

Apathy: A Spiritual Cancer

Part 1

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Which of the following battles do you think poses the greatest threat for this local congregation?
 - 1. The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ issue?
 - 2. The doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage?
 - 3. Liberalism in the church?
 - 4. The 70 A.D. Doctrine?
- B. While all of the above are solid areas wherein we should take a stand, they are not the areas where we face our biggest battles. I would suggest that our biggest battle is apathy.
- C. It is the purpose of this lesson to examine the subject of apathy. In this lesson, we will:
 - 1. Define spiritual apathy.
 - 2. Show that spiritual apathy is a sin.
 - 3. Show that spiritual apathy condemns the sinner.

I. WHAT IS APATHY?

- A. According to the Webster's dictionary, apathy is "1. lack of emotion; 2. lack of interest; listless condition; indifference." Some synonyms for apathy would be impassiveness, indifference, lethargy, and unconcern.
- B. The specific area of apathy for which we must be on guard is spiritual apathy. Spiritual apathy is seen in one's lack of interest in spiritual areas. For instance:
 - 1. Lack of interest in the church.
 - 2. Lack of interest in studying God's Word.
 - 3. Lack of interest in prayer.
 - 4. Lack of interest in Heaven and Hell.
- C. Spiritual apathy can be manifested in several different ways.
 - 1. A decrease in attendance at the Sunday evening service could be a sign of

spiritual apathy.

2. Coming to Bible classes without proper preparation could be a sign of spiritual apathy.
 3. Not attending Bible classes at all could be a sign of spiritual apathy.
 4. A lack of interest shown toward visitors could be a sign of spiritual apathy.
 5. A lack of support for local gospel meetings could be a sign of spiritual apathy.
- D. Quite often, apathy will develop when a person finds something else to be more important than spiritual matters.

II. REASONS WHY APATHY IS A SIN.

- A. Reason #1: Apathy weakens and destroys a local congregation.
1. Within the material world, apathy has been known to destroy. *{Ex. Man who does not maintain his house.} {Ex. A farmer who does not tend to his garden.}*
 - a. *“Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks.”* (Ecclesiastes 10:18, NKJV)
 - b. *“He who is slothful in his work Is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.”* (Proverbs 18:9, NKJV)
 2. When Christians grow apathetic, they allow the Lord’s work to go undone. When this happens, the local church will slowly weaken to the point of destruction. For example:
 - a. Neglecting the services can and will discourage the weaker members who are struggling to stay faithful.
 - b. Failing to encourage our weaker brethren or discouraged brethren will weaken the church.
 - c. Neglecting Bible studies and other scriptural avenues of exhortation and encouragement will weaken the local church.
 3. Christians are to be working to build up the church. We are not to be tearing it down.
 - a. *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”* (Romans 14:19, NKJV)
 - b. *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.”* (I Corinthians 10:23,

NKJV)

- c. “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” (I Thessalonians 5:11, NKJV)
 4. If we fail to edify, build up the local church, then we stand guilty of weakening the local church.
- B. Reason # 2: Apathy causes various spiritual needs to go unmet.
1. The lost of the world have spiritual needs to which we are to be attending.
 - a. The gospel is God’s power of salvation. (Romans 1:16)
 - b. A person cannot be converted without being properly taught the gospel of Christ. This need resulted in the command of Jesus to go teach the gospel to the world. (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:18-20)
 - c. The gospel is the only means through which God draws men. (John 6:44-45)
 - d. We must be taking the gospel to the lost. However, when apathy develops within our minds, then the work of taking the gospel to the lost stops.
 2. The weaker brethren have needs to which we are to be attending.
 - a. The weaker Christians need the help of the stronger brethren. (I Thessalonians 5:14)
 - b. Christians who are caught up in sin need members who are spiritually minded working to help restore them to the Lord.
 - (1) Galatians 6:1
 - (2) James 5:19-20
 - c. If a stronger brother fails to help the weaker brother, he then stands in violation of the word of God.
 3. When apathy develops, both the needs of the lost and the needs of the weaker brethren go unmet. As a result, souls may be lost if someone else does not take up the torch from where we have dropped it.
- C. Reason # 3: Apathy can destroy the quality of our worship.
1. If our worship is going to be acceptable unto God, then our worship must be offered from the heart.
 2. God has never desired only outward ceremonies. (Micah 6:6-8)

3. Every item of worship should demand our fullest attention and concentration.
 - a. During the sermon, every member has the responsibility to listen and to strive to learn or be reminded of what the word of God teaches. (Acts 17:11; I John 4:1)
 - b. During the singing, every member is expected to make “melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19), “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16)
 - c. During the prayer, every member should be listening to the prayer so that he might be able to say, “Amen.” (I Corinthians 14:16) We are not to look for the end of the prayer, but, instead, we are to pay attention to what is being said in the prayer. It is in reference to the contents of the prayer that we say, “Amen.”
 - d. In order to properly observe the Lord’s supper, Christians must remember Christ’s death. (I Corinthians 11:24-29)
 - e. Our giving back as we have prospered must be done with purpose. (II Corinthians 9:6-7)
 4. When apathy develops, Christians begin to pay less attention to the worship services.
 - a. Some members day dream during the sermon. Some even sleep.
 - b. Some members pass notes, clip fingernails, and some will even carry own conversations in their “whisper” mode.
 5. All of these destroy the quality of our worship services. When this happens, our worship services fail to meet with God’s acceptance. Our worship services are then in vain.
- D. Reason # 4: Apathy causes a Christian to no longer put God first.
1. Spiritual indifference occurs because something or someone has taken priority over God in a Christian's life.
 2. Christians are to seek first the kingdom of God. (Matthew 6:33) You cannot seek first the kingdom of God and, at the same time, place God second in your life.
 3. To show the degree to which we are to place God first in our loves, consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:37-38.
 4. Consider also the parable of the wedding feast. (Luke 14:15-35)

III. SPIRITUAL APATHY CONDEMNS THE SINNER.

- A. Knowing that apathy is a sin, we must draw the conclusion that apathy will condemn the sinner.
 - 1. Consider the example of the seven churches of Asia. Apathy can be clearly seen in three of the seven churches.
 - a. Revelation 2:4-5
 - b. Revelation 3:1-3
 - c. Revelation 3:16-17
 - 2. As can be seen, God clearly disapproves of apathy.
- B. Knowing how dangerous apathy is, we must look for the manifestations of apathy.

CONCLUSION.

- A. Apathy truly is a great battle that every Christian must fight against. If each Christian will be victorious against apathy, then the local congregations will be victorious against apathy.
- B. In lesson two of this study, we will show:
 - 1. The manifestations of spiritual apathy.
 - 2. How to defeat spiritual apathy.
- B. If you are Christian and your actions are those of an apathetic person, then please, turn back to the Word of God and work to replace that apathy with zeal.

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