**How To Avoid A Spiritual Failure**

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 In his final hours in Rome, awaiting an inevitable execution, a very lonely apostle Paul suffered some additional heartbreak. "Demas," he wrote***, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world"*** (**2 Timothy 4:10**). We are left to speculate as to the particulars - what dread fears or powerful allurements led this faithful friend and co-worker to abandon the kingdom of God and to forsake his burdened brother. It was not as though he had fled the field at the first approach of trouble. During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Demas had evidently been a steadfast companion (**Philemon 24; Colossians 4:14**). Now, unexpectedly, this heart - mauling betrayal and desertion. Only those who have had a trusted companion in Christ (one who has proven himself in many a crisis) to suddenly turn from God and run for the world can understand. It can numb the spirit.

 What is it that can cause one who has invested so much in the kingdom to suddenly abandon everything? Some fade early because they have little understanding of the calling of God and even less commitment. The first approach of temptation and hardship devastates them (**Luke 8:13**). Others seem to have a deep commitment to righteousness but not an absolute one. Their price for betrayal is high but they have one nonetheless, and when it gets high enough, they run. The wealthy young ruler who came to Jesus was like that. He was willing to give up a lot, but not everything (**Matthew 19:16-23**).

 Paul said that Demas ***"loved this present world."*** The "world" is many things. John describes it as a way of thinking where lust, materialism and pride abound (**1 John 2:15-16**). What was it that got to the faithful Demas? Was it fear of death or imprisonment? Or was it something more subtle like a nostalgic longing for the old easy ways free of constant unabating warfare? We are not told which one of these undid Demas but one of them found its mark. (Conclusion, next week)