

Checkin' Out My Walk

#43 - Laodicea - The Road To Lukewarmness

Rev. 3: 14a And to the angel of the church OF THE LAODICEANS write,
The Problem Of Possession -The other letters in Revelation 2 and 3, you will see, " *the church OF or IN...*", and then the name of the city - it was the Lord's church in that city. In Laodicea, it was their church and they did as they pleased, not considering the will of the Lord.

Quote: The devil doesn't care how many church building men construct so long as they are filled with lukewarm preachers and people.

Truth: Jesus died for the church and purchased it with His Own blood.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. He builds it and sustains it > Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:19-22. The church exists for His glory. Our duty is to preach Him; praise Him; promote Him; and publish Him.

Rev. 3:14b ' *These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:* The hope of the church and the Biblical message that enables people to weather life's storms and grow through them is gratitude for what happened at the cross of Christ combined with a passionate confidence in what will yet take place at His blessed coming. The only source of real stability in this present is a deep thankfulness for the past work of the Savior combined with a confident expectation for the future glories promised by Christ.

Their Condition: Jesus gives only criticism and condemnation to this church.

Rev. 3:15-16 "I know your works [deeds], that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. [intense disgust]

A. SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE = Spiritually apathetic

You are completely useless to Me because of your spiritual indifference. You have no purpose.

Question: Can cold and hot both be a positive thing? Yes! Cold water refreshes.

Hot water can be very therapeutic and healing. Lukewarm water does neither!

Whenever you hurt yourself, we put hot pack or cold packs on.

Many people like hot coffee or iced coffee - same with tea! Who likes either lukewarm?

From a standpoint of ministry, the church provided neither refreshment nor healing; they could only cause nausea! Don't be apathetic!

Question: Do I provide spiritual refreshment to others? Do I bring others encouragement, joy and hope? Do I bring healing by challenging the careless, rousing the indifferent?

Truth: I cannot help anyone if I am lukewarm!

Dr. Adrian Rogers - 2004 Lukewarmness is not weakness; it is wickedness. It is not a small sin; it is a great sin. If the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, then the greatest sin is not to do so.

In the last days, our Lord says that lukewarmness will be the condition of the average church. Quote: "There was a time when people went to church, heard the TRUTH and wept over their sins. Today, people go to church, hear a motivational speech, and ignore their sins."

Francis Chan - from his book- Crazy Love - Traits of Lukewarm Christians

1. Attend church fairly regularly. "Good Christians" do, so they go.
2. Give money to charity and to the church as long as it doesn't impinge on their standard of living; giving out of our leftovers. If that fits you then hear the words of:
I Chron. 21:24: "I will not take to the Lord...I will not sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

3. Gauge their morality or goodness by comparing themselves to the secular world.
4. Tend to choose what is popular over what is right when they are in conflict. They desire to fit in both at church and outside the church. They care more about what people think of their actions than what God thinks of their hearts and lives. Craving people's approval!

Luke 6:26: "Woe to you when ALL men speak well of you..."

5. Moved by stories about people who do radical things for Jesus, yet they do not act.

6. Say they love Jesus, and He is indeed a part of their lives but only a part.

In Christianity there is no room for lukewarm neutrality. The individual who has not declared FOR Christ is AGAINST Him. Weak commitment is NO commitment.

Jesus will not tolerate their indifference and apathy! They were useless to the Lord due to loss of passion for the things of the Lord [just going through the motions].

Isaiah 29:13: "These people come near Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men."

Trey Morgan: Symptoms Of A Lukewarm Christian

1. Thinking more about life on this earth than their eternal life

Note: Col. 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

2. Seeking God when I have a problem

3. Saying we believe in God, but living like He doesn't exist.

4. Rarely or never share the Gospel.

5. Critical or Complaining Attitude

Quote: If you find yourself a bit irritated and overwhelmed, it's a sign that you're spending less time with God and more time with this world.

6. Blend in with the world instead of making a difference

Matt. 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

7. Justified [ticket to heaven] but not submitted to sanctification.

Quote: Lukewarm people don't really want to be saved from their sin; they want only to be saved from the penalty of their sin.

8. Say we believe in God, but we do not take the time [STRIVE] to get to KNOW Him. [The Greek word for "strive" is *agonizomai*, implying an agonizing, intense, purposeful struggle. It is the same word used in I Corinthians 9:26-27 of an athlete battling to win a victory.

Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

²⁷ *But I DISCIPLINE my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

Col. 4:12 *Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always LABORING FERVENTLY for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

I Tim. 6:12 *FIGHT the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

It is an intense struggle, a battle, an extreme effort with an intentional purpose.]

Question: How do I Strive To Know Him?

a. Put My Heart Into Discipleship

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

b. Like Living Stones...Being Built Up

I Pet. 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

c. Pressing On To Maturity

Heb. 6:1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

d. Straining Every Nerve -Pressing Toward The Goal

Phil. 3:12-15 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature,

HAVE THIS MIND; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

[So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it. The Message]

Francis Chan: God is calling you to a passionate love relationship with Himself.

The answer to religious complacency isn't working harder at a list of do's and don'ts.

It's falling in love with Jesus Christ.

How Did They Become Lukewarm?

A. SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Rev. 3:17 BECAUSE YOU SAY, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing...

Laodicea was famous for 3 things: (1) Wealth - many banking centers

(2) Production of Soft, black wool (3) Produced eye salve for medical conditions

Ray Steadman: Laodicea was sort of a first century Bank of America, Macy's and Mayo Clinic all rolled into one.

They possessed material wealth and the arrogant, proud, self-sufficient attitude with it. This attitude was further revealed when an earthquake destroyed the city in AD 60. The Roman government offered to subsidize and pay for the rebuilding of the city. Laodicea refused the money.

Tacitus: "Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources and with no help from us."

Note: We should NEVER look to wealth for our security and contentment in life. When we begin to put our trust in those things, instead of what we possess in God alone, we are in danger of moving toward a state of spiritual lukewarm-ness and spiritual apathy.

Note: A lukewarm person is more difficult to reach; he feels comfortable & self-sufficient.

I Tim. 6:17 Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Quote: I will not trust in riches, but in Him who richly provides. Rich in what matters most!"

Laodicea lost their impact on the world because they were occupied with the world and left the Lord standing outside.

WARNING: Beware Of Self-Sufficiency! Pursue a vital, growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Do not lose your sense of dependence on God and the sense of your needing Him.

C.S. Lewis: "The thing is to rely on God. The time will come when you will regard all this misery as a small price to pay for having been brought to that dependence. Meanwhile, the trouble is that relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing has yet been done."

What makes you feel secure? What makes you feel self-sufficient that you have it under control that you are okay? Is it your financial wealth, your husband, your family? Perhaps it is your status in your church or the community. But, what happens if God removed those things from your life tomorrow? Will your world crumble? His blessings to us must never take His rightful place in our lives. He alone is constant and completely trustworthy.

WARNING: Beware of spiritual blindness! An attitude of self-sufficiency will prevent you from seeing your need for Christ. When we do not see our need for Jesus Christ, we are in danger.

I Tim. 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty [conceited], nor to trust [fix their hope] in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let them [Instruct them] do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.[the life that is truly LIFE]

How Did They Become Lukewarm?

B. SELF-DECEPTION

Rev. 3:17 you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Note: They do not have a clue as to their condition.

Jesus' Diagnosis: You Are In Need Of Everything.

1. You are WRETCHED: Greek word (talaiptos) which comes from the word talai meaning "to bear, undergo" and ptos which means "hard, callous."

They were wretched in the sense that they were bearing severe calluses on their soul, hardened against the truth.

Note: A hardened heart will keep you from perceiving spiritual truth.

2. "MISERABLE" means "pitiable." "POOR" is beggarly.

He becomes the object of extreme pity, like a beggar. Begging for crumbs to fill his hunger or craving. The real pity is that they were like a drunk in the cold; they could not feel their condition. Those who try to find happiness and security in the things of the world are like beggars trying to exist on crumbs.

3. "BLIND" -without spiritual insight or discernment.

Spiritual blindness, poor spiritual insight or a lack of biblical perspective is the problem.

Traits of Spiritually Blind

1. They place burdens which God did not require. [Matt. 15:1-20]

Acts 15:10 Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

2. They remove burdens God did require. [Rev. 2:20-24]

Acts 21:25 But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, ...

3. They cause others to fall in the ditch with themselves.

Matt. 15:14 They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

Truth: Religious blinded minds are blinded because of self-righteousness and lack of the truth.

Rev. 3:17 Christ, as the True and Faithful Witness, describes the condition to which they were blind and totally insensitive because of their lukewarmness, a condition caused in part by their

1. FAILURE TO DESIRE:

I Pet. 2:2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

2. FAILURE TO KNOW & RESPOND TO THE WORD:

I Thess. 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Veiled Heart & Blinded Mind - It is a tragedy for a person to have blinded eyes, but infinitely worse to have a blinded heart. No one willfully chooses to be sightless, but spiritual blindness is a product OF THE HUMAN WILL.

Seeking happiness in the treasures of the world is at heart, an eyesight problem, a problem of blindness or poor spiritual eyesight.

Matt. 6:19-23 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of

light.²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.
If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

The Results of Good Eyesight or Spiritual Illumination

Psalm 119:11-14 Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

¹² Blessed *are* You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes.

¹³ With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth.

¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as *much as* in all riches.

Ps.119:99-105 I have more understanding than all my teachers,

For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.

¹⁰¹ I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word.

¹⁰² I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me.

¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

¹⁰⁵ Your word *is* a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Ps. 19:10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Prov. 16:16 How much better to get wisdom than gold!

And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

4. You are "NAKED:" Greek word *gumnos* > It meant (a) to be totally without clothes, or (b) to be poorly clothed, dressed in rags. Though they were rich, and manufactured and wore expensive clothing, and made eye salve, they were, spiritually speaking, in pitiful condition. We may flatter and deceive ourselves, but He sees and He knows us as we really are. He knows our true spiritual condition.

If you walk into the average church today and told them that they needed a revival, they would be offended. If you encouraged them to get on fire for God, they would say, "*Look at us and all we have! We are doing fine and we need nothing!*" The sad truth is some people get more excited about money in the bank than they do souls on the altar. They get more stirred up about a big number on a board than they do about sincere worship of the Lord. They are more blessed by what they have than by the Lord showing up and moving in a service! John Stotts: "Laodicea describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so wide-spread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic. We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion. We have no problem being PASSIONATE about other things, but not our Christian faith—that would make us stand out a little too much." A luke-warm, passionless believer loses his power to attract people. In fact, they have a REPELLING effect. On the other hand—a Christian—or CHURCH—that is ON FIRE PASSIONATE in the way they follow Christ is incredibly attractive.

Dr. Nathan Barlow - Mossy Foot Project

Challenge of Self-Examination >

Ps. 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

²⁴ And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.