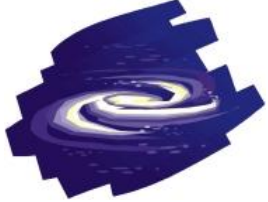


Sucked In

A Lesson from Demas about the Dangerous Side of Love

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At the center of the swirling mass of stars known as the Milky Way galaxy exists a phenomenon known as a black hole. This cosmic garbage disposal has a gravitational pull so strong that stars, planets, asteroids, and even space itself cannot escape. What happens to the object that is sucked into this monster defies imagination: its mass is compressed by the forces of gravity to such extreme density that it disappears almost completely. Imagine a nearly invisible speck of dust—one that was formerly a massive star—weighing millions of tons!



Black holes possess the irresistible ability to draw in whatever gets too close. Even if stars and planets possessed the will to escape, they could not do so once within the monster's reach. The only reason the earth hasn't been sucked in is that it is much too far away to be at risk.

The Bible tells of a professing Christian named Demas who got too close and was sucked into a black hole of another sort—the spiritual black hole of unbelief.

Demas is mentioned three times in Scripture. In Colossians 4:14 Paul mentions that Demas wanted to send greetings to the Colossian church. In Philemon 24 Paul once again refers to Demas, this time as one of his “fellow workers” in spreading the gospel. These two references tell us that Demas was a close associate of the apostle Paul, and someone who was widely thought of as a true Christian. But sadly, that is not where the story ends.

The third time Demas is mentioned we are given a different picture entirely. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul writes from a Roman prison, saying, “Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” (2 Tim. 4:9-10).

Paul's third description of Demas wasn't intended to show a true believer having a bad day or month or year. His reference to Demas “having loved this present world” described someone who had fallen away from Christ. As John wrote, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him” (1 John 2:15). Though Demas was formerly thought of as

a believer even by Paul himself, he had abandoned the faith. He had been drawn away and overcome by the dangerous side of love.

What was it about “this present world” that Demas loved enough to stop loving and serving Christ with Paul? Was it a woman? Was it a business opportunity or a promise of riches? Was it his craving for social acceptance? Was it his preference for comfort and ease rather than suffering, and perhaps dying, with Paul? Was it an immoral habit? The Bible doesn't tell us what Demas loved about “this present world,” but only that he chose it over Christ and eternal life.

The Bible is also silent about what happened in between Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 2:10, but we can be sure that Demas didn't just wake up one morning and decide to dive into the abyss of unbelief. He allowed himself to get too close. His affections for the world grew stronger over time, and his affection for Christ weakened gradually. Paul, it seems, had even warned him about being on a slippery slope toward apostasy. How else would he have known not only *where* Demas had gone, but *why*?

What worldly attraction would suck you in if you let it? What is it about “this present world” that you often find yourself getting too close to? What is it that you are tempted to value more highly than eternal life—the one thing you find yourself loving in competition with Christ? What is it that might someday result in faithful Christians saying sadly of you, “We were sure he was a true believer, but his love for (_____) sucked him into the black hole of unbelief”?

Whatever it is, whether money, possessions, physical comfort, family loyalties, sexual sin, alcohol, social acceptance, power, prestige, career, or even life itself, it isn't worth losing the glories of heaven or “gaining” everlasting punishment. “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26).

From all that we know of Demas, he made the wrong choice and is suffering in hell for it. He gained something from the world, and lost his soul in the process. The book is closed on him. The black hole of unbelief has swallowed him up forever. Your book, on the other hand, is still open. What must you do to make sure your story will have a happy ending?