A Church in Need of "Fire"

("LAODICEA: THE LUKEWARM CHURCH")

Revelation 3:14-22

3-27-2022

INTRODUCTION: Verse 14-16

***We need to examine the spiritual temperature of our hearts!**

What are the causes of a decrease in temperature?
What cools off a believer (church)?

I. The CAUSE of Lukewarmness

A. Christians cool off when they become:
No longer dependent upon Christ (v. 17a)
(Deceived by self-sufficiency)

B. Christians cool off when they:
No longer see what really matters (v. 17b-18)
(Ignorant of true values)

C. Christians cool off when they:
No longer have a close fellowship with Christ (v. 20)
(Separated from intimacy with Christ)

II. The CURE for Lukewarmness

Jesus counsels the lukewarm Christian to:

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B. "Be zealous and repent" (v. 19)

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The greatest problem in churches today is apathy!

This Laodicean church (more than the previously mentioned churches) seems to be the most fitting description of churches in America today.

"Laodicea" = "Laos" (people) "Dike" (judgment) --
The people rule

Even the name hints at the problem at Laodicea: Christ was not on the throne of their lives; the people were!

Like the pattern of much contemporary Christianity, where God's Word is no longer the sole authority -- the viewpoints of the people are.

Who are the lukewarm Christians today?

1) Those who view "hot" Christians as radicals or fanatics.
2) Those who straddle the fence between Christianity and the world.
3) Those who put a limit (ceiling) on how much they serve Christ and His believers.
4) Those whose love has grown cold (Mt.24:13); and whose love have become misplaced (II Tim.3:5 - "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God")
5) Those whose ears have become "dull of hearing" (Heb.5:11)
   When was the last time the word of God changed you; moved you to tears.

Luke warm Christianity today is new evangelicalism; also doctrinally sound fundamentalism that lacks evangelistic zeal.

The lukewarm Christian has not:
--denied Christ . . . nor has he told others about Him.
--been actively working to destroy His work . . . nor has he built it.

Apathy is simply having an **"I don't care attitude"**

Becoming lukewarm is the first stage to backsliding.

No Christian goes from the very top to the bottom. Satan knows he can't knock a fired-up believer off of his mountain-top fellowship with Christ, so he coaxes him down one step at a time.

V. 14

"The Amen" = an O.T. title for God; the word refers to truth, fidelity.

II Cor. 1:20 - "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

The one who is the truth tells the truth to a church in need of the truth (because she had been deceived by the liar [Jn. 8:44] -- like many churches today).

"The beginning of the creation of God" = This is not saying that Jesus was the first being that God created, but rather Jesus is the one who gave creation its beginning.

Jesus is the "beginner" = the one who made everything begin (cp. Rev. 1:8- "The Alpha and Omega , the beginning and the end").

Cp. Jn. 1:1-3
Col. 1:15-18 (*v. 18)

Jesus begin the origin or the source of all creation is also the "ruler" of creation.

V. 15

Why would Jesus prefer a people to be "cold" rather than lukewarm?

ANSWER: Because a "cold" people may awake to their coldness (deadness) and repent; whereas a lukewarm (middle-of-the-road) person will remain content!

If he was cold, at least he would feel it, become chilled, and seek clothing (v. 18).

V. 16

"Lukewarm" = To be indifferent, to be neither one thing or another; non-committed

The lukewarm Christian is comfortable, complacent, and content.

Cold water is refreshing to drink. Hot water is invigorating to drink. (EX: warm coffee; warm tea; warm milk).

"Spue thee" = to vomit or reject with disgust.

As the Lord tastes the temperature of your spirituality, what would His reaction be?

***We need to examine the spiritual temperature of our hearts!**

What are the causes of a decrease in temperature?

What cools off a believer (church)?

I. The CAUSE of Lukewarmness

A. Christians cool off when they become: No longer dependent upon Christ (v. 17a) *(Deceived by self-sufficiency)*

The Laodiceans actually told others "We have it all." What more could we possibly need?

In A.D. 60, after the city suffered heavy damage from an earthquake, it declined the offer of aid by the imperial government with the reply, "I have grown rich and have need of nothing" (Smith, p. 93).

NOTE: The contrast between this church and the Smyrna church:

--The Smyrna church was in poverty (materially) but rich (spiritually);

--Whereas the Laodicean church was wealthy (materially) but poor (spiritually).

The church of Laodicea, like the city of Laodicea under Roman rule, was very wealthy. The city itself was a center of banking and finance.

No doubt it was a prestigious church -- like churches today with padded pews, wall-to-wall carpet, pipe organs, multi-million dollar budgets, white collar membership, etc. . . . yet devoid of the power of God!

Dead churches with dead preachers, preaching dead messages, to dead or dying people.

Beware: We can become so wrapped up in the blessings that we forget the Blesser (gifts --- Giver; provision --- Provider).

Self-sufficiency is a dangerous position to be in. Why?

1. You think you stand (I Cor. 10:12).

2. You become blind to your true needs.

   --EX: Rich man entering heaven is like a camel going through the eye of a needed (Mt. 19:23, 24)

   Cp. Mt. 11:25 - "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

If the Holy Spirit was taken out of your life, how different would things become? For many "Christians" life would not be altered at all.

B. Christians cool off when they:
No longer <u>see</u> what really matters (v. 17b-18)
(Ignorant of true values)

"Knowest not" - points to ignorance.

To have a problem and know it is sad; to have a problem and be blind to it is even sadder.

"Wretched" = someone who is living in <u>misery</u> or someone who is <u>afflicted</u> (but doesn't realize it).

"Miserable" - someone who is pitied; an object of sorrow; not someone who would be admired, but someone who would cause others to feel sorry toward.

In the eyes of men, no doubt the Laodicean church was a church to be envied. But in the eyes of God, it was a church to be pitied.

The characteristics of being "poor, and blind, and naked" (without the article) indicate the source or reason for their wretchedness and misery (the reference to these 3 characteristics supports this point) (Smith, p. 93).

"Poor" - extremely poor; one who has reached the level of a beggar.

"Blind" = NOTE: Laodicea was widely known for its medical school and particularly famous for an eye salve made from "phrygian powder" mixed with oil" (Reinecker, p. 821). She who had modern technology to assist those with failing sight, was blind herself.

"Naked" - "The city was famous for its garments of glossy back wool" (Reinecker, p. 821).

"All the while, their spiritual power had been decaying, their material wealth and glowing statistics were but shrouds hiding a rotting corpse" (Wiersbe, p. 580).

"Counsel" - to advise

1. "Pure gold"

"Gold tried in the fire" - gold that has been tested and refined. Jesus is offering them "real gold" (spiritual gold).

He offered them the real stuff as opposed to the cheap imitations that they boasted over (and thought were real).

NOTE: How references to refined gold are often linked with faith.

"When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

"The trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth" (I Pet. 1:7).

According to James 2:5, God's value of what a person has is measured not by his material wealth, but by his being "rich in faith."

2. "White raiment"

A reference to moral purity (cp. Rev. 19:8).

God offers garments of salvation (Is. 61:10). Man needs to be clothed with God's righteousness (Job. 29:14).

That which is important is not that you wear the latest fashions (which often do not cover one's shameful nakedness).

"Nakedness" - would refer to the lack of spiritual covering.

In the biblical world, "nakedness" was a symbol of shame and humiliation.

Today, many are spiritually naked. When the facades are removed, the inner barrenness and shamefulness is revealed.

Many do not even blush when the corrupt behavior is unveiled.

3. "Eyesalve"

A reference to spiritual insight.

We need the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes, to the end that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened (Eph. 1:17, 18).

C. Christians cool off when they:
No longer have a close fellowship with Christ (v. 20)
(Separated from intimacy with Christ)

NOTE: This verse specifically applies to believers in context (those who are objects of Christ's love - v. 19).

The phrase "If any man" would open up the applicability of this truth to unbelievers, since Christ wants all men to accept Him personally and intimately (Jn. 1:12; Eph. 3:17).

"I stand" - lit. I have been standing and still am (perfect tense) (This reveals the patience of Christ).

"And knock" - lit. I am continually knocking" (This reveals the politeness of Christ).

A Christian cools off when Christ is no longer the core of his life.

When our fellowship is intimate, however, and Jesus is able to closely minister to our heats, we can experience what the Emmaus disciples said, "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Lk. 24:32).

Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers that Christ would "dwell in [their] hearts by faith" - That Christ would be at home; settle down in them.

Too often we treat Christ like a passing visitor or like an occasional guest.

SEE John 15:1-8.

NOTE v. 4 - "Abide in me, and I in you"

NOTE v. 5 - "Without me ye can do nothing"

"Sup" - to eat a meal (English = to have supper).

To a Jew, when someone had you over for a meal, it meant that they accepted your company, they desired your fellowship. (EX: Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners; the Jews would never eat with Gentiles, because such would be an indication of fellowship)

Cp. Acts 10:28; Acts 11:3 - "Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them"

--With a disobedient brother, we are not to eat (fellowship) - I Cor. 5:11 - "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

--EX: How eating the Lord's Supper denotes fellowship (I Cor. 11:23ff).

II. The CURE for Lukewarmness

Jesus counsels the lukewarm Christian to:

A. "Buy of Me" (v. 18)

The Counselor (Is. 9:6) advises such a church to acquire the answer to her spiritual poverty.

"Poor, blind, naked" - Jesus has the remedy to each (v. 18) and He is the source of each remedy!

(NOTE: You can purchase from Him with no money - Is. 55:1ff)

B. "Be zealous and repent" (v. 19)

"As many as" - implies that there was at least a remnant in this assembly that were objects of Christ's love.

"Love" = "phileo" - to have an affection for; or to be fond of.

God loves His own enough to discipline. He does not led his children go their own way.

NOTE: He only spanks His own. He does not spank the devil's kids (Jn. 8:44; Acts 13:10).

Such love we should be grateful for.

NOTE: The Lord's discipline of His children has 2 aspects:

1) "Rebuke" - verbal reproof - "My sheep hear my voice"

2) "Chasten" - physical discipline (SEE Heb. 12:5-11)

"Be zealous" - is an encouragement to make a decision to change. You must want to change!

"Repent" - reveals the way such change comes about (the means to change)

"Repent" = have a change of mind (attitude) about yourself.

Be honest with yourself.

Honesty is the first step to true blessing.

C. "Hear My voice and <u>open</u> the door" (v. 20)

"If any man hear my voice" -

Are you listening? Has He been speaking to you?

"My sheep hear my voice" - What would Jesus be saying to such a people" -- "May I come in?" "Do you see that life cannot go ont he way it has?" "I desire to have a closer fellowship with you than I ever had. I want you to know me more intimately than you ever had."

Hence the last phrase: "I will come in to him (intimacy) and will sup with him and he with me (fellowship)."

The One who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness "<u>will</u> come in."

It's a promise! But it's conditioned on whether or not you will open the door!

It's rude to keep someone knocking on your door (especially Christ!).

CONCLUSION:

We need to examine the spiritual temperature of our hearts!

What are causes of a decrease in temperature?

1. The Cause -

No longer dependent upon Christ

No longer see what really matters

No longer have a close fellowship with Christ

2. The cure -

Buy of Me

Be zealous and repent

Hear My voice and open the door

The Reward for the Overcomer:

<u>Eternal</u> intimacy and fellowship (v. 21)