

(Spiritual Dangers) the Danger of Complacency

by Don Currin

The sermon warns against the dangers of spiritual complacency, neglect of God, and love for pleasure, and calls for a return to the truth of God's Word and a commitment to evangelism and revival ministry.

Duration: 58:49

Scripture: Amos 6:3, Amos 6:7-14, Matthew 6:33, Romans 13:14, 1 Corinthians 15:34, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:5

Topics: "Complacency"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher describes a scene in a restaurant where people are enjoying their meals and drinks while oblivious to a documentary on global starvation playing on the television monitors. The preacher then goes on to explain four characteristics of spiritual complacency, focusing on the idea of putting far away the day of judgment and creating an environment of violence. The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith accompanied by works and the need to stay on the cutting edge of one's spiritual journey. The preacher concludes with a cautionary tale about becoming so consumed with creature comforts that one becomes deaf to the cries of the perishing.

Transcript

Thank you, Brother Ron. It's a joy to be with you today. I want to say, first of all, I appreciate you as a church for supporting our family and our ministry.

There is no doubt that the Lord has used this human agent to sustain us, as, of course, this year in particular, the meetings are not coming like they normally do. And so, I believe God has some sovereign purposes in it. One is to perhaps just have me rest for a while, to kind of renew myself in the Word of God.

And it's been a delight to be home and be able to get into God's truth. But I would have gone out, I would have been preaching all year if God would have opened doors, but it just hadn't happened that way. Now, of course, over the next couple of months, we're almost in church every night preaching somewhere.

So, I'm very grateful that the Lord has opened these doors. But thank you as a church. Thank you for supporting us.

I know you pray for us. Some of you give us that moral support we need. And, of course, you as a body financially support us.

And once again, we don't take that lightly. Thank you so much for your kindness and for your profound faith on our behalf. Now, the pastor mentioned a moment ago that I reminded him of one of the circuit rider preachers.

Well, I don't know if I would have made it back in those days, because I'm not so sure they could have found a horse tall enough to accommodate me. My legs certainly would have drug the ground, and probably I would have had to carry the horse rather than him carrying me around. But I would have attempted it anyway.

I would have enjoyed walking if the horse couldn't have bore me up, you know, to take me from church to church. But that's my heart, is evangelism, is revival ministry. And these days, you know, I'm grappling with the fact, you know, I mean, you want to connect with people, but at the same time, you want to expound the Scriptures.

And it seemed like the guys that are most popular in itinerant ministry today are those that get up and tell 45 minutes worth of jokes and refer to the Word of God for about one or two minutes. And look, don't misunderstand me. Not judging, not criticizing.

To his own master, he stands or falls. But that's just not me. God's put in my heart that, listen, it's the Word of God that changes.

It's not our stories. It's not our jokes. It's not our charismatic personality.

But it is the truth of God's Word that sets men free. And so that's my devotion. That's my commitment, is to preach God's truth.

Now, speaking of a little humor this morning before we get started, I don't know if you recently heard Bill Gates made a stab at the auto industry and targeted GMC. And he made a statement. He said, you know, if the auto industry would have kept up with technology the way the computer world has, we would have had, we would be able to buy \$25 cars and they would get 1,000 miles to a gallon.

Well, the director from GM wasn't going to take that on the chin. So he said, yeah, but who wants a car that will crash twice a day? So it's a lot more to it than that. I mean, he made about 12 or 13 stabs back at Bill Gates.

But I guess I hope those guys were just trying to poke in a very innocent way to one another. I hope they weren't serious there. All right.

This morning, if you would, I want you to look with me once again in the minor prophet Amos in chapter number six. Amos in chapter six. Pastors, I read that for us, the entirety of the chapter.

This morning, I want to glean from this farmer once again, this verse number one, who has delivered a very prophetic message from the mouth, from the very throne of God. If you would let me direct your attention, please. Once again, verse number one of Amos chapter number six.

It is a word of warning. It is a word of solemn warning. As the prophet says, Woe to them that are at ease in Zion and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations to whom the house of Israel came.

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion. You know, I don't know about you, but I'm real concerned for the church at large these days. As I mentioned in Sunday school in passing this morning, it seems as if many churches today are in a spiritual stupor.

We see the lethal effects of lethargy, of complacency among God's people in the local church in this hour. You'll note in the text that the prophet gives a solemn warning to those who have become spiritually careless. Their reliance on their religious heritage and prosperity has produced a deadly complacency toward God.

Like those in the New Testament church of Laodicea, they are increased with goods and have need of nothing, especially God. Their trust, interestingly, in their wealth has led to a neglect of God. Now, note this, if you would, this morning in the way of introduction, the prophet, this man speaking prophetically, Amos does not issue this warning to the drunkards, the adulterers, the God-haters, or the idol-worshippers of his day, but rather to the spiritually indifferent, to the spiritually careless.

Woe be unto those who are at ease in Zion. Tragically, in our culture of affluence, we lift Christianity on a lounge and we forget that it was born on an old, ragged cross. We have become so consumed with the pleasure that we see the life of self-denial a threat to our happiness and unnecessary for eternal salvation.

Charles Spurgeon warned, Doeth that man love his Lord that would be willing to see Jesus wearing a crown of thorns while for himself he craves a chaplet of laurel? Shall Jesus ascend to his throne by the cross and do we expect to be carried there on the shoulders of applauding crowds? Be not so vain in your imagination. Count you the cost. And if you're not willing to bear Christ's cross, go away to your farm and do your merchandise and make the most of them.

Only let me whisper this in your ear. What shall a man be profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? You see, George Bernard penned the words to that old classic hymn, The Old Ragged Cross. And in one of the stanzas there, he says, All that old ragged cross so despised of the world has a wondrous attraction to me.

Can I ask you this morning, does it have a wondrous attraction to you? A wondrous attraction? For the dear Lamb of God left his glory above to bear it on dark Calvary. You see, sadly, the truth of the matter is, people, the cross no longer possesses that wondrous attraction. To those, sadly, most of those in the church of North America.

It is looked upon with such contempt that many within the church are ashamed of it. They see it as an object to be despised. Those who sought to forget the ultimate judgment of God by immersing themselves in the affluence of the mountain of Samaria are like the vast multitude in the church of North America.

Our generation has attempted to remove coming judgment from its thinking and preaching so that lost people are made to feel comfortable in church. Tragically, many are sleeping the sleep of death because of the unwillingness of preachers to proclaim the reality of impending doom. You see, the day that the tsunami hit and swept tens of thousands away, there were many of those people that were intoxicated on the pleasure of that culture.

That is the picture that we have here in the warning of Amos. This morning, I want us to look at four things in passing. First of all, we're going to consider what it means to be at ease in Zion.

What does it mean when you and I drift into a state of spiritual ease complacency? Secondly, the tragic effects of being in such a state. What does it mean? What are the effects? What are the repercussions of being in a state of lethargy? Thirdly, we're going to consider the judgment that awaits those who are at ease. And then finally, the importance of stirring oneself out of spiritual complacency.

Well, let me just move quickly. I want to share with you, first of all, what it means to be at ease in Zion. Now, I want to make this very simple this morning, because I want you to understand exactly where you are.

And I certainly want to understand afresh where I am spiritually. I don't know about you, as I mentioned in Sunday school this morning, it's a constant battle. It's a daily conflict of striving, of being diligent to keep myself on the cutting edge of spiritual reality.

I'm not satisfied with the mediocre. I do not like the mundane. I want to be constantly pressing forward.

I want to be, as Tozer said, leaning into the wind. I want my life to count for God. I don't know about you.

But then there's something insidious. There's something that is like a slow death that creeps upon us, where suddenly we start yawning during our devotional time, if we have devotions at all. We're very indifferent toward reaching the lost.

We're very careless when it comes to our walk with God, in keeping sin confessed up to date, and walking with the Savior, and being sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This is what I'm talking about this morning. Let's make it simple.

The Scripture says, Woe to them that are at ease. What does the word ease mean? Well, in the Hebrew there, it means careless or secure. You see, the idea is, here in the text, these people were resting on the laurels of their traditions, their own religious heritage.

You see, the mountain of Samaria was a strong, fortified city where the affluent lived, and they were confident that their wealth and strength and might would insure them against any type of nation or people that would seek to penetrate and overtake them. But what does it mean to be at ease in a personal way? To be at ease is to neglect God. It means to live indifferently toward Him.

It refers to a people who profess to know Christ, but live carelessly. There is a neglect of prayer, holiness, obedience, consecration, and family worship. When one is at ease, biblical truth is not altogether denied.

It's just simply neglected. God's Word no longer governs what they do, where they go, what they watch on television, or how they think. Guarding their heart, their tongue, and their time is often looked upon as legalism.

They desire a Savior that delivers from hell, but not one that delivers from sin and worldliness. This is what it means to be at ease in Zion. But secondly, what are the effects of being in a spiritual state of ease? Now, we look at our text expositionally, okay? Let me direct your attention, first of all, to verse 3. There are four things that Amos gives us under divine inspiration that are marks or characteristics of being in a state of spiritual complacency.

The first thing is, he says, Ye that put far away the evil day and cause the seed of violence to come near. The evil day, friend, it's significant to note, is the day of judgment. It is the day of reckoning.

It is the day when Jesus Christ will judge the world in truth and in righteousness. And what Amos is saying, you have put so far from your life, so far from your thinking, the day of reckoning, that now you have literally created an environment of violence. There is no standard.

There is no truth that governs and reigns. This is why all this recklessness and rebellion is running rampant, is because you need a dose mentally of the judgment of God to sober you up, recognizing that one day you'll have to give an account of yourself to God. What is astounding to me today is even many professing Christians don't take the time periodically to consider that one day they're going to have to stand before God.

I don't know if you read the interview of Martin Lloyd-Jones with a reporter from Christianity Today a few years before his death. The man asked Dr. Jones said, What do you think God is saying in the light of the economical situation there in the British Isles? I mean, after all, you're going through quite a time economically. You know, people are suffering.

They're reeling from the economic depression there in your country, as well as the other countries. What do you think God is saying in the midst of that? And Lord Jones looked at the man and spoke very clearly, very succinctly as he says, I believe what God is saying to our countries is flee from the wrath to come. Well, the guy moved on to the next issue.

And he said, well, what do you think God is saying? Considering the political arena today and some of the people you have in there that are the movers and shakers in the political arena. What do you think God is telling your countries, you know, in the light of all the oppression that's coming as a result of decisions that are being made by those in positions of authority? And they talked for a few minutes and finally summed it up by saying, I believe what God is saying is flee from the wrath to come. Well, then they moved to the ecclesiastical problem.

The churches, of course, were at an all time low as far as their attendance. Considering their membership and what came regularly on Sunday, they were at an all time low. The spiritual life of the church was at a low ebb.

The preachers were passionless. They did not preach the Word. Many were moving toward modernism and ecumenicalism.

And so they asked Lord Jones, what do you think God is saying to the church today there in Wales and Ireland and England and Scotland? And he said, I believe that God is saying to the people flee from the wrath to come. Now, why would he give that same answer in response to every one of those questions? I'll tell you why. Because you see, friend, there is nothing that will improve the economic and the political and the spiritual climate of a nation or a people any more than fleeing from the wrath to come and taking refuge in the mighty merits of Christ.

You see, conversion changes the hearts. And when conversion takes place in the life of a people, I tell you, the entire environment begins to be transformed. It improves everything.

But do you ever think about judgment? You know, one day you'll have to stand before God. It's just around the corner. How quickly time passes, friend.

We'll be there before we know it standing before God, His Person, the man Christ Jesus. There's a second thing I want you to note this morning in regard to the effects of being in a state of spiritual ease. And there,

as you'll notice, there is a love for pleasure more than a love for God.

Look at Amos chapter six, verses four and six, verse four. These people lie upon beds of ivory. They've got the most expensive pieces of furniture, the most expensive bedding of their day.

They stretch themselves up on their couches and they eat the lambs out of the flock. And the calves out of the midst of the stall. You see, they had the choices of food, the choices of meat.

You'll notice down in verse number six, they drink wine in bowls and they anoint themselves with the chief ointments, the most priceless, the most valuable of ointments they place upon themselves. And notice, they don't just drink wine from cups. They literally douse themselves.

It's a picture of indulgence. The second thing I want you to see this morning is when you're in a state of ease, I tell you, friend, you're consumed with pleasure. You know, there are no poor people in the United States of America.

There are no poor people. Just like one old preacher said, if there are any poor people in the United States of America, it's just because they're too lazy to go out and get in their Cadillac and drive down to the store and redeem their food stamps. There are no poor people in our country.

We are pleasure seekers. But I tell you, friend, we're seeking pleasure in the wrong places. In 2 Timothy chapter three and verse four, one of the characteristics of those latter days that will be characterized by perilous times you find is that men are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

Do you understand that in the United States of America, we spent billions and billions and billions of dollars just on entertainment last year? Do you understand this morning that the average professing Christian spends more on cat food and dog food than they do missions in our society? My wife and I went out to eat one night. We're standing in one of these, I guess, middle class restaurants, you know, and most of them have the bar right in the middle of them. And I don't know how you feel about that.

We go in. We normally sit on the outside parameter of the establishment there. And we're waiting in line to be seated.

And I noticed that throughout the restaurant, there were these monitors, these television monitors. And apparently, the program, whatever they had playing, had changed. And they were airing a documentary on global starvation.

And I'm standing there watching this and seeing these waiters and waitresses pass in front of my eyes and taking these very exquisite meals and these wonderful entrees with all this delicious food on it from table to table. And people guzzling their wine and they're guzzling their liquor there. And they're drinking their drinks and they're laughing.

Everybody's oblivious to what's going on on the screen. I watch the documentary. You've got all these black children there.

Their bellies are inflated with malnutrition. Their lips are parched and cracked. Their tongues are cracked.

There's flies all over their faces. And then I look down at all the affluence of the people. In our culture, I want to tell you something, friend.

We're going to give an account for how we spend our money. Are you investing your money in the kingdom of God? Jesus says, make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness that when you fail, when you die, they will receive you in everlasting habitations. In other words, God will not allow them to forget your labor of love on their behalf.

The investment that you made in their life. And when you come to glory, they're going to come up to you and they're going to shake your hand. They're going to embrace you and say, thank you because it was your prayers and your financial investment as to why I'm here today.

But we're consumed with pleasure. Something else I want you to notice. In verse number 5, there is an increased desire for entertainment that leads to sensual music.

I hope you're going to love me after what I'm about to say. I hope you're going to love me. I tell you, friend, I believe that there are many demons that are being drawn to churches as well as homes because of some of the music that people are listening to today.

Listen to this. In verse number 5, it says they chant. The word means that they engage in mindless worship to the sound of the vial.

And they invent in themselves instruments of music like David. You know what he's saying here? In their mind, they're justifying the music that they're listening to. The music that they're composing and the instruments that they're inventing.

Pardon my voice. I've got allergy problems right now. Lord, give me grace.

Just pray for me. But they're coming up with music and instruments. And even though the music is very sensual in nature, they're justifying this music by saying, well, after all, David created instruments.

After all, David created a certain type of worship music. That's the picture you have here. And have you not heard that today in our culture? What's wrong with the music in the Christian contemporary scene? When even though it's watered down, it's not very sound theologically.

And even though the music I know is very lively and appeals to the sensual faculty and people, what's wrong with it? After all, David did it. David did not do it. Do you realize that they took a test and they took all the Hebrew lyrics there and there were certain Hebrew musicians that played those things there, the Psalms, and they found out that every one of those was void of a sensual tone.

It was a song that was spiritual. It was a song that was ministered to the master. It was a song that bypassed the sensual aspect of the flesh.

I'm not legalistic. I'm not narrow-minded. I'm very open, friend.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not opposed to some of the contemporary courses today. I'm not opposed to some of the music as long as it's God-ward and God-centered, and as long as the music itself or the words of the music take precedence over the melody that wants to stir up the flesh.

I'm not opposed to things like that. But I am concerned about much of the music today that is coming down the pike under the name of Christian. I want you to listen to this.

One night I was sitting in the back of a church, and I was sitting in front of Dr. Al Smith, the sacred hymn writer. And I told Dr. Smith, I said, Dr. Smith, I'm real concerned as I go from church to church these days. I said, I sit there in the front row, and I have to listen to music that oftentimes people are up there standing before the congregation they're gyrating to.

They're very entertainment-oriented. It bothers me. It disturbs me.

He looked at me, that old man. He looked at me, and he said, Brother Curran, you know what would eliminate a lot of that? And I said, no sir, what? He said, what would eliminate a lot of that is if people would only remind themselves of who their audience is. How in the world, friend, can we be sensually oriented in our administration of music if God is our audience? If God is our audience? Listen to this.

T.P. Johnston said, The message we preach today in our pulpits here in this North American culture is walk in the Spirit, but our music says walk in the flesh. Here's how we can try the spirit of music. Listen, I don't want to just come in here like a battering ram, you know, and beat you upside the head.

I want to give you some instruction in righteousness. Here are five different tests for music just in passing this morning. First of all, the music that you listen to, you say it's Christian, but can you hear the Word of God clearly over the music itself? In Matthew 13 and verse 23, we find that there are two things that a sinner must experience before they can come to faith in Christ.

Number one, they must hear the Word of the Gospel. And secondly, they must understand it. Friend, how in the world can people understand a message in music if they can't hear it? And much of the music that's being composed and shared today, you can't hear the lyrics.

Fannie Crosby said, it is never right to take the lyrics of Zion and put them to the tune of Babylon. There's a second thing. Does the music enlarge my vision of the glory of God? You'll notice what is characteristic of that song in Exodus chapter 13 and verse 23 is God.

They've come through. God has delivered them with a strong hand. And they come on the other side, they look back and see their enemies annihilated.

And here they are. They engage in this song of worship and adoration. And you'll notice that song there as they begin to sing corporately.

It's all about God. It's all about God. It's not me.

It's not what I can do for God. It's all about God. A third thing is, will what I'm listening to produce the fruit of holiness in my life? Romans chapter 6 and verse 19.

Will what I'm listening to produce the fruit of holiness in my life? An excellent book. I think it's out of print now. But it's by the British evangelist John Blanchard.

Perhaps you've seen his little publication, Ultimate Questions. Well, this little book is dealing with a Christian contemporary music situation. Much like this excellent book by Peter Masters, Worship in the Melting Pot.

And in this book, John Blanchard said that they took a survey in 11 different missionary societies. In these training schools where young men and young women were training to go to the mission field. They interviewed them and asked them questions.

And they asked them this question. How many of you were either saved or called into the ministry? In a contemporary music atmosphere. Listen to this.

Of the hundreds and even thousands that they interviewed, not a single one. Not a single one. Dear people, listen to me.

God has still chosen to use the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. And yet much of the music today we call gospel music does not have the spirit of the gospel or the word of the gospel in it. It is an unfortunate situation that is costing us dearly.

There's a fourth thing. Ask yourself this question. Does the music communicate sound biblical doctrine? Sound biblical doctrine.

Colossians chapter 3 and verse 16. Can you hear what is taking preeminence over what you're listening to? Those words that are saturated with truth, that are Godward all the way. Number five, does the music tend to sedate the mind and make it insensible to God's truth? In other words, listen to this people.

To what part of your being is your music most ministering to? What part of your being is your music? Thank you, Brother Larry. Larry, I brought me a cup up here and I don't take the time to drink it. Romans chapter 13 verse 14.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. Listen to the words of Martin Lloyd-Jones. He said we can become drunk on music.

There is no question about it. Music can have the effect of creating an emotional state in which the mind is no longer functioning as it should be and no longer discriminating. He said I have known people to sing themselves into a state of intoxication without realizing what they were doing.

Friend, music can sedate the mind. Woe be unto those that are at ease in Zion. You see, the music that is being composed today is catering to the sensual element of people and taking the edge of conviction off and dulling the spiritual senses.

You say, well, that sounds old fashioned to me, preacher. Listen, friend. That is the book.

It is harmful. It is detrimental. And it all reveals the fact that we're sleeping even a more deep sleep of death.

Well, Augustine said it like this. I am inclined to approve the custom of singing in church. Nevertheless, when it happens that I am more moved by the song than the thing which is sung or the person that is sung, I confess that I sin in a manner deserving of punishment and that I should rather not hear the singing.

Isn't that interesting? You know, if we could come up with a rendition in the contemporary realm today of Amazing Grace, it would go like this. Amusing grace, how sensual the sound that entertained a seeker like me. I once was lost, but now I'm amused, was blind, but now I'm deceived.

That's what's going on today. There's a fourth thing I want you to see this morning very quickly, and that is you find that there is a growing insensitivity to the needs of those around them. Look at Amos chapter six and verse six.

The process of drinking wine and bowls and anointing themselves with chief ointments. Notice what it says. They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

You see, Joseph, that was the people of God. These people were very poverty stricken. They were a large mass of people.

But these folks that were at ease in Zion were so consumed in affluence and pleasure that they were oblivious to the needs of their own brethren, of their own culture. So they were insensitive to the point that they would not minister to their needs. Can I tell you this morning, one of the greatest evidences of being in a state of spiritual complacency is that we never give a rip anymore about reaching people for Christ.

We'll sing about the songs. We'll receive the challenges from the pulpit. But I ask you, friend, what are you doing about it? What are you doing about it? When's the last time you passed out of your gospel track? You say, well, I'm not cut out for that.

Well, you need to get sewn up and recut. What's wrong with that? Somebody asked Dwight L. Moody one time, said after he tried to press them with the demands of the gospel to come to Christ, the guy looked at him in anger and he said, Sir, why don't you mind your own business? He said, Sir, that is my business. Is it your business? Is it your business? I found great liberty in recent days in street preaching, in passing out tracks, in engaging people in conversations about eternity.

Do you realize, friend, these people are going to burn for eternity? But you see, when we're careless, when we're in a state of spiritual ease, we're not concerned for the affliction of Joseph. The story is told of a fishing village just in a cove right next to the sea. The entrance into the cove was so small that if there was any turbulence whatsoever, oftentimes ships were imperiled and some didn't make it.

They were dashed on the rocks and many sailors lost their lives. And so what they did is decided to build a platform right down there just inside the cove. So if they did not make it, they could reach out and the people could rescue the perishing.

Time went on and people said, you know, the rain at time comes down in torrents and it's cold and the wind is very brisk and sometimes our lives are endangered. What we need to do is we need to put some walls up around that platform. And so they built some very sturdy walls there.

And sure enough, when the ships came in, if one did not make it and the sailors were cast into the sea, they could still reach out and rescue the perishing. But it wasn't long before somebody said, you know, at times the storm is so intense and the rain comes down in torrents. What we need is a shelter over that wall.

And so they built a very strong roof, a very sturdy roof there. To shelter them from the elements of the storms. But one thing led to another and it wasn't long before they put a door there.

And then somebody donated some carpet. They put this very plush and beautiful carpet down on the floor. They had a heater there where they could stay warm.

And then somebody else gave a refrigerator. And then it wasn't long before it was a television and then a VCR. And you know what happened, friend? Over a period of time, they became so concerned, so consumed in their creature comforts that they could no longer hear the cries of the perishing.

The ships came. Sometimes they were dashed on the rocks. The sailors were cast in the sea and they would cry for help.

But no one could hear because they were so involved in what they had in that little building that they could no longer hear the cries of the perishing. Is that you this morning? Is that you this morning? Let me give you two more things to consider. The Bible tells us to wake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God.

I speak this to your shame. And judges, the Bible tells us in Amos chapter 6 verses 7 through 14, that judgment awaits those who are at ease. Now people, so we're on the same page.

You don't miss what I'm saying this morning. I'm telling you, you've got to be aware of the fact that Arminian churches don't have a monopoly on the religiously lost. You've got people in Calvinistic circles, in sovereign grace circles, in reformed churches that I'm telling you, friend, their spirituality is reduced to having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.

And you see their continued complacency towards spiritual things reveals that they've never passed from death into life. Some of you this morning here at LeMoyne Baptist Church, as much as I love you and love your church, you've been in this state for years now and you claim to know the righteous work of Christ in your heart. I don't know who you are.

I've not talked to your pastor about you. But you know who you are. Your conscience is dead toward the things of God.

You don't stir yourself. When's the last time you spent a half a night alone with God in prayer? I'm not talking about a legalistic performance thing, brethren, but I'm talking about your heart just yearning for God. God, you've got to come and do a work in our church, a work in our young people.

When's the last time? So we're without passion and we think it's a normal thing. But yet we're so critical of carnal Christianity. And to me, one of the great evidences of carnal Christianity is the fact that we're so apathetic toward the things of God for so long.

But yet we'll criticize those who say, well, I'm in a profession of faith, and yet they live like the devil. And yet we make a profession of faith and we're so careless in our religion. They say, well, I wish you would shut up.

I'd rather go home today and just think about it. Oh, you'll go home today and you won't come back. And that's fine.

But I'm telling you the truth this morning. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? You never deny it verbally. You never reject it with all your heart.

But you neglect it daily. No secret prayer. No diligent study of the Word of God.

Your devotional life consists of maybe reading a few verses, if you do that, and saying a few prayers. But you don't connect with Jesus. You know nothing of the reality of Christ drawing feelingly near to you.

Do you know I love you? Do you still love me? Listen to this. In Amos 6, verses 7-14, I'll not take the time to read it all, but I just want to highlight a few things for you. Look as you notice in verse 7. Just follow along with me.

I'm just going to hit this at a glance. Notice God's judgment upon these people. Therefore, now shall they go captive with the first.

As you read on, the Lord God has sworn by Himself, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob. What's their excellency? It's their affluence. It's their pleasure.

I hate his palaces, God says. And therefore, will I deliver up the city. Notice He says in the next verse, And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

You read on down the text here, and you find He says, For behold, the Lord commandeth, and He will smite the great house with breeches, and the little house with clefts. And then He goes on to say toward verse 14, But behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness. God says, conflict, punishment, judgment is going to be your lot, because you are at ease in Zion.

Have you ever noticed how many parables in the New Testament that the theme is a warning against lawfulness, idleness? Have you ever noticed that? Let me just highlight one for you. Matthew chapter 25, verses 14 through 30. Jesus said, The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.

And you remember the story goes on and unfolds for us, where He gives one five talents, and He gives more talents, and then He gives this one, one talent there. The Bible tells us that there was a day of reckoning. The scripture tells us that as they came, and they began to give an account for their talents, so He that received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents.

Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. And then the other two talents did the same thing. And the Lord commenced these men.

Now, listen to what happened. The Bible says, Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man. Now, watch this right here.

Speaking of those who appreciate sovereign grace, as you and I do. Notice what He says, Reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strove. In other words, it's almost as if He uses His vision of God, His perspective of God as an excuse for not being a good steward of His talent.

God, I know you're going to do what you're going to do regardless of me. Did it cost Him? More than a reward. It cost Him His soul.

Listen, I was afraid and went and hid that talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast it that is thine. His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, Thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I not strove.

Thou oughtest therefore to put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with you three. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. Now, listen to this.

For every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast he the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall

be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

His indifference was an indictment on his life. It cost him his soul. Spurgeon said it like this.

It is one of the surest marks of a lost and ruined state when we are careless and indifferent concerning God. Friend, do you have a heart to pray? Do you have a heart to pursue holiness? Do you have a heart to be a good steward of these things that God has entrusted to you? Or perhaps is your theological understanding of God been so imbalanced? You say, well, God's going to do what He's going to do. Why should I pray? Why should I believe? Why should I work? Why should I invest in the kingdom of God? Faith without works is dead.

And then finally, I'll close with this. I'll just give you some instruction in righteousness here. I just want to share out of my own heart, friend.

It's a daily battle. Staying on the cutting edge it is. And sometimes I begin to drift.

But God in His mercy begins to chasten and bring me back. I want to give you just three things, three or four things in closing this morning. Listen very quickly.

Number one, if you're interested, if you're concerned about stirring yourself out of this condition of lethargy, you no longer want to be at ease in Zion, the first thing I would recommend you do is remove anything in your life that is causing your passion to wane toward Christ. Remove anything in your life that's causing passion, enthusiasm, zeal to wane toward Christ. Acts 24 verse 16, The apostle said, Herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense between God and all men.

So you say, preacher, what are you saying? I don't know if it's a sin. I don't know if it's a relationship. I don't know if it's an idol.

I don't know what it may be in your life right now. But friend, whatever it is that God for a long time has put His hot finger on, you deal a death blow to it because it's dragging you down. It's draining your spiritual battery for Christ.

Listen to this. Secondly, resolve to live for eternity. Resolve to live for eternity.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 9 and 10, Wherefore, we labor that whether present or absent, we may be accepted. The idea there is approved of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

When we were in Scotland back in 2004, we went to the church of Robert Mary McShane. There on the threshold of that cemetery, it's St. Peter's Church there in Dundee, Scotland. There is a marker there.

It has one word in it. Let me tell you the story behind it. Back in McShane's day, there was a commoner.

It was a man that just barely survived for a living, but he was a blasphemer. He was illiterate. His name was Robert Annan.

And Robert Annan, God had mercy upon his soul and converted him. And I tell you, friend, the nature of that conversion was nothing short of radical. God marvelously transformed his life.

He cleaned up his tongue. He set his path on the path of righteousness. He became quite an enthusiastic witness for Christ.

You know, in his day, he rescued 13 people out of the dry docks there in Dundee, Scotland. That had stumbled over in the dry dock. He jumped in and he brought them back to safety, 13 people.

And the last one he did was a 10-year-old boy. As he got him back to the dock there, just as he handed him up, he was suddenly sucked under by the current. And he was swept out to sea.

They never found his body. Because of his passion for life and his passion to love and reach people, even the secular society recognized his exemplary character. He was the only commoner that they ever gave a royal funeral for.

He had no money. But the people, they had built a grave marker. It's a flat marker.

It's on the threshold of St. Peter's Cemetery where McShane is buried. And the one word in that marker is the word, eternity. Eternity.

They said he was so enthralled with that word, everywhere he would go, he would talk about eternity. He would carve it in trees. He would take rocks and write it.

He learned to write the word. He would write it on rocks. Everywhere he would go, he would talk about eternity.

That should be the divine stamp of our life, brethren. That should be the outstanding characteristic. But let me tell you something.

If you're constantly sulking over somebody not speaking to you, or somebody hurting you or offending you, or somebody that you've got unforgiveness or bitterness toward, I tell you, you're not living for eternity. If you're investing in this world's goods and the pleasures of this society, friend, you're not preparing for eternity. I read the biographies of Robert Mary McShane and David Brainerd.

Both men died at 29 years of age. Both men saw revival in their ministry. And both men recorded in their journal that they lived for eternity.

McShane said, I love to live on the verge, while Brainerd said, I love to live on the brink of eternity. They were men of eternity. Richard Baxter says, oh God, stamp eternity on my eyeballs.

Thirdly, if you're concerned about stirring yourself out of sleep by this lethargy, count not your life dear unto yourself. Count not your life dear unto yourself. Oh, brethren, listen to me.

You know you can't take it with you. You can't do it. Give up all hope of preserving your life, preserving your future.

But none of these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy. And the ministry people that live in this world, friend, they don't die easy.

They don't die in peace. They don't have the testimony of those that know them best of finishing their race with joy. Spurgeon, I'm just a marvel at Spurgeon, never misses an opportunity to capitalize on an illustration.

Listen to this story. We're almost finished. He said there was an old Greek story of a soldier under Antigonus who had an extremely painful disease that was likely to bring him soon to the grave.

This soldier was always first in the charge, rushing into the hottest part of the fray as the bravest of the brave. His pain prompted him to fight that he might forget it. And he was not afraid of death because he knew that in any case he had not long to live.

Antigonus, the king, the ruler, he greatly admired the valor of the soldier and discovered his affliction and had him cured by one of the most eminent physicians of the day. But from that moment, the warrior was absent from the front of the battle. Now he sought his ease, for as he remarked to his companions, he had something worth living for.

Health, home, family, and other comforts. And he would not endanger his life in the heat of the battle. So Spurgeon said, so when our troubles are many, we are often by grace made courageous in serving God.

We feel that we have nothing to live for in this world. We are driven by hope of the world to come to exhibit zeal, self-denial, and industry. But how often is it otherwise in better times? For then the joys and pleasures of this world make it hard for us to remember the world to come and we sink into an inglorious ease.

One final thought. Never be content with where you are spiritually. Never.

Don't ever rest on your laurels of what God has done for you and in you. But be pressing on home. Certainly, that wasn't the life and the perspective of the Apostle Paul considering all of his colossal accomplishments.

But yet he said in Philippians chapter 3 verse 14, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Here's my appeal to you. You hear a message like this from your pastor or from a speaker, might have a gripping effect on you.

Might stir your heart afresh. Might to some degree awaken you out of sleep. But you know what's unfortunate? Your son will be awakened only temporarily to turn back over and fall back to sleep.

Have you ever been in a deep sleep before and somebody called time to get up? Or they might come in and nudge you. Get up. You don't have much time.

And you know, you ought to get up. You know, you ought to rise and prepare yourself for the day. You know, the time is an urgent factor that you need to rise and get going.

But you'll turn over and you get in a more comfortable position and you fall back asleep. The only difference between that and the previous sleep is you sleep even sounder and you sleep to a point. There have been times that you cannot be awakened.

By another. Our churches are full of people like that. That through deception, they are sleeping the sleep of death.

And when they will awaken, it will be eternally too late. For they will awaken in the fires of hell. I ask you this morning, arise, O men of God, arise, women.

Stir yourself. For in this culture, we're so inclined to take our ease. Woe be unto those who are at ease in Zion.

Shall we pray together? Now, Father, I want to be the first to thank you this morning for helping my voice. Lord, bless you, Lord. I see in these recent days the myriad of distractions and assault of temptations.

Lord, I see this as a good sign. Lord, I believe your desire is to do something. Do something, Lord, for us today.

For all of us, Lord. Lord, would you make this a day of your power? That your people might be made willing? God, would you please reign righteousness upon us? Lord, would you cause us today, today, Lord, today to break up the fallow ground? To seek the Lord until He come and reign righteousness upon us? God, please revive your people in the midst of the years. May Christ draw feelingly near to your people today.

God, if we've been awakened out of sleep this morning, Lord, may we capitalize upon the moment and press on, resolving in our heart to be men and women of eternity. So, Lord, may all of our time and our talents and our resources be invested in your people. Accordingly, as we look to Christ, we ask these things in Christ's name.

And Father, I want to pray for those this morning that you've spoken to. Oh God, I pray that you might do a deep, a deep, expanded and abiding work in their hearts. Lord, we don't have to stay in this state.

Thank you, Lord, that the grace that was behind this this morning, Lord, was nothing short of extraordinary. Lord, you want your people to be stirred, to be zealous for God, zealous to repentance, zealous to good works. So, God, make us passionate people for your glory and your glory only.

We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. We say this morning before a pastor comes, Christ Jesus died for slothful sinners.

Christ died for sinners. You're here this morning and perhaps you've been in a state of ease. At times you don't feel like you really care.

It's not that you're just casually or occasionally preoccupied with the world. That's your lot in life. Sports is your pursuit.

Making money is your pursuit. There's mercy for you. If you will look to Christ, Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God.

God in the flesh, came and He laid down His life. He was wounded for your sins of idleness. And if you will embrace Him, His death upon the cross, the shedding of His blood, the shedding of His blood.

You've heard that so much before. But if you'll finish, you'll embrace His finished work upon the cross in faith, in childlike faith. You don't have to do better.

You don't have to chase chasing yourself. You don't have to make resolutions. You just come as you are.

That's the marvelous blessing of grace. Is you can do nothing. You just come as you are.

And God will show Himself strong on your behalf to save you. So what do you mean come as I am? You just look to Him in simple childlike faith. Lord, have mercy upon my soul and save me.

And God will not only save you, but I'll tell you, He'll set you on a course of living where your life will be lived. Nothing short of zealous for God. And when you're not zealous for God, God will begin to chase in you, to bring you back, to put you on the cutting edge of spiritual passion.

Amen.

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