

It Is Written

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Indifference To Indifference

By Jim R. Everett

Lackadaisical, nonchalant, slipshod, haphazard, careless, apathetic, listless, mediocre, slovenly, casual – all give an added dimension to “indifference.” Disciples cannot be lackadaisical in their treatment of sin, nor can teachers be apathetic in dealing with a casual attitude toward immorality. The true glory of the church is not exemplified in the eloquence or charisma of its teachers nor in the strength and wisdom of its leaders - it rests upon the moral fiber and character of its members.

The theme and challenge of 1 Corinthians 5 is not so much the rebuke of incest -- though it was so bad that it was not even named among the Gentiles - nor the condemnation of the man so sinning. It is a rebuke of the indifferent toleration of sin in the ranks of the disciples. The call by Paul is to deal with the sin to which they were indifferent.

If they continued in their refusal to deal with the sinful man, he would be lost but there would also be a greater damage to the true light of the congregation and the loss of many more souls. A church can become so bad that it loses its illumination; and when the light of the church is as dark as the world, it is a worthless sham. Jesus said to His disciples, “ye are the light of the world...let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

The church must stand unified in a commitment to “Christ-like” character, and it must accept nothing less than every member putting forth his best effort in that pursuit (cf. 1 Peter 2:22-ff). It must, therefore, also stand in solidarity in its condemnation of immorality and an intolerance for those who continue to PRACTICE immorality. And, when it becomes necessary to discipline a member who will not walk in rank with truth, every member must do his part to try and restore the erring brother (1 Corinthians 5:2, 5, 7, 9, 11 & 13; cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10-15).

The church in Corinth was not only indifferent toward the sinful man, but they even “gloried” in their behavior and were “puffed up” about it -- the implication of the wording is that they were proud of their tolerance. However, Paul was not indifferent to their indifference. Are we nonchalant about sin? And, are we indifferent to indifference manifest by others? If so, we won't save the erring brother (cf. James 5:19-20); and the whole church will become contaminated and lose its true light.

Saved By A Religious Experience?

By Tom Edwards

We live in a time when many people will often cite their “religious experience” as an indication of their salvation--whether it was an overwhelming feeling that they “knew” was from God, seeing a “heavenly vision,” or hearing the “voice of the Lord.” But was anyone in the New Testament ever saved by merely a “religious experience”?

Let us not forget the two good examples of Cornelius and Paul. How were they saved?

Though an angel appeared to Cornelius and told him to send to Joppa for one named Peter, it wasn't the angel nor this “religious experience” - which was undoubtedly actual - that saved Cornelius. Rather, he was directed to the message of God's word whereby salvation would come. As the angel told him, “and he [Peter] shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household” (Acts 11:14). And we can also point out that it wasn't merely “hearing” the message that would save, but also responding to it (James 1:22; Heb. 5:9; Acts 10:47,48).

Paul, too, had quite a “religious experience” on the road to Damascus. Though he was earnestly on his

way to persecute Christians, he soon came to a startling, major crossroad in his life, in which he suddenly made some dramatic changes in his beliefs - for Paul had met the Lord! In response to Paul's question of "What must I do, Lord?," Jesus told him to go to Damascus for the answer. The answer arrived when Ananias, who was sent by God, commanded Paul to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins..." (Acts 22:16). Though Paul had seen the risen Lord three days prior and could certainly give mental assent toward His reality, Paul wasn't saved by just that. Rather, he had to hear the words of the gospel and submit to them - just as anyone else would also need to do - in order to be saved from past sins. Being baptized into Christ was the last step Paul had to make to have his sins washed away, to be put into Christ, to rise up to walk in newness of life, and to become a new creature in the Lord (Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:26,27, Rom. 6:3,4; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Rather than pointing people to "religious experiences," let's point them to the word of the Lord, which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), by which one can be born again (1 Pet. 1:23). Remember, feelings--and even "modern-day religious experiences"--can be deceptive; but God's word is truth and will never deceive! So never put your own feelings or experiences before the word of the Lord!

The Devil's Deal

By Dan S. Shipley

Satan desires to have all men the way he desired to have Peter (Lk. 22:31). Relentlessly, he seeks to gain advantage over men through the employment of devious and persuasive devices (2 Cor. 2:11). That some don't care and that others don't take him seriously only makes his work of destroying souls easier. Peter calls him our adversary, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking who he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Not that he looks or sounds like the lion (better that he did!), but that he seeks his prey as the hungry lion, even when appearing as an "angel of light" (1 Cor. 11:14). It matters little to Satan that most of his followers deny (even resent) being identified with his kingdom. Why should he care about those who deny voting for him so long as he carries the election? Men serve Satan as they serve sin, claims to the contrary (even by some "religious" folk) not withstanding! As John puts it, "he that doeth sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

But even worse than Satan's seeking a place in man is that man will give it! When Paul says "neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27), he implies man's ability to resist. James says plainly, "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). This means that no man has to serve Satan; that every man as a free moral agent can choose his master. It means that the only place Satan can have in man is that which man gives him! Such bespeaks of a potential and power for which every man should be thankful. Satan's power is limited. With God's help we can resist; we can endure (1 Cor. 10:13), therefore we must. The devil ever seeks a place in man, but thanks be to God, he cannot take it!

Not only can the devil be given a place in man, his given place becomes a growing place. Sin begets sin. The attitude that permits one will permit yet others, and with increasing ease. Recall David's lustful looking upon Bathsheba and how it led to adultery, lying and finally murder. In every sin lies the germ of a hundred more. And with each successive sin comes a degree of hardening (Heb. 3:13); a gradual dulling of the spiritual senses that soon numbs the violated conscience. Once given a place, the devil is hard to displace and soon expands his base of operations. That's why he needs resisting - and early!

In addition to being a given and growing place, the devil's place is also a distracting place. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (11:3). "Simplicity" here is singleness and sincerity as opposed to double or divided. Satan would divide and distract our minds from Christ - perhaps with cares; perhaps with riches and pleasures, or in other ways, just so long as it is occupied with earthly things and not spiritual (Col. 3:2). Mark it well: whatever distracts us from Christ; whatever hinders our doing His will or encourages not doing it is of the devil! His deal is simple: give him a place in you now and he'll give you a place with him in eternity (Matt. 25:41).