

CONFRONTING CASUAL CHRISTIANITY

Luke 14:28-33

INTRODUCTION:

1. What would you say is the greatest enemy of the Christian faith?
2. Many of us would point to Satan, or to the moral decline of our nation, or to society's influences that diminish the role of God, as our greatest enemies.
3. However, I believe that our most dangerous threat doesn't come from outside the faith.
 - a. Instead, our greatest enemy is complacency and apathy in the hearts of believers.
 - b. Apathy is the enemy that is destroying the church.

ILLUSTRATION:

Several years ago an "Apathy Club" was formed on a certain college campus. The officers of the club advertised a meeting of the membership. Not one soul showed up. Explanation: They were too apathetic to attend.

4. Perhaps that story causes us to laugh.....
 - a. Yet, apathy is a serious spiritual virus that is invading the church.
5. What is apathy?..... You ask.....
 - a. The dictionary defines apathy as "lack of feeling or emotion; impassiveness lack of interest or concern; indifference."
6. Do you believe that some Christians are living apathetic spiritual lives?.....
 - a. Although lost people are living all around us, some of us don't care enough to go out and help bring them to the Lord.
 - b. Although people are in poor physical health, some of us don't care enough to call them, visit them, or pray for them.
7. Presently, would you say that you have a great spiritual passion for the work of the Lord, or are you in a spiritual lull?
 - a. In (Matthew 26), Jesus, while in the garden of Gethsemane, asked His disciples to keep watch while He went to pray.
 1. After prayer, Jesus returned and found His disciples asleep.
 2. After rebuking them, Jesus went off again to pray.
 3. When He returned, He found them asleep again.
 4. Three times Jesus left and returned to find His disciples sleeping.
 - b. How often has Jesus checked on you and found you sleeping, instead of serving
 - c. Folks, we need to stop sleeping on the job and start living passionately for Jesus and the work that He has called us to do.
8. I will offer two ways in how we can avoid living complacent and apathetic spiritual lives.

I. FIRST, TO AVOID LIVING COMPLACENT AND APATHETIC SPIRITUAL LIVES, WE MUST MAKE A COMMITMENT.

A.

1. Why do you suppose there are close to one hundred million church members in America, and yet they are not making the moral and spiritual impact they should?

2.

2. Why is it that on Sunday morning thousands of churches have more empty pews than full?
3. If God is really a prayer-answering God, and if He meant for us to ask, seek, and knock, why is there so little genuine praying going on?
4. If you and I believe there is a heaven and a hell, why do we keep so quiet about the gospel of Jesus Christ?
 - a. If "there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," then why are we not sharing the message of His amazing grace?
 - b. Why are we keeping the Good News to ourselves?

B.

1. There is a common answer to all of those questions.
 - a. And the answer is that God's people, most of them, have made a decision about Jesus...but have never made a commitment to Him.
 - b. There is a vast difference between a decision to do something and a commitment.
2. Many people who are saved were convicted by the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God and made these kinds of decisions:
 - a. "I don't want to go to hell."
 - b. "I want to go to heaven when I die."
 - c. "I'm sick and tired of this mess I'm in."
 - d. "I'm upset about the way I've been living."
 - e. "I want help, and I want a new life."
3. They made a decision to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.
 - a. They did not want to spend eternity in hell.
 - b. They wanted to enter heaven; they wanted to leave that disgusting old life.
 - c. They desired God's forgiveness, so they received it.
 - d. They invited Jesus Christ into their lives, and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, and that was a definite decision.
 - e. But yet, many of these Christians are not living fruitful and devoted lives..... Why?
4. Because no one explained to them the difference between a decision to do something and a commitment to the Person, Jesus Christ.

C.

1. As Christians, we must not only make a decision to follow Jesus, we must commit our lives to Him.

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send

3.

a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" Once again.....(Luke 14:28-33).

- a. In this passage, Jesus is talking about commitment.
 - b. He is saying that we must count the cost before we become His disciples.
 - c. In other words, He is saying, if we are not willing to give up everything we have for Him, then we might as well not even start.
 - d. Commitment is vitally important to Jesus.
2. What does commitment mean?
- a. There are about ten different Greek words that are translated commitment in the New Testament.
 - b. Without going into much detail, commitment means, "to turn something over to someone."
 - c. It implied committing it to them, yielding to them, surrendering to them, abandoning it to them, entrusting it to them, and placing it at their disposal.
 - d. When a person makes a commitment in the New Testament, it is a fully devoted commitment.
 1. We cannot be partially committed, or sort of committed.
 2. We are either committed or not committed.
3. My friends, many of us have already made the decision to follow Jesus, now it is time for us to commit our lives to Him.

II. SECOND, TO AVOID LIVING COMPLACENT AND APATHETIC SPIRITUAL LIVES, WE MUST RECAPTURE OUR ZEAL FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING.

A.

1. In (Jn. 2:12-25), Jesus became upset with some people who were turning God's House into a market place, so He drove them all out of the temple courts.
 - a. He got rid of the sin and corruption that were polluting God's House.
 - b. Have you ever wondered what motivated Jesus to clear out the temple courts?
 - c. The answer is found in (Jn. 2:17).
 - d. His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."
2. It was Jesus' Zeal for God and spiritual living that motivated Him to cleans the temple.
 - a. I wonder how many of us, after seeing the sin and corruption in the temple courts, would have just walked on by and did nothing?
 - b. I wonder how many of us would have just ignored the situation because we didn't have an interest or a desire to deal with it?

4.

3. Jesus had the heart to do something about it.
 - a. He had so much zeal and enthusiasm for God and spiritual living that He couldn't just ignore the corruption that was polluting God's House.
 - b. His zeal prompted Him to get involved.

B.

1. Just as Jesus was zealous for spiritual living and for the things of God, we must be zealous as well.
 2. But what exactly is zeal?
 - a. Zeal is an enthusiastic and diligent pursuit of God and His will.
 - b. We should be so excited and thrilled to be children of God, that we crave and desire to fervently serve Him every day of our lives.
 3. God wants us to be zealous.
- (Rom. 12:11) "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."
4. I came across a story that may help us to understand better what zeal is.

ILLUSTRATION:

An interviewer once asked J. B. Priestly, the famous English Novelist, "How is it that you have become so successful, but your fellow classmates never had much success." Mr. Priestly replied, "It is not because of my ability that I became successful and my classmates didn't—we all had the same ability. I became successful and they didn't because many of them only toyed with the idea of becoming a writer, but I cared like blazes.

5. Zeal is not only an enthusiastic and diligent pursuit of God and His will, but it is also caring and serving God like blazes.
6. I believe that there are many people in churches today who have a genuine zeal and love for God.
 - a. However, I also believe that there are some people who have lost their spiritual zeal and desire to serve Him.

C.

1. If you have lost your spiritual zeal and desire for Christian living, here is how you can recapture it.
 - a. To recapture our zeal, we must start refocusing our lives on Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION:

On March 6, 1987, Eamon Coughlan, the Irish world record holder at 1500 meters, was running in a qualifying heat at the World Indoor Track Championships in Indianapolis. With two and a half laps left, he was tripped. He fell, but he got up and with great effort managed to catch the leaders. With only 20 yards left in the race, he was in third place—good enough to qualify for the finals.

While finishing the race, Coughlan looked over his shoulder to the inside, and, seeing no one, he let up. But another runner, charging hard on the outside, passed Coughlan a yard before the finish, thus eliminating him from the finals. Coughlan's great comeback effort was rendered worthless by taking his eyes off the finish line.

2. Often times in our lives, we run with a lot of zeal and energy in our Christian walk.
 - a. And after running so hard for so long it is easy to take our eyes off of Jesus and let up and try to coast into heaven.
 - b. Brethren, if we lose our zeal and enthusiasm for the Lord, we may not finish the race.
3. The Lord has called us to remain faithful to the very end.
 - a. We are to finish with the same amount of zeal that we started with.
 - b. We must focus on Jesus and fervently remain zealous to the end.
 - c. Nothing in this world is more important than fervently loving and serving our Master.
 - d. When we put Jesus first in our lives, we will become zealous for Him.
4. The Apostles in (Acts 5:42) were so zealous for Jesus that the Bible says that, "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."
 - a. That is the kind of zeal and enthusiasm that we are to have as Christians.
5. If you feel that your zeal tank is running low or is on empty, then I would like to encourage you to fill your tank back up with Jesus.
6. When we start refocusing upon Jesus and our commitment to Him, then our zeal will return.

CONCLUSION:

1. In closing, apathy is the greatest enemy of the church today.
 - a. Many people have lost their enthusiasm and zeal for the Lord and His work.
2. Brethren, we need to start living passionately for Jesus and the work that He has called us to do.
3. To avoid living complacent and apathetic spiritual lives, we must make a commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. We have made the decision to follow Him, now we must make a commitment to Him.
 - b. And, we must recapture our zeal for spiritual living.

Invitation:

. This morning, if you would like to dedicate your life to Jesus, and be a genuine follower of His, please come now as we stand and sing.