

Overcoming Sin (Part 13)

Indifference

Revelation 3:14-16

I. Introduction: 1, 2

- I. 3 The word “indifference” is not found in the Bible, however, several passages address the subject.
 - A. While we may not appreciate or understand how something like indifference can be considered a sin, the Bible reveals it is a sin against both God and man.
 - B. The word “indifferent” means: 1. Having or showing no partiality, bias, or preference; neutral; 2. Having or showing no interest, concern or feeling; uninterested, apathetic, or unmoved.”
 - C. The word “indifference” means “lack of concern, interest, or feeling; apathy” (Guralnik).
2. Indifference is disinterest, coldness, apathy, detachment, or unconcern.
 - A. God seeks to find the opposite attitude in man.
 - B. God calls us to make a decision and choose a side with regard to serving Him (**Josh. 24:15**: “...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...”; **1 Kgs. 18:21**: “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.”; **Rev. 3:15**: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.”).
 - C. Jesus taught that men were either with Him or against Him (**Matt. 12:30**: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”).
 - (1) There is no middle ground regarding our commitment to the Lord; no “fence sitters”!
 - (2) When we consider what God has done for us, we must realize indifference is one of the most insulting attitudes that one can have towards God.
3. Indifference is a sin; Jesus told the Laodiceans to repent (**Rev. 3:19**: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”).
 - A. When was anyone ever told to repent when they had not sinned?
 - B. Their indifference (the fact they were neither cold nor hot) resulted in a separation from Christ.
 - (1) He was ready to spew them out of His mouth (v. 16).
 - (2) Sin separates us from God; thus, we must logically conclude indifference is a sin.
4. Indifference is a calloused disregard for the love of God and the plight of our fellow man.
 - A. As such, it is unfitting in the life of a Christian.
 - B. In this lesson, we will consider some of the consequences of indifference, as well as some things we can do to overcome this sin.

II. Discussion:

- I. 4 Consequences of Indifference: Indifference may not seem like a serious thing, but like all sin it carries serious consequences.
 - A. ** It disgusts God:
 - (1) The lukewarmness and indifference of the Laodiceans elicits a strong emotion out of the Lord—disgust (Rev. 3:16).
 - (2) Heartless indifference, not an overly vile transgression, brings Jesus to the point of vomiting.

- (3) I can easily understand that if I were an adulterer, a thief, or a murderer how I would be disgusting in the sight of God. But I can do none of those things, I can dress in a nice suit and attend every service and yet the Lord is ready to vomit me out of His mouth if I'm indifferent.

B. 5 It discourages brethren: Prov. 10:26: *"As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy man to those who send him."*

- (1) Those who are diligently striving to serve the Lord cannot help but be discouraged by those who profess the same Lord, but display indifference towards His cause.
- (2) Things like poor attendance and contribution, lack of preparation for Bible classes, lack of interest in get-togethers, lack of concern for brethren who ask for prayers and help, preference for worldly interests, companions, standards, etc., are all sources of discouragement to faithful brethren.
- (3) A congregation saddled with indifferent brethren is like a ball and chain around one's leg.
- (4) A chain is only as strong as its weakest link; the same is true with the church.

C. 6 God's "house" is abandoned:

- (1) The prophet Haggai rebuked the Jews for rebuilding their own houses while neglecting their work on the Temple (**Hag. 1:4-11**).
- (2) They suffered want because of the indifference they were showing towards the things of God.
- (3) God rebuked the shepherds for allowing His flock (Israel) to wander through the mountains with no one seeking or searching for them (**Ezek. 34:1-10**).
- (a) These shepherds (spiritual leaders) only cared about themselves.
- (b) They were indifferent to the spiritual well-being of those under their charge.
- (4) We can be just as indifferent towards the things of God's "house" today.
- (a) ✖ The work of the church must be done; it's the most important work on earth!
- (b) Souls will perish without hearing the gospel; saints need to be taught, exhorted, strengthened, rebuked, and corrected.
- (c) Sacrifices need to be made so this important work can be done.

D. 7 The needy are neglected:

- (1) There will always be poor individuals who are in need of help (Mk. 14:7: *"For you have the poor with you always..."*).
- (a) There will always be urgent needs that must be met (**Titus 3:14**: *"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."*).
- (b) Indifferent people are selfish, the opposite of what God expects of us (**Heb. 13:16**: *"But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."*).
- (2) Indifference causes us to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the plight of those who are in desperate situations.
- (3) Indifference also causes us to turn away from injustices and the plight of the helpless (**Isa. 57:1**: *"The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil."*; **Eccl. 4:1**: *"Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter — On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter."*); David felt abandoned because he felt as if no one cared for his soul (**Psa. 142:4**: *"Look on my right hand and see, For there is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul."*).

(4) We have obligations to those in need!

(a) Spiritual: Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20

(b) Benevolence:

- ✓ Congregation (**1 Cor. 16:1**: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also.”).
- ✓ Individuals: **Jas. 1:27**: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”; **Mt. 25:31-46**

E. 8 We will lose our soul:

(1) The Bible makes it clear destruction and damnation are the ultimate consequences of man's indifference towards the things of God.

Psa. 28:5: “Because they do not regard the works of the LORD, Nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them And not build them up.”

Prov. 19:16: “He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, But he who is careless of his ways will die.”

Zeph. 1:12-13: “And it shall come to pass at that time That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart, ‘The LORD will not do good, Nor will He do evil.’ 13 Therefore their goods shall become booty, And their houses a desolation; They shall build houses, but not inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.”

(2) We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12; **Heb. 2:1-3**).

(3) Carelessness and indifference will cause us to neglect this important work to the point we lose our soul's salvation.

2. 9 How to Overcome Indifference:

A. ** Love:

(1) Many people believe “hate” is the opposite of love, but it isn't.

(2) Indifference is the opposite of love; love is a strong emotion, as is hate, but indifference is the absence of any emotion.

(3) What causes indifference in a relationship? Taking one another for granted; failure to consider the needs and interests of your spouse, etc. Love keeps these things from happening.

(4) Love provokes us to do good for others (**1 Cor. 13:4-7**: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”; **1 Jn. 3:17-18**: “But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”).

(5) Love causes us to value each individual soul! **Lk. 15:4-7**

(6) Nature hates a vacuum! When we fail to do positive things required to maintain a good and proper relationship with God (prayer, Bible study, worship, etc.) it will leave a void and a vacuum that Satan will fill (**Matt. 12:43-45**).

B. 10 Zeal:

(1) The Laodiceans were indifferent towards Christ: “be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

(a) To have zeal is to have warmth of feeling for something or someone.

- (b) The Laodiceans needed to be warmed up, stirred up, and woken up; they needed to become alive and active; they were “dying on the vine.”
- (2) The Bible tells us to serve the Lord with zeal (**Rom. 12:11**: “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.” (NIV); **Heb. 6:11-12**: “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”).
- (3) Zeal comes from the fellowship and association we have with our brethren (**Heb. 10:24-25**: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”; **2 Cor. 9:2**: “for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority.”).
- (4) What if everyone in this congregation had the same zeal as me?

C. **11 Let Christ into our lives:**

- (1) The reason the Laodiceans were lukewarm was because they had left Christ out of their lives (**Rev. 3:17-20**: “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”).
- (a) The city of Laodicea was extremely wealthy; this gave the citizens a smug sense of self-sufficiency.
- (b) “So wealthy was this city that its inhabitants declined to receive aid from the government after the place had been partly wrecked by an earthquake” (Hendriksen, p. 76).
- (c) Apparently, the church in Laodicea had the same attitude towards Christ.
- (d) They had become complacent; they felt they were managing just fine on their own.
- (e) This caused them to be indifferent towards the Lord’s instructions and warnings.
- (2) Left alone, liquid will slowly work its way to room temperature.
 - (a) Something has to be added to it to make it warm or cold.
 - (b) The same is true of a Christian; if we separate ourselves from Christ, we will slowly take on the “temperature” of our surroundings, becoming indifferent to the commitment we initially made to the gospel.
 - (c) But, if we let Christ back into our lives (through Bible study and faithful service), we will become hot again.

D. **12 Give of ourselves:**

- (1) The Macedonians were not indifferent to the needs of the suffering saints: **2 Cor. 8:3-5**: “For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”
- (2) They gave out of their financial poverty to help others because they “first gave themselves to the Lord.”

- (3) We cannot help but be indifferent about something in which we have no interest.
 - (a) For example, I am completely indifferent about the business section of the newspaper (I don't have any investments!).
 - (b) Once we invest ourselves (our time, energy, interest, etc.) in something, it takes on meaning to us.
 - (c) Members who are indifferent about the Lord's church are likely those who have invested the least of themselves into it.
 - (d) We are to give ourselves to the Lord, to the work of the local church, and to our brethren, not for personal gain or praise of men, but because it is right and good for us to do so.
 - (e) Jesus told the rich young ruler to lay up treasure in heaven (Lk. 18:22); are you laying up treasure in heaven? **Matt. 6:19-21**: *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

E. 13 Pray:

- (1) Prayer is a good prescription for any spiritual ill, including indifference; show me a man/woman who doesn't pray regularly and I'll show you someone who is indifferent or headed there.
- (2) Prayer is available to help us; but how often do we take advantage of it? **Lk. 18:1-8**
- (3) If we see indifference is a problem in our heart, we can pray earnestly, and God will help us overcome it (**Matt. 7:7-11**; **Eph. 3:20**: *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,"*).

III. Conclusion: 14

- I. God is not indifferent about our indifference; He calls us to make a choice.
 - A. When we consider what God has done for us, how can we choose to be indifferent toward Him?
 - B. Indifference can also be shown in a lack of love for our fellow man.
 - C. It is a neglect for others born out of an undue focus upon our own opportunities, successes, and happiness.
2. Indifference can be overcome if we will practice love, pursue zeal, give of ourselves, let Christ back into our life, give of ourselves, and pray.
3. A failure to do so will result in the loss of our souls, and we cannot afford to be indifferent about our souls (Matt. 16:26).
4. Overcome indifference through conscious effort!

Adapted from *Overcoming Sin*, by Heath Rogers, 2013, One Stone Press, Bowling Green, KY (pp. 97-100).

References:

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