

Checkin' Out My Walk
#44 - Prescription For Lukewarmness

Question: What is the greatest challenge facing the church today? Is it Christian persecution? Persecution is the fastest way to grow a healthy and vibrant church.

It is more than a curiosity that the church has flourished in persecuted areas while it is dying in the West. Lacking any visible external threat to our faith, many in the free world have lost any sense of the subtlety of the enemy and how he attacks. We have grown careless and apathetic. Am I more concerned with my own comfort and well-being than with the Command Of Christ that I should follow in His steps?

I Pet. 2:20-21 For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. ²¹ For To This You Were Called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Consider: The greatest challenge to any church or individual is prosperity.

Rev. 3:17a Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,'

II Tim. 3:1-2,4-5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men will be lovers of their own selves...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Question: Are we blind to the effects of our own forms of greed?

Greed-driven behavior is not exclusive to the world. It is in the church among God's people, but often we are too blind to see it. Think of how often GREED [laying treasures on the earth and desires for the good life] negatively affects the body of Christ:

(1) Greed tarnishes the testimony of Christ when business professionals compromise integrity and Biblical values to cut a less than honorable deal.

(2) Greed shreds families when parents devote their best energies to dreams of the "good life" leaving little strength or time for caring for the spiritual well being of their family.

(3) Greed injures the church and ministry for the same reasons because people are so engulfed in the pursuit of position, power, praise, prestige, and pleasure that there is neither time nor energy to devote themselves to the Word, to ministry, or to liberal giving.

The key to identification of the Age Of Laodicea: lukewarm and spiritually blind.

a. Diluted Word - Only when the gospel became so watered down that it no longer contained a message of salvation could Laodicea arrive in full force in the institutional churches.

Tozer: Christianity and God's Word has been so watered down until the solution is so weak that if it were poison it would not hurt anyone, and if it were medicine, it would not cure anyone.

b. Twisted Word -Christian leaders twist God's Word to conform to their own pet theories. Few followers are any the wiser because of the Biblical ignorance that prevails in "Churchianity."

c. Biblical Ignorance -Most members of churches today do not know the plan of salvation or the fundamental teachings of the Bible. Christians claim to believe the Bible is God's divinely inspired Word, and His inerrant message. Yet despite this, we aren't reading it.

A recent LifeWay Research study found only 45% who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40% read their Bible occasionally, once or twice a month.

Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they *never* read the Bible.

II Pet. 3:16-17 There are some things in those [epistles of Paul] that are difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist *and* misconstrue to their own utter destruction, just as [they distort and misinterpret] the rest of the Scriptures.

Let me warn you therefore, beloved, that knowing these things beforehand, you should be on your guard, Lest You Be Carried Away by the error of lawless and wicked persons and fall from your own [present] firm condition [your own steadfastness of mind].

Truth: Mix God's perfect unchanging Word with man's fallible, ever-changing opinions = "theological Jello." You cannot stand on theological jello.

Spurgeon: Beware of those who say there is no hell, and who declare new ways to heaven.

God's Word Calls Believers: Study & Know The Word Of God:

1. Master the Word so you will not be deceived by any false teaching.

II Tim. 3:14-17 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ 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. [surrendering your entire self to Him and having absolute confidence in His wisdom, power and goodness]. ¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine [what's right], for reproof [what's wrong], for correction [how to get right; of error and restoration to obedience], for instruction in righteousness [how to stay right], ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete [perfect, mature], thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. A Command To Confront & Refute False Teachers

Titus 1:10-11;16 For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

3. Know The Truth So You Can Confront False Teaching and Protect Yourself From It

Acts 20:28-30 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. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

II Tim. 2:15 Study *and* be eager *and* do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing *and* accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

Laodicea MUST: Rekindle the Passion for Jesus Christ and Overcome Their Lukewarmness.

The Cure For Lukewarmness & Apathy:

I. Be Rich Spiritually

Counsel of Jesus Christ: Time Is Running Out

Rev. 3:18a I counsel you to Buy From Me Gold Refined In The Fire, that You May Be Rich

A. "Buy From Me" All their wealth cannot buy what they need!

Jesus is not asking you to "do more" or "try harder."

Quote: Trying to change people by pushing them to try harder or do better will not result in improved performance. If you want a new level of performance, you must get a new system.

Jesus presents HIMSELF as the answer!

Spiritual wealth can only be received by faith and bought only from Christ.

Isaiah 55:1- "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, BUY wine and milk WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE.

Instead of storing up material wealth you should buy [acquire or gain] gold refined by fire.

1. Purchase Price is merely: to recognize your wretched condition and come to Him in repentance, forsaking your riches and prestige for the true riches = faith tried in the fire.

I Pet. 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the GENUINENESS OF YOUR FAITH, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Gold is a picture of faith produced by God's own Word by which you bring the spiritual riches of Christ into your life. Gold tried in the fire symbolizes faith in Jesus Christ, tested by the fire of adversity and trials, to prove the genuineness of my faith.

Deut. 13:3 the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers: Has not God chosen the poor of this world

Rich In Faith, and Heirs Of The Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?

2. Purchase Price is merely: Forsake worldly wisdom for true wisdom in Christ.

Col. 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

II. Spiritual Vesture [cure for lukewarmness & spiritual apathy]

Rev. 3:18b White garments so that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed;

Wear White Garments ["white raiment"] = symbolic of righteous conduct or righteousness that would cover our spiritual nakedness.

a. Imputed Garment Of Justification is the righteousness of Jesus Christ

II Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the

Righteousness Of God In Him.

b. Garment of Sanctification = Experiential righteousness = Fruit of The Spirit

Acts of righteousness from living in the Word, walking in fellowship by abiding in Christ.

Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control.

Rev. 3:4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

Rev. 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is The Righteous Acts Of The Saints.

III. Spiritual Vision [cure for lukewarmness & apathy]

Rev. 3:18c anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Why are people dead, dry, and indifferent spiritually? [1] They can't see themselves as they are.

II Cor. 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

I Cor. 2:14-16 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. ¹⁶ For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But We Have The Mind Of Christ.

[2] They cannot see Jesus Christ as He truly is! He can open blinded eyes.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the LORD *is* upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to *the* poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to *the* captives and Recovery Of Sight To The Blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; [Isa. 61:1-3]

They needed their spiritual eyes opened to see themselves as He sees them.

(1) A reference to the Word of God that enables us to clearly see God's perspective.

(2) Person & work of the Holy Spirit who anoints our eyes to discern His Word.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 16 13 When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.

Eph. 1:17-18 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling.

Only Christ can supply an everlasting inheritance, clothe us in righteousness, and heal our spiritual blindness.

ADMONITION OF JESUS CHRIST

Rev. 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Remember: These letters are written to the church > the believers. He promises to rebuke and discipline them to bring them out of their self-sufficiency and into the sufficiency of His life.

1. A Word Of Compassion - "*as many as I love*"

Jesus calls them and continues to love them even when they reject Him and His love.

2. A Word Of Caution - "*I rebuke and chaster*" - He will use two methods to turn us to Him.

a. "Rebuke" = "*to convict, or to correct*".

He will convict us in our hearts via the ministry of the Holy Spirit and His Word. [John 16:7-11.]

If we fail to heed His rebukes, He will use more direct methods. [wretched = callused]

b. "Chaster" = "*to correct with blows*" Note: This could require severe testing, pain and heartache to bring them [me or you] to a point of personal need and dependency upon the Lord.

He may touch any area of life to get our attention; He might even use death,

Heb. 12:5-11 My son, do not despise [do not lose heart] the chastening of the Lord,

nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him. For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a

father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, Of Which All Have Become

Partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers

who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to

the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to

them, but He for our PROFIT, That We May Be Partakers Of His Holiness.

¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless,

afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Those who Refuse to walk in God's path will encounter trouble in their lives.

[Prov. 13:15; Jer. 2:19; Prov. 15:10; His judgment falls on us, I Pet. 4:17.]

3. A Word of Command Be Zealous [zesty = come to a boil] And Repent Of Your Ways.

"Be zealous" is a present imperative which commands a CONTINUAL STATE. How?

Use our divine operating assets, the Word, the filling of the Holy Spirit, prayer, etc.

When you see your need and turn to Him, it will manifest itself in genuine repentance.

Repentance can be defined as "*a change of mind that results in a change of direction.*"

The verb REPENT is metanoew, "to change the mind."

Confess your past or the present with a view to a change in the future.

"Repent" is an aorist imperative which means don't delay. It is an action designed to arrest a

condition, the condition of lukewarm self-sufficiency. Stop The Discipline Before It Begins!

IV. BE RESPONSIVE [cure for lukewarmness & apathy]

THE PROMISES TO LAODICEA

A. Rev. 3:20a A Present Promise - "*Behold, I am continually standing at the door, and I am continually knocking on the door...*"

"Knock" = present tense which looks at continuous action. What gracious condescension!

The Creator—God—Savior would seek our fellowship. He stands, knocks and speaks.

B. 20b A Personal Promise - "*if any man hear my voice, and open the door...*" - He merely needs just one person to hear him and to open the door. It must be opened by an act of the will.

C. 20c A Precious Promise - "*Sup with him...and he with me*" - This passage, addressed to the church, is a call for confession of one's sins with a renewal of mind and heart to continue to draw upon the glorious life of Christ daily through walking by the Spirit and living in the Word. Abiding in Christ, the vine (John 15:1-7; I John 1:7-10; Eph. 4:20-24; 5:14-18; Rom. 8:1-16) You can be a member of a dead, dry church, but you don't have to be that way yourself. If you will open the door to Jesus, He will come in to you. You can have revival in your life while everyone else sits around in deadness and apathy.

D. A Powerful Promise - Rev. 3:21 TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES [lukewarmness, self-sufficiency, self-deception, repent, be zealous, open the door] I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Share His reign with him who overcomes! The privilege and right to share in Christ's authority and rule in the millennium. Note the Basis Of The Promise: "as I also overcame and sat down." Because of His perfect obedience to the Father's plan, victory over death, sin and Satan was accomplished by Christ in His life, death, and resurrection. Then He was granted the right and authority as the God-man to sit with the Father until he makes His enemies His footstool. (Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:3, 13)

The Rapture Is Imminent! Lukewarm and carnal Christians are being called to commit their lives to holiness: Rom. 13:12-14 "The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and lust, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts." I John 3:3 And Everyone Who Has This Hope In Him PURIFIES HIMSELF, just as He is pure.

To Properly Prepare Ourselves For His Imminent Return, we need:

His faith	Gold tried in the fire
His righteousness	White raiment
His works in & through me	Righteous acts of the saints = Sanctification
His Holy Spirit	Eye salve

The Great Lesson: a church that is religious, but basically useless. They have excluded Christ from their fellowship in selfish, materialistic, self-dependence. Christ stands on the outside, excluded by the church's apathy to His Word, a Word which convicts, enlightens, warms and softens hearts, and makes people productive. Thus, the call is to hear, to open our ears. This city, once prosperous and complacent, is now a miserable waste. The 21st century traveler said, "Nothing can exceed the desolation and melancholy appearance of the site of Laodicea." Will we heed these warnings? Or will our lives become a similar desolation

C.S. Lewis "Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance.

The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.