

The Lord was speaking to John Bunyan very deliberately when writing these past chapters which touch the ‘golden calf of money’, at the Hill Lucre – or as the King James Bible calls it, ‘filthy lucre’. The Bible warns of the snare of the **love** of money which I Timothy 6:10 clearly states, “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*” We know that marriages, families, relationships and businesses fail and fall apart because of the excess of it, the lack of it, the abuse of it and the lack of wisdom about it. It’s worthy to note that this chapter is not talking about someone earning an honest living by their profession, trade or ability. It’s specifically talking about getting sidetracked, off the narrow path and being seduced and tempted to get rich quick with little or no effort. How many churches or business people have lost personal money or their church building funds by the promise of high and quick returns on their investments, or the infamous ponzie schemes that have become all too prevalent. Posing as truthful, sincere and wholly trustworthy, people like Demas have run off and squandered countless thousands of investor’s life savings.

We first see that Christian and Hopeful have a little time of ease and respite which brought them satisfaction. It can be assumed that they were having sweet fellowship at their local church, a weekly time of refreshing before going out again into the world. In looking deeper we need to realize that though we’re commanded to not forsake fellowship with the saints, we don’t pitch a tent and live there! We’re called to be salt and light in the world and to press on to the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus. We’re in this world to lead others to Jesus Christ, to evangelize, to preach the gospel. We’re not to be afraid of the world and hide in the safe place of the church. Neither are you to take the attitude that you can kick back and be at ease because you’ve made it into heaven and don’t have to do anything else. We continue to press on, that’s why their time was quick and narrow.

A backslidden Christian by the name of Demas is the mine keeper and was lured away by the wealth of it, strayed from his calling and election and now calls out to others to do the same. In the old English text it says; “Ho, turn aside hither”, it means a deliberate turning away from the purpose of following Christ. It would seem that Bunyan used this name as reference to Demas who traveled and ministered with the Apostle Paul and backslid because of loving this present world. II Timothy 4:10 says; “*for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica...*” What happens to those who go astray off the narrow path? 1) they were destroyed or killed and 2) were severely maimed, never regaining their usefulness and potential in the Kingdom of God. Preachers have all too often been led away from their calling and election because of this, never to return and unfortunately become a mockery to the world because of it.

As mentioned, the term ‘filthy lucre’ is mentioned four times in the King James Bible by the Apostles Peter and Paul, specifically as it applies to those in ministry, or ministers of the gospel. In essence it means unclean gain, base profit sordid and covetous gain. If the warning by them over 2000 years ago was this strong, what would they say if they would see Christianity having been turned into big business today! [I Peter 4:12 – 5:14](#).

- I Timothy 3:3 ; “*Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous*”
- Titus 1:7; “*For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.*”
- I Peter 5:2; “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*”

This ‘little’ hill has a silver mine called Lucre and would seem to have no challenge to it, but we see that its banks are deceptively unstable, prone to collapse and one can fall over the edge in a heartbeat. Christian says that many have been hindered in their pilgrimage because of this silver mine lucre. He chooses to keep on the straight and narrow path because he knows the wealth that God provides is greater than any earthly temptation. Demas lies saying it’s not very dangerous and insists for them to ‘just take a look’, yet he’s blushing in the conversation! His blushing shows his guilt and love for the shameful enterprise he’s laid a hold of. When was the last time you blushed at your sin? Really, think about it. Or has your heart become so hard and calloused that you brush sin and your burning conscience off as if everything is cool, acceptable, everyone else is doing it – so why can’t I attitude? The devil is always seducing people to ‘just take a look, looking can’t hurt you’ lie, right? He’ll say ‘just take a little gander on over there’ or ‘let’s just take a little look-see, can’t

hurt! Galatians 5:17 says; *“For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”*

Christian says that Demas is just like Gehazi and Judas and is an enemy of the Lord! Gehazi was a servant of Elisha who prayed for Naaman to be healed of leprosy. Naaman wanted to ‘financially bless’ Elisha because he was healed but Elisha would have no part of it. But Gehazi was full of greed, ran after Naaman and lied to him fabricating a story as to why Elisha now needed what Naaman had to offer, so Naaman gave him the ‘financial blessing’. However the prophet Elisha knew what Gehazi did and as a result, the leprosy came upon not only him, but his descendants forever! You don’t want to mess with being greedy or being like Judas. Judas betrayed Jesus Christ for filthy lucre, 30 pieces of silver! Hebrews 10:29 says; *“Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”* Demas made merchandise of the ‘blood of the covenant’ and insulted the ‘Spirit of grace’! How many men and women have left ministry to pursue worldly wealth justifying themselves that they can no longer walk by faith because it’s just not easy or comfortable?

As I said earlier, Christianity has become big business in our society. Ministers, preachers, evangelists and teachers are even changing their names to ‘motivational speakers’ so that they can glean financial support from the secular! They have adjusted their websites, literature and biographies to remove evangelical, Jesus Christ, faith and Christianity so as not to be offensive to those who may want to help them out in their orphanages, overseas missions and general evangelical projects. God have mercy! Jesus is clear in Luke 9:26; *“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.”* Proverbs 28:20, 22 says; *“A faithful person will have an abundance of blessings, but the one who hastens to gain riches will not go unpunished”, “The stingy person hastens after riches and does not know that poverty will overtake him.”*

So, if you do not succumb to the initial enticement of filthy lucre and fall by the wayside, is your heart still set on it longingly and covetously? Lot and his wife escaped the judgment of God when He rained down fire and brimstone over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angels warned them ‘not to look back’ but it says in Genesis 19:26; *“But Lot’s wife looked back longingly and was turned into a pillar of salt.”* Her lust, passion and desire for all ungodliness possessed her that she could not only shun the angelic warnings but also that of her husband. Her husband was righteous; she was in her heart just like those who were being judged in the city she was just delivered from. It’s a warning that Jesus uses in Luke 17:28-32 referring to his return; *“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so it will be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife.”* She escaped one judgement but was destroyed by another.

Christian and Hopeful see what their demise might have been had they yielded to Demas’ proposition. When we’re warned to stay away from sin and lusts of the flesh, and to keep our eyes fixed on the author and finisher of our faith, we only need to see the judgement and what happened to this woman if we refuse and are rebellious.

The judgment of Sodom is not a fairy tale or something to be ignored. It says that before this judgment, that whole region of the Jordan was like the garden of the Lord. [Genesis 13:10-13](#). It was lush, fertile, and gorgeous! All the provision and gracious favors that God had given them mocked. They were audacious and shameless sinners whom God had warned time and again to repent and they did not. Jude 7 says; *“As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”*

Things to reflect on. Have you been tempted to go off the straight and narrow by people like Demas? Are you a Demas who is blushing at his audacious sin of enterprising filthy lucre? Have you laid down the call and the election on your life to pursue vanity and riches? Are you compromising how you communicate the gospel to raise finances and instead of being known as a powerful preacher are now simply a motivation speaker? Are you merchandising the gospel of Jesus Christ and insulting the Spirit of grace? Are you like Lot’s wife still lusting and coveting the world? Hard questions I

know. Each of us are tempted, we know that, and Jesus Christ was tempted also. Hebrews 4:15 says; “*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” I Corinthians 10:13; “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*”

All you need to do is repent and come to the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help. Some of you may be as it said, ‘maimed for life’. But with every breath in you, purpose to continue to run the race and not give in until you reach heaven.

