

## Carelessness

An Attitude Typical of Laodiceanism

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 01-Nov-03; Sermon #636

American culture has over the past several decades become quite careless. We can observe this carelessness, for instance, in our language. I notice that. I am working with language all the time. I read a great deal. Not only do I read a great deal that is being produced now, but I read a great deal that was produced in the earlier times—historical things. And we no longer speak the same language that we spoke 100, 75, or even 50 years ago.

We no longer speak with precision. It seems like most people do not even try to be well-spoken. They just talk without a care for really what comes out of their mouth.

I notice as an editor that split infinitives are allowed in most publications now. That is putting a word between *to* and the infinitive of the verb like *to not go* instead of *not to go*. It used to be that if you had a grammar school teacher and she saw that *not* between *to* and the verb, she would mark you down for that. But, today it is allowed to go.

Another thing that is allowed in a lot of publications is contractions. We are slurring our speech so that the word *not* is now *n't*! Who knows if we were allowed to go on many more years, it might disappear from the language. I do not know. But it is a lack of precision, a lack of care with our language.

And the one that I hate the most, and I hear it so often that I even use it on occasion, is to use the word *their* in place of the correct *his* or *her*, as in "each person took *their* turn at the window." "Each person" is singular, but "their" is plural. They do not match. It should be, "Each person took his turn, or her turn, at the window." But it is allowed now even in schools. "Their" is allowed to slide.

This carelessness is also seen in the way that we dress. Dressing down is in. Casual is allowed just about everywhere. People used to dress up when they got on to an airplane to fly across the country. They were not necessarily in their luxurious top hat and tails, but they dressed in suit and tie, or, for the ladies, a dress or nice skirt and blouse.

But today, you go on a flight anywhere, jeans or shorts and T-shirts are the norm. People are very casual about appearing in public. Many seem to go for the baggy, torn, loud or just plain weird styles of dress. People are more likely to wear the jersey from their favorite football team than they are to wear a nice polo shirt for their favorite

activity.

It was not that long ago that June Cleaver and Donna Reid wore pearls, dresses, and pumps to clean their houses. I am sure some of that was make-believe. However they were at least expressing what was thought to be the standard for dress. Those times in the 1950s a suit and tie were *de rigor* for any kind of business you were going to do.

My mother has told me about her uncle who had a painting business, and he painted in a nice white shirt like I have got on today. Did he wear a tie too? Yes, he wore a tie. He painted houses like this! Now if you get a painter in, he is likely to have his grungies on, because he knows of all the splatter that is going to end up on his clothes. But the people back just a little while ago, took a great deal of care in their dress. They dressed in classical styles.

But today, it is anything goes. Now the trend is *the fewer the clothes, the better* it seems. And I say that with a wry expression, not as truth. That is the way it seems to be going. Many commentators have remarked on the undressing of America. It is almost like we have gone past even bad dress, and now it is to very little dress at all.

Our schools are another example of carelessness. What schools teach our children is just an abomination. Instead of teaching them knowledge that they will need to succeed in life, our public schools teach humanism, diversity, multiculturalism, social awareness, environmentalism, sex, politically correct tolerance for perversion—you name it. Where did the three R's go? They are so busy pushing their social agenda that there is so little time left for what really is important for them to learn.

This country used to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, science, history, physical education, and music. And those programs are all being cut back. I read within the past four to six months that there was a school in some mid-Atlantic state who was thinking of phasing out their reading program! Because the kids did not need it, I guess! It takes too much time away from their sex education classes, or something—I do not know!

There was an uproar as you can expect from the parents. "What do you mean? Reading is core." But in today's politically correct schools, reading is not core. Reading is secondary to the social programs that they want these kids to swallow.

So, these three examples of carelessness are really indicative of a general trend in our society. Americans may sincerely protest that "We care!" "We are interested in our children's education! We are interested in preserving a pure language. We are interested in seeing our children dressed properly."

But, the behavior does not change. If we really cared there would be change. We would be speaking more precisely; we would be dressing more appropriately; we would be teaching our children the essential knowledge they need to function productively as adults. But, we are not seeing change.

Today the solution to every problem is political. But do you know what this does? This allows the government to care. It is passing the buck to the government to somehow enforce mores, or whatever the thing that you want done, rather than people taking personal responsibility to change it themselves in themselves or their community. The political solution is never the real solution. As I said, it is passing the buck.

So, do people really care? They may think they do. But are their actions really showing us, or anyone else who is watching, that they really do?

Now, of course, attitudes that occur in the world, like carelessness, have a way of creeping into the church. Sometimes they do not creep; they barge in to the church. Sometimes we are so much in the world that the attitudes between world and church are only very thinly separated.

If we are careless in the way that we live in this world, not when we are here on the Sabbath at church, but the way that we live in this world; if we are careless there, we will be careless in our approach to God and to His kingdom.

Carelessness is not something that we should take lightly. It is not a *minor* problem. I hope that as we go through this you will be able to see that carelessness touches on a lot of areas of our Christian life.

I will admit that carelessness in both myself and in others is a pet peeve. I have my father to thank for this, I think, because he drilled it into us as kids to think. And usually when he tapped us on the head to let us know that we were not thinking, we had been doing something carelessly.

If we had thought it through we would have done it right, or we would not have done something stupid, and we would not have gotten in trouble. It made a life-long impression on me because I have been able to see as I have grown up and lived in the world long enough that carelessness causes a great deal of problems.

It goes from things as silly as spilling a glass of milk at the dinner table—which might not seem to be all that bad, but it is indicative of a habit that may be starting—all the way to something that is very dangerous like where one would string an extension cord. And,

you walk over that extension cord, four or five thousand times, just in the natural course of doing something, and pretty soon, the plastic insulation begins to wear off, and you have got a fire, and may not have a house. And, you might not be alive. It is just a little bit of carelessness. A little bit of not thinking things through.

My kids know this personally because I have carried on my father's tradition. I cannot stand it when my kids do things that are careless, probably because it reflects on me, that I did not teach them this well enough. But they end up bearing the brunt of it, because they are learning this too. And I have told them many times, and they will probably start mouthing this as soon as I start saying it, that if I teach them only one thing before they go to live somewhere else it will be to be careful.

But, when they leave my house—when they get out from under my authority—I hope that they are some of the most careful people on the planet, because I do not want them dead when they get behind the wheel of a 1500 pound vehicle.

I do not want them to be careless in the way they choose their friends. I do not want them to be careless in the way they use alcohol. I do not want them to be careless in how they keep their homes. I do not want them to be careless with the way that they treat their relationship with God. And that is how far it goes!

Most of the time when the kids get in trouble with me it is as the result of their carelessness—something that they should have done better but did not think it through. Jarod, for instance, just earlier this week, getting my week off to a "wonderful" start, had his remote control car that his Uncle Bill and Aunt Sharon bought for him at the Feast. And, we had not put the batteries in until we got it home.

So, here he had it out for the first time since the Feast, we put the batteries in, and he was off! This car was going everywhere around the house. He had not had that thing out but an hour or so when somehow, who knows how, one of the wheels became permanently bent because someone had stepped on it.

Now, how did this happen? Well, Jarod was doing his thing around the house, and he had to go do something. Well, instead of picking it up, and putting it someplace out of the way, he puts it in the middle of the hallway (we think) where Beth had piled the laundry for sorting. We all know that this is what happens on Monday morning. All of the laundry gets piled on the sides of the hallway, and we just make a path down the center of it, and everything is fine. We all know it. It is not a trip hazard for us.

But, he had somehow (we think) gotten this remote control car buried in the clothes

somewhere, and one of us "elephants" came stomping along, and hit the corner of that car, and did not know it. The individual did not hear it because it was muffled in all these clothes, and by the time that he goes back to get the remote control car to play with it, one wheel is messed up.

Well, he kind of got an earful from me, because I tried to bend this thing back. It is a little pin that is about an inch long that runs through a piece of plastic bracing there for the wheel, and I tried my best to get that thing straightened up, but every time I bent it, it was just bent in another direction. It was not straight at all. So, I did not make that thing any better. He is going to have to play with it with a bent wheel.

It is going to have to serve as an object lesson for him. If he wants to keep his toys nice, he had better put them away when he is done with them so they do not get stepped on.

Now, if he just thought—I know he is only four, so I was not going to string him up or anything for it. But I wanted to be upset enough at him so that he would know that he should have thought better, or thought about it a little bit, because he tends to be careless with his toys in general. I had to make an object lesson out of this one toy to make it stick. Hopefully he will not be that way for long. However just today, he left toys all over the place, and it is going to be a lifelong thing with him to get him to clean up after himself. But, that is just one of the burdens of being a parent, I guess.

But, the key is this: to avoid carelessness in anything we need to take a little bit of time to think things through. A little thought is likely to lead to a proper decision. So, one who is careless—if we want to just make an overall definition of what carelessness is—a *careless person does not make proper judgments*.

It is that simple.

Now, the improper judgments may be in making no judgments at all, not even thinking about it—head in the clouds (whoo-too-doo)—and then suddenly he stubs his toe against something. Suddenly he is hurting.

On the other hand, it might be not taking enough time to think things through to their ultimate end. This is when you start getting into spiritual problems. Are we not supposed to be thinking about our later end? God says that of Israel, "Oh if they had only thought of their latter end!"

You get the impression that if they only had sat down for a few minutes and thought things through, things could have been so much better for them. But they just barged

their way through the wilderness—tripping from one trial to another—and never giving it enough thought to look back, and say, "You know, if we would only do things this way, maybe things would not be so bad!"

But, they were always getting stomped on from one area to the next, whether a curse or a plague that God sent, or enemies coming, or having these feelings of hunger, or lust, because they were not thinking. They were getting themselves into their own messes. A little bit of forethought would have helped them to avoid many of them.

The word "careless" is not found very often in the Bible, believe it or not—"careless" or "carelessness," specifically.

In the New King James Version the word "careless" appears only twice. In the Old King James "careless" appears five times. In Proverbs 19:16 is one of them. There are actually two different words that are translated into "careless." You would think that if they would appear that few times, that there would be only one word that was used for it. But here in the New King James, and the Old King James—only seven times between the two of them—there are actually two words that mean careless.

**Proverbs 19:16** He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless of his ways will die.

That is pretty dire! We will get into this verse a little bit more later but I want to give you this word before we get too far away.

The word is *baza* [bayzah]. It does not really mean careless. It means, "to despise or disdain; to hold in contempt." The translation of careless is figurative. It is the way that it comes out. The spite, the contempt, and the disdain are internal. But carelessness comes out in the way that we act.

It could also be as in the New King James margin, "reckless." Not just careless, but reckless, which is maybe an intensification of carelessness. Recklessness tends to give you the idea of a great deal more activity, and wildness, whereas carelessness can be more passive.

Now the *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* says of this word, *baza*: "The very act of undervaluing something implies contempt."

Now I pulled that out of there because of the word "undervaluing." What this tells us is

that when one despises or disdains something or someone, he has judged it to be of very little value to him. And thus, his actions toward that person, or that thing, are thoughtless, careless, or reckless. See? This gets back to the point that I made earlier that carelessness is making improper judgments.

So, when you are careless towards something, then you treat it as if it does not mean anything to you. Now, here is maybe an example that some of you might understand.

I do not like cats. Some of you like cats. I am glad that there are people in the world who like cats because they would have a hard time if there was not any. But, I am not a cat lover. I cannot ever remember being a cat lover. We have always had dogs, it seems.

But, if I were given a cat to care for, my disdain for cats in general would cause me to be a careless custodian. I would not care if they got fed or not. I would not care if they had kitty litter or not. Maybe I would after a while. But I am not particularly a cat person, so my disdain for them would cause me to just shrug them off; ignore them. They could go back and live in the wild for all I care. There are plenty of rats and mice out there for them.

You see, the value that we place on things determines the amount of attention that we pay to them. If we do not place a very high value on something, we are not going to pay it any attention. We are not going to care for it. We could not care less about them.

Now, there is another thing that others of you might understand a bit better.

I have had the same car for ten years. I have been driving it since the summer of 1993. It is a gray, 1991 Dodge Dynasty. We have taken pretty good care of that car over ten years of time. It was our primary family car for many years until we got our van in 2000. So, now we have my car, the 91 Dynasty, 169,000 miles, and two transmissions. The thing has its trim falling off, the seats are beginning to rip. It needs various things here and there. I have come to the point where I do not care much for it anymore.

Sometimes Beth will walk me out to the car as I am going to work, and I will say, "I really would like to get a new car." And she says something like, "Well, we still have so many payments on the van," or "this is still running." But, it has come to the point where I do not care if the trim comes off. As a matter of fact, I have this secret wish while I am going down the road that somebody will hit me. Actually I would prefer it while it is in a parking space while I am inside shopping, and they hit me, so I could total it out, and put it as a down payment on another car.

But, that is how we approach things. We may care for something very much when we first get it, but over time our care for it diminishes because familiarity breeds contempt, and pretty soon, we are careless in our way of treating it. That car is what they in Chicago might call a beater. Beater cars are what the men took to the steel mill. It is their bad weather, bad road condition cars. They get rusted out from all the road salt in the winters. My car would be a great beater car.

That is the way that we treat things. Over time we become careless because we become very familiar with them. So, the value we place on people or things determines the amount of attention we pay to them.

In the Proverb here, getting back to Proverbs 19:16, the careless person has not undervalued a cat, or a car, or anything material. He has undervalued his way, which is very interesting.

He has undervalued his own behavior. He has undervalued his lifestyle, or his manner of living. He has not correctly judged his way, or his manner of living. What he has done, whether consciously or not, is determined that what he does matters little.

So, he takes no pains to do what is right, because it does not mean anything. He takes no pains, and has no care to work toward a goal. He has no reason to improve himself, or to be a good example. He says to himself, "What is the use? It does not mean anything!"

This may not be something that is conscious, but this person just does—he lives, he goes with the flow. There is no control over his way. He is careless about it.

Now, notice in the Proverb here what this carelessness is contrasted to: Keeping the commandments, it says.

The illustration that Solomon gives us here is of two men walking down a road. The one who keeps the commandments is steady. He is sure. He is secure. He is content and he has got every hope of reaching his destination.

The other one, however, is all over the place. There is no meaning to his life. He flits from here to there, wherever his lusts or emotions, or just his wandering feet, take him.

One man is on a path and he is pursuing that path with all he has got. The other man has no path. He is everywhere.



Carelessness by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

It is like the cartoon character who is so full of energy, bouncing all around the screen, ricocheting off things, finally coming to rest—"boom"—and he is smashed, seeing stars, and hearing the tweety birds flying around his head. That is what this proverb says. "He who keeps His Commandments keeps his soul." He is secure and steady. But, he who is careless will die, will get smashed, will see destruction. It is not a very pretty picture.

It is the Roadrunner—"zoom!"—and Wile E. Coyote—"boom!" Splat!

I want to show you something about keeping the commandment which is emphasized in the book of Deuteronomy. So, if you will go back to Deuteronomy 4, we will take a quick romp through the book of Deuteronomy. I want to show you in fifteen places, God tells us to be careful.

Now, what I have done in my Bible is taken an orange pencil and underlined "be careful" in every one of these situations/passages.

**Deuteronomy 4:5-6** "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LOORD my God commanded me, that you should act according *to* them in the land which you go to possess. "Therefore ***be careful*** to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

**Deuteronomy 5:1** And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and ***be careful*** to observe them.

**Deuteronomy 5:32** "Therefore you shall ***be careful*** to do as the LOORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Remember the Proverb? The man walks steadily on the path. He knew where he was going. The other one was all over the place to the right and to the left.

**Deuteronomy 6:3** "Therefore hear, O Israel, and ***be careful*** to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LOORD God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.'

**Deuteronomy 6:25** 'Then it will be righteousness for us, ***if we are careful to***

Carelessness by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

**observe** all these commandments before the LOORD our God, as He has commanded us.'

**Deuteronomy 8:1** "Every commandment which I command you today you **must be careful** to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LOORD swore to your fathers.

Put the Kingdom in there for the "land."

**Deuteronomy 11:32** "**And you shall be careful to observe** all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.

**Deuteronomy 12:1** "These *are* the statutes and judgments which **you shall be careful to observe** in the land which the LOORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth.

There is no slacking. God wants us to be careful to do His commandments every day of our lives.

**Deuteronomy 12:32** "Whatever I command you, **be careful to observe it**; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

**Deuteronomy 16:12** And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and **you shall be careful to observe** these statutes.

**Deuteronomy 17:10** "You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the LOORD chooses. **And you shall be careful** to do according to all that they order you.

This is the administration of justice within the land.

**Deuteronomy 17:19** "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life [the principles that kings were supposed to govern by], that he may learn to fear the LOORD his God and **be careful to observe all** the words of this law and these statutes,

This was specifically to the leadership that they had to be careful to do the law all the time.

**Deuteronomy 26:16** "This day the LOORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; ***therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.***

This is not just observing the statutes by rote. This is putting heart and soul into it, mind and body, you might say, in the keeping of God's commandments.

Deuteronomy 28 is in the midst of the Blessings and Curses. This particular one is in the blessings:

**Deuteronomy 28:13** "And the LOORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, ***if*** [the biggest little word in the English language] you heed the commandments of the LOORD your God, which I command you today, and ***are careful to observe them.***

If you heed the commandments, and are careful to observe them, not just listen to them, and know they are there, but actually doing them.

Now, for the last one, chapter 32. This is within the Song of Moses:

**Deuteronomy 32:46** ...and He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which ***you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law.***

The last one is about teaching them to the next generation. Not just that we are supposed to be keeping them carefully, but that we are supposed to teach them to our children to observe them carefully.

The point is obvious after fifteen verses, and within each one He says, "Keep God's law, His commandments, His statutes, His judgments carefully.

God's way is not something that we can follow easily. I think that we have seen enough to know that following God's way—observing them—takes work. It takes focus. It takes attention to detail. It takes prioritizing the important from the not so important. It takes

dedication. It takes perseverance.

And it is not just that we need to do these things to get on the path, but it takes all these things to stay on the path. That is one reason why Jesus says that the violent will take the kingdom by force. Those people who are aggressive, and energetic, and single-minded with God's way are the ones who are going to enter it. It is almost as if they have to conquer it.

But in reality they are conquering themselves, and making sure that they stay on the right way.

I decided to go to Luke because Luke's version of this is quite a bit longer than Matthew's. He puts things together a little bit differently. This is the narrow way:

**Luke 13:22-23** And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?"

That is a good question. It is almost as if the way that the question is asked the person knows that this way is not easy because he has been listening to Jesus, and the things that Jesus has been saying seems to exclude just about everybody.

Notice Jesus' reply:

**Luke 13:24-30** And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' [remember that for later] "But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. "They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. "And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last."

This is interesting because the very next thing that He says is that He talks about Pharisees. The very day some Pharisees came saying to Him, etc. I get the impression that they were Pharisees out in this audience. And maybe the one who actually asked this question was himself a Pharisee. Now, one would think that of all people the Pharisees would be among the most careful of people in following God's way. But, if were to take anything from this, Jesus has a far different perspective.

Now, the people here in Judea had been taught by the Pharisees. And so, I know behind what He said is a message to the Pharisees, not just to the people. He is telling the Pharisees in this particular way that they were careless in the their approach to God. Sure, they cared a great deal for their rules, their regulations, their self-imposed restrictions, but they cared little for the truth! They were not careful to observe all that God had commanded them to do.

They were not observing the way of life, as He mentions here, of the Patriarchs, and the Prophets like Moses, David, and Isaiah. They were following their own religion.

What did He tell them? "In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." They were careless in their reading of the scriptures. And they were certainly careless about the application of it. All you have to do is read Matthew 23 and you know for sure that they were not applying the law of God.

This tells us something. Just to bring it into our day and age, this tells us that we can be careful people in some areas, and be careless in others. It is most important that we are careful in the right areas. The Pharisees were super-careful about observing the silliest and most exacting things that they or their fathers had added to the worship of God. But, as Jesus says, they were not very careful about how they treated the widows. They were not very careful in how they treated proselytes. There were not very careful in how they tithed, truly. They were not careful in the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faith.

They were worried about the chief seats in the synagogue. They cared a great deal for praise in the streets. They cared a great deal about being ritually pure. When Jesus came, He showed them how little much of that meant in the grand scheme of things. He showed them where they should have been careful, and where they had been careless. That is why He tells them here, "If you do not change your ways you are going to be on the outside looking in. If you do not put more care into the things that are really important to God, then so many people are going to come into the kingdom before you do.

If we go back to that proverb in Proverbs 19:16, it is obvious that Jesus and the Pharisees were walking different paths, and thus God did not know them. They were not companions on the way. There was no companionship, no relationship, no meeting of the minds, no common purpose! Even though they read the same book, they were going in opposite directions. One of them was going to end up in the kingdom of God, obviously Jesus Christ, while the other ones, well, that He said they would end up outside the kingdom, which is very serious. He is talking the second death there.

Their carelessness, if they did not change their ways, is going to end up in the lake of fire. They were carelessly trusting in their covenant relationship in the traditions of their fathers, but Jesus tells them that their trust was misplaced, and that their goal would be death, just like in the proverb: Those who are careless of their ways are going to end in death.

Now, in the few minutes remaining, let us bring it to us.

Let us go back to Isaiah 32. That is funny—I say we are going to bring it to us, and then we go to the Old Testament.

Now, the beginning of this chapter is about Christ's reign, but verses 9 through 15 is a section itself, entitled in the New King James, "Consequences of Complacency." This is where we get the other Hebrew word that is translated careless.

Three times in three verses here, 9, 10, and 11, we have the word complacent, and it is translated from the Hebrew *batah* [baytay]. The diacritical marks seems to indicate long "a."

**Isaiah 32:9-15** Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you **complacent** daughters, give ear to my speech. In a year and some days You will be troubled, you **complacent** women; for the vintage will fail, the gathering will not come. Tremble, you women who are at ease; be troubled, you **complacent** ones; strip yourselves, make yourselves bare, and gird sackcloth on *your* waists. People shall mourn upon their breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. On the land of my people will come up thorns and briers, Yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city; because the palaces will be forsaken, the bustling city will be deserted. The forts and towers will become lairs forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks—until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

He says, "Woe to you who are careless—complacent," because very soon the tribulation will come, and it is going to be bad—very bad—until things get turned over completely, when God finally extends His Spirit more generally. In the last two little phrases there, where it shows the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field counted as a forest, the whole nature of everything on earth changes.

Now, this word *batah* means, "Having a sense of well being or security which results from having something, or someone in whom to place confidence."

A shorter definition would simply be, "To feel secure," or "To be unconcerned," because you are OK, and I am OK. We are all OK. We are fine. Nothing is going to happen. Let us have a beer, or something. (We will get to that when we get to Amos 6.)

The *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* comments about this,

"In particular the Bible heaps scorn upon those who live in complacency [Listen why:], never having evaluated the flimsy basis of such complacency."

There is a place in Isaiah, I believe it is chapter 44, from about verse 9 onward, that has the idea of just how stupid idolatry is! In one section it says, "We cut down a tree, and then we burned half of it, and let us make an idol from the remainder and bow down to it!"

And you can see God going, "*How idiotic! If you burned it for wood fuel, does that not tell you the worth of the whole idol? This is something that can be thrown into the fire, and destroyed in minutes!*"

But, what about God, who is Everlasting?

This is also the place where it talks about, "Can idols speak?" No, but God does! He speaks from heaven.

See, the person who is complacent feels secure, feels like he has no fears or concerns, but he has never really evaluated why he feels that way, because if he did he would figure out that he has no good reason to believe that he is secure! In fact, if he made the proper evaluation he would know that he is on shaky ground!

They do not judge themselves, or their behavior, or even question why they do what they do. They just blindly believe that they are OK and everything will be all right. And

they never give a thought to why they are in the position that they are in, and what they need to do about it. ***They care less.***

Now, Webster adds "self-satisfied" to the English definition of complacent, and that directly leads to Laodiceanism. A Laodicean is careless in his approach to God. Remember, "he has need of nothing." How much less careful can you get? He does not need a thing. He is secure. He is at ease in Zion you might say. He is satisfied with himself the way he is. These verses in Isaiah fit the Laodicean situation perfectly.

Notice in Isaiah 44:9 that God has to tell them to listen to Him! "*Hey! Wake up, those of you who are lying back on your couches!*" He tells them that they have to hear His voice. He is the one outside knocking on the door, "*Hey! Open up the door in there!*" And, they do not answer. He has to tell them to wake up from their slumber, to prepare for the trouble that is just around the corner.

Notice that He says their food supply will be cut off. "The vintage will fail," is that not interesting? The wine is going to be cut off. Did not we just hear a sermon about the "wine of the wrath of her fornication?" The thing that has been making you drunk is about to be stopped, and what will happen then? What is going to float your boat then?

His advice is that they humble themselves—put on sackcloth, and repent! Tribulation is coming, there is no time to lose. It is only a year and some days off. He says (which is a kind of a general figure of saying), "*It is close. You do not have much time to change!*"

**Amos 6:1** Woe to you *who are* at ease in Zion, and trust in Mount Samaria, notable persons in the chief nation, to whom the house of Israel comes!

Yeah! The whole nation is going to these notable people. And are the people in Zion doing the same thing? I sure hope not!

What is Zion? Zion is the place on which the Temple is built. Sounds very much like the Church to me, or the people of God. At least, in the figurative; it at least stands for the people of God. And you know that Amos was not going to the Jews. Amos was a prophet to Israel. Zion was in Judah. So, this is to me a very pointed reference to those people who call themselves, "those of God's house." He is saying here, "Are you trusting in America to save you? Do you trust Mr. George Bush to make things right, and to keep the good times rolling?" Is he not a notable person in the chief nation? He is the most notable person in the chief nation! All of Israel is looking toward him for salvation. And God says, "Woe to you in Zion if you are going to trust in that!"



It is a reed that is going to break!

Do you trust in God's promises, even? To Abraham to keep us from trouble? "Oh, God has blessed Israel with all these things. We will come through in the end."

That is idolatry!

God gave those things to Israel in spite of Israel. He gave them only because of His promise to Abraham, and because of the plan that He was fulfilling. He can take them away as soon as, and as often as He likes. Just because we are in Israel, just because we are Americans, does not mean a thing.

**Amos 6:2** Go over to Calneh [a city outside the borders of Israel] and see; and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory?

Do you understand what He is saying? He says that we live in a nation that is no better, no bigger, no greater than the other nations. So what if America is Israelite. It is coming down because of these things in the book of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, all the way up and down the Bible to the book of Revelation that tells us that the whole nation is sick from the head to the toes. The whole nation has been drunk on the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and it is going to fall.

Notice:

**Amos 6:3-6** Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near; who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

"Hey, we will come through. It is ok! Do not worry!"

**Amos 6:7** Therefore [conclusion!] they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, and those who recline at banquets shall be removed.

In another place, it talks about them being removed with fishhooks through their noses.

Amos is telling us here what careless living causes. Notice that the first thing he tells them is that they put far off the day of doom. Do you know what this is? Keith Larson calls it, "Reality Narcolepsy." It is blindness to reality. It is going to sleep at the switch. That is exactly the problem of the Laodicean. He tells them, "buy from Me eye-salve so that you can see." He means take off the blinders and see what is actually happening. Be aware of what is actually going on.

And then he said there in verse 3 that it is this blindness that actually accelerates the ultimate destruction. Because you make the day of doom afar off, it causes the seat of violence to come near. Our defenses are down because we think that everything is hunky-dory, and the enemy sneaks right in to the very house, the very center of our nation, of our culture, of our civilization.

It says here that it causes people to lie down. That is halfway to falling asleep. And they lie down to satisfy themselves, when God, in Ephesians 6 tells us to stand up and to stand fully clad in His armor, because we need to be prepared to act, to move, to fight if need be. You cannot do that lying down. That prone position is the most defenseless position of all. Satan can come up and put one of his darts right through your heart. You have nothing to defend yourself with.

He goes on to say here in Amos that it causes us to get involved in distracting activities. This is the music metaphor he used here. People are so busy chanting, and making instruments, which maybe they even use for their religious observances, but it was the wrong focus. God loves to be praised by music. He has given us talents to do such things. I am just using it as an example here. But if we have our focus on something that is not of God, or necessary for the time, we are going to lose out on it. God wants us to be focused on His kingdom and His righteousness.

They are using this music, or whatever the distracting activity is, for their own pleasure and their own self-promotion. They wanted to be known as an inventor of an instrument like David. Was not David the most noteworthy Israelite? They all wanted to be like David. They did not want to be like God. They wanted to be known in history as someone who was a great composer, or whatever.

God wants us to strip down to the bare essentials. Peter tells us to gird up our loins, and Jesus tells us to be single-minded in the pursuit of His righteousness.

Then we go on here in verse 6 that says that carelessness cause us to go to extremes in pursuing our self-satisfaction, until we become overindulged and over-pampered, when God wants our minds off of our self, and on to what is truly important.

Jesus says, "He who loses his own life for my sake shall find it."

The end of verse 6 shows us that carelessness causes us to have little feeling or care for the people, or the culture destroying itself around us, when God wants us to sigh and cry over these abominations that are happening. Carelessness causes us to fixate on the self. He who is fixated on himself is oblivious to the true extent of what is taking place around him.

That is why He says, "Woe to you in Zion who are at ease," because it is bad news.

I told you to remember walking in the street about Jesus' saying in the little parable there in Luke 13 about walking in the street. If you would like to put it down, Proverbs 1:20-33 shows **wisdom** walking in the street, shouting, crying out, yelling, saying, "Look! I have the answers! If you would just listen to me, I will tell you the right way to live!"

And there is a deafening silence. The people will not even come to the door and listen. At the end of that, it talks about those who are complacent, who are at ease. They are inside their homes, their nicely paneled houses doing their own thing. They will not listen to wisdom, which is God.

You can also write down Song of Songs 5:2-8 where the Beloved comes to the door of the Shulamite's house, and knocks, and asks to come in. And the Shulamite says, "No. I do not think so. I have already taken off my robe, and I have gotten into bed. Sorry." And so, He goes away.

And suddenly, she comes to herself, and says, "Oh! My Beloved. I had better go and see Him!" She opens the door, but He is gone. She runs into the street, and is promptly abused by the soldiers that are patrolling outside. She did not care enough for Him to answer when He called, and she paid the price.

Let us go to Lamentations 1 as we wrap up here. I just want you to see how God judges this. He looks and shows through Jeremiah here how things happened, and the reasons for her destruction.

**Lamentations 1:7-8** In the days of her affliction and roaming, Jerusalem

Carelessness by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

remembers all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, with no one to help her, the adversaries saw her and mocked at her downfall. Jerusalem has sinned gravely, therefore she has become vile. All who honored her despise her because they have seen her nakedness; tes, she sighs and turns away.

An allusion here to her sin—spiritual adultery, idolatry—going away from God. Verse 9:

**Lamentations 1:9** Her uncleanness *is* in her skirts; ***she did not consider her destiny***; therefore her collapse was awesome; she had no comforter. [Jeremiah says,] "O LORD, behold my affliction, for the enemy is exalted!"

At least, that is how I take it. Maybe that is Jerusalem speaking.

Jerusalem did not consider her destiny; that is, she did not think through the course of her actions. She did not sit down and say, "OK. If we do this, are we going to end up here, or there?" She does not have any foresight to see the projection of her way of life. She had not considered the consequences of her spiritual adultery. Her idolatry, her adultery brought forth not a beautiful baby, but death, and the destruction of everything she considered pleasant. That is why I read verse 7.

She was careless, and her collapse was calamitous. When God says something is awesome, it is bad; it is huge.

As we read Proverbs 14:14, just ask yourself, personally, which are you?

**Proverbs 14:14-16** The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above. The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps [he thinks, he is careful]. A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident.

Which are we? The backslider, the simple, the fool, or as I have said in this sermon, the careless? Or are we the good, the prudent, the wise, the careful?

Which one of these destinies do we want? Do we want to be satisfied from above? Do we want our steps to be good ones? Do we want evil to depart from us? Or do we want these other things that end in destruction and death? Which one do we care enough

Carelessness by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

about to pursue?

Let us resolve to be careful to observe God's way in every decision of life, large and small. Think about the consequences of our actions. Think about pleasing God in everything.