

Casual Christianity

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[0:00] It was the largest luxury ship of its day.

And on its maiden voyage it hosted some of the most prominent people in the world. A host of millionaires was on board. And due to its double layered hull and 16 watertight compartments, shortly before midnight on April 14th the ship collided with an iceberg, damaging five compartments and thus the unthinkable became reality.

The unthinkable ship began to sink. However, even when the alarm sounded, many of the passengers casually disregarded the warning.

And they perished in their ignorance and their arrogance. But even for those who heard the warning, their fate wasn't much better because they discovered to their horror that there weren't enough lifeboats.

And for the fortunate few who made it to a lifeboat, they soon discovered that the drain plugs in the bottom of some of the boats had been pulled out.

[1:19] Everything that could have gone wrong seemed to go wrong that night. And when the screams and cries finally subsided, the death toll rang out.

1,635 people were dead. The ultimate luxury boat turned into the ship of doom. The year was 1912. The ship of course was the Titanic. Now we all know about the Titanic and that awful disaster. But what if I told you that I know of a disaster that makes the Titanic look minor?

What I'm going to tell you today is about a disaster that didn't occur in just one night. But it is going on right now, day after day.

And it's leaving a trail of death and destruction for centuries. It isn't a watery maritime disaster. It's a worldwide spiritual disaster.

[2:19] That's right, I'm talking about a destruction that is being waged in the church of God today. What would you say is the greatest enemy of the Christian faith?

Many of us were quite to Satan or to the moral decline of our nation or to the influences of the world and of the diminishing role of God as some of the greatest enemies.

But I put it to you that the most dangerous enemy, the most dangerous threat comes not from outside the Christian faith, but it is within.

It is within. Our greatest enemy is complacency and apathy in the hearts of believers. Complacency and apathy.

Apathy is the enemy that is destroying the church. Just as on the Titanic, when the warning sound came, people were arrogant and ignorant.

[3:20] The greatest threat to the church today is casual Christianity. Casual Christianity. George Barna is a religious marketing researcher.

He surveys people's views and beliefs and behaviour. And he's found that he reckons that some two thirds of Americans are what he calls casual Christians.

In other words, they've got a kind of Christian veneer about them. They're middle of the road.

Uncommitted really about their faith. It doesn't truly impact their lives.

Their faith really doesn't make much difference day by day. It's a faith in moderation. It's a faith when you want to feel kind of religious now and again, but there's no priority to your faith.

Casual Christianity. Casual Christianity. It's apathetic. It's lacking emotion. It lacks impact. It lacks passion. It's indifferent.

[4:21] And you see the casual Christians pop their heads up every once in a while. The casual Christians who may be now and again at certain times of the year, they feel kind of religious.

They feel like there's a kind of religious time of year, whatever it be. Or if perhaps there's a funeral to attend, they'll pop their heads up and put on the veneer of Christianity.

Or they might come to church every once in a while. Like church is some kind of good luck charm that's somehow going to do them some good. Something, you know, they want to feel close to God every so often.

When something might be going on in their lives. When they want something. Or when they are concerned about something. We're witnessing today the rise of a casual, crossless Christianity. Luke 9.23 He says to them, Luke 9.23 If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

[5:39] You see a casual Christian wants a crossless kind of Christianity. He is a faith. He will turn back. He will not keep his hands to the plough.

He will not go through when the storm comes. He is lukewarm. Some years ago there was a club that someone started called the Apathy Club.

The Apathy Club. They started it in some college campus. And the officers of the club advertised a meeting of the membership. Not one soul showed up. That's good.

Why? They were too apathetic to attend. Sometimes churches are like that. Apathy.

It's like a spiritual virus that afflicts the church. What is apathy? Apathy is a lack of feeling or emotion, impassiveness, a lack of concern, indifference.

[6:42] Some Christians have this kind of apathetic kind of life. kind of life. Although lost people are living all around them, they don't care enough to witness. Although people are in need in physical or social need, they don't care enough to call, to pray, to visit. Casual, careless Christianity. Where is the passion gone for the work, for the things of God, for what matters? In Matthew 26 our Lord prayed at the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked his disciples to watch and pray while he went to pray. And after prayer the Lord returned and he found them asleep. After rebuking them he went off again to pray and he returned and he found them asleep again. Three times he left and returned.

To find his disciples sleeping. How often does the Lord Jesus check up on us and find us sleeping instead of serving him? Does no one have to sleep yet? How often does he find us sleeping when we should be praying? How often does he find us sleeping on the job, as it were?

You know, where I work people get the sack for that. When they are supposed to be awake on night shift. You know, we shouldn't be sleeping. We should be praying. We should be, as our Lord says, ask, seek, not. Yet why is there so little genuine praying going on? Apathy. Careless, casual Christianity. Now the inspiration for this sermon was actually yesterday at Bunnings. I walked into Bunnings and I came across someone that I recognised. And I hope he is not here this morning.

But I hope he won't mind me using him as a sermon illustration. And I said to him, oh I don't even know your name. And I did remember his name and I said it to him. And he was someone, a Christian friend, who has been missing from church for a long time now. And he sheepishly, but he honestly confessed something to me. He said, my Sundays are my own. I like to use Sundays for myself. My Sundays are my own. He knew it was wrong, but he was honest. He was downright honest. Good on him. He said what others don't have the guts to say. Don't have the, you know, the guts to really come out and say. My Sundays are my own. That's why I've been missing church.

And in a way he was effectively saying, I know it's wrong, but you know, life's busy. It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 6 where it says, what? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which you have of God, and ye are not your own. Amen. Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a Christ that will glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Your life is not your own. Your Sundays are not your own.

Your Mondays are not your own. Your Mondays are not your own. Your Tuesdays are not your own. Your life is not your own. You are bought with a Christ. Our Lord condemns casual Christianity. A Christianity that makes no impact. That makes no challenge.

That has no effectiveness. It bears little or no spiritual fruit. It carries no cross. Casual Christianity.

[10:40] What does it mean to carry your cross? I think it speaks of the suffering for Christ's sake. There's a glory in suffering. Now, Spurgeon said there are no crown bearers, sorry, there are no crown wearers in

Apathy prevails today, people. It prevails in most quarters. And the Bible says in Amos 6, Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.

[16:16] In other words, our Lord is against us becoming too casual, at ease in Zion.

You know, we need to start living passionately our faith and doing what we are able to do while we are able to do it. Be prepared to do something.

Do something. Your life is not your own. Every day of the week, none of the days of the week are your own. your life is not your own.

You are bought with a price. Soldier on no matter what. You may face stern opposition and harsh unjust treatment.

You know, I think of the misunderstandings and mistreatment that I have known personally. And this is not to make you feel sorry for me, but it's the reality of ministry. Ministry is full of that.

[17:19] You face this when you take up your cross. Every Christian does or should. Because when you raise your head above the trenches, someone's going to take a shot at you.

You will be attacked when you do something for God. You'll be attacked and your families will be attacked. That's right. And so pray for the families of ministry.

Now, I've got used to people taking pot shots at me. I could show you things that people have written. Mostly I've thrown them away. But, you know, things, ridiculous things that people have said against me and against this church fellowship.

Things like some silly person, I don't know how to put it tactfully, but someone says, someone's accused our church of having Freemasons.

I don't know, I don't know if there's any Freemasons here. Look, we don't go along with that, okay? I think I'm pretty clear on such things as that. Or, they've accused us of not dealing with heretics.

[18:27] Now, who's a heretic anyway? I mean, there's a unity of the faith I trust here today. As much as there are different views on some peripheral things, I can't see any heretics here this morning.

I see unworthy people, especially this one, who by the grace of God have found his grace and salvation. Some accusers of being legalistic in this church, while others think we are not strong enough.

Not strong enough. You know, as Paul said, how am I becoming your enemy because I'm telling you the truth? You are in the firing line. Brother, sister, you that love the Lord today, you are in the firing line.

Now, I've been accused of ignorance, of arrogance, of being unteachable, of being unfit for ministry, for various reasons. And people who we have loved and cared for have effectively stolen from us, lied to us, and cut themselves off from us, and now savage us to others that they meet, or stab us in the back.

One has a demented agenda to constantly harass us, with hateful phone calls. So we've got to filter all of our phone calls. And we've had to do this for many, many years.

[19:48] Such is ministry. That's bearing a cross. I'm not saying this to praise me. I'm saying that's what happens when you put your head above the trenches and you actually do something.

Do something. Will you carry a cross? He says to you, carry a cross? Or will you rather be a casual Christian? My Sundays are my own.

I'll come and go, I'll take it or leave it. I'll come when it's convenient, when I can fit it in. Casual, lukewarm,!

Christian, the early Christians lived sacrificial lives. Sacrificial, yet it seems the popular way today is superficial. Superficial Christian living.

Casual Christianity. As a faith that makes no demands is preoccupied, really, let's be honest, it's preoccupied with the world. The casual Christian takes the things of God for granted.

[21:07] The casual Christian takes the Bible for granted, such that they don't read it, study it, meditate on it. The casual Christian takes church fellowship for granted.

They're usually disconnected from the church. They don't want to identify with the church. The casual Christian takes prayer for granted. They rarely pray.

The casual Christian takes Christianity for granted. They compromise their values at every turn. They will not stand and be counted. They don't think of such things, what would Jesus do? It's rather whatever they think, whatever they want, they do. They don't care what Jesus would want of them. Friends, it's a trap. Casual Christianity is a trap.

The great preacher of Old Fans said, casual Christians know nothing of spiritual warfare. Maybe it's time to put your armor on.

[22:06] A casual Christian knows nothing of spiritual warfare. The evil one doesn't see you as a threat. That's why he's leaving you alone some of the time. So let's stand and be counseled.

Let's be willing to go and step across the line. Let's be willing to be a part, a regular part, an active part of an accountable community, a church.

Biblical Christianity is not casual. It's not casual. It's not a matter of convenience and when we can fit it in, but rather of conscience.

The casual Christian thinks church attendance is an optional thing. The word casual means by chance or without regularity. It's one of the first things the devil wants to do.

I've heard it said it's one of the ways that a church will suffer decline when people just come hit and miss. By chance or without regularity.

[23:11] How can we be an army? If it's a roll call and where's Smith? Where's Jones? Where's Baker? Where are they? They should be on parade when the sergeant does the roll call.

Oh, he's sleeping in this morning. Oh, he had a late night. he's got some family commitment that's blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Casual Christianity.

We're meant to be a mighty army, aren't we? Or to be a roll call at parade? The enemy would say you don't be like those religious zealots who go to church services on a regular basis.

Just go enough to keep up the appearances. Casual attendance weakens the church. It weakens the church. Romans 12 it says of gifts of members one of another.

It tells us having their gifts differing. Where the prophecy let us prophesy. Where the ministry let us minister. Where the teaching let us teach.

[24:14] Where the exhorting let us exhort. Where the giving let us give. Where the mercy let us show it. Romans 12 If we're not here we can't minister.

We can't use the gifts. We can't employ those gifts which are given for the benefit of the whole. Friends let's be an active Christian. The enemy knows the power of the church is when the people get active Christians.

Now this is not to put anyone down. Again I'm not here to keep condemnation on your head. There's valid reasons why you can't always get here. Some people went to Bali. That would have been hard for us to get here.

There's different situations as people that have got particular things that crop up out of the blue. They are genuinely sick You don't want to drag yourself here when you're full of some dread infectious disease.

But I'm talking about being honest about your commitment to God. it's not going to church that is the be all and end all. It's about being the church.

[25:26] If we are the church we'll want to get together. And so we see the church is weakening all around the world today. This survey was done and these are some people who professed to be Christians have said when a survey was done of them.

53% say the Holy Spirit doesn't exist. 30% say that Jesus died but he never physically rose again.

29% contend when Jesus lived on earth he was human and committed sins like other people.

25% said it doesn't matter what faith you follow because all faith groups teach the same lessons.

31% says a good person can earn his or her way to heaven.

12% don't know what will happen to them after they die and 47% say that Satan does not exist.

These are people professing to be Christians and no wonder there's such an absolute lack of biblical knowledge.

There's a biblical ignorance that is endemic because people are not fellowshiping they're not getting where they can get fed. The casual Christian is aiding the enemy in effect.

[26:51] Aiding the enemy by discouraging attending by not fellowshiping where they can receive the truth and be trained and learn about the things of God and then they'll know the truth that will set them free.

The casual Christian cares little for witnessing. Another definition for casual is to feel or show little concern. Aren't we to be feeling concern?

the devil wants Christians to think the Great Commission is rather the grand suggestion. We're called to witness.

It's what Christians are meant to do. Some will say well that's for just Christians who like that kind of stuff. It's an order to be obeyed.

To take the gospel. Why? Because people are going to a place called hell. Here's what one preacher described hell as.

[27:57] Picture a time that just continues to tumble on and on forever never ending never slowing down. The same years and decades and torment regret sorrow pain darkness nights never ending constant consciousness lostness aloneness loneliness rumblings from the pit groans torturing fire choking smells unending and unending no letting up no relief no comfort never resting never ceasing never relenting no end in sight 100 years rolling into another 100 years slowly turning over into a thousand years painstakingly evolving into another thousand years and finally into a million years the same grinding pain the continual bone wrecking agony screams upon screams weeping upon weeping echoing sighs upon sighs hell hell

I'm not swearing I'm talking about a place people use that word as a swear word yet it's where they're headed it's their destination and if the church of God believed in hell we care about souls we care about souls the Lord Jesus warned of hell over and over again it's not son mate believe it is a real place and it's forever forever if you're outside of Christ this morning it's your destination but that can change thank God it has thank God it has changed thank God that he can turn a life around friends Christians this morning don't be a casual Christian don't fall for that lie that you can be a casual Christian casual about your church commitment casual about your witnessing casual about your time with the word of

God and prayer God can turn you from a casual Christian into a committed one there's words that were written by a Christian from Zimbabwe shortly before he was martyred for his faith tell me if he was committed for Christ the actual words of a Zimbabwe Christian martyred for his faith he says I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed I have the Holy Spirit power the die has been cast I have stepped over the line the decision has been made I'm a disciple of his I won't look back let up slow down back away or be still my past is redeemed my present makes sense my future is secure I'm finished and done with low living sight walking smooth knees coldest dreams tamed visions worldly talking check giving and dwarf goals

I no longer need preeminence prosperity position promotions plaudence or popularity I don't have to be right first tops recognised praised rewarded or regarded I now live by faith lean in his presence walk by patience and I'm lifted by prayer and I labour with power my face is set my gate is fast my goal is heaven my road is narrow my way rough my companions few my guide reliable my mission clear I cannot be bought compromised detoured lured away turned back deluded or delayed I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice hesitate in the presence of the enemy pander at the pull of popularity or meander in the maze of mediocrity I won't give up shut up let up until I have stayed up stored up prayed up paid up preached up for the gospel of Christ

I am a disciple of Jesus Christ I must go till he comes give till I drop have no problem sorry preach till all know and work till he stops me and when he comes for his own he will have no problem recognising me my banner will be clear now people of God search your heart today is your banner clear is your stand clear today will he say to you well done thou good and faithful servant not that it's about any working of your own but you want to be found faithful you want to finish well people of God there's a war going on a cosmic battle for souls of men and women and the stakes are high a war and if we're going to win this war we need to rise up and be committed Christians not casual ones there's no time to be a casual Christian things are hotting up in the

[33:12] Middle East there's many signs of the erosion of truth of godliness of decadence arising of Christianity becoming one day virtually

declared illegal the stakes are high there's no time to waste there's no time to be a casual Christian today so we need to hear what the word of god says about the cure for casual Christianity Joshua 24 14 in part it says now therefore fear the lord serve him in sincerity and in truth in other words in sincerity it means not wavering not sitting on the fence not having it both ways not having that casual Christianity that really has got little impact it's ineffective it's fake let's face it but rather a wholehearted 100% dedication to god and that's not to say i've arrived or any of us have arrived it's a journey it's a walk and you'll take some steps forward and back you'll make some mistakes you'll blow things you'll make some mistakes along the way but god helping you keep your face set towards the goal let me read him in closing am i a soldier of the cross a follower of the land and so i fear to own his name to own his cause or to bless to speak his name must i be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas are there no foes for me to face must i not stand the flood is this vile world a friend to grace to help me unto god sure i must fight if i would reign increase my courage lord i'll bear the toil endure the pain supported by thy word thy saints in all this glorious war shall conquer though they die they see the triumph from afar by faith's discerning eye when that illustrious day shall rise and all thy armies shine in robes of victory through the skies the glory shall be thine must i be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease do we want to have that kind of take it easy go christianity when we see that need as our lord says if any man will follow me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me