

## The Conquest of Indifference.

Text: Isa 55:6-7

Suggested Hymns:

304, 363, 307, 305, 303

- 1) Indifference towards the Christian Religion
- 2) How people reveal a spirit of indifference
- 3) Indifference towards the Christian religion is a serious matter
- 4) How indifference may be conquered

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Isaiah 55:6-7, ***6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Christian religion is a very interesting subject. It is a subject of deep interest to millions of people, whether they are church-ed or unchurch-ed. You will find religion being debated and discussed almost everywhere. Newspapers and magazines regularly print articles on religious topics because there is a strong demand for them. Books on religious matters are continuing to be issued in large numbers.

But the Christian religion is not merely an interesting topic given to us by the Lord for purposes of discussion and entertainment. It is the most important and valuable topic on earth for our consideration, because it concerns our welfare not only here in this world, but also our well-being in the vast stretches of eternity. The Christian religion deals with man's most basic need: his need of a Saviour from sin and its dreadful consequences.

The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 that ***God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*** <sup>20</sup> ***Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on***

*Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

The Bible also tells us in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, <sup>14</sup> *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Strange to say, however, there are some people who are coldly indifferent towards the Christian religion. They are not at all concerned about the eternal salvation of their immortal souls.

They do not seek the Lord or call on Him. They do not forsake the ways of wickedness or their thoughts of unrighteousness. They do not return to the Lord God. They find the Christian religion dry and dull, and the church services tedious and boring, and religious discussions uninteresting and uninviting.

They ignore, neglect, and even reject the appeals of the church of Jesus Christ and the religion of Christ. Do you and I ever take an attitude of indifference towards the religion of God? How can we overcome a spirit of indifference towards the Christian religion? Let us consider the Conquest of Indifference. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Indifference Toward The Christian Religion**

Indifference toward the Christian religion is widespread in the world. The religious atmosphere of today is surcharged with a spirit of indifferentism. Many people will carefully plan and prepare and scheme and study in order to preserve and to promote their economic, educational, political, and social affairs. Many people will skilfully invest their time, talents, and treasures to their own best possible advantage. Many people will devote years of intensive study toward the acquisition of a degree or a diploma, but they remain indifferent toward what Jesus Himself called "*the one thing needful.*"<sup>1</sup>

In the scene at Calvary the Bible paints for us a striking picture of indifference toward the cross of Christ. After nailing the Lord Jesus to the cross

of pain and shame, the squad of Roman soldiers assigned to perform that terrible task sat down beneath the cross and passed the time by gambling for the Lord's few pieces of clothing.

Take a look at those indifferent soldiers — gambling, joking, laughing — while above their heads, only a few feet away, that Man, the loving Saviour, suffered and died on the tree for the sins of men! What a picture of indifference! The Son of God atoning for the sins of the world, and those soldiers, in cold and callous indifference, giving little or no thought to the proceedings!

Those indifferent soldiers at Calvary are a picture of the careless and unconcerned people of today. How many people today live within a stone's throw of Christian churches, but waste the time of grace in appalling apathy! The average person of today is coldly indifferent toward the church of Christ and toward the cross of Christ.

As a matter of fact, even the average Christian of today is often somewhat indifferent toward the Word of God and toward the house of God. There is growing in the world around us a secularisation and a worldliness that are very sad to contemplate. People are vastly overemphasising secular and earthly matters and are vastly underemphasising sacred and heavenly matters.

Like Martha of Bethany, they are full of care about many things, but they are not full of care about the one thing that is really needful. Like the rich man whose ground had brought forth plentifully, they are full of care for their bodies, their business, their crops, their homes, their profession, and their recreation, but they often reveal a lack of concern about their religious duties and privileges.

## **2. How People Reveal A Spirit Of Indifference**

Some people reveal their carelessness and unconcern about religious matters by living as though there was no God in the world. They do not acknowledge the existence of God. They do not believe in Him, do not fear Him, do not worship Him. They are dead in trespasses and sins.

While a minister was once preaching a sermon about the burden of sin, an arrogant young man interrupted him in the midst of his sermon by saying, "*You have been speaking about the burden of sin. I don't feel any burden of sin. How heavy is it, anyway?*"

The minister paused and answered, *“Young man, if you were to put a load of 200 kg on a corpse, would it feel the weight?”* *“No, of course not,”* replied the youth, *“because it’s dead.”* *“The spirit, too,”* said the preacher, *“is dead which feels no load of sin.”*

The Bible says about those who are careless and unconcerned about spiritual values that they have *“no hope and are without God in the world.”*<sup>2</sup>

Other people show their indifference toward the Christian religion by turning a deaf ear toward it, as though it was a matter that does not deserve earnest consideration on our part. They close their hearts and minds to the appeals and to the demands of the Christian religion, and neither the solemn warnings nor the gracious promises of God have any effect upon them. They flatly refuse to accept and to apply the Christian religion in their daily lives.

The Prophet Isaiah had to complain about such an attitude even in his day, saying, *“The harp and the strings, The tambourine and flute, And wine are in their feasts; But they do not regard the work of the LORD, Nor consider the operation of His hands.”*<sup>3</sup> Jesus Himself had to complain about a similar attitude in His day, saying, *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.”*<sup>4</sup>

Remember the story in Matthew 22:1-7, where Jesus said that *“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,”*<sup>3</sup> *“and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.”*<sup>4</sup> *“Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’”*<sup>5</sup> *“But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.”*<sup>6</sup> *“And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.”*<sup>7</sup> *“But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”*<sup>5</sup>

Still other people are indifferent toward the Christian religion because they allow secular affairs to take priority in their lives over sacred matters. Jesus once said that some people *“are choked with cares, riches and pleasures of life.”*<sup>6</sup>

Now, Christianity does not prohibit its followers from engaging in earthly business and pleasures. To engage in such matters is, within certain definite

limits, altogether consistent with the teachings of Christ. But Christianity does frown upon the abuse of such things.

The reason is quite clear. When people allow the cares and riches and pleasures of this life wholly to absorb their time and attention, then very soon Jesus is banished from their thoughts, Christianity becomes obliterated from their minds, and God is disregarded in their lives. We read in Matthew 6:33, <sup>33</sup> ***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*** And in Matthew 16:26, <sup>26</sup> ***“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”***

And still other people exhibit their indifference toward the religion of Jesus by refusing to recognise their dependence upon God. They like to ascribe their accomplishments and attainments to themselves, to their own skill and wisdom. Man as he is by nature likes to say with an ancient Pharaoh, ***“Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?”***<sup>7</sup> Man as he is by nature likes to say to God, as did certain people of Job’s day, <sup>14</sup> ***Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. <sup>15</sup> Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’***<sup>8</sup>

But we invite disaster whenever we decline to acknowledge our dependence upon God. Goliath the giant, in his combat with little David, ridiculed David’s God and his reliance on God — and you know what became of him!

### **3. Indifference Toward The Christian Religion Is A Serious Matter**

Unconcern in religious matters is a very serious fault. Neglect in any area of life is a serious thing. A merchant who neglects his business will soon fall into bankruptcy. A farmer who neglects to till his crops will not reap much of a harvest. A teacher who neglects her pupils will not gain much success. A minister who neglects his flock will be called to account by the Lord.

And a Christian who neglects his Christian duties and privileges will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. Those who are indifferent towards the church, towards the Bible, towards the Christian life, towards Christian education, towards prayer, should seriously consider the warnings of God in Hebrews 2:3, <sup>3</sup> ***how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.*** And in Isaiah 32:11, ***Be troubled, you complacent ones.***

God is greatly displeased with anyone who is careless and unconcerned about the religion that He has given us. He says, and His words have been inscribed indelibly on the pages of Scripture, in Psalm 50:22, <sup>22</sup> *“Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, And there be none to deliver.* And in Amos 6:1, <sup>1</sup> *Woe to you who are at ease in Zion.*

The New Testament has this warning in Revelation 3:15-16, <sup>15</sup> *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.* <sup>16</sup> *“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

What folly, therefore, for anyone to be indifferent toward the religion of God! Why in the world should anyone be indifferent to the matter which is of the highest value to him in this life and in that which is to come? You and I must under no circumstances yield ourselves to the spirit of indifferentism that is so widespread in the world today. Too much is at stake.

By being indifferent in religious matters we jeopardise the welfare of our immortal soul. We read in Hebrews 10:28-29, <sup>28</sup> *Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.* <sup>29</sup> *Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?*

There is not a person sailing the seven seas today that is in a worse condition than the person who coldly and callously ignores or neglects the Christian religion. We do not think very much of a person who allows his business, his health, his property, his home, to go to ruin; what shall we say about a person who carelessly disregards the redemption won for him by the sacrificial atonement of Jesus, the Saviour?

#### **4. How Indifference May Be Conquered**

To conquer the evil foe of indifferentism one must first of all realise the enormous value of the Christian religion. It concerns both the temporal and the eternal welfare of our immortal, blood-bought souls. It concerns our life both in this world and in that which is to come.

It tells us that *“Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is our Lord, who has redeemed us, lost and condemned creatures, purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that we might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.”*

Anyone who ignores and disregards the Christian religion will be lost, and will be lost eternally. He denies *“the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”*<sup>9</sup>

A person who, by the grace of God, realises and recognises the enormous seriousness of the Christian religion and who realises and recognises the tragic consequences of being careless and unconcerned about the most important and valuable matter that confronts him in this world, will earnestly and sincerely repent of his sin of indifference.

He will do what the text before us urges all people to do, as we heard before in Isaiah 55:6, *“Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.”*

The hymnist writes,<sup>10</sup>

*But first rouse thee, and awake  
From secure indiff'rence;  
Else will follow in its wake  
Woe without deliverance.  
Oh, beware! Soul, take care!  
Death in sins might find thee,  
Ere thou look behind thee.*

Any person who diligently seeks the Lord, calls upon Him, and returns to Him in repentance and faith will be cordially received by the Lord. Scripture says in Isaiah 55:7, *“Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”*<sup>11</sup> And in Psalm 145:18, *“The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.”*

Let us close with these words written in 2 Peter 1:5-11, *giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, <sup>6</sup> to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, <sup>7</sup> to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

*<sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

*<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; <sup>11</sup> for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:42

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:12

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 5:12

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 15:8

<sup>5</sup> See also the story of Gallio, Acts 18:12-17

<sup>6</sup> Luke 8:14

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 5:2

<sup>8</sup> Job 21:14-15

<sup>9</sup> 2 Peter 2:1

<sup>10</sup> ELHB 381 v 2, LH 338

<sup>11</sup> See also Isaiah 1:18,