

The Tragedy of Spiritual Desertion

2 Timothy 4:9-10

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. I am afraid that we all know professing Christians who used to be active and involved in church... but they no longer are.
- b. There are many of these people in the world today... and unfortunately their number is growing.
- c. Today I want to talk about... the tragedy of spiritual desertion.
- d. In this passage... Paul wrote these sad words ... “Demas hath forsaken me.”
- e. Demas is mentioned several times in the New Testament ... he was a notable Christian.
- f. Demas was a companion... a friend... a fellow worker... a helper of the apostle Paul... he was a man of God... a gifted man... a useful man.
- g. But then he quit...he turned his back on the ministry... he turned his back on the Lord... he turned his back on Paul...He turned his back on the church and the Lord’s work.
- h. Demas was like a soldier... who deserted in the midst of the battle.
- i. The letter we call 2 Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote that is included in the New Testament... not long after Paul penned these words... he was executed by the Romans.
- j. When Paul wrote this letter...he was confined in the infamous Mamertine Prison there in Rome.
- k. The Mamertine prison... was a dark, filthy, cold, slimy hole... it was the death row of the Roman prison system... people confined to the Mamertine prison did not get out.

- l. When Paul wrote this letter he was old... he was cold... he was hungry...he was beat up... and broken down from the abuse he had taken after serving the Lord for many years... and suffering for Him.
- m. Paul needed help... he needed comfort... he needed strength... his body was broken... and his heart was burdened... for the churches and the work of Christ.
- n. If ever Paul needed a friend... a comrade... a helper... someone to pray with ... it was then.
- o. But with a broken heart and tears in his eyes... Paul writes to his friend Timothy ... “Demas is gone... Demas has forsaken me.”
- p. Demas...a once faithful Christian...a once faithful friend ...once a faithful companion...had forsaken Paul...he had become a backslider.
- q. Today... I want this message to be a warning to all of us... because any one of us is in danger of becoming a backslider.
- r. I don't care who you are... I don't care what position you hold... I don't care how long you have been a Christian...do not think that you have arrived to such a spiritual level...that becoming a backslider is not a danger to you.
- s. If becoming a spiritual deserter happened to Demas... under the right ... or the wrong conditions... it can happen to you.
- t. Even the Apostle Paul said of himself... in *1 Corinthians 9:27* (NKJV) “*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*”
- u. Paul said I watch myself day and night... I keep a close watch on myself... I keep my body and I keep my life in subjection to the Lord ... lest I do something that will disqualify me from serving the Lord.
- v. If the Apostle Paul had to watch himself... you had better believe that we have to watch ourselves.

II. THE WORK DEMAS LEFT-

- a. We don't know how or when Demas came to know the Lord...we don't know how he came to be a friend... a co-worker... and a companion ... of the Apostle Paul.
- b. But we do know that after he was saved... Demas was called by God to be a minister... a preacher of the gospel to the lost... and a servant to the church.
- c. Demas was also called by God... to be a helper... a co-laborer... a prayer-partner to the Apostle Paul.
- d. In the closing verses of the book of Colossians... Paul wrote ... *Colossians 4:14 (NKJV) "Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you."*
- e. As he closed the letter to Philemon... Paul wrote... *Philemon 1:23-24 (NKJV) "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers."*
- f. Demas was an important man... with an important place in the church ... and in the ministry of the Apostle Paul.
- g. Paul had invested much time and effort... into careful teaching, counseling, and encouraging Demas... Paul expected Demas to carry on his ministry after he was gone.
- h. But when Paul needed him most... when the church needed him most ... when the work of God needed him most.
- i. Demas had forsaken the Lord... he had forsaken his calling... he had forsaken his ministry ... he had forsaken his work... he had forsaken the church... and he had forsaken Paul.
- j. The word translated forsaken... is a word that means to utterly abandon someone... to leave someone helpless in a dire situation.

- k. Demas had become a backslider... and unfortunately there are many people like Demas today.
- l. Today there are many people who at one time were active and involved in the church and the work of the Lord... but they no longer are ... they use to be faithful to worship ... they use to give, work and serve... but they no longer do.
- m. They have forsaken their calling and ministry... they have forsaken the church ... they have forsaken the work of God... they have forsaken their witness and testimony... they have forsaken their Lord.
- n. When Paul wrote Timothy that Demas had forsaken him... you can feel his sadness... you can feel his grief... you can feel his shock and broken heart.
- o. I can tell you in my own ministry... nothing has broken my heart more ... than to see once faithful Christians... once faithful workers and servants of the Lord... once faithful Christian friends... forsake the Lord and the church.
- p. True Christians are broken-hearted... when a fellow Christian wanders away from the church... and forsakes the Lord.
- q. But it happens... and we must be on guard... to see that it does not happen to us.

(The Work Demas Left)

III. THE REASON DEMAS LEFT-

- a. Why did Demas leave?... *2 Timothy 4:10 (NKJV) "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."*
- b. People give all kinds of excuses... for leaving the church and God's work.
- c. Somebody hurt their feelings... somebody did something or said something they did not like... they did not get their way ... they could not get along with this person or that person... etc.

- d. But all of those are just excuses people use for leaving the church and forsaking God and His work ... none of those are the real reason why people leave God and His church.
- e. The real reason people leave the church... the real reason people stop living for the Lord ...and serving the Lord.
- f. Is because like Demas... they love the world... the values of the world... the stuff of the world... the activities of the world... more than they love the Lord... His people...His work ...His values... His kingdom... and His church.
- g. When a person who professes to be a Christian forsakes the Lord and His church... one of two things is true.
- h. #1, Either they were never saved to start with... and their leaving the Lord and His church proves it.
- i. #2, Or... they are a disobedient, backsliding Christian ... who has turned away from God.
- j. By the way ... understand that if a person leaves the church... they have left the Lord.
- k. A person cannot be right with God... they cannot be loving God ... living for God ... and serving God as they should... if they have left the fellowship and the work of the church.
- l. No person can be right with God... if they have left and abandoned His church.
- m. Sometime people leave the church... because they were not really saved to start with... and their leaving the fellowship and the work of the church proves the reality of their lostness.
- n. *1 John 2:15 (NKJV) "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

- o. *1 John 2:19 (NLT2) "These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us."*
- p. But sometimes a true Christian will leave the Lord... and the church.
- q. They allow their love and devotion for Christ to grow cold... they allow themselves to get caught up and entangled in the activities, affairs and things of the world... and they become backslidden a Christian.
- r. What happens when a lost person forsakes the church?... when a lost person leaves the church... more times than not...their attitude toward the church becomes harder ... the self-deception that they are saved becomes stronger... and as time goes by their determination not to return to the church becomes more fixed.
- s. Some of the hardest people in the world to win to Christ... are lost people... lost church members... who have abandoned the church.
- t. But, when a truly saved person forsakes the Lord and abandons the church ... something totally different happens.
- u. When a truly saved person forsakes the Lord and abandons the church ...they become objects of God's discipline and chastisement.
- v. As the good Shepherd... when one of His sheep wanders from the fold ... Jesus will take His rod and staff... and He will go get them.
- w. As a good Father... when one of His children wanders from home into spiritual danger... God will go get them.
- x. When a true Christian wanders from the Lord and His church... the Lord will go get them.
- y. And the Lord will not relent... He will not give up ... He will not stop... until they repent... get right with God... and come back to church and the work of God.

z. *Hebrews 12:6 (NKJV) “For whom the LORD loves He chastens...”*

aa. If through the experiences of life... the Lord has to take one of His children to the woodshed... to bring them back to the church and His work ... He will do it... and He will not stop until they come home.

bb. The true Christian who wanders from the Lord and forsakes His church... will be miserable until they come home.

(The Work Demas Left... The Reason Demas Left)

IV. HOW DEMAS LEFT-

- a. The language that Paul uses in 2 Timothy 4:10 about Demas... leads us to believe that Paul believed Demas was a true Christian... who had backslidden from the Lord.
- b. Listen again to what Paul said about Demas... in *2 Timothy 4:10 “For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.”*
- c. The word “forsaken”... has the idea of suddenness... Paul got up one morning and Demas was gone... maybe he left a note... maybe he didn't ... he was just gone.
- d. But the phrase “having loved this present world”... has the idea of something that happened slowly, gradually over time.
- e. A Christian backsliding from the Lord... is not something that happens suddenly, overnight.
- f. Backsliding is a process that happens in the heart of the believer ... they take their eyes off Jesus...they allow their love, devotion and commitment to Christ, to His church and to His work to grow cold... while their interest, involvement, love for and entanglement in the things of the world grows stronger.
- g. Backsliding from the Lord is a process... it happens slowly...over time... in the heart of the believer ... until one day you look up... and they are gone.

- h. One of the commercials on TV that I am thoroughly sick of asks ...
“What’s in your wallet?”
- i. Today I ask you... “What’s in your heart?”
- j. What is growing more in your heart more... your love and devotion for the Lord... and His church... and His work and service ... or your love interest and involvement in the world... and the things of the world?
- k. You may be closer to backsliding from the Lord... than you think.

V. CONCLUSION-

- a. The saddest thing in the world is a backslidden Christian... who has forsaken the Lord... and His church.
- b. You don’t have to totally leave the church to forsake the church... a lot of people who attend church have forsaken the church.
- c. They attend...but don’t pray for the church... they don’t support the church ... they don’t give to the church... they don’t work in the church... they are not involved in the church.
- d. Today I encourage you to bind your heart to the Lord... love the Lord with the same passion that He loves... live for Him... be faithful to His church.
- e. If you have backslidden from the Lord and you know it... it is time to come home.
- f. Maybe you need to be saved this morning... maybe God has been dealing with you about your salvation... I invite you to come.
- g. Maybe you have been saved... and you want to make it public... you want to join this church family and be baptized... I invite you to come forward.