

Lukewarm

Anyone who has read the Holy Bible, and in particular the Book of Revelation is aware that in these end times we live in the age of the lukewarm church as Jesus describes it in chapter three. This was a prediction of the nature of the church that would predominate in the end times. The awesome accuracy of this prediction is tragically evident to anyone who takes Scripture really seriously, and looks around to see what is today called Christianity. What seems evident is that the functions of the vast majority of “Christian” churches, as well as what passes as evangelicalism, and biblical teaching, is so watered down, superficial, or in error, that it is very often useless as a means of bring people to a saving faith. As a result, full strength biblical wisdom, the kind that is the result of a hot pursuit of genuine understanding of His Word, has become an extreme rarity. No wonder then that lukewarm faith is the principal characteristic of the great majority of those who call themselves Christians. When one is born-again and thus becomes a new creation in Christ, it must follow that there be a heated passion to know Christ Jesus, the One to whom, we are eternally grateful for becoming our Lord and Savior. We owe Him everything, and yearn to express our gratitude in ways that will please Him. But how can we do this when we don’t know much about Him, or how to serve Him as our Lord.

The answer to everything that is necessary for us to know is found in Scripture. However, approaching it with lukewarmness will not be fruitful. I believe that the second birth brings with it a heated passion, love, gratitude and eagerness to know and obey Him. If it’s only lukewarmness that follows, this second birth then I fear it may have been but a “still birth”, or in the medical vernacular, “a false positive”. However, even a healthy alive second birth, full of that “fire in the belly” for the Lord, can and very frequently does drift into lukewarmness. This is not good as our Lord powerfully reminds us. At what point does the high heat of Christian fervor and zeal cool down enough to be considered lukewarm? Only God knows with certainty, but each saved soul should be able to internally recognize when that cooling process is occurring, and to be aware of its seriousness, and not rationalize it out of the mind.

Am I being too cynical or overly judgmental? The majority of those who are of this lukewarm church, as Jesus describes it, will tend to believe they are saved, mostly out of insufficient biblical knowledge. Most choose to believe that they are the exception, and that they really belong to the church of Philadelphia about which Jesus has nothing negative to say. Jesus hates a lukewarm-ness, both in those who profess to be His, as well as those who really are His. In His assessment of this church, He expressed His disgust by saying that He has "*spewed it out of His mouth.*" He then gives hope to those who seek to be of the remnant in that church who are not lukewarm, by charging each individual to invite Him into his or her heart, that is to receive His eternal companionship. It takes a higher heat than lukewarm to even hear His knock on ones heart, let alone effectively receive what He offers.

In what I see as an expansion of this message, read what He said to the church of Ephesus. He had only good things to say about their doctrines and works but severely condemned them for having lost their "*first love.*" Can we really appreciate the significance of this condemnation? It's the whole point of this discussion, He said that unless they would repent, He would remove their candlestick. In chapter 1 verse 20, He defined the candlesticks as the 7 churches. It seems clear that short of repentance, He will remove this form of the church from the whole of the church body as well. I don't know exactly what the full ramifications of this would be, but it sounds about as bad as the indictment He pronounced on Laodicea. Any church of the present age that has the characteristics of the church in Ephesus would be widely considered as a model church, because most wouldn't even understand what that "first love" is all about, and that's the nub of the problem, biblical ignorance!

What was the first love that they lost? All evidence points to the initial heated zeal and joy in the Lord expressed as continued gratitude, humility and worship through strongly heart-felt prayer and trust. Is that too much to ask of a soul who has been given the greatest of all gifts, an eternal future in the presence of God? To take such a gift for granted by failing to express on-going fervent appreciation is evidently a posture God tells us is repulsive and subject to some form of serious punishment. However, it is only

through serious, dedicated study of God's Word, most desirably under the tutelage of knowledgeable and zealous pastors, teachers, and elders, are these truths likely to be adequately understood, and God's awesome disciplinary action to be avoided. We must never allow ourselves to be part of the mainstream lukewarm church, but instead, be among that remnant that hears Jesus knocking, and eagerly open the doors of their hearts.

At some early moment of our Christian experience, most likely the moment when our rebirth took place, each of us must have had that heat and fervor in our hearts for Jesus. However are any of us really capable of sustaining the intensity of that first love? Does that seem like a task too huge for any of us? Indeed it is! But it is not too big for the Holy Spirit that dwells in all saved souls. Depending on how close a relationship one has with Him, I believe that he will instill in us daily reminders and little blessings that, if we but recognize and appreciate their source, can keep us filled with that necessary zeal, simply out of a gratitude. This is the holy trigger that activates many of His other graces.

It is the rarity of strong convicting messages in today's mainstream churches that is a major reason why lukewarm-ness exists and so perfectly describes them. It is because of the power of the messages to Ephesus and Laodecia that, I feel persuaded to revisit them periodically in order to stoke the fire of my zeal. I pray that the reader will also take most seriously these messages to the church to which he or she belongs so as to intelligently, in the spirit of truth, assess its real condition, and deal wisely with what the Holy Spirit reveals.

We have all heard the sage advice that we should take all things in moderation, that it's unwise and unhealthy to go to extremes. For the most part that is good advice, when it comes to eating, sleeping, exercise, entertainment and most other carnal activities. We might express this advice another way as well, by suggesting that one keep an attitude of "lukewarmness" about these aspects of life. We probably should not be too critical of such applications of lukewarmness, as long as they are limited to the physical realm. However, Jesus has made it clear that this is not "kosher" in the spiritual realm. The gift of salvation is so awesome, so stupendous, so incredible, and so precious that the most

fervent, most zealous and most dedicated expressions of gratitude fall pathetically short of any possible adequacy of reciprocal response. Under these circumstances there is never a justification for lukewarmness, and any such condition in the heart of a redeemed soul may be considered as seriously unconscionable. Lest you feel that these words are excessively harsh, remember that Jesus spewed out of His mouth just such a church, the whole church of Laodicea. The word spew, in the Greek is “emeo” meaning to vomit. We can say it made Him so sick that it made Him vomit! If such a church can make Him that sick, it seems pretty dangerous for any individual to be similarly lukewarm. As I look around our nation and at the condition of much of what is called the Christian Body, I suspect that our Lord and Savior is doing a great deal of vomiting these days. Let us each pray that our commitment, our love, our fervor, and our zeal for the Lord will keep our spiritual temperature well above merely lukewarm.