

# Apathy

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the dangers of spiritual apathy and the urgent need for Christians to remain zealous in their faith.*

**Duration:** 27:33

**Scripture:** Revelation 3:14-21

**Topics:** "Apathy"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the dangers of spiritual apathy and the consequences it can have on individuals and the church. He emphasizes the importance of not desiring the wrong things, as it can lead to spiritual compromise and meanness. The speaker also highlights how apathy can hurt and hinder others, using the example of the lukewarm church in Revelation. He concludes by mentioning the need for believers to be vigilant against enemy tactics and to prioritize prayer and commitment in their spiritual lives.

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## Transcript

Revelation chapter 3. I've spoken on a lot of different subjects over the years and so I'm always looking for some new subject to develop a message on or some thoughts about and yesterday just right out of the blue I I think I was listening to a Tozer tape somewhere I heard the word apathy, a word I haven't used so much and it just triggered my prayers and my thinking and I realized I had never spoken on the subject of the danger of spiritual apathy. We find a lot of apathetic people in the churches. I certainly have preached quite often messages to try to stir them but I don't think I've ever given a message on what what are the dangers when people just continue in lukewarmness, they continue to be apathetic year after year and I just got these few thoughts I hope they're from the Lord and I'd like us to think about them together because probably one of the temptations you're going to have during your time on OM is to become apathetic.

You certainly will get it when you leave and being in any kind of training movement or evangelistic movement does not guarantee that you will not become lukewarm and apathetic down the road.

The scripture I want to read which I have preached on many times is Revelation chapter 3 verse 14 Revelation chapter 3 verse 14 and unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write these things that the amen the faithful the true witness the beginning of the creation of God I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot I would thou work cold or hot so then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor

hot I will spew thee out of my mouth because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear anoint thine

eyes with salve that thou mayest see as many as I love I rebuke and chasten be zealous zealous therefore and repent behold I stand at the door and knock any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in him and sup with him and he with me to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne as I am also overcame and and sat down with my father in his throne he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches let's just pray again father help us to hear what you have to say to us this morning we need a word from you so easily we can just get caught up with the work a lot of it is routine and a lot of times we realize we're going against the tide against the tide of our society against the tide of the tendency toward spiritual apathy and we want to be

those spiritual fish so to speak that can swim upstream help us Lord to not only get something for ourselves this morning but something that we can give to others as wherever we go we face apathetic Christians and we want to be a blessing we want to be able to give people the right book that might just turn the tide we want to maybe pass on the right cassette tape guide us we pray in Jesus name amen few weeks ago I was fellowshiping with Glenn Garner back from Turkey finding an enormous challenge to try to adjust to life in America had not even been asked to give his testimony or report about Turkey in his home church one of the biggest most alive churches in the area talk about discouragement and we were sitting along a beautiful stream in Oregon talking and fellowshiping and suddenly

we saw these fish jumping in the water I don't know if you've ever seen fish jump three four feet out of the water if you've been born and reared in London you probably have not had this experience this was in Oregon and these fish were salmon trying to go upstream I remember being there at this very spot before and finding a lot of dead salmon apparently they they try to get back to where they came from originally and some of them don't make it and they die after they give birth so this time they were I didn't see any dead fish around but they these live ones were trying to get up a waterfalls it's one thing that you know swim up the river it's another thing for a fish to leap up a waterfalls well the ones we are watching didn't seem to make it but that may have been our lack of

understanding about what happens after they fall back in the water but what a spiritual illustration that in the Christian life how vividly I saw this in Austria and Belgium it's upstream it's against the tide and maybe some of you you thought that coming on OM you were going to get with the tide right this is a spiritual movement and somehow you're gonna get with the tide and even though you're just a spiritual minnow you thought you get with some of these big fish and you get with the tide and you're gonna really go places and you've had nothing but waterfalls since the day you came in and you haven't you haven't got up one yet feel that somewhat you're just all wet you may feel OMS all wet surely living the Christian life is going against the time and though I wouldn't think generally

when we're with other believers we're with a fellowship like OM there is terrific advantage we are still against the time now the day that you leave a movement like OM and you go home much will depend on that local home fellowship if you get with a fellowship that understands you and loves you and somehow believe in what you've been doing and they're going places you'll probably find that's a great advantage and will be an enormous help to you and there's nothing wrong with that but many people are not finding that for various reasons that I haven't got time to go into and so they soon find that they become

discouraged or apathetic I've spoken about dealing with discouragement perhaps too many times but this morning I want to share not just on the subject of apathy but what are the

dangers of continuing in spiritual apathy and I've only started to think this through and some of you can even write me a note and add to these thoughts before I perhaps give it in some other meeting I've just written down five dangers that I see if we continue in apathy we continue in lukewarmness and that's whether we're in OM or whether we're somewhere else the first thing I've written down is that you tend to develop deadly habits you become accustomed to apathy I think many of the men of God that I have read about and I've been listening to a lot of tapes by Tozer lately have never become accustomed to apathy they never tolerated it they never allowed it I'm sure they were tempted but they never developed the ability to be at home in apathy and they battled their way out of it so the

longer we continue in spiritual apathy the greater the danger that this how can you say it will become a habit I remember a message years ago by Billy Graham and he pointed out that basically our life is a series and combination of and how I have seen this because I've got some bad habits that I've been trying to break and they're not breaking and I developed some of these habits when I was your age everyone's here and they are not easy to break I even took for example driving lessons from the professional driving teachers and managed to pass the test after two failures because I had these bad driving habits and I still had some of those habits even though for the test I managed to get mega motivated and for those 20 minutes drove properly I mean after two failures and I had a thousand

people praying for me there was there was some hope so continuing in apathy is going to develop some deadly habits which could eventually lead to the person's complete spiritual wipeout why some people get an apathy for a few weeks and get wiped out and others seem to be able to live in apathy for years and actually life is alright don't think that because you're away from the Lord or you're in spiritual apathy that everything is going to go wrong actually for a while everything might go right again I remember Redpath preaching a message at Keswick sharing how you get tempted to quit and in the message he said you know if you quit you'll probably really feel great for a while because the pressure will be off and when you're you're moving in evangelism you're moving in commitment the

pressures on and of course you'll feel great when that pressures off at least for a short time I haven't heard by the way that Alan Redpath is very ill we certainly would like to be praying for him and his wife secondly the second danger of continuing in spiritual apathy is that you open yourself up to enemy tactics we all know the verse Satan is a roaring lion seeketh whom he may devour we know the verse that Satan even can come as an angel of light and that we're not to be ignorant of his devices and I am convinced that in my own life even one day of apathy which I've never had that I know of I've certainly had hours and had to battle my way with every inch of spiritual fight back to the cross and repentance I have other sins and difficulties in my Christian life but I don't think we

could be classified as as apathy but I know that if I become apathetic I give up the fight those other weaknesses that I have they'll just perhaps destroy me and we're all different in temperament some people get destroyed slowly probably I'm the kind of temperament that's what the book says that one day you will see me in your preaching and the next day it'll be all over and you just read about it in the paper if you don't think that can happen to George Berwick you are spiritually because there's been men far greater than I that I couldn't even tie their shoelaces have been wiped out in spiritual warfare so I believe the safest thing especially for characters like me is to just not tolerate lukewarmness or apathy and to repent quickly and to try to find the source of the difficulty and

to not trust my emotions my emotions would definitely lead me to the school further downstream of the lukewarm water swimming around but we cannot afford that to happen number three the third danger of spiritual apathy is that your heart gets hardened again I can't speak from experience but I can speak from counseling people that after people are apathetic for so long they are no longer responsive to spiritual challenges and many many young people in that many of the teenagers reared in our churches and that's so many messages and so many Christian camps and so many Christian films and if you go and you work among them you minister with them you discover they have almost no hunger for God I remember about a year or two ago I spoke here of why people are not hungry for God I remember

because I have a twinge of guilt that Mike asked me for a copy of it or the notes and I'm not sure if I ever got a sentence to him because he was convinced that this was certainly a big problem today that people don't seem to be hungry for God what's the how how can people even relate to somebody like A.W.

Tozer so hungry for God naturally he's going to grow naturally he's going to go on because he's hungry for God when you're hungry you find food and today it seems that among many young people and some older people as well of course there's there's no hunger for God there's no appetite for spiritual things if you give someone a book like true discipleship who's not hungry for God he's not even going to read it and many young people don't read any spiritual books whatsoever and I believe this is a danger for us as mature Christians that if we harden our heart or that if we live in apathy for a while we become accustomed to that we become accustomed to a low level we may still be in church we may still give me the occasional spiritual grunt or sing a chorus with even a degree of life I mean

unconverted people come to our meetings and sing these choruses and they enjoy it but generally that isn't going to carry us down the main highway of spiritual life we're given warnings in the Word of God about hardening our hearts I think of also that verse in the Old Testament where it says he gave them the desire of their heart in this case they seemingly wanted the wrong thing and he sent meanness to his soul what a verse sometimes even as Christians we can desire the wrong thing and God may even allow us to eventually get that wrong thing but with it their spiritual compromise their spiritual leanness fourthly it hurts apathy hurts and hinders other people it spreads doesn't it of course a person who is strong in spirit and strong with the Lord as he comes across spiritual apathy

just like the fish going upstream he manages to to keep on going but I can tell you even strong-minded committed people I hope I'm I guess I'm in that camp I hope so at least strong-minded people others tell me so committed I hope so but even we find sometimes ourselves being overwhelmed and very discouraged meeting so much apathy and I can tell you the apathy at times in Operation Mobilization by the middle of March in some years has been just overwhelming to me and it's almost at times caused me just just to give up there is more apathy and because we don't want to be judgmental we often don't find it because we want to believe the best we're not you know some kind of KGB trying to figure out who is on fire for the Lord there's a lot of freedom in OM I don't think we keep track of

people's quiet time have you been asked to give a report about your quiet time to fill out a chart I remember when I was a student in Moody Bible Institute I you know we had to go and fill out a little thing on the wall about how many people we witnessed to and how much evangelism I think they threw that out I know there was a protest against it maybe they've got something in its place since then but we don't want to be judgmental we don't want to in one sense put our nose in other people's affairs we want to believe the best a recent report according to a book I read last week shows that the average minister in America prays 22 minutes 22 minutes that counts worship prayer intercession you know the whole package then

we wonder why the church is seemingly a little bit lame in some

situations yes apathy does spread the apathy that one person may have can be very hurtful to others I think of the people who are our prayer partners I think of how some of them really do love us and pray for us and the awesome news it will be for them if we do get knocked out of the battle if somehow they don't hear from us a long time and then they meet somebody and they said oh yeah oh yeah oh he's not living for Jesus I'm his prayer partner I wonder why I haven't heard from him that happens I don't think it happens too much more often people leave Christian work as it's called and because of that decide not to send a prayer letter anymore and so they the people lose track and they just figure well he's not in Christian work but he must be doing all right I think people who are not in

Christian work should pray about sending out prayer I think they need prayer just as much as those of us who are out here and supposedly in in Christian work maybe they can only send it once a year can be a Christmas letter I get Christmas letters from people who are in sort of secular employment they give a little news and it helps me to pray for them all right I think people who are not in Christian work should pray about sending out prayer I think they need prayer just as much as those of us who are out here and supposedly in in Christian work maybe they can only send it once a year can be a Christmas letter I get Christmas letters from people who are in sort of secular employment they give a little news and it helps me to pray for them so our apathy will spread our apathy will hurt

others it will hinder others and that's the last thing in our hearts I think we want to do and then lastly apathy is actually opposition to God it's it's throwing aside the promises of God it is far more of a sin than we are willing to admit and that's why this passage in Revelation chapter 3 is one of the strongest passages in the Word of God be ye hot or be ye cold if you are lukewarm I will steer you out of my mouth I haven't heard many of the modern preachers of our day speak on this passage maybe they have found some interpretation you have some study that's not valid the old messages we get from Redpath and from Ravenhill and from other speakers at Keswick on Revelation chapter 3 I think I spoke on it perhaps once at the Keswick Convention maybe even in one of the STL books apathy

really is an abomination to God now that's a mystery to me because God seems to tolerate an awful lot of apathy among people in his churches and I think that is because God is so merciful he is so loving there are things that we do probably this day that will displease God but his love toward us is so great because he is our father and I've met many men of God whose children are are astray and they're they're in apathy but the father's love the mother's love still reaches out to them they're not happy about what they're doing it's hurtful it may be breaking their heart but they're still merciful they're still loving they're still reaching out and that's sometimes been what God has used to bring them back so don't presume that because God isn't hitting you on the head that all is well if

there's apathy if there's lukewarmness we know there's many ways to define that lack of zeal lack of love for the Lord which would be expressed in our work in our worship lack of reality and desire to to witness eventually the lack of even being convicted about your sins once you were convicted for your lack of evangelistic zeal now you've learned to live with once you were convicted about missing your quiet time or not being involved in the prayer life of the church or the team now you're learning to live with it apathy is how should you say it it's taking its toll in your own life and it's a far greater sin a far greater affront to God than I think most of us are willing to admit be you hot or be cold if you're lukewarm I will spill you out of my mouth yes apathy obviously and I know if

I took time to study this I could come up with another five or ten points but let's let's declare war against apathy let's not blame it on the church let's not blame it on OM let's not blame it on our department head or our leader who we feel maybe doesn't understand this enough or our wife who may be doing this or our prayer partners haven't written us lately or our donors who are no longer donating or our churches that don't seem to be praying we don't have any excuse and one of the dangers of Christian work is there's always in Christian work someone else to blame this is always something going wrong and I'll tell you if STL and OM has been a disappointment to you I'm very sorry I apologize on behalf of the board of directors I apologize on behalf of the general council or the area

leaders and that disappointment could be in God's timing his appointment for you to learn to swim upstream because if you come here and it's all easy and it's all blessing and the relationships and fellowships and living together and then just one great onslaught of spiritual flood and then you leave here and you go home and everything's just the reverse it's against the tide it's uphill people don't understand you they don't appreciate you they think you're extreme then where will you be you'll probably be like those salmon I met lying somewhere on the shore spiritually dead let's learn to swim upstream and if you're finding Bromley and UK and STL ICT a little upstream so that's no excuse for any sin on our part and we're going to work day and night to try to make this whole work better

for his but if you find it somehow the tide is a little bit against you a little bit of disappointment take advantage of that because the tide is probably gonna be tough in the future let's pray together father we just think of so many dear ones that we know who are in spiritual Apple spiritually some that don't even bother to go to church they've heard it all well maybe they've been conned into thinking that it's not the truth and Lord as we see and we as we've seen this morning just some of the dangers of spiritual apathy we just want to run into your arms for a spiritual refill we just want to turn away from even a square millimeter of lukewarmness that may enter our souls maybe from other people's apathy we want to run this race with our eyes upon you and we want to lay aside every

sin every sin or even weight even a weight that may be hindering us and Lord as we look across this great spiritual invasion of OM across the world we pray for revival we pray that people will turn be refilled with your Holy Spirit we pray for spiritual diligence where people will deny self each day and move forward by faith even if it's against the tide Lord you know our hearts you know our needs you know my own situation the increased pressure that's come since my mother's death since buying this new ship and already having trouble with it and we thank you that you can meet us in the midst of the times of pressure you can meet with us and minister to us I just thank you for these tapes of A.W.

Tozer that I've been able to listen to these days even on the road in Austria just thank you that you've accepted my repentance of sin and I just thank you for your great mercy your great love that's so incredibly patient with us but Lord we don't want to in a sense see this love and this grace and this mercy forgiveness and then just throw it to one side and just go on pretending almost that it doesn't exist strengthen us for the work meet with those leaders who are having special sessions right now guide us through the lot of activities a lot of meetings this weekend that we may speak in the power and the authority of the Holy Spirit that we may see many more apathetic people apathetic about world missions apathetic about the hungry the suffering the dying the wars that are going on may many be aroused this weekend may many be aroused through these books were distributing may we go the extra mile and getting some of these these books that bring revival and destroy apathy into the hands of people across this nation but oh Lord we know that somehow there has to be the move of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer that the pages of these books may become like spiritual knives into the hearts of people grant us

grace to do all of this with all of our hearts as unto you in Jesus name

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