

SPIRITUAL APATHY AND ITS FRUIT

By Donald Townsley

Apathy is the state of mind that is without feeling or emotion; there is the want of feeling, a lack of interest, a listless condition; indifference, dullness, lukewarmness, sluggishness, unconcern and lethargy. The prophet Amos, in the long ago, pronounced a "woe" upon Judah and Israel for being "*at ease in Zion*" (Amos 6:1). Israel's worship was outward and heartless, and God said, "*I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.*" (Amos 5: 21 - 22). This was during a time of materialism, luxury and ease (Amos 6: 3 - 6).

There was apathy in the church at Ephesus; they had left their first love (Rev. 2:4), and apathy would destroy them if they did not repent (Rev. 2: 5) ! Christians and churches all over this country are filled with apathy ! It is destroying many churches today, and the only remedy is REPENTANCE. There are many conditions that result when people are apathetic. Let us look at some of them and determine that we will not be guilty of this sad state of mind.

Apathy causes us to be carnally-minded -- to mind things of the flesh by giving our time and attention to the things of this life. The church at Corinth was carnal. They were filled with envying, strife and divisions and walked as men of the world (I Cor. 3: 1 - 3). Many in the church today are materialistic -- constantly seeking after more luxury and pleasure, and like the church at Laodicea they say, "*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*" when in reality they are "*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" from the spiritual standpoint (Rev. 3:17). They are apathetic toward the spiritual and have set their affection on things on earth (Col. 3:2).

Apathy kills personal Bible study. Paul said, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (II Tim. 2:15). The Hebrews were rebuked for their failure to study: "*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat.*" (Heb. 5:12). Many members of the church today are ignorant of what the Bible teaches because they do not take time for personal Bible study. This goes back to apathy! Israel was destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), and apathy will also destroy us in this generation if we don't get back to studying our Bibles because an ignorant people cannot discern good from evil (Heb. 5:14). When the church is filled with apathy and ignorance it can be led into all kinds of error by false teachers (I John 4:1; II John 9 - 11).

Apathy kills prayer and reliance upon God. God wants His people to be a praying people (I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1) -- a people who talk to Him daily and rely upon Him for their every need (Matt. 6: 11 -13; Phil. 4:6; Matt. 6: 25 - 33). A person who is apathetic and feels no need of God will not pray!

Apathy kills the desire to visit the sick (Matt. 25: 36), **to do personal work** (Acts 8:4) **and to faithfully attend the services of the church** (Heb. 10:25). It brings the work and growth of a congregation to a complete standstill. A decline then sets in that, in time, will cause the congregation to vanish from the community if there is not a complete change of attitude in repentance.

Apathy kills the desire to give generously of our means. People will not be generous and self-denying for that toward which they are indifferent. Christians are to give liberally of that which the Lord has provided for their use (II Cor. 9: 6 - 7). Apathy is robbing God in many congregations today!

Apathy weakens the preaching of the gospel. An apathetic group of people who sit and listen to the preaching of the gospel and are not moved to make any changes in their lives or to render any service unto God WILL DIE; and apathetic congregations throughout the United States ARE DYING! Apathy discourages alien sinners from obeying the gospel. It is also having a bad effect on men who preach the gospel; many are discouraged beyond words! And then brethren are heard to say, "I don't know why we are not growing" or "I wonder why brother 'so and so' moved." I will tell you why, brethren: APATHY ! APATHY !, that is the reason !

Apathy discourages the work of the church. The elders in congregation after congregation are discouraged because they receive little or no encouragement from the apathetic churches they are striving to oversee. Deacons are discouraged. Bible class teachers are discouraged because of the lack of involvement and care on the part of the classes they teach -- students fail to prepare the lessons (children and adults), and parents who should know their duty along this line do not see that their children have their lessons prepared!! APATHY ! APATHY ! WHAT A SHAME !!

SOME CAUSES OF APATHY

1. The *"cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in"* (Mark 4:19) is the cause of apathy in congregation after congregation.
2. The idea of many that religion is only for enjoyment and privilege. The true religion of Jesus Christ is not only enjoyment and privilege, it also carries with it duty, labor and activity (James 1:27; Matt. 25: 35 - 36; I Cor. 15:58; Acts 2: 42; Heb. 10:25); we are to be LABORERS in His vineyard (Matt. 20: 1 -16; 9: 37 - 38).
3. Many in the church today are apathetic because of the evil company they keep. Paul said, *"Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners."* (I Cor. 15:33). Many in the church need to start keeping company with their brethren and stop running with the children of this world because their worldly company is destroying them spiritually!
4. Many have become forgetful of their responsibility. Peter knew this was a danger and said: *"Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;"* (II Pet. 1:13). Many today need to be stirred up by way of remembrance to repent and to do their first works (Rev. 2:5).

WHAT THE APATHETIC STATE OF MIND DOES

1. It makes us lukewarm and self-deceived about our real state before God (Rev. 3: 15 - 17).
2. It renders us barren: we bring forth no fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4; John 15:8; Mark 4:19).
3. It causes us to be a bad influence on the brethren: our apathy "infects" others (I Cor. 5:6).
4. It has a bad influence on the local church: apathy renders a congregation's influence almost powerless in the community.
5. It has a bad influence on the world: men see our indifference and know this is not the way Christians should act, so it hinders the conversion of souls.

Friend, are apathetic toward your duty to God? If so, won't you make the proper changes in your life today?

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