



The Good News

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The Danger of Being “Lukewarm”

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If you go to a restaurant and order coffee, you expect it to be hot. That’s the way most people like their coffee. Have you ever received a cup of joe and taken a swig only to find that it’s room temperature? I have. It’s disgusting. It no longer has that quality that is partly responsible for its enjoyment: heat. Your first instinct upon taking a mouthful of lukewarm coffee may be to spit it right back out. It’s mine, too. So, what does any of this have to do with our service to God?

When Jesus addressed the congregation in Laodicea in **Rev. 3:14ff**, He addressed the state of their service to Him with language to which they, and, by extension, us, can relate. He says in **Rev. 3:15-16**, *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”* Jesus says that He wished they were either cold or hot. Why? If they were hot, then they were doing what they were supposed to do with the proper zeal and energy they were supposed to have. If they were cold, then Jesus could address the specific issues or sins that they needed to correct in what they were or weren’t doing. But He says they are lukewarm. One definition for lukewarm is *“characterized by a lack of force or enthusiasm”*. This suggests that the brethren in Laodicea weren’t necessarily doing anything explicitly wrong or sinful. They were doing what they were supposed to...but nothing more. There apparently wasn’t a burning desire to learn and grow. Perhaps there wasn’t a zeal to stand out in the community. They had become complacent, satisfied in their state, believing themselves to be self-sufficient. They lacked the drive and force that is consistent with conviction. They were “bumps on a log”;

they were just...there. They believed in Jesus, and it sounds as though they worshipped properly and lived their personal lives properly, but they lacked energy, enthusiasm, and zeal.

So, if they were doing the right things, were they in sin? This is the deceiving part of their state; they believed they were perfectly fine. They were doing what they thought was required. But they weren’t doing those things with the zeal what was needed. So, carefully read the words of Jesus in **vs. 19**, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”* While they believed themselves to be fine, Jesus says that they were in sin. Thus, they needed to repent. But Jesus also addressed the attitude they needed to have to repent; they needed to be zealous. Being zealous requires proper focus on our purpose, remembering this world is not our home. The moment we begin to become complacent, satisfied in our state, and comfortable with our physical world, we begin to lose that focus and force of conviction. We are no longer guarding our minds as we should, and we no longer have the energy that should be in our service to God. In essence, we simply go through the motions without the proper attention and attitude that must be included in those motions.

The danger of being lukewarm is an ever-present one, a constant fight against the lure of the world to just relax. While relaxing in the flesh is fine, and sometimes needed, we can never relax in the spirit. The moment we do is the moment we start to lose our energy and focus. And if we don’t light that fire again, Jesus might very well “vomit” us out of His mouth as He threatened to do with the brethren of Laodicea.