

Who was Demas in the Bible?

Demas had at one time been one of Paul's "fellow workers" in the gospel ministry along with Mark, Luke, and others (Philemon 1:24). During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Demas was also in Rome (Colossians 4:14).

There is also biblical evidence that Demas was with Paul during Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, at least for a while. Then something happened. Demas forsook Paul, abandoned the ministry, and left town. Paul wrote about the sad situation: "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica" (2 Timothy 4:10).

The Greek verb used in the original implies that Demas had not merely left Paul but had left him "in the lurch"; that is, Demas had abandoned Paul in a time of need. The apostle was in prison, facing a death sentence, and that's when Demas chose to set sail. Undoubtedly, Paul was deeply let down by Demas. It's never easy to see a friend and associate in whom you've placed your trust forsake you in the midst of hardship.

The separation caused by Demas' desertion of Paul was not merely spatial but spiritual. Demas left Rome because he fell in love with the world. In other words, Demas chose the corrupt value system of the unsaved world over what heaven values. As the NLT translates it, Demas "loves the things of this life" (2 Timothy 4:10). We don't know the details of Demas' situation, but it is evident that Demas decided that what Satan has to offer in this life is better than what God has to offer in the next.

Much can be said in support of the view that Demas, in love with the present world, was never a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. Paul makes a sharp contrast in 2 Timothy

4:8 and 10. In verse 8, Paul speaks of those who love the Lord: “There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award . . . to all who have loved his appearing” (ESV). Demas, in contrast to those who love Jesus’ return, loved the present world (verse 10). First John 2:15 is clear about the spiritual state of those who love the world: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.” Nowhere in the Bible do we read of the restoration of Demas.

The tragedy of Demas is still being lived out today by those who choose the temporary benefits of this world over the eternal riches of heaven. Today there are still those who seem to receive the Word but then “the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). Past service is no guarantee of future faithfulness; we must depend on the Lord, our Strength (Psalm 28:8). We must be born again (John 3:3); otherwise, we have no foundation of faith. “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 John 2:19; cf. Matthew 7:22-23).