

Guard Your Heart Series
Text: **Proverbs 4:23/Haggai 1:1**
"Apathy the Evidence and Cause"

Intro:

Good evening and welcome to restoration Life. This past Sunday we spend quality time introducing this message series that started with the importance of guarding our hearts.

The main points were:

1. We all have a heart condition
2. The significance of our spiritual heart condition
3. The heart attack or what attacks the heart

We concluded with **Philippians 4:6 – 7** *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

1. Tonight I want to expose the devil in the details of his attack on our hearts.

a. The idiom "the devil is in the detail" is expressing the idea that whatever one does should be done thoroughly; i.e. details are important.

Looking at our theme text: **Proverbs 4:23** *Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*

- And the devil is a detailed strategist that would love to see you with an apathetic heart Condition.

b. The word Apathy is not found in translation of scripture but I can assure you that it's Spirit and fruit is found throughout the bible.

Apathy: is most commonly defined as a lack of feeling, emotion, interest, or concern.

- It is a state of indifference, or the suppression of emotions such as concern, excitement, motivation and/or passion.
- A person that struggles with An apathetic spirit has an absence of interest in or concern about emotional, social, spiritual,

philosophical and/or physical life.

Helen Keller

We may have found a cure for most evils; but we have found no remedy for the worst of them all, the apathy of human beings.

Eleanor Roosevelt "So much attention is paid to the aggressive sins, such as violence and cruelty and greed with all their tragic effects, that too little attention is paid to the passive sins, such as apathy and laziness, which in the long run can have a more devastating effect."

c. But what are the evidences and Causes of Spiritual Apathy:

- What are some of the underlying causes of this spirit of indifference, this spirit of apathy towards the God's plan, for people that God put in our lives, the state of our nation, our ministry, our Testimony?

2. To study this out we are going to look at the Book Of Haggai.

a. In this series we'll see how relevant his message is for the Church today.

- Written some 2,500 years ago and intended to address a specific situation at that time, Haggai's message is timeless in its relevance.
- Why, because the spiritual issues and problems that he had to deal with in his day tend to recur in every generation of the Church.

3. A little History: Haggai is one of the shortest books of the Bible.

- He is one of the prophets of the Restoration, the other two being Zechariah and Malachi and what we mean by that is he ministered to the people of God after their return from exile in Babylon.
- Haggai was one of the last prophetic voices to be heard before the coming of Christ.
- Unlike most of the prophets Haggai had the joy of seeing his ministry produce positive results among the people of God.
- There was a great spiritual awakening, a spiritual revival under

his ministry.

- It shows us what can happen when God's Word is faithfully preached and when God's Spirit begins to work in the hearts of God's people.

My Hope: It is my hope and prayer that as we study this out together, God the Holy Spirit will work in each of our hearts and help us guard our hearts against Spiritual apathy.

4. The two themes that dominate the message of this book are Spiritual Apathy and Spiritual Awakening.

- Tonight we begin with Spiritual Apathy.
- We will consider The Evidences, The Causes, the Consequences and The Cure to Spiritual Apathy.

5. The Evidences of Spiritual Apathy

- Haggai was sent by God to minister to a people who had fallen into a state of Spiritual apathy.
- What were some of the signs, what were the evidences that such was the spiritual state of the people at that time?

Well the first evidence was that

I. God's Work Was Being Neglected:

Read **Haggai 1:1-13**

a. Now in order to see this we need to understand something of the historical context.

- The city was brought to nothing and the temple was completely destroyed.
- God's people were taken into Babylon as captives and there they remained for seventy years.
- The exile was God's judgment upon the people for their sins. It was a time of great sorrow for God's people.

- A time when they felt cut off from God and could no longer worship him as they had formerly done. Their mood is summed up in...

Psalm 137:1-4

1 Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem. 2 We put away our harps, hanging them on the branches of poplar trees. 3 For our captors demanded a song from us. Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn: "Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!" 4 But how can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a pagan land?

b. However although God punished them by means of the exile, he did not abandon them.

Hag 1:13 NKJV 13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the Lord.

- In Ezra we can read how The people of God became discouraged, their initial zeal faded, they no longer had any heart for the work and the temple lay unfinished.
- They started rebuilding the temple but when faced with constant opposition they eventually caved to the pressure and gave up what should have been priority and focused on just themselves and their own personal needs.

c. **Here's the problem:** The work of rebuilding the temple should have been their top priority.

Matt 6:31-34

31 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

- That was the primary reason why God sent them back to Jerusalem.

- God's work had been abandoned and with the passage of time the people became more and more apathetic towards the work.

d. This then was the first evidence of Spiritual apathy among the people – God's Work was being neglected.

Application: And this is one of the first signs, one of the first evidences of spiritual apathy in the life of an individual believer or in the life of a congregation of God's people – the work of God is neglected.

My Point: Just as God had a great work for the people to do in Haggai's day, the work of building His temple, so too he has called us to undertake a great work for him, a building work, a work of raising a holy temple to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:24

No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

1 Corinthians 10:33

Even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Application: The temple that we are called to raise is not a temple made out of bricks and mortar but a temple that is composed of the living stones of men and women, boys and girls who have been saved by the grace of God.

e. The temple of the Old Testament was a type of Christ and of his Church.

- Do you remember what Jesus said in **John 2:19** "Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days."
- And how it goes on to say that "the temple he had spoken of was his body" And here on this earth the Church is the body of Christ and as such God's spiritual temple in this world.

1 Peter 2:5-6 NIV

5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

f. Peter is using the analogy there of the temple.

- Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone around which all the other stones are built.
- As each sinner has an encounter and confession Jesus Christ as savior another brick is added to that spiritual House that God is raising in this world.

g. The apostle Paul uses the same temple analogy on a number of occasions in his writings.

Ephesians 2:19-22 NIV *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

In **2 Corinthians 6:16** he likens us the believer to the temple of God when he says, *"what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols. For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people."*

- And one aspect of the work to which you and I, both individually and corporately, are called by God in our day and generation is the work of building up this spiritual temple;
- Of seeing the lost in sin being saved and added to the Church.
- Now of course we cannot save anyone. We cannot add anyone to the Church as such, but we can be and we are meant to be instrumental in doing so by reaching out to sinners with the good news of the gospel.
- This is the means that God has ordained by which people will be saved.

Romans 10:13-15 *"Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on the one they have not believed in and how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard. And how can they hear without someone preaching to them...faith comes by hearing the message..."*

My conviction as a Christian is this... I believe with everything that is within me that every believer in Jesus Christ should be engaged in somehow in the building of God's people.

Phil 2:1-13 NIV 2 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

h. There are things that you could do.

Part III.

- The real question is, are you interested enough to do them?
- Have you a genuine interest in and concern for the work to which God has called us or have you over the years become apathetic to such things?
- But there is another very important work.

Paul writing to the Church at Corinth in 1 Cor 3:16 says to the believers there "do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple

and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

He says the same thing a little further on in 6:19 "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you."

Application: God has called each one of us as Christians to engage in an on-going spiritual building work in our own personal lives.

- To build up our own temple of God.
- To ensure that our own life is like a visible structure, that bears testimony to and glorifies God.

I. The temple was a holy place and as we build our own lives in Christ we are to do so in such a way as to ensure that they are characterized by holiness.

- The temple was known as a place of prayer and prayer is to be an integral part of our lives.
- The temple was a place of worship and the worship of God is to be something that is central to our life.
- The temple was a place of sacrifice and we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto God.
- The temple was a place of service and we are to be men and women whose lives are given over to the service of God.
- God has called us to engage in this work of building up the temple of our own spiritual lives.

The question is have we been applying ourselves to that work or have we been neglecting it?

So the first evidence of spiritual apathy is God's Work is Neglected.

The second evidence of the spiritual apathy that prevailed among the people of God in Haggai's day was

II. God's People were Content

a. And what I mean by that is this. With the passage of time the people who had returned to Jerusalem got used to worshipping God

amidst the ruined surroundings of the ruined temple.

- They had set up the altar in what was once the temple court and day by day they brought their sacrifices by way of worshipping God.
- Now although they knew as they looked around them at the ruins of the temple that this was not the way it should be the fact of the matter was they were not troubled enough by the state of things to do anything about it.

b. They were happy enough to just let things continue as they were.

- And while they initially probably had no intention of leaving things the way they were for as long as they did, 14 years as it turned out, nevertheless as time passed they quite simply got so used to their surroundings that it didn't really bother them any more.
- Had they been really concerned about the state of things they would have done something about it, but the fact of the matter was they were too content with the prevailing situation.
- This contentment was an evidence of their spiritual apathy.

Application: Here's the problem, as Christians we can so easily drift into that paradigm/mindset. Oh we may not intend for it to happen but as time passes we can get so used to and so content with things being the way they are, that we don't do anything to change the situation.

The idea of changing what we have become so content with because abrasive to us and we reject change. Even if it betters us!

- Even though we know that things are not the way they should be.
- We don't see sinners being saved and in time we can actually get used to that.
- We start slacking in our prayer time and we used to that.
- We stop fellowshiping and going to church and that becomes routine.

- We stop serving in some capacity and then the abnormal becomes normal/
- We get use to the ruined things in our lives and then desensitized to them
- We start watch and listen to more and more of what would pollute our spirit that we start making excuses for it until we find ourselves in the most apathetic state we can be in LUKEWARM!

Rev 3:15-17 NIV

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

- Guard your hearts church, for this is subtle and slow and the devil is in the detail that you cannot or will not attend to.

Rom 12:3 NIV For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Application: When God's people become content with things as they are, in their Church, in their family, in their own personal life, even though they know that the way things are, are not the way God wants things to be, spiritual apathy has set in.

The third and final evidence of Spiritual apathy that we find here in this passage is

3) God's People Making Excuses:

"Hag 1:2 "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.'"

a. The work on the temple had been stopped and it seems that at some point the suggestion had been made regarding the possibility of recommencing the work.

- But the overwhelming opinion among the people was No, its not the right time to undertake such a project – `

- This is what the people were saying. 'It's not that we don't want to do the work. No we have every intention of rebuilding the temple, but not just yet.' - *The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built.*

But look at this:

As you read what God says through the prophet Haggai, you realize that far from being a legitimate, justifiable reason for not undertaking the work of God, what they offered was instead a vain, empty excuse by which they tried to cover their sinful neglect of the work to which God had called them and to which they ought to have been applying themselves.

Hag 1:3-10

3 Then the Lord sent this message through the prophet Haggai: 4 "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? 5 This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Look at what's happening to you! 6 You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

7 "This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Look at what's happening to you! 8 Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the Lord. 9 You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses.

Application: In other words you were so consumed with what you wanted, when you wanted it and how you wanted to see that happen that you neglected me and what I have called you do.

A person who is in a state of spiritual apathy will always make excuses to try to cover their sinful neglect of the things of God and the work of God.

— Benjamin Franklin

"He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."

--Joyce Meyer: We clearly see in God's Word that anything He tells us to do, He will give us the ability to do it. But do we really believe it?

Do we want to believe it? It's easier to come up with excuses for why we can't do things that are hard or that we really don't want to do.

2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

In closing:

1 John 2:28 THE MESSAGE: 28 And now, children, stay with Christ. Live deeply in Christ. Then we'll be ready for him when he appears, ready to receive him with open arms, with no cause for red-faced guilt or lame excuses when he arrives.

IV. We can be so brilliant at making excuses for not doing what God wants us to do.

a. And our excuses can seem so credible.

Pastor eddie I would love to get more involved in the work of the ministry

- I know the Children's church needs teachers and assistants
- I know that the ushers and greeters could use a hand. I just have a hard time getting up on Sunday.
- I know our prayer team could use more intercessors. But I don't really pray.
- I know I should be spending more time reading and studying the scriptures and praying so that I might be built up and grow as a Christian but I am just so busy, I have so much on, I just don't have the time.

I wonder what God thinks of such an excuse?

Luke 14:15-24 NIV

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." 16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

22 "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' 23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"