

INTRODUCTION

Done with his official work for the day, Thomas Jefferson sat in the new presidential mansion in Washington in 1803 and opened his Bible--not to pray, but to cut.

He scoured the text for Jesus' greatest teachings, sliced out his favorite portions, and glued them into an empty volume.

He called it "The Philosophy of Jesus." That book was lost to history.

In 1819, he started over and created a new version called "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth," commonly referred to now as the Jefferson Bible.

This volume was kept largely secret and passed among Jefferson's relatives until 1895, when it was discovered by the librarian at the Smithsonian.

In 1904, it was published by Congress.

The Jefferson Bible was an "effort to extract the doctrine of Jesus by removing sections of the New Testament containing supernatural aspects as well as perceived misinterpretations he believed had been added by the four Evangelists" (Wikipedia).

If you were to look at the Jefferson Bible today, you would first notice that it "begins with an account of Jesus's birth without references to angels, genealogy, or prophecy. Miracles,

references to the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, and Jesus' resurrection are also absent" (Wikipedia).

Now, before you sit in judgment on Jefferson, consider the action of many Christians.

They, like Jefferson, take scissors to their Bible and cut out anything they don't like and create a Bible more to their liking.

That's essentially what happens "if we ignore any portion of God's Word, whether unintentional, conveniently or deliberately.

We too are guilty of Jefferson's offense."

If we don't do this we will avoid the difficult and challenging passages of the Bible and focus only on those we find to be encouraging.

Here's a passage that is easily ignored:
1 John 2:15.

Listen just to the first part of this passage:

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world.”

There's nothing subtle about those words.

It's abrupt and to the point!

It's categorical, “Do not love the world.”

It's comprehensive, "Do not love anything in the world."

"It's intrusive, strategically aimed at whatever we desire most: 'Anything in the world.'"

It forbids worldliness in no uncertain terms.

We may ignore this verse because we aren't sure what it really means.

You may ask, "Does it mean I can't watch MTV or go to an R-rated movie?"

Do I have to give up my favorite TV shows?

Is it okay to watch a movie as long as I fast-forward the sex scene?

How much violence or language is too much?

Are certain types of music more worldly than others?

Is rap or indie music that I'm loading on my iPod okay?

How do I know if I'm spending too much time playing games or watching YouTube clips online?

Can a Christian try to make lots of money, own a second home, drive a nice car, and enjoy the luxuries of modern life?

Am I worldly if I read fashion magazines and wear trendy clothes?

Do I have to be out of style in order to be godly?

How short is too short?

How low is too low?

How do I know if I'm guilty of the sin or worldliness?"

You may have questions like this or you may be like some who really don't want to know the answers.

Or you may be one who says, "I'm a Christian and this doesn't apply to me."

Or "I'm a Christian and I would never live like that!"

Let me introduce you to someone in the Bible who probably echoed those same words.

Is This Verse In Your Bible?

1 John 2:15

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He is found in 2 Timothy 4:10.

His name is *Demas*.

Demas (2 Timothy 4:10)

He was a close friend and traveling companion of the apostle Paul.

He participated in spreading the Gospel and strengthening the fledgling church throughout the Roman Empire.

He left his home and his family for ministry.

But we have these words in 2 Timothy 4:10, “For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”

“What a tragedy!

What a waste!

A testimony ruined.

The gospel maligned.

For Demas, in love with the present world, not only deserted Paul and the saints—he deserted his Savior.”

"One of the bitterest experiences in Christian service is to be forsaken by those who were formerly one's fellow laborers.

Demas had been a friend of Paul's, a fellow believer, and a fellow worker.

But now Paul was in prison, Christians were being persecuted, and the political climate was distinctly unhealthful for Christians.

Instead of loving the Lord's appearing, Demas fell in love with this present world, and so left Paul and departed for

Thessalonica" (The Believer's Bible
Commentary: 2 Timothy 4:10).

What happened?

What causes a person to do what
Demas did?

First...

He Drifted

The dictionary defines this as “to
change or develop gradually, or move
slowly from one point or position to
another.”

When Demas drifted, “it wasn’t
immediate.

It wasn’t obvious at first.

He didn’t go from disciple to deserter
in a day.

No, it was a gradual weakening, a subtle contaminating, and an eventual conforming to this world.”

All of us know a Demas.

They burned bright for the love of Christ and then suddenly faded from fellowship and turned their back on Christ—or they fell into serious sin and left everyone wondering what happened.

So often we’re ignorant of the signs—which is one of the symptoms of worldliness.

“People can be attending church, singing the songs, apparently listening to the sermons—no different on the outside than they’ve always been.

But inside, that person is drifting.

He sits in church but is not excited to be there.

He sings songs without affection.

He listens to preaching without conviction.

He hears but does not apply.”

A love for the world begins in the soul

It's subtle, not always immediately obvious to others, and often undetected by the people who are slowly succumbing to its lies.

It begins with a dull conscience and a listless soul

Sin does not grieve him like it once did.

Passion for the Savior begins to cool.

Affections grow dim.

Excitement lessens for participating in
the local church.

Eagerness to evangelize starts to wane.

Growth in godliness slows to a crawl.

This person over time is taken captive
by sin.

It's simply one more step from apparent
follower to deserter.

What about you?

Are you drifting?

Was there a time when you were
passionate for God?

Demas was like that too.

Was there a time when your life was characterized by an extravagant devotion and love for the Savior?

Sadly, Christians are largely unaware of the peril.

Because we've ignored verses such as 1 John 2:15, we've become completely desensitized to the clear and present danger of worldliness.

James Hunter says, "Evangelicals still adhere to prohibitions against premarital, extramarital, and homosexual relations. But even here, the attitude toward those prohibitions has noticeably softened."

This softening, he points out, brings an inevitable result:

“Many of the distinctions separating Christian conduct from ‘worldly conduct’ have been challenged if not altogether undermined. Even the worlds *worldly* and *worldliness* have, within a generation, lost most of their traditional meaning.”

We’ve softened!

We’ve lost clarity!

He May Have Been Unconverted

Because Demas deserted having “loved this present world,” it is possible that he was not a believer at all.

John says, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

The word that Paul used for “deserted,” was a word that meant “to utterly abandon,” with the idea of leaving someone in a dire situation.

Demas was a fair-weather disciple who had never counted the cost of genuine commitment to Christ.

Jesus described people like Demas

Matthew 13:20-21 (NASB) ²⁰ "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

They are those say “Lord, Lord,” but Jesus says in Matthew 7:21, “They will not enter the kingdom of heaven” because they didn’t do “the will of My Father in heaven.”

They’re many who fit this description today

“Today, the greatest challenge facing American evangelicals is not persecution from the world, but seduction by the world.”

C.J. Mahaney says, “We’ve let down our guard...And as a love for the things of this world has infiltrated the church, it has watered down and weakened our witness. It threatens to silence our clarion call for repentance and faith in the Savior.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church.”

See, “the greater our difference from the world, the more true our testimony for Christ—and the more potent our witness against sin.

But sadly, today, there’s not much difference.

The lines have blurred.

The lack of clarity between the church and the world has undercut our testimony for Christ and undermined our witness against sin.

In Spurgeon's words once again:
'Worldliness is growing over the church; she is mossed with it.'

CONCLUSION

Is there a noticeable difference in your life?

Is your lifestyle obviously different from that of the non-Christian?

If the difference is hard to detect, you may be in danger of drifting down the deserter's path with Demas.

Or you may not be a Christian at all.

Surrendering to Jesus means to abandon all former loyalties to the world, sin, and Satan.

My prayer for you today is that you will see the seriousness of worldliness in your life, hate it, and forsake it!

Examine your heart this morning.

2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?"

In the context of 1 John chapter two, John says those who do not love the world are those who "keep His commandments" (2:3) and "abides in Him" (2:6) and "loves his brother" (2:10).

On the other hand, those who love the world, "say [they] have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, [and] lie and do not practice the truth" (1:6).

They do not confess sin (1:8) but say they "have not sinned" (1:10).

They "walk in darkness" (1:6) and eventually leave the church and Jesus all together.

1 John 2:19 says, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

Worldliness is a serious issue.

It defines us.

It reveals the heart as well as the motives.

But the Word of God exposes it.

This Word that is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword," [pierces] as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb.4:12).

Hebrews 4:13 says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Where's your heart right now?

Has it drifted?

If so, repent!

Turn back to Christ!

Confess this sin and fall in love with Jesus again.

Jesus said to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:5 says, "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lamp stand out of its place--unless you repent."

Let's pray this morning as we consider these things.