that appears to be very scathing, especially if you’ve been in the church for awhile. In verse 10, Paul writes:

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me...

That’s a pretty strong inditement. In one sentence, we have the guy’s name, we have the fact that he was in love with this present world, and that abandons his pastor, his missionary, his friend.

This morning, as we consider this text, in light of the question “what makes people do the things that they do?”, we’re going to see three points from this passage. If you’re like me, you read these last parts, all these names, and they just kind of flow through your brain. If you dig into the Scriptures, not even very far, you’ll find a lot of back story.

This morning, I believe this passage will teach us three things about loving the present world:

1. What does it mean to be in love with the present world?

What does it mean when Paul says that Demas was in love with the present world? What does that actually look like? If you’ve been a Christian, it sounds bad, right? Love for the present world. We’re going to see a little more detail behind what it means to be in love with the present world.

2. What happens when someone is love with the present world?

What are the results? What are the implications? What are the consequences? What happens when Christians, or actually anybody, falls too much in love with this present world, perhaps more than the world to come?

3. Why do we fall in love with the present world?

Why does anyone love this present world more than a future coming world.

Last week, Pastor Steve started a series with a title that just sticks in my mind: A Kind of Love God Hates. He talked about 1 John 2 about how God hates the love of the world. To continue in

the spirit of that, we're beginning a series called "When Love Hurts" because most people, especially Christians, think love is a good thing; in general it is, but in this coming series we're going to look at when love hurts. We're going to take a look at an example at what it means to love this present world and next week we're going to look at the theological underpinnings of that.

1. What does it mean to be in love with the present world?

We see this here in verse 9. In verse 9, we see that Paul is writing from prison to his protégé and arguably one of his best friends, Timothy. He writes these last words:

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. ¹² Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

So what's the situation? Paul is writing in prison. He is chained up. He knows it's near the end of his life. If you've read other parts of chapter 4, you'd know that he's already gone on trial at that point. He says that everyone has abandoned and deserted him and now he's at this point where he feels isolated and alone. His team has basically been broken up and spread out. The only one that is left is Luke, his physician. Lastly, he says, "For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica."

Now, in Christian church world, being in love with the world often means something really bad. People use the phrase "oh, that is so worldly." If you're not a Christian or you're not a church-goer, you might wonder, "what's so wrong about being worldly? What makes it so bad?" I think Christians and non-Christians alike may not have the clearest idea of what it means to be "in love with the world". What do you think of when you think of someone who is not in love with the world? We might think of someone who is living in a monastery far away, someone perhaps who is a hermit, someone who is able to ignore their physical needs and fasts a lot, someone who walks around with hardly any clothes on because he or she can shut out the feelings and temptations of this world, or someone who is able to be by himself all the time just meditating. We thinking someone who is not in love with the world is completely detached from the world.

The interesting thing here is that Paul writes, "Demas was in love with the world" but then Paul describes three things about himself that makes it seem like he's almost contradicting himself. In the next verse, he's going to say a couple things: don't be in love with the world like Demas,

but I need human companionship and I get lonely so Timothy please come to me; don't be in love with the world like Demas, but I'm cold so can you please bring my jacket that I left; don't be in love with this world like Demas, but please bring my books because I'm bored and I love to read. It's kind of strange. You'd think that someone not in love with this world wouldn't need things like clothes, distractions like books, etc.

Let's take a look here. Please turn your attention to verse 13.

¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

In the entire New Testament, in the last chapter of the great apostle Paul, we have, what it seems, inconsequential stuff. I think a lot of people think that to not be in love with the world means to be someone who neglects these things. You have to understand that unless Paul is totally losing it and totally contradicting himself, let me tell you what it does not mean to be in love with the world.

It does not mean you don't get lonely. It does not mean you don't crave human companionship. It does not mean that you don't need friends. It does not mean you don't feel isolated at times. I mean come on, he has got Jesus, he shouldn't need anything else right? No, he says, "please come to me. Everyone has abandoned me and only Luke remains. Come to me when you can." Not only does it not mean that you aren't lonely and you don't need human companionship, but also it does not mean you neglect your physical needs. It doesn't mean you should have a home or certain kinds of clothes. It might mean that you shouldn't have a certain kind of home or extravagant clothes. It does not mean you neglect your physical body and your physical needs.

This was a physical letter he wrote by hand. It wasn't an email he just quickly typed and sent into cyberspace. Someone hand carried it and of all the things that could be hand carried and of all the things Paul could have said as his final words on this earth, Paul asks for his cloaks and parchment and books. Some people make a big deal out of the parchments and the books; some commentaries say, "See, Paul studied even until the end. He was theologically nourishing his mind." That may be true, but I like the more basic interpretation: in prison, it gets boring. Some commentators will point out that Paul was studious and very scholarly – I'm sure these weren't comic books that he was asking for. On a fundamental level, to be in love with the world does not mean you don't desire human companionship, it does not mean you neglect your physical needs, and I would go as far as to say, it does not mean you neglect your mental needs.

Lest you think, to be world is to buy clothes and eat good food – that’s not what he’s saying. What does it mean to be in love with this world?

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

You need to understand here: Paul says he’s alone. There are three people who have left: we’ve got Demas, Titus, and Crescens. All we know about Crescens is that he’s gone to Galatia; that’s all we know from the Bible. Tradition teaches us, what we mean by that is extra-Biblical authors, that when Crescens went to Galatia, he planted several churches and eventually became the bishop of Chaleston. He was sent by Paul. Here you have three of Paul’s inner circle, his closest companions, having left: two of them by assignment and one of them by abandonment.

What does it mean when you love the present world more than the coming world? It doesn’t mean neglecting your human needs, your physical needs, your mental needs. It means you prioritize the needs of this world over the needs of the coming world. That’s basically what it means. We care too much about our comfort and our quality of life here, more than the hope of the future.

What does it mean to be in love with this world? You have to remember friends: in Genesis, God made this world. The Bible says that it was a good world. God made humanity to live in the Garden of Eden and it was literally paradise. There are many things about this world to be in love with. There are many good things even in what the Bible describes as a fallen world. There are relationships, there is beauty, there is truth, there are people, there are a lot of things. However, the priority of putting those things above God is what makes one person abandon his mission, his ministry.

What does it mean to be in love with the present world? It does not mean that you don’t crave companionship, you don’t meet physical needs, you don’t meet mental needs. It means that you don’t prioritize the comforts in this world more than the mission and ministry of God.

Now, that’s pretty abstract. I believe Paul, in writing this, gives us a more concrete picture.

2. What happens when someone is love with the present world?

What does it look like when someone loves the present world more than the coming world? This might get at the heart. Maybe you're sitting here thinking, "Well Enoch, I like this world. I like my job. I like my home. I like my stuff. I like the car I drive. How do I know if I'm actually loving this world more than I should?" Here we have the second point: what happens when we love the present more than the coming world? I want you to see what it does to Paul. Let's consider what Demas' abandonment does to Paul:

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me

What we see here is Demas loving this present causes Paul to be in great need. We could go off about all these things. We could say loving the present world causes you to abandon your friends in their times of need. We could say loving the present world causes you to neglect serving them so that your gifts, your loving acts, the ways you could meet people's needs are failing to meet people's needs. I think the best way to think about it is this: loving the present world results in hurting this present world. When you love this world too much, you will inevitably hurt this world. Whether you're a Christian or not, when you love the comforts of this world, the pleasures of this world, and I don't even mean the illicit sinful things, when you love even the good things of this world too much, you will inevitably bring harm to this world. Maybe the opposite will help you understand.

When you love the future world more than the present world, you will be used by God to alleviate suffering in the present world. When you love the future world more than this present world, you are being open to God to sacrifice for the needy, the poor, the oppressed, those who are suffering from injustice.

Demas love this world so much that he abandoned Paul. When Crescens and Titus loved the future world so much, loved the promised world of God, they were willing to sacrifice their companionship with Paul for the sake of the kingdom.

Just last week, Steve and I were in the Philippines and we met a woman, who I will call Lee (that is not her real name). Lee was working in the ministry center that our missionary friends Pastor Manny and Sharon work in. She was basically our cook for the week. I just thought she was just one of the helpers. However, Sharon shared with us Lee's story about Lee and her family lost

their home and husband as a result of a typhoon. I asked Sharon, “Well, how did she come to work here?” Sharon responded, “Well, we just found her. We just met her when we were serving the damage. Someone connected her with us and she had nothing so we just took her and her three kids in.”

When you don't love this world enough that you aren't concerned whether or not you have enough of your own comforts, when you don't love this world so much but you trust in God's future world and you're willing to part with the comforts of this world, you will dedicate your life to helping this world. However, if you love this world too much, that is what leads to corrupt governments. If you love this world too much, that is what leads to us lying on our taxes or about our income. When we love this world too much, that is what makes us work people at work in order to achieve and gain worldly success. When you love this world too much, it is too hard to sacrifice, too costly to give up things for the sake of others, too much to actually put your hope in Christ. If you take a look at anyone who believes in a future afterlife, you'll find that the people that are most passionate about their faith and believe that the next world is real are the most willing to do whatever it takes to live in this world. If you love this world too much, you will inevitably bring harm to this world. The only people who can ultimately do good in this world are the people who don't love it enough because they are willing to part with the comforts, the pleasures, the successes, and the accolades of this world.

One of the reasons why churches and Christians are held back from fulfilling the amazing calling Jesus has in their lives, and I believe He wants to use this church to make a huge impact for the sake of Christ, is because we love this world too much, this present age too much. If we were able to let go of the things of this world, we would actually help this world a lot more because our money would be used for Him, our time would be used for His purposes, our gifts, our time, our energy, our prayers would all be about the other world coming into this world rather than bringing what we have in this world into the next world.

That's why people who know Jesus closely are not afraid to die. The next world is where we're all banking on. The next world is where our hope is. That's why people, even Christians, are afraid to die. We love this world too much to leave it behind.

What does it mean to be in love with this present world? It does not mean neglecting companionship needs, physical needs, or even your mental needs. It means we prioritize this world over the next. What does it concretely look like? Well, look at Demas. He abandoned one

of his closest friends. He abandoned his team, he abandoned the work of the Lord, and he caused a great need in the life of Paul. Paul was sending Titus and Crescens to do their ministries and perhaps thought that Demas would stay with him. When Demas left, Paul had no one left but Luke.

Friends, if you've ever hurt someone, betrayed someone, or let someone down, I think if we looked into our lives deeply enough, we'd realize that somehow or other, the cause is that we love the things of this world too much and prioritize them too much. Often times, they are things that God gave us; they are good things that have become the ultimate things. Why do we do this? This sounds so terrible.

Here's the idea. What does it mean to love the world? It doesn't mean to be a monk living in a monastery or neglecting basic needs. It is to prioritize the things of this world more than the things of God. It creates these needs in our lives; it creates absent mothers or fathers; it creates absent and unfaithful spouses; it creates oppressive systems of injustice because we love the stuff in this world too much.

3. Why do we fall in love with the present world?

Why does this happen? Why does anyone fall in love with this world too much? To answer this, we have to do a little more digging in the text. I usually don't like to rely on interpretations that do this because I don't want you think of the Bible as some code that if you cross reference enough, you'll decipher its meaning. This is one of those cases where I think you need to look through the rest of the text because the only clue we really have is one single random statement.

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica

It's almost like a throw away; it doesn't really matter where he's gone. All that matters is that he's gone and he's abandoned Paul. I think it does matter where he went. Is there anything significant about the fact that Demas has gone to Thessalonica. If you were to go into the Bible and look up Acts 20:4 and Acts 27:2, you will notice something about Thessalonica. Namely, there is this guy Aristarchus from Thessalonica. Acts 20 and 27 very clearly mention a Macedonian man named Aristarchus from Thessalonica.

If you were to go other parts of the New Testament like Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:14, you will see Paul list Demas' name with a man named Aristarchus. We do this a lot. Last week when we were in the Philippines and people would introduce us, they would group this other guy from Seattle named Doug with me and Pastor Steve from Boston. You do that when you introduce people; you group them together from the same place. Paul often did that same thing with Demas and Aristarchus. Most commentators would say that Demas was probably from a place called Thessalonica.

What's the significance? Paul says:

Do your best to come to me soon.

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and...

... went home. Or we could say:

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has...

...returned to what was familiar.

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world, has...

...returned to what was comfortable.

¹⁰ For Demas, in love with this present world...

...returned to where things were easier and where he hoped things would be better.

We could also say he went back to the way things were. He reverted. He backslid.

Why does Paul explicitly say that Demas went to Thessalonica? Because commentators say that Demas was probably from Thessalonica. Where did Demas go when he abandoned Paul? He went home because he's in love with the comforts, the pleasures, the good thing of this present world.

Why do people fall in love with the present world? It is because we think home is in this present world. However, to the Christian that understands what Jesus has done on the cross, home is wherever Jesus is. That is why Demas abandoned and that is why any of us abandon Christ or

our mission or prioritize the worldly things over the eternal things. It is because we have found our home here.

When Steve and I left the Philippines, it was sad and there were hugs all around. We had a great time serving and really being encouraged by the brothers and sisters there. As sad as it was to leave, I was quite happy to leave. Not because of the hundred degree humid weather and not because of the sunburn I was probably getting, but because Boston is my home, at least right now. BCEC is my church home, unless God calls me elsewhere.

There is nothing wrong with having a home. However, if your ultimate home is found in the comfort and securities of this world, we will never be able to put the needs of this world above our own needs. We will always put our own needs above the needs of the world because those who put the needs of this world first are in love with the next world and those who love this world the most are definitely going to harm it and extract all that they can get from it. That is why any of us abandon our faith.

Commentators debate whether Demas abandoned Paul or Christ completely. I think regardless of that important discussion, the point is: Demas went home, he left his work, he left the assignment that God had for him.

Friends, whether you're a missionary or a consultant, whether you're a ministry worker or a public school teacher, God has an assignment for you. If you're not a Christian, the first assignment is to know that God loves you and has offered you hope and forgiveness of sins in Christ. The first assignment is to become a child of God through the faith in Christ and His work on the cross. As we move ahead in our life in Christ, all of us have an assignment, every single one. Even if you feel like you're the least important Christian in the world and in the church, God has an assignment for you. I don't know what it is exactly and maybe you don't know either. All I know is this: you and I will be more faithful to that assignment if we let the Holy Spirit weed out the overly zealous love of this world. We will be more impactful in God's plan if we say, "God, everything in this world, you can take away because my home is in You. My hope is in You. My future, I am banking on in You."

What did Paul say in chapter 4 verse 6?

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

I was driving back with Pastor Steve one day because we both live in Medford. We were talking about our families and our lives in general when he says, “You know, I think I’m ready to go. The Lord has been good and I think I’m ready to go.” I said back, “I don’t think I’m ready to go...” I thought he would encourage me and say something like, “No you can give it up for Jesus.” Instead he said, “Well, that’s understandable. You just got started. You just got married and you just had your first kid. There is still a lot in this world that God could give you.” There are a lot of things that I hope for and God is allowing me to live. Maybe you’re a college student right now or you’re single right now and you hope to one day get married and have kids.

There are a lot of good things in this world. There is nothing wrong with hoping for these things and asking God for these things. However, if we love the things of this world more than the things of God, if we want these things more than the things of God, we will not do the good that God wants us to do, as a church, as a people, as followers of Christ. Those who love this world too much will inevitably do harm and injustice to this world to get what they can from this world. Those who will do the most good in this world are the people who are hoping for the next.

This is the kind of love that hurts –the kind of love for the world that, when we love it too much, it makes us love it too much and too zealously. We are becoming ineffective and we might even abandon our faith in Christ, abandon our assignment, and abandon our mission. The way and the good news is to put our hope in our true home.

When we were reading this, I couldn’t help but think of abandonment. In the Bible, the other time that everyone left, and I don’t mean just one person, was in the case of a man who was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and all his friends left, every single one, including all the disciples and all the writers of the Gospels. That man was Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ knows what it’s like to be abandoned. He loved the next world so much that He was willing to give up this world for the next.

The way to put your hope and your home in Christ is to understand more fully what He has done for us on the cross. Friends, if you’re not a believer this morning, the point is not to give up the luxuries of this world. That is not the point of any Bible passage. The point of any Bible passage

is to put your hope in the One who abandoned His own very life so that you might be secure in the Heavenly Father. Jesus died for your sins. Your sins were so bad that He needed to die for them. Yet, He loves you so much that He was willing to die.

As we move ahead in that, especially for those who are already believers in Christ, we might say, “I’ve been so focused on what my assignment is. I’d love to know where I’m going to work, who I’m going to marry, where I’m going to go.” But what God says very clearly this morning is this: Whatever assignment He has for you, will be more impactful, more joyful if you can just trust Him and put your hope in Him and not the wonderful gifts God has given to you. I know many of you in this room personally and many of you have fantastic educational backgrounds, you have wonderful jobs, you have wonderful homes, you have great lives. All those things are good, but if God was to take any of those things away, perhaps with a hurricane, perhaps by some other means, would we still find our hope in Jesus and in the next world? If so, He will use us to great effect to love this world.

Let’s bow our heads and let’s pray.

Our Father, it is easy to beat ourselves over the head and work ourselves up into a guilty frenzy by saying, “God, I don’t want to be worldly so help me to not love this world. I forsake my smart phone or I forsake my cable TV or I forsake my nice car and home.” Lord, you’re not asking us to give up all those things today. You’re asking us to follow Jesus wherever He calls. For some of us, maybe we’ll never be at a point where we have to sacrifice all these worldly comforts and, for some of us, maybe we already have.

We ask you, Father, through the powerful love of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, that we would not love the world, the lust, the flesh, the things of this world, like Pastor Steve preached about last week on 1 John 2. We ask that we would not abandon our faith.

We look at Demas. Demas was not a new convert. He was not a lazy Christian. Demas was one of the most compelling missionaries to probably one of the most demanding missionary leaders in the history of the church, the apostle Paul. We know that Paul got upset at Mark and sent Mark away. For Demas to be in Paul’s missionary circle, he must have been an amazing missionary. Yet, even someone like Demas could fall in love with the present world and abandon his post.

Lord, humble us. If we already feel like we love this world too much, remind us of Your sweet forgiveness and show us that You are better than anything this world has to offer. Because better is one day in Your courts, in Your presence, than a thousand days in the most lavish, luxurious hotels this world has to offer.

We pray that as we go from this room that we would be a people more aware of the great hope we have, in love with You and not in love with this world.