

Why We Tend To Turn A Blind Eye To Sin

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- [0 : 00] Cancer is a deadly disease that kills over 10 million people each year.
- You may know, very likely, you may know someone close to you who is suffering, has suffered or has died from cancer. The thing about cancer, though, is it very often starts small and unnoticeable, right?
- With a little mole on the skin or a lump in the breast. And something that it's easy to overlook, easy to ignore.
- Oh, it's just a little spot. What's a little spot going to do to me, right? That's not going to kill me. Sadly, lots of people die from cancer because they've ignored little signs.
- It's amazing how often Christians have that attitude towards little sins in their life.
- [1 : 01] Oh, it's just little. It's not going to kill me. Besides, I'm saved by grace. I can't fall away.
- It's just a little sin. It's just a little thing on the side. You know, and I'm a sinner. Can't help it. And so because of their theology, they ignore sins that they shouldn't.
- Sins that can actually end up killing them eternally. Well, the letter to the Christians at Thyatira is a stern warning against that attitude of using our theology to ignore our sin.
- It's written to a bunch of Christians who were ignoring their sin. And it's something we desperately need to hear. Because as we look at this letter this morning, in Revelation 2, 18-28, we will find at least three reasons why Christians so often contend to ignore our sin in our lives and turn a blind eye to sins that we really shouldn't ignore.
- And we also learn the dire consequences for our eternity if we do that. So I know it's not a bubbly happy topic this morning, but it is so vital that we listen.
- [2 : 24] No matter what you're doing and no matter what you're distracted by, or no matter what doodles you're making in your notes right now, just sit up and listen. Because this is an important letter for us, especially in the culture we live in today.
- There's three reasons that we want to look at this morning of why these Christians ignored their sin and why it's so easy for us to ignore our sins today. The first is, interestingly, because they got everything else right.
- I wonder if you noticed that when we were reading this letter to the Thyatiran church, especially when you compare it to all the other letters, what stands out about the Thyatirans, I hope I can keep saying that word, Thyatirans.
- It's a weird word, but that's the city that we're from. And what stands out about this group of Christians in Thyatira is how much they were actually getting right. Look at verse 19.
- I know your works, your love, your faithfulness, or your faith in the gospel, your service, your endurance, and I know that your last works are greater than the first.
- [3 : 31] Do you notice that this letter, the commendation to the church at Thyatira is the opposite of the church at Ephesus? Do you remember that a few weeks ago? The first church we read, what they were doing, do you remember?

They had all their theology buttoned down. It was all great, but they weren't loving each other and the people around them and Jesus himself. Which, of course, we saw is the very proof that you're getting your theology right and that your theology is actually landing in your life is that, is it producing love?

It's the ultimate test of orthodoxy at the end of the day. And the Ephesian Christians were getting that wrong. But the Thyatiran Christians weren't.

They were loving each other. Their theology was causing the right stuff. It was causing them to love each other, practically to love the world around them. And they were faithful to the gospel, we read.

They had strong faith in the true apostolic gospel. And they were actively serving inside the church, outside the church, and they were enduring under the trials of being Christians.

[4 : 42] In many ways, this is kind of the pastor's ultimate wish that his church would be, right? The church in Thyatira. This is, in many ways, the ideal church.

The pastor of that church would have had no problem recruiting people for the roster. No problem getting people involved in evangelism and social action. It was good.

Things were working well. It was what you want your church to be. Which makes the rebuke in the next verse all the more surprising.

Look at verse 20. But I have this against you. You tolerate. Now, let's just stop there for a second.

They were getting everything right. What they were getting wrong is they were tolerating something they shouldn't. Let's read on.

[5 : 41] You tolerate the woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

Okay, so, despite all that this church were getting right, they were also ignoring a really major issue of some serious sin in their ranks.

And it's perhaps exactly because they got so much right that they didn't think that this particular thing was such an issue. I mean, look at all the things we're getting right.

So what about this little problem we have on the side? They didn't think that this was an issue because of how strong they were in other areas.

Do you see that? That's the Thyatiran church. Kind of like the Titanic. You know the ship. You know the ship from history that sank. That's all we remember about it. It sank. But actually, you know something about that ship? It was really good in other areas.

[6 : 43] It was a top class ship. It had the latest technology for the time. It was a very impressive ship. It got so much right that it was considered unsinkable.

And that is exactly why so many people died. They never accounted for that eventuality. They didn't even have enough lifeboats for everyone. How can the ship sink? Look at all that we're getting right. Look how strong it is.

Look at the bulkheads. Look at the decks. Look at the engine. They assumed it was unsinkable and that's what caused such a tragedy. That assumption.

all that they were getting right. Well, it's often the case and I've seen it in pastoral ministry that the more we're getting right in our lives as Christians the more we tend to think we're unsinkable.

Of course. Look at me. Look at all the Christian things I'm doing. I must be one of the elect. Right? I can't fall away. No. Because look at how good I am as a Christian.

[7 : 50] Look at all that I'm getting right. Well, this letter to the Thyatirans is a sobering reminder that that is not the case. We must never think that. You can be a very strong Christian and have all the right stuff.

You can be serving. You can be actively evangelizing. You can be giving to the church. And you can at the same time have a major sin in your life that can kill you eternally.

That is what this letter is here to sober us up to. And so each of us as we read it need to ask ourselves no matter what I might be getting right look at me I'm a preacher.

I run a church. That's what I've got to ask myself. No matter what I might be getting right what sins might I be turning a blind eye to because of that?

And you've got to ask yourself the same thing. I come to church every Sunday. I'm involved. I'm on the roster. I have an active quiet time.

[8 : 57] I love my neighbor. No matter what you're getting right you need to ask yourself this morning this is what God is challenging us to in Revelation 2 what sins might I be turning a blind eye to in my life and ignoring little spots that I don't think are that serious.

That's the first reason that Christians turn a blind eye to sin is when they get everything else right. Reason number two we see in this passage that they turned a blind eye to their sin in Thyatira was that they lived in a culture that accepted it.

They lived in a culture that accepted it. So let's talk about Jezebel this woman in this church. We don't know too much about her. She was probably an individual in the church.

Her name was probably not Jezebel though because Jezebel is reference deliberate reference to a woman in the Old Testament who the people knowing the Old Testament would have known well.

We can read about her in 1 Kings and she was a very bad woman. she married the king of Israel but she wasn't an Israelite herself. She had come from a pagan nation but she was the queen and she managed to introduce into Israel God's people Baal worship.

[10 : 21] Now that's worship of this idol Baal and the thing about worship of Baal and many other idols from the pagan nations is that they came part and parcel with worshipping this idol came with sexual immorality.

So just to give you some graphic details of what happened and not too graphic, they went to these temples of these idols and they relied on Baal especially for fertility, crops, industry, economy and in order to convince him to make them fertile, they had sex with temple prostitutes whose job it was to make themselves available to worshippers.

that was part and parcel of the worship. They would go and enact their fertility so that their God would enjoy that and be convinced to make them more fertile.

That's how the idol worship happened. And Jezebel had introduced this into Israel, God's people and they had embraced it and they had started persecuting the prophets that spoke against it.

Well it turns out there's a very similar situation here in Thyatira. What you need to know about the city of Thyatira some context is that it was a major commercial city in the region and it was the center of guilds of that day.

[11 : 41] Back in the day you needed to be part of a guild if you wanted to get ahead in business. And Thyatira was where all the guild head offices were. And so your participation in these guilds was essential if you had some kind of trade.

But along with these guilds back in those days religious and secular weren't separate. They were mixed. And they had guild feasts.

It was like the end of year Christmas party. And others throughout the year which was dedicated to the idols because if you made the idols happy then you would have good business. And like the Baal worshippers there was sexual immorality involved in these guild feasts.

and it was part of the deal. It was part of how you lived in that culture in that city and it was totally acceptable the sexual immorality that came with this idol worship.

And these Christians who were also involved in the economy and in the society they knew they needed to be part of the guilds to carry on operating and so it was very easy for them to overlook this particular sin precisely because it was expected and so normal in the culture around them.

[13 : 00] Well think about the culture that surrounds us for a second. What is normal that shouldn't be?

What sins might we overlook turn a blind eye to because they're so normal and even expected especially when it comes to sex?

What does the world expect of you sexually that is actually a sin that we tend to turn a blind eye to? What might we let into our lives that we shouldn't because it's so normal in the culture?

And we let it into our lives by perhaps watching it on TV or seeing it on the internet so easily accessible pornography. sex before marriage LGBTQ and we see these things normalized on TV.

Sex in the city modern family friends even the seemingly innocuous fun show and yet if you watch those as a thinking Christian you see how many sins are being normalized and made to look like they lead to happiness and a life of flourishing and we tacitly accept them because they're so normal in our culture but you know accepting them is one step away from indulging in them ourselves if not publicly then privately behind closed doors in front of a computer screen and thinking nothing of it you know they all do it at work and yet this morning I need to make clear I shouldn't have to make clear but I realized when I was preparing the sermon I need to make something clear because it is not clear for many people in today's culture because the culture has normalized these things so much right so allow me to make clear because the

[15 : 03] Bible makes clear despite claims that it doesn't the Bible is very clear that the misuse of sex is abhorrent to God God designed sex as a beautiful thing but something that is meant to be used within a heterosexual marriage relationship alone that is what it's for that is all it is for any sex outside of a heterosexual committed marriage relationship is contrary to God's will and the Bible says it is rebellion against God and it is the result of our rebellious hearts listen for example to Romans 1 a passage that makes it abundantly clear you know when these people say oh no the Bible says homosexuality is fine listen to Romans 1 24 and onwards just in case you thought that it was okay

Romans 1 24 therefore God delivered them over this is because of our rebellion and our sin against God God delivered them over talking about humans in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity so that their bodies were degraded among themselves what did this look like verse 26 for this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions their women exchanged natural sexual relations i.e.

having sex with your husband for unnatural ones what does that mean well their men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error it's very clear right any use of sex outside of what God designed it for which is in a heterosexual committed marriage relationship is a rejection of God it's rebellion against him and it's sin and to reject your creator to reject your creator never leads to flourishing okay to reject your creator and his design for your body and for your sexuality will never lead to happiness and flourishing and you can see that in people who do they make it look very nice but behind the scenes if you just scratch beneath the surface it leads always eventually to frustration to pain and to spiritual death and so it should never be acceptable in our lives publicly privately in our actions or in our thoughts if we're

God's people no matter how acceptable it is in the world around us that is the second reason that these thyatirans turned a blind eye to this sexual sin is because it was normal in the culture around them just as it is today reason number three that they saw their sin as acceptable is that they listened to teaching that justified it they listened to teaching that justified it so in verse 20 this Jezebel woman thing about her is that she was in the church and she was teaching in the church she claimed to be a prophetess someone who brings God's word and in those days before the Bible had been completed God still spoke through prophets from time to time and here comes Jezebel claiming to be a prophetess and so they are like okay well let's listen to what she has to say it or in the text it's the deep secrets of

Satan but that's not how she would have marketed them obviously she taught deep secrets that nobody else told the people you know that's how Bible teachers can often get a following oh I'm going to tell you something that your pastor never told you okay I'm going to tell you unique knowledge deep secrets that you can only get from me listen when how to when you hear that when you hear a claim to unique knowledge that no other pastor has got or I'm reading this verse in this way that has never been read in this way before for thousands of years steer clear please because it's false teaching it's actually from Satan but what were these deep secrets he was teaching well if you go back to the time one of the most popular false was something called Gnosticism I know it's a fancy word but bear with me

[20 : 01] Gnosticism was the teaching that was very popular in this time in that region which is that the body was very separate to the soul as I'm saying that you can spot similar ideas floating around in the world today what I feel inwards my inner identity is not the same as my outer flesh right it's lasted throughout the years this idea that body and soul are separate that the soul is merely I mean the body is merely the vehicle or the shell for my soul which is the really important part my incorporeal soul and as long as my soul is saved well then my body doesn't matter right that was what Gnosticism taught and therefore justified all kinds of bodily sins right because that's body stuff that doesn't matter as long as my soul is saved as long as I am believing the right stuff and you can understand why that teaching was so popular in

Thyatira amongst Christians who really needed an excuse to be able to get along in their guilds and go along with all the sin and then they're like oh it's such a tension I need to have a job there but they want me to do the stuff the sexual immorality and then along comes Jezebel and say hey but wait you can because what you do in the body doesn't matter as long as your soul is right of course they embraced that teaching but you know that idea of Gnosticism is still very much alive and it's in the church as well Gnosticism dressed up as Christian with Christian clothes and it that as long as I believe the right things as long as my soul is saved well then my sins aren't that serious it's a very common attitude amongst Christians and you see it in in Christians who yes we know sins are bad so we go and we confess our sins and we are so happy that we are forgiven and we hear the assurance of our forgiveness and then we go out and we actually take no steps to change that and because we know we're just going to come back and confess it again next week so it's fine you know as long as

I believe the right things then what I do in the flesh well you know I can't change it I'm a sinner and it's just that pathetic excuse I'm just a sinner you know that totally undermines everything God says about the power of the Holy Spirit to change you and to give you the power to put off sin in your life to say oh well you know I just I can't help it I'm just a sinner at least I've got Jesus that's Gnosticism it's not Christianity and you know what this is particularly the case when those sins are private and perhaps of a sexual nature only you it's your private little secret and it's not hurting anyone else so what if I do this I'm forgiven by Jesus and it's not hurting anyone else it's not so bad God will forgive me but

I need to tell you this morning it is bad it is bad those sins that you turn a blind eye to that no one else knows about you know what they are you know what they are and that you just keep doing even though you confess them but you just keep doing them you know what they are you need to hear the warning of this letter you might turn a blind eye to those sins but you know who doesn't the judge with eyes of flaming fire look at who this warning is from verse 18 write to the angel of the church in Thyatira thus says the son of God the one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze this was the image of Christ that was given to the Thyatarians to remind them of something that they needed to know about

Jesus and so do we his feet are feet of fine bronze what does that mean well that's a symbol of heavenly authority on earth established on earth the heavenly authority of the son of God on earth God has established him the Bible says as the ultimate authority not authority Jesus Christ the son of God proven by his resurrection ascended to glory is the one that every single human being is going to answer to whether they like it or not whether they believe in him or not that's what the fine bronze and the authority of Christ is there to remind us of and so he defines what we tolerate not society and certainly not ourselves and he's told us what he wants us to tolerate and so society does not get to decide what we as Christians tolerate we don't dance to the tune and the narrative of the culture we serve the risen

[25 : 31] Lord Jesus Christ who has all authority in heaven and on earth but what's even more worrying when we consider those sins in our lives that we turn a blind eye to is that his eyes are like flames of fire that is symbolic of a perfect judge you know what makes a good judge a judge who sees and knows everything a judge who you cannot hide any secrets from nothing escapes the gaze of this heavenly judge and he will judge what he sees i mean look at what he says about the thyatiran christians ignoring their sexual sin listen to what he says verse 22 to 23 he says look i will throw her that's this jezebel woman into a sick bed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction this is the christians in the church he's talking about and this is what he says he's going to do to throw them into great affliction unless they repent of her works i will strike her children those who follow her teaching dead then all the churches will know that i am the one who examines minds and hearts and i will give to each of you according to your works this lord never turns a blind eye to sin even in the lives of his own people especially in the lives of his own people he saved us from sin not to carry on sinning and the only sure way you can know that you are really saved is if you are really actually putting off the sin in your life and so when you are still tolerating a particular sin in your life and turning a blind eye to it you need you know what you need and

I know it's hard I'm a sinner too and there are sins in my life that I know I tolerate when that happens you need to get this picture of Jesus in your head this authority this son of God who will judge according to what he sees and he sees everything with eyes of flaming fire you need to get this picture in your head this Lord of heaven and earth whose gaze nothing escapes so next time you're tempted to that sin that you know about I don't know what it is but you do next time you feel that temptation coming on you sitting late at night behind your computer screen or at the office party and you're tempted to indulge in what is completely normal to the people around you and what the world says is fine you need at that moment remember this image of the one who says it's not the judge of heaven and earth with fiery eyes and because of him there is only one solution for these sins in our lives that are so easy to ignore and that is not to tolerate them you see the problem with the thyatirens is that they tolerate it but the solution is not to tolerate it's to really repent repentance not tolerance is the solution look at verse 21 this is amazing

Jesus says talking about Jezebel this woman who's causing all this problem I gave her time to repent but she does not want to repent she likes the sin too much but what I want you to notice is that Jesus gave even her a chance to repent Jesus gives everyone time to repent and right now because you are here or because you are listening to this sermon on the recording he is giving you in this moment a chance to repent again don't ignore it he gives even Jezebel time to repent and forgiveness is always available as you're hearing this as you draw breath and Jesus is giving you a chance to repent he wants to assure you because of what we celebrated earlier his death on the cross forgiveness will always be available but those sins must be truly repented of turned from cast out of your life if there's to be any real forgiveness because if not if you don't deal with those ongoing sins even the ones that seem so innocuous so not a problem those little sins in your life that you know about they're actually the cancer that seems small now but will end up killing your very soul verse 23

I will strike her children dead then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts and I will give to each of you according to your works brothers and sisters don't test the patience of the judge of heaven and earth deal with your sin or he will let's pray for his grace to be upon us Lord we thank you for this this warning which you did not intend to be taken lightly when you caused it to be written down here in Revelation 2 you intended for it to hit hard and we pray that it does we pray that you would help us to truly repent of those sins that we up until now have turned a blind eye to help each of us to recognize what those sins are and we thank you that by your power you give us the strength to put those things off so that when you do consider our lives and our works you will see lives that testify to salvation not to tolerance

Lord help us to be ready for that day that you come back in Jesus name Amen