

Apathy? Who Cares?

In stark contrast to our own affluent society, many less fortunate people face grim realities daily. These may include a lack of adequate shelter, severe food shortages, disease, natural calamities, civil unrest, or wars. In countries where oppressive regimes preside, Christians also face persecution and punishment for bearing the Name of Christ.

While we certainly enjoy our tremendous resources and freedom to pursue our goals of happiness, well-being, and religious convictions, Christians must beware! The enemy of our souls has deployed a weapon to destroy the Church, and this weapon is especially effective in a prosperous society: spiritual apathy—the state of nonresistance against Satan. By gradually lulling the Church to sleep, Satan is working to shape a church that is lean in its soul and lax in its love for truth and righteousness. He wants a church emptied of its spiritual vision and indifferent to the call of God. Nonetheless, Jesus seeks to establish a Church such that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). If we so determine, we can be part of that triumphant and glorious Body.

1 • Have you ever shared a matter of great interest with someone, or tried influencing another to respond with the urgency you felt, only to be met with little reaction? Experiencing such a situation is like “talking to a wall” and can be quite frustrating.

Scripture is replete with passages regarding God's concern for man and man's quests for Him. It also provides numerous instances of man's indifference to the truth. Read Matthew 22:2-5 and Luke 14:16-20. What was the attitude of those in the Matthew text who were bidden to the marriage? How are the excuses in the Luke passage similar to those that people make today for putting the Gospel aside?

2. Have you ever felt so weary while driving your car that you had to fight to keep your eyes open, knowing your life depended on doing so? Christians may find themselves in a similar spiritual predicament. We are in a fight to avoid being lulled into apathy. How can we prevent the enemy of our souls from dulling our spiritual alertness and causing us to become "asleep" and off guard? What is the outcome of falling into such a state?

3. If you were to ask an average individual whether or not they would enjoy being filled by the powers of darkness, he or she would probably answer with an emphatic, "No!" If you asked the same person about the alternative of being filled with the Spirit of God and becoming fully devoted to His service, you might still get a negative response. Today, many people are not willing to go to an

extreme for anything spiritual. People seemingly want a casual association with God. They want a limited form of religion, not something that requires total commitment and dependence on Him. A church of such indifference is described in Revelation 3:14-19. What made this Laodicean church so indifferent? What causes people to be indifferent today? Comment briefly on God's response to the attitude of this church, and relate His remedy for their lukewarmness.

4. As we observe sin and violence becoming more rampant and heinous in our society, we are reminded of Noah's day when "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Genesis 6:12). In that era, the earth was "filled with violence" and every "imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). It seems amazing that God found a righteous family in a world of lawless people with little regard for God, but He did.

The days of Noah have passed, but the nature of man remains. Jesus prophesied of the latter days, saying, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). What evidence is there of this prophecy's fulfillment? How can we, as Christians, shake off the effects of the sin around us and remain "on fire" for Christ?

5. Spiritual apathy prevents many individuals from moving on in their Christian walk, by causing them to become content with their present spiritual condition. Striving for perfection and seeking the deeper things of God are no longer their priority. They put the pursuit of holiness on a shelf of neglect, procrastination, or total forgetfulness.

In Joshua 18:2,3, Joshua set forth an indictment to seven tribes of Israel and said, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?" In what areas do Christians tend to become slack? Read Hebrews 2:1-3.

6. To most individuals, indifference and noninvolvement are positions of neutrality that harm no one. According to James 4:17, what are the scriptural ramifications of this attitude? How does Matthew 25:42,43 relate to this passage in James?

7. Several accounts in the Bible admonish us to watch for the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:35; and Luke 21:36). For those with an attitude of apathy, failure to see the urgency of preparing for the eminent coming of

Christ may be the greatest tragedy. Read Matthew 25:1-13, and note what you think the oil represents in this parable. Why do you think the foolish were without enough oil? How does this parable relate to Hebrews 4:1?

8. The day is rapidly approaching—if it isn't already here—when the world attaches a greater social stigma to the life of a fundamental, evangelical Christian than to a homosexual, adulterer, drug addict, etc. If, as present trends continue, severe punishment is handed to those who worship God and who proclaim their faith in Christ, how will the churches change? Will they be filled or almost empty? What will happen to the Church spiritually?

Key Texts

Genesis 6:5,12; Joshua 18:2,3; Matthew 16:18; 22:2-5;
24:12,42; 25:1-13,42,43; Mark 13:35; Luke 14:16-20; 21:36;
Hebrews 2:1-3; 4:1; James 4:17; Revelation 3:14-19

Other Scriptures Used in This Study

Psalm 8:4; Matthew 6:21; 10:30; 26:41; John 17:15; Eph-
esians 6:11; Philippians 3:13,14; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Peter 1:5-
10; 3:1

Suggested Verse for Memorization

Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things
before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the
error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.
— 2 Peter 3:17