

A.W.O.L.

2Tim 4:1-10; Philemon 24; Col 4:14

Introduction:

1. We begin with some of the final words of the apostle Paul
 - a. He recognized that his time on earth was growing short
 - b. As he bore the burden of prison, the Holy Spirit led Paul to write once more to Timothy
 - c. As Paul closes this letter he reflects on those who have been closely associated with his ministry
2. In sadness, Paul mentioned the defection of Demas
 - a. There is no arrogance here – i.e. – Demas has forsaken me, but I'm still staying by the stuff! You won't find me running.
 - b. There is no animosity here – i.e. – Demas has forsaken me, but he was never much to begin with.
 - c. There is no anger here – i.e. – Demas has forsaken me and I hope that he gets what is coming to him!
3. I suspect that we might have seen tears fall as Paul wrote these words had we been there
 - a. One of the most tragic things to witness is a Christian, who once had a zeal for the things of God, grow cold and indifferent
 - b. Call them what you may, deserters, traitors or backsliders – it is sad when one regresses spiritually
 - c. Demas had gone AWOL
4. Of course, I am not talking about someone losing his salvation
 - a. Either Demas was a saved man who became terribly backslidden
 - b. Or Demas was an unsaved man the entire time
5. Demas is an example of such a person
 - a. He is only mentioned 3x in the Bible
 - b. Each time we see his name, we learn something about his life
 1. Demas's heart may have been a rocky place, covered by just enough soil to superficially accept the seed of the gospel but not enough to bring full salvation. When the heat of the world's "affliction or persecution" became too fierce, he withered and fell away ([Matt. 13:5-6](#), [20-21](#)).
 - c. Or perhaps his heart was thorn infested; and when "the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches [choked] the word,... it [proved to be] unfruitful" ([Matt. 13:7](#), [22](#)).
 - d. His reaction to the deprivations faced in his physical life eventually exposed the deprivation of his spiritual life.
6. Demas is mentioned 3x in God's Word – He is a maximum Christian, he is a minimum Christian and, in the end, he is a missing Christian

I. A Maximum Christian – Phile 24

24 Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.

A. Demas Was a Maximum Christian

1. There was a time when Demas served with Paul
 - a) *What would it have been like to work side-by-side with Paul?*
 - b) *What an honor to have Paul call you his fellowlaborer*
2. Paul and Demas probably preached together
 - a) *Maybe Paul preached in the synagogue while Demas preached in the street*
 - b) *Perhaps Demas would hand out tracts while Paul preached*
3. Paul and Demas probably planted churches together
4. Demas would hold the nail while Paul would swing the hammer
5. They surely prayed together
6. Demas was one of Paul's preacher boys and showed great potential
7. He was being trained by the greatest missionary who ever lived

B. Are You a Maximum Christian?

1. Be Determined
 - a) *Determined to do your best for the Master*

Brian Mittman says he and his parents were having dinner at a smart London restaurant. The food was superb, and the setting--complete with chandeliers, crystal and silver--was unbelievably elegant. Nonetheless, when his mother's main course arrived, she felt the need for a little salt. Trying the three silver shakers that were on the table, she discovered that each contained pepper. She called the waiter over only to be told that she must be mistaken--each table always contained two dispensers of pepper and one of salt. A second attempt, however, showed that their table did, indeed, have three pepper shakers. Horrified, the waiter immediately brought her a saltshaker. When it was time for dessert, the maitre d' appeared, insisting that they choose something "on the house" because of the oversight. Brian's mother protested. "It's not that important," she said. "But, Madame," he replied in all seriousness, "what if you had been the Queen?"
 - b) *Determined to do what God expects for any Christian*
 - c) *Determined to live for the Lord*
 - d) *Determined to be separated from sin*
2. Be Dedicated
 - a) *Dedicated to serving God through His church*
 - b) *Dedicated to supporting this work through your tithes / offerings*
 - c) *Dedicated even though circumstances may be going against you*
 - d) *Dedicated though you don't feel like it – Livingston ←*

3. Be Desirous

a) *Desirous of serving God*

b) *Desirous of hearing "Well Done!" some day*

Imagine a man proposing to his sweetheart by saying, "Honey, I love you and I want to marry you. I'll take good care of you. I'll provide. I'll be a good father to your children. All I ask is that you allow me one day a year for the other woman." Is there anyone who would accept such an offer? Of course not. Likewise, it is wrong for us to act as though Jesus would accept an offer of part-time discipleship.

II. A Minimum Christian – Col 4:14

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

A. Demas Became a Minimum Christian

1. All we find here is his name
2. Nothing more and nothing less
3. Only a few months had passed between the writing of Philemon and Colossians
4. During that short time something had happened in the life of Demas
5. Perhaps he had not quit the ministry yet, but Paul felt that all was not right with Demas
6. Every pastor knows people in this same situation
 - a) *They have not completely quit on God yet, but their hearts are wandering*
 - b) *They still may be going through the motions of the Christian life*
 - c) *It is only a matter of time before they will stop all together*

B. It This You?

1. Just going through the motions?

Newsman Bernard Shaw became a "celebrity" during Desert Storm when he broadcast for 16 hours from the al-Rashid Hotel while bombs exploded around him. He dismissed it all by saying, "So we did extremely well on that story--so what? Next week we still have to be responsible and accurate and on top of the news." You cannot "coast" on past success; you have to prove yourself every day.
2. Hit and miss in church attendance?
3. Not growing as a Christian?
4. Trying to enjoy the Lord and the world at the same time?
5. Used to serve God but not anymore?
6. Lost your zeal, lost your fervor?

III. A Missing Christian – 2 Tim 4:10

A. Demas Left the Work

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

1. This is the same word used by our Savior – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
2. Just as God turned His back on His Son, so Demas turned his back on the work of God
 - a) Demas *deserted* Paul.
 - b) *Deserted* is from *enkataleipo*, a strong verb that means to utterly abandon and leave someone helpless in a dire situation.
 - c) Perhaps the sacrifice of many comforts, including the probable loss of his own freedom, became too high a price for Demas.
 - d) He was a fair-weather disciple, who had never considered the cost of genuine commitment to Christ.
 - e) He may have been caught up emotionally with the idea of a noble cause, which he did his part to serve when the demands were not great. But when the cause became costly, he was nowhere to be found.
3. We don't know if he got discouraged, disillusioned or defeated
4. Maybe he decided that the service of God was not worth the struggle and sacrifice anymore
5. Maybe he loved comfort more than Christ
6. Demas was no longer dependable – he could not be counted on

B. Demas Loved the World

10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...

1. The reason that Demas left the work is because he loved the world
2. John warns us about the world – 1 Jn 2:15

15 Love not the world, neither the things [that are] in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

 - a) *Most of us are sick of the world system with its wicked and ungodly philosophies*
 - b) *The things of the world compete with our love for Jesus Christ*
 - c) *How we love the things of the world*
 - d) *If it hinders your walk, your witness or your worship, it is of the world and should be left alone*

C. Demas Lost His Witness

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

1. This is the last statement in Scripture about Demas
2. D.L. Moody said, "A man's life should never be written while he is living. What is important is how a man ends, not how he begins."
3. He had had enough and left the ministry and went home
4. He was from Thessalonica and he went back
5. The Virginia Medical Monthly once documented the story of a woman who grew backwards. She lived a normal life with her husband and three children until tragedy struck in the home. In one year, she lost her husband and father, leaving her to care for her children alone. To deal with the grief she went into denial and entered into a severe second childhood disorder. She began wearing the clothes of a teenager and started going to high school parties. A couple of years passed and all the while she kept acting younger. Psychiatrists called it "personality regression." This woman slipped backward at a rate of one year for ever few months that went by. When she was 61 years old she was acting and talking on the level of a six year old. Finally, she was sent to a psychiatric hospital where she insisted on wearing diapers, playing with toys and babbling like an infant.
6. The sad truth is that while we are supposed to be growing, some are going backward.
7. Some are saved and never seem to grow in the Lord
8. Some seem to grow for awhile and then stop and begin regressing spiritually.

Conclusion:

1. There is never a good time to quit, especially when the need is so great.
2. Demas was AWOL from God's work
3. Have you gone from a maximum Christian to a minimum Christian?
4. Then beware, by this time next year you may be a missing Christian.

When Dr. David Livingstone was working in Africa, a group of friends wrote him: "We would like to send other men to you. Have you found a good road into your area yet?" According to a member of his family, Dr. Livingstone sent this message in reply: "If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."