

An aerial photograph of a complex multi-level highway interchange. The roads are light-colored and curve through a landscape of dry, brownish-green hills. In the upper portion of the image, a large body of water with a distinct blue-green hue is visible. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts.

Indifference

The Heart of The People

Has Become Dull

A Teaching Outline

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Indifference

Romans 3:11

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Paul uses these Old Testament references to show that humanity in general, in its present sinful condition, is unacceptable before God. Have you ever thought to yourself, "Well, I'm not too bad. I'm a pretty good person"? Look at these verses and see if any of them apply to you. Have you ever lied?

Have you ever hurt someone's feelings by your words or tone of voice? Are you bitter toward anyone? Do you become angry with those who strongly disagree with you? In thought, word, and deed, you, like everyone else in the world, stand guilty before God.

We must remember who we are in his sight—alienated sinners. Don't deny that you are a sinner. Instead, allow your desperate need to point you toward Christ.

You have seen many things but did not observe them.

Isaiah 42:20

You have seen many things, but you do not observe them; your ears are open, but none hears.

Isaiah describes God's power to create, his provision to sustain, and his presence to help. God is almighty and all-powerful; but even so, he cares for each of us personally. No person or thing can be compared to God (40:25). We describe God as best we can with our limited knowledge and language, but we only limit our understanding of him and his power when we compare him to what we experience on earth. What is your concept of God, especially as revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ? Don't limit his work in your life by underestimating him.

You have eyes, but do not see.

Jeremiah 5:21

'Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see; who have ears but do not hear.

Have you ever spoken to someone, only to realize that the person didn't hear a word you were saying? Jeremiah told the people that their eyes and ears did them no good because they refused to see or hear God's message.

The people of Judah and Israel were foolishly deaf when God promised blessings for obedience and destruction for disobedience. When God speaks through his Word or his messengers, we harm ourselves if we fail to listen. God's message will never change us unless we heed it.

And those who have turned back from following the Lord.

Zephaniah 1:6

And those who have turned back from following the LORD, and those who have not sought the LORD or inquired of Him."

Idols have been worshiped down through history. More than just a stone statue, an idol can be anything revered more than God.

Thus, idol worship is prevalent even today: People trust in themselves, money, or power and not in God. But ultimately all idols will prove worthless, and the true God will prevail. Seek God first (Matthew 6:33), and have no other gods before him (Exodus 20:3).

The people's heart is grown gross.

Matthew 13:15

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

How easy it is to agree with Christ with no intention of obeying. It is easy to denounce worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth and still do nothing to change our ways. In light of eternal life with God, are your present worries justified? If you had everything you could want but forfeited eternal life with God, would those things be so desirable?

Lawlessness is increased

Matthew 24:12

"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

With false teaching and loose morals comes a particularly destructive disease—the loss of true love for God and others. Sin cools your love for God and others by turning your focus on yourself. You cannot truly love if you think only of yourself.

The heart of the people has become dull.

Acts 28:27

For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Paul didn't complain or despair. He simply did what he could. Able to receive visitors, he taught, preached, and counseled even while he was confined to quarters. He wrote letters, commonly called his Prison Letters, to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians—letters that have impacted millions of believers down through the centuries.

Your deeds are neither hot nor cold.

Revelation 3:15-22

'I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

The Laodicean church was complacent and rich. They felt self-satisfied, but they didn't have Christ's presence among them. Christ knocked at the door of their hearts, but they were so busy enjoying worldly pleasures that they didn't notice that he was trying to enter.

The pleasures of this world—money, security, material possessions—can be dangerous, because their temporary satisfaction makes us indifferent to God's offer of lasting satisfaction.

If you find yourself feeling indifferent to church, to God, or to the Bible, you have begun to shut God out of your life. Leave the door of your heart constantly open to God, and you won't need to worry about hearing his knock. Letting him in is your only hope for lasting fulfillment.

Jesus knocks at the door of our heart because he wants to save us and have fellowship with us. He is patient and persistent in trying to get through to us—not breaking and entering, but knocking. He allows us to decide whether or not to open our life to him. Do you intentionally keep his life-changing presence and power on the other side of the door?

Neither the servants nor the people have listened.

Jeremiah 37:2

But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD which He spoke through Jeremiah the prophet.

King Zedekiah and his officials did not want to listen to Jeremiah's words, but they wanted the blessings of his prayers. They wanted a superficial religion that wouldn't cost anything.

God is not pleased with those who come to him seeking only what they can get rather than seeking to have a relationship with him. We would not accept that kind of relationship with someone else, and we shouldn't expect God to accept it from us.

My people did not listen to my voice

Psalm 81:11

"But My people did not listen to my voice, and Israel did not obey me.

God let the Israelites go on blindly, stubbornly, and selfishly, when they should have been obeying and following God's desires. God sometimes lets us continue in our stubbornness to bring us to our senses. He does not keep us from rebelling because he wants us to learn the consequences of sin. He uses these experiences to turn people away from greater sin to faith in him.

The word of the Lord has become a reproach to them.

Jeremiah 6:10

To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.

The people became angry and closed their ears. They wanted no part of God's commands because living for God did not appear very exciting. As in Jeremiah's day, people today dislike God's demand for disciplined living. As unsettling as people's responses might be, we must continue to share God's Word. Our responsibility is to present God's Word; their responsibility is to accept it. We must not let what people want to hear determine what we say.

God has called you, but you did not listen.

Jeremiah 7:13

"And now, because you have done all these things," declares the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer,

This passage applied to the evil in the Temple in Jesus' day as well as in Jeremiah's. God's Tabernacle had been at Shiloh, but Shiloh had been abandoned (Psalm 78:60; Jeremiah 26:6). If God did not preserve Shiloh because the Tabernacle was there, why would he preserve Jerusalem because of the Temple?

You have not inclined your ear or listened to me.

Jeremiah 35:15

"Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending them again and again, saying: 'Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them Then you will dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me.

There is a vivid contrast between the Recabites and the other Israelites.

(1) The Recabites kept their vows to a fallible human leader; the people of Israel broke their covenant with their infallible divine Leader.

(2) Jehonadab told his family one time not to drink, and they obeyed; God commanded Israel constantly to turn from sin, and they refused.

(3) The Recabites obeyed laws that dealt with temporal issues; Israel refused to obey God's laws that dealt with eternal issues.

(4) The Recabites had obeyed for hundreds of years; Israel had disobeyed for hundreds of years.

(5) The Recabites would be rewarded; Israel would be punished.

We often are willing to observe customs merely for the sake of tradition; how much more should we obey God's Word because it is eternal.

The house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to me.

Ezekiel 3:7

Yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.

Belief in God is not a crutch for those too weak to stand on their own. God makes his followers strong enough to stand against anything or anyone, including those who hate what is right. Just as God gave Ezekiel tough faith ("as hard as the hardest rock"), he wants to give you the stability, perseverance, and insight you need to live up to the great task he has given you. Give yourself over to God's conditioning and let him get your life in shape.

They did not listen or give heed to me," declares the LORD.

Zechariah 1:4

"Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds "' but they did not listen or give heed to me," declares the LORD.

The familiar phrase "Like father, like son" implies that children turn out like their parents. But here, God warned Israel *not* to be like their forefathers, who disobeyed him and reaped the consequences—his punishment. We are responsible before God for our actions. We can't use our heredity or environment as excuses for our sins. We are free to choose, and individually we must return to God and follow him.

**They have made their faces harder than rock;
They have refused to repent.**

Jeremiah 5:3

O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have smitten them, But they did not weaken; you have consumed them, But they refused to take correction they have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent.

Nothing but honesty is acceptable to God. When we pray, sing, speak, or serve, nothing closes the door of God's acceptance more than hypocrisy, lying, or pretense. God sees through us and refuses to listen. To be close to God, be honest with him.

In vain, God has struck your sons.

Jeremiah 2:30

"In vain I have struck your sons; they accepted no chastening your sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion.

Being a prophet in Jeremiah's day was risky business. Prophets had to criticize the policies of evil kings, and this made them appear to be traitors. The kings hated the prophets for standing against their policies, and the people often hated the prophets for preaching against their idolatrous lifestyles

Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.

Jeremiah 7:27-28

"You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall call to them, but they will not answer you. "You shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God or accept correction; truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.

God demonstrates his consistent faithfulness even in the face of human resistance. God was also "going on record" for those beyond Jeremiah's generation. See 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 for an explanation of God's detailed recording of the past failures of his people. The stories are intended to guide us and prevent us from making the same mistakes.

They stiffened their necks in order not to listen or take correction.

Jeremiah 17:23

"Yet they did not listen or incline their ears, but stiffened their necks in order not to listen or take correction.

Instead of entering the gates of the city on their way to worship, they continued the hustle and bustle of business like any other day. They considered making money more important than keeping God's law. If they would repent and put God first in their lives, God promised them honor among the nations. Over a century later, when Nehemiah led the exiles on their return to Jerusalem, one of his most important reforms was to reinstitute Sabbath observance (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

They have turned their back on God.

Jeremiah 32:33

"They have turned their back to me and not their face; though I taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction.

These pagan shrines were where the most important and grotesque part of Molech worship took place. Children were offered in sacrifice to this pagan god.

They are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel 12:2

"Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel played the role of a captive being led away to exile, portraying what was about to happen to King Zedekiah and the people remaining in Jerusalem. The exiles knew exactly what Ezekiel was doing because only six years earlier they had made similar preparations as they left Jerusalem for Babylonia.

This was to show the people that they should not trust the king or the capital city to save them from the Babylonian army—only God could do that. And the exiles who hoped for an early return from exile would be disappointed.

Ezekiel's graphic demonstration was proven correct to the last detail. But when he warned them, many refused to listen.

Most people's love will grow cold.

Matthew 24:12

"Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

With false teaching and loose morals comes a particularly destructive disease—the loss of true love for God and others. Sin cools your love for God and others by turning your focus on yourself. You cannot truly love if you think only of yourself.

They paid no attention and went their way

Matthew 22:5

"But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business,

In this culture, two invitations were expected when banquets were given. The first asked the guests to attend; the second announced that all was ready. In this story the king invited his guests three times, and each time they rejected his invitation.

God wants us to join him at his banquet, which will last for eternity. That's why he sends us invitations again and again. Have you accepted his invitation?

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion

Amos 6:1

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, to whom the house of Israel comes.

Amos leveled his attack at those living in complacency and luxury in both Israel and Judah.

Great wealth and comfortable lifestyles may make people think they are secure, but God is not pleased if we isolate ourselves from others' needs. God wants us to care for others as he cares for us. His Kingdom has no place for selfishness or indifference. We must learn to put the needs of others before our wants.

Using our wealth to help others is one way to guard against pride and complacency.

They hear your words, but do not do them.

Ezekiel 33:31

"They come to you as people come, and sit before you as my people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth, and their heart goes after their gain.

In your heart, do you really love God? These people gave the appearance of following God, but they loved their money more. Many today also give the outward impression of being religious while remaining inwardly greedy. Jesus warned that we cannot love God and money at the same time (Matthew 6:24). It's easy to say, "I surrender all" when we don't have much. It's when we start accumulating wealth that it becomes difficult to avoid loving it.

"Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work negligently.

Jeremiah 48:10

"Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work negligently, and cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood.

God's judgment made it clear that human-made resources and gods are no match for the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

The nobles did not support the work of their masters.

Nehemiah 3:5

Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.

The leaders from Tekoa were lazy and wouldn't help. These men were the only ones who did not support the building project in Jerusalem.

Every group, even churches, will have those who think they are too wise or important to work hard. Gentle encouragement doesn't seem to help. Sometimes the best policy is to ignore them. They may think they are getting away with something, but their inactivity will be remembered by all who worked hard.

How long will you wait to take your possessions?

Joshua 18:3

So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"

Joshua asked why some of the tribes were putting off the job of possessing the land. Often we delay doing jobs that seem large, difficult, boring, or disagreeable. But to continue putting them off shows lack of discipline, poor stewardship of time, and, in some cases, disobedience to God. Jobs we don't enjoy require concentration, teamwork, twice as much time, lots of encouragement, and accountability.

The reward for being lukewarm

Revelation 3:14-16

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, will I spit you out of my mouth.'

Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities, known for its banking industry, manufacture of wool, and a medical school that produced eye ointment. But the city had always had a problem with its water supply. At one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs.

But by the time the water reached the city, it was neither hot nor refreshingly cool—only lukewarm. The church had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city.

God is willing to make known his thoughts.

Proverbs 1:28

"Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me,

God is more than willing to pour out his heart and make known his thoughts to us. To receive his advice, we must be willing to listen, refusing to let pride stand in our way. Pride is thinking more highly of our own wisdom and desires than of God's. If we think we know better than God or feel we have no need of God's direction, we have fallen into foolish and disastrous pride.

Causes of failure in Indifference

Proverbs 1:28

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An invitation is given to open your heart's door to Jesus

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print