

Lukewarm

Charlie Burke

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I enjoy reading the book of Revelations, even though understanding some of it can be a challenge. One section that has meant a lot in my life is the third chapter where God deals with the church at Laodicea. God refers to this church as lukewarm when He says: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, I will vomit you out of my mouth" (3:15-16). Those are some very powerful words, not words that any of us want to hear from the Lord. The concept of "vomiting" is very graphic and carries an extremely negative image. God blames this attitude on the arrogance of the Laodiceans when they say: "I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing" (3:17). In contrast, God rebukes them and says: "You do not even know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (3:17). In fact, He would prefer we be either hot or cold rather than lukewarm, implying that this is the least favorable of the three. How does God deal with this condition? Verse 19 tells us: "Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline" (NIV). Some translations say: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (NKJ). Most translations follow these words with "therefore, be zealous and repent". The implication is that God uses discipline and chastisement to deal with lukewarmness.

How easy it is for us to become lukewarm, to become comfortable in our lifestyle, happy to just go to church on Sunday and maybe hit up a bible study here and there. We get stuck in a rut and believe everything is OK. We are content to turn our life over to Jesus, but surrendering our will is an entirely different matter! Because of His great love for us, He often resorts to some kind of discipline to get us back on track. The form that this discipline takes is highly variable, ranging from a gentle rebuke to a major chastisement. When I was caught deep in my addiction, God had to pull the rug out from underneath me! Nothing less would bring me to a point of repentance. I still must guard against becoming lukewarm, less I fall back into the same pit He called me out of. I can't afford to be lukewarm! It provides a false sense of peace and leaves me feeling empty.

How about you my friend? Are you lukewarm? Have you wandered away from your "first love"? Do your sins cause you grief, or are they glossed over as minor infractions. Have you become complacent with the things in your life that grieve our Lord, justifying them by believing that grace will cover all your misgivings? (Bonhoeffer calls that "cheap grace"). I encourage you to take time to do a moral inventory and identify areas in your life that need to be addressed, and then repent and return to your first love. You can start with the words "Search me oh Lord"! Be encouraged by the fact that He is standing at your door and knocking, waiting for you to hear His voice and open the door (Revelation 3:20). In the world that we currently live in, we don't have time to be lukewarm anymore. There's too much at stake!