



## The Danger of Indifference

**Ezekiel 24:15-25** *The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover the lower part of your face or eat the customary food of mourners."*

*So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did as I had been commanded. Then the people asked me, "Won't you tell us what these things have to do with us?" So I said to them, "The word of the LORD came to me: Say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword. And you will do as I have done. You will not cover the lower part of your face or eat the customary food of mourners. You will keep your turbans on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep but will waste away because of your sins and groan among yourselves. Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.'"*

My friends, can you give me your official position on oatmeal? For most of us oatmeal is something we can take or leave and it doesn't make much difference. In fact, were we to meet an adult who had never yet known or experienced all that a bowl of slightly warm oatmeal mush can be, we'd probably reassure them that they haven't missed too much. Oatmeal hasn't roused nations to war or inspired volumes of poetry. For most of us oatmeal is a matter of indifference.

We can be indifferent about any number of things—oatmeal, watching golf on TV, or the color of the paint on the walls—without serious harm to ourselves, but should indifference take root in our relationships, there are few attitudes that are as damaging or as deadly. Indifference is so dangerous to our interconnections because it refuses to be moved. It does not allow anything to work on it. Anger does not frighten it; concern does not awaken it; love does not draw it near. Like a sponge indifference only absorbs until the other either gives up themselves or has nothing left to give.

As one reads through the book of Ezekiel, you get a sense of God's frustration with his people because of their growing indifference towards him. They were treating their Maker and Savior, his love, his promises, his commands, and his worship as objects of indifference. So, the LORD put his prophet as a sign among them to show them just how tepid their love for him had become. He told Ezekiel that his beloved wife was going to die, but in response Ezekiel was not to mourn or display visible grief. He was to continue on with his life as he always had, as if nothing had happened, for this would be the same way that the people of Judah would react once they received the news that Jerusalem had fallen, its inhabitants been killed, and God's temple destroyed. Rather than mourn these incredible losses and lament what their idolatry and indifference had brought upon them, they would shrug their shoulders and go on with life as usual.

But are we so much different than they? Indifference towards the Lord, his word and sacraments, and worship are all too frequent guests in my heart. God thunders at me with his law and woos me with his love, and so often my sponge of a selfish, sinful heart refuse to budge. Moreover, we run out of digits to count the number of family, friends, and loved ones, who have convinced themselves that the Lord and his holy things are matters of little import, unworthy of their passion or attention until they should get around to it. God forgive us all for our readiness to give up on him!

May God be praised and our hearts be amazed that in the midst of this dysfunctional dynamic he remains anything but indifferent towards us! He has given us a sign more powerful than the passing of Ezekiel's wife. On the cross he gave up his one and only Son. He gave us all he could to show us the infinite length of his love and the sincerity of his mercy. He gave until he could give no more and nothing better. The cross says it all! God's love for us is living, breathing, bleeding, dying. Jesus died for our sins so that you and I now live in the constant embrace of his fervent love. Soak it up until your heart overflows. Until your indifference is overcome—submerged in God's grace like a dish sponge in an endless ocean.

*Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, in your word you reveal that your love for me is so vast, so deep, so alive. It is from eternity. It is truly everlasting. Fill me with corresponding love for you so that I joyfully adore you and do what pleases you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.*