

## **The Problem of Apathy Session One**

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Saige Valfre / Youth Group

Zeal Dnow / Laziness; Zeal / Romans 12:11; Hebrews 2:1; Hebrews 5:11-14

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### **Romans 12:11**

Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord.

### **Introduction**

Paul's letter to the church in Rome consists of 16 chapters. The first 11 chapters heavily focus on doctrine and deep theological concepts. Paul wanted the Roman church to have a strong foundation in right knowledge of Jesus Christ. The latter chapters, 12-16, focus on the practical application of those deep theological concepts. We find ourselves in chapter 12 today focusing in on one verse in the midst of many application verses. **Do not lack diligence in ZEAL; be FERVENT in the Spirit; SERVE THE LORD.**

What is zeal? Zeal is passion. It is when you feel fire for something. To make it personal, consider something in your life that when someone brings it up, you just can't stop talking about it. I can be this way with movies, music, even

books. I love stories that are well told. Stories that capture you and pull you into them. I could talk on and on about stuff like that. This is something I am zealous about. When I get to talking about it or interacting with it, I am consumed by it, almost. When I think of zeal, I think of a pot that is full of water boiling overtop because the stovetop is so hot. Zeal is this overflowing enthusiasm and dedication to something.

## **What is apathy?**

If zeal is an overflowing enthusiasm, apathy is lacking any care at all towards something. For example, I used to have a friend who was zealous about cars. He could name year, make, and model of any car that drove by. He could tell me about the engine, the exhaust, miles per gallon, how quick it gets to 60. I could never get him to shut up about cars. Me on the other hand, I couldn't care less about cars. It isn't that I hate cars, but I just have no feelings towards them. No excitement, no enthusiasm. Just meh. Numbness. I am apathetic towards cars.

Apathy is okay to feel towards certain things in life that don't matter, but apathy is extremely dangerous in your relationship with Christ. This is why Paul writes that the Romans must not lack diligence in zeal, but tells them to be burning hot with the Spirit. The author of Hebrews sees this problem of apathy in those he is writing (more likely

preaching) to. He says in chapter 2:1,  
Hebrews 2:1

**For this reason, we must pay attention all the more to what we have heard, so that *we will not drift away*.**

The author is warning of this issue of drifting away. He says that unless they pay attention to the Scriptures and the teachings of the apostles, then they will drift. Like one playing on a beach who ends up almost a mile down from where they came in at just because they weren't paying attention. The drift is dangerous. Then later in chapter 5 he gives an even harsher rebuke:

Hebrews 5:11-14

**Hebrews 5:11–14 CSB**

We have a great deal to say about this, and it is difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand. Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.

The author was delving into deep topics regarding Jesus Christ being our Great High Priest. He brought up this priest

that blessed Abraham named Melchizedek and was trying to relate Melchizedek to Jesus. But then he stops and says this. He gets frustrated because he knows that those listening/reading do not understand or, even, do not care to understand. In these passages we find some attributes of the apathetic Christians. They are 1) inattentive to the teachings of Scripture; 2) they have lazy minds; 3) they never grow from basic teachings into more mature ones. Let's break these three attributes down.

## **Inattention to Teachings**

I don't want you to think that because you have trouble paying attention to the preaching and teaching of God's Word, you're the worst Christian ever. Even I get antsy after listening to someone preach for long enough. What inattention to teachings is referring to is the application of those teachings to your life. See, when someone is preaching God's Word, they are using the Word as a mirror. The preacher will look into God's Word and allow it to shape and change him; he will be convicted and grow in knowledge and wisdom of God's Word. The preacher then will turn the mirror of God's Word to His people and help them understand what they are seeing. This occurs so that they, too, may be shaped and changed to look more like Christ. The issue comes when the preacher is showing you the mirror of God's Word and you don't care what it says. You see yourself falling short of the glory of God, and you do

nothing about it. This is a problem.

When God's Word is being preached or taught to you, be pliable. See yourself in your imperfection; see Christ in His perfection. Change. Mold. Adjust. Being a christian is not about being perfect at all. Coming to know Jesus, you do not come perfect, you come a mess! However, after coming to know Jesus, you must change. It would be completely backwards for our God who loves us to see us in our flawed state and leave us this way. What saved sinner would see Jesus for who He is and not desire to look more like Him? Do not allow apathy to lead you to disregard God's Word. Instead, zealously lean into His Word and allow God to shape you into His image.

## **Lazy Minds**

What does it mean to have a lazy mind? What does it mean to be lazy? This is to be inactive and sluggish. Slow-moving; not doing much at all. Making an effort to make no efforts. Examples of overall laziness is laying on the couch for a long period of time just watching TV or scrolling for hours without doing anything. Perhaps you need to get up to rotate the laundry, but you're just not feeling it. Your dog needs to be fed, but you're too busy not being busy. Sorry dog. A lazy mind is very similar, but in your thoughts. You hear hard teaching and rather than digging your heels in and trying to understand what it means, you dismiss it. You

either dismiss it by saying “Eh, I am sure it is true,” or you say “Eh, it’s probably not true.” One with a lazy mind hates to read. See, reading is a mental workout. It takes a lot of mental work of seeking to comprehend and truly learn what you’re reading.

Our minds are only getting lazier now with Tik Tok, Instagram Reels, and Youtube Shorts. These are videos that catch you in a matter of milliseconds. If the video does not catch you immediately, you swipe off to the next. So, when someone puts a book in front of you, maybe even the Bible, your mind is freaked out by it. “That is way too much mental work to read,” and so you don’t. Back to shortening your attention span by watching more mind-numbing Tik Toks. Lazy minds want to be numb and happy without any struggle and work through. Lazy minds see that they have serious mental issues and just play victim to it and take pills instead of dealing with it. Lazy minds avoid having hard conversations because they will have to really think through how to respond if they want to respond like Christ. Be weary of the lazy mind.

## **Never Maturing in Teachings**

Coupling together an inattentiveness to teachings and a lazy mind, you simply never grow in your understanding of God. There are believers who truly love Jesus, but they have become apathetic over a season in their relationship with

Jesus. So, they never seek to know Jesus more deeply. They try to pray to God and go to church at least once every now and then, but they don't want to grow in their knowledge and wisdom of Jesus. They say "Jesus is my Lord," but don't really know what that means. They say "I am saved," but don't know how they were saved. They hear big words and deep concepts and they say "No thanks!"

Apathy will take potential pastors and leaders; potential missionaries and evangelists and kill their calling. Not because God stops calling you, but because the apathetic person is too numb to see it or care about it. "I probably could make an effort in missions, but I don't know; I just don't care." This also happens with shallow Christians never shaping up in their faith. So many believers have this great potential and they squander it due to pure apathy. They grow up into these fake baby Christians who never read the Bible or apply it. This was the issue with these the writer of Hebrews was speaking to. This idea of Christ being compared to the priest Melchizedek is deep and beautiful, but the apathetic person will never see it or care to comprehend it. He or she will just hear it and ignore it.

Some of you may look at your lives in a time of self reflection and realize "Oh no, I am an apathetic Christian." You see that you have no care for teachings about God's Word. You see that your mind is extremely lazy and numb from all the TikTok you're consuming. You see that you have

been a Christian for longer than a month and never actually matured in your faith. This is why we are focusing on this issue this weekend; because I know many of you do struggle with this. I know many adults who struggle with this! I know I struggle with it!

## **Sin and Apathy**

Before we go into how we should respond to our apathy, I want to briefly discuss where our apathy comes from. It doesn't just appear. There are certainly driving forces that lead to an apathetic Christian. The main driving force behind apathy is simple: sin.

How do these relate? Well let's think this through logically. You are in a rough patch where you have fallen into sin after sin after sin. Perhaps it is one sin that is just ravaging you or it is many sins ravaging you. You have a week where you keep lashing out at others; you keep gossiping about others; you keep not forgiving your brothers and sisters in Christ; you keep fooling around with your boyfriend or girlfriend; you keep looking at porn; you keep lying to your parents; you keep stealing; you keep drinking; you keep etc. Overtime, our sin builds a strong, hardened wall around our hearts. All the soft humility is gone; only callousness remains. Paul describes this in Ephesians 4:17-19 when describing unbelieving Gentiles to warn believing Gentiles.



### **Ephesians 4:17–19 CSB**

Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts. They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

Do you see what happens? You give yourself over to your sin to practice impure things, such as the list above. And all you're left with is a desire to do more sin. What about all other feeling? What about your zeal for the Lord? It is not there. Rather it has been covered by the wall around your heart.

### **Conclusion**

So we have established what apathy is: the lacking of care or total numbness towards something. We have discussed what apathy leads to in a Christian: 1) Inattention to teachings, 2) Lazy minds, and 3) Never maturing in teachings. And we have established the root source of apathy: sin. So what do we do about it? How can we feel zeal again? Spoiler alert: Christ is the only source you can tap for it. This world will pump you full of garbage until you feel nothing at all and as long as you have made this world your

savior and lord, it will continue to do so. The richest and most famous men and women who have it all take their lives because they realize they still feel nothing. They keep searching for more and more, but all of it fails. Christ is the only way out of apathy.

For the believer, this looks like returning to your Lord and Savior. Returning to the fundamentals of your faith. For the unbeliever, this looks similar: run to Christ. Without Him, you do have nothing and this world will only make you more apathetic. But in Christ, there is an eternal source of joy and love and peace that never taps out. The issue is that we have tendencies to turn to different sources instead. Run to Christ and see the zeal He brings for things that matter in this world.

### **Questions for Small Groups:**

1. Have you ever experienced apathy in your life? What are some things you feel apathetic towards?
2. Of the three attributes of the apathetic Christian, which one can you relate to the most? How?
3. What habits/sin do you have in life that may be leading you to feel numb towards the Lord?
4. What do you hope to get out of this weekend?