

Are You a Lukewarm Christian?

A Reflection on the Warning to the Church at Laodicea

Reflections Reflections The Scroll

Revelation 3:16

Matthew 7:21-23

Have you ever given serious thought to the first half of Isaiah 29:8? This is what it says:

"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite." (Isaiah 29:8a)

This refers to those who claim to be close to Jesus but merely go through the motions. For them, religion has become routine instead of real. Call it the Laodicean attitude, or, as Jesus described the Pharisees, religious hypocrisy. This is what happens when a believer becomes complacent in his or her Christianity. Let us look at such a Christian a little more closely.

For years, this person has been regular at church services, liberal in giving, and has participated in almost all church activities; and thinks he or she is a good Christian.

This person has not indulged in any serious sin, has not fallen into conflict with a fellow Christian or with anyone else, has respected the clergy and gone out of the way to make the clergy comfortable; and thinks he or she is a good Christian.

This person thinks there is nothing more he or she can do to practise Christianity, that there is already a bond with Jesus Christ, and that the gates of Heaven will be thrown wide open when he or she crosses over; and thinks he or she is a good Christian.

The fact of the matter is that such a person has become complacent in Christianity. This fits the description of a lukewarm Christian. On the day of reckoning, such people would greet Jesus, calling Him 'Lord, Lord', but they will not be heard. I am not saying this; Jesus was recorded by Matthew as saying, in chapter 7, verses 21 to 23:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23)

That is not all. In Revelation 3:16, we read:

"So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

(Revelation 3:16)

If you think there are just two categories of people — non-believers and believers — you are wrong. If you think that all it takes is a desire to be a Christian, and that God will welcome you with shouts of joy, you are wrong again. The fact that people think along these lines shows that they have become complacent, lukewarm, in their Christian walk. They do not have Jesus first in their hearts; they seem to follow Christ, but make compromises.

How does one know whether one belongs to this category? A few questions need to be answered by every believer. Is Jesus all in all in my life? Do I read the Word of God regularly, and search for the inner meanings it contains? Do you secretly feel that holiness, or putting up a pious appearance, has become tiresome and boring? Do you pray from your heart, and not merely utter or repeat set prayers? Have you ever felt that you are a superior Christian, and looked down upon other Christians? Do you proclaim Jesus in public often enough, or can you count several missed opportunities? Honest answers to these questions will tell you where you stand. As someone has put it: "If God had not intervened, I would have awoken from my delusion to a lake of fire. I imagined I feasted at the table of grace, and drank from the chalice of eternal life, but I was eating garbage and drinking sewer water. I was dreaming, like all others who are religiously lukewarm."

But all is not lost. There remains ample scope for course correction. Such correction happens when the Word of God makes sense to us — in other words, when we trust Jesus to walk us through the Scriptures. Only He can open our hearts and minds, and shed light on the life He wants us to live. The fog in our minds will give way to clarity, and Jesus will change our priorities. We need only be receptive. As you pursue the Bible, again and again, with a heart made fertile and receptive, you will read new meaning into what is written, and see the truth that stares back at you. One must take such truth to heart, to live out the rest of one's life as a true Christian. Continue your quest for the real meaning of what it means:

To be born again; to love Jesus above all others — father, mother, son, daughter, spouse — is not just for 'super' Christians, but for all who would follow Jesus (Matthew 10:37–39); that Jesus is disgusted with us for drawing near with our mouths before meals and on Sunday mornings, while our hearts remain far from Him (Isaiah 29:13–14); that we could search the Scriptures through a thousand Bible studies and yet refuse truly to come to Jesus and have life (John 5:39–40); that in no way could we please Jesus while we live in the flesh (Romans 8:8); that we were rightly cursed for not loving Jesus (1 Corinthians 16:22), and that the punishment would be everlasting torment (Revelation 14:11); that Jesus is not a socially awkward figure in the lunchroom, desperate for anyone to sit with Him; that His very name is 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords' (Revelation 19:16), to whom every knee in creation will bow (Philippians 2:10); that Jesus did not need us (Acts 17:25); that if we refused truly to worship Him, the very rocks would (Luke 19:40); and that we are created for His glory, not that He exists for ours (Isaiah 43:7).

The good news is this: that while we were worse than lukewarm, the King of Kings died for us (Romans 5:8); that although our sin and apathy had earned us eternal death, the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ (Romans 6:23); that Jesus did not come for those who are well, but that His compassion and grace

are for those who are sick in their sin (Luke 5:31); that if we are thirsty, if we have no money or worldly wealth, Jesus invites us to come and be satisfied in Him (Isaiah 55:1); that if we are weary of labouring, and are left empty, and turn to God, He will feed us with rich food, give us life, and make an everlasting covenant with us through His Son (Isaiah 55:2–3); and that the Lord is near to anyone who will return to Him for pardon, offering to the vilest and most lukewarm sinner a pardon and a joy beyond anything he could dare to hope for (Isaiah 55:6–9).

If you are lukewarm, and reading this, there is great news for you: there is still time. Repent. Believe. Rejoice. Live. In Jesus, we have life. Amen.