

The Cause of the Lukewarm Church

Key Introduction

What makes us think we are rich and in need of nothing but has made us miserable, wretched, poor, blind, and naked? We must not forget that these are the very words of Christ critiquing His own body(assembly) in Laodecea.(Rev. 3:17)

It has been the sloppy teaching of love (Agape vs. Phileo), of grace(Romans 6:14; Titus 2:11), of freedom (Romans 6:5-7), of free forgiveness without repentance and without bearing the fruit of repentance, (2 Corinthians 7) and not understanding the “Law of Christ and the law of the Spirit”(Galatians 6:1 & Romans 8:4) which fulfills the moral Law given by God to Moses, “within” us! (Romans 3:31)

WE ARE LIVING IN THE AGE OF THE AMERICAN IDOL CHURCH.

We are focused on a man preaching or man singing up on stage and now these men are delivering eloquent messages that are not lifting up agape love and tickling your ears.

We are being entertained by amusing, witty teachers.

Jesus needs us to quit worshipping man and to start worshipping Him!

Key Unlocked

The Protestant Reformation was critical in challenging the traditional views of the Catholic Church and they used the printing press to achieve their purposes. Today the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction with the flimsy view of grace and no works. Even the Apostle James declared that faith without works are dead! We must put the full gospel message to work for a complete understanding. Those in the body of Christ with ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, need to cause another reformation not through the printing press but through the Internets World Wide Web!

The theory behind the lukewarm church really has to do with the pressure of society. What has happened is that the bar of achievement and success has gotten so competitive and so high, that we are looking to relieve the normal every day pressure of our souls. This leads to not wanting to view God as somebody who is holding us up to a standard of behavior and conduct that would hold us accountable to actually being the “new” creation claimed by our rebirth.

We therefore have chosen to overemphasize certain passages and character traits of God and define those character traits in a context of Western cultural definitions. This has blurred the harmony of all Gods attributes and how to rightly define his character traits using biblical terms based on original language in the Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek text. In

other words we choose to define Freedom as our right to happiness and self expression, Love as acceptance without accountability and we choose to define Grace as unconditional acceptance no matter how we behave, and we choose to Focus on forgiveness without the necessary repentance.

Even the idea of repentance has been greatly skewed as defined by 2 Corinthians chapter 7 when it makes a comparison about worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. (see “key to repentance”)

In short we have chosen to minimize in Christ the character traits of righteousness and holiness and justice in order to relieve our internal pressure.

The battle or battles of this life have become so fierce we do not want to add to the pressure of life! And yet at the end of the day, when we have to give an account to God for our lives. The pressures of making a living or raising your kids to be a worldly success is not what will come under judgment.

The apostle Paul appropriately defines the things that matter by referring to three things that he was trying to accomplish before the end of his own life.

These three were to fight the good fight, to finish the race, and to keep the faith. (2Tim.4:7) The meaning behind these will determine whether or not our lives were truly successful to God! Mathew 6:33 tells us to prioritize our kingdom lives ahead of our natural lives. In fact, it comes with a promise that if we do put kingdom priorities first that it is God’s guarantee that He will take care of the natural needs.

I believe one of the keys to understanding the fight, the race, and the faith are revealed in the example to the church at Corinth in first Corinthians chapter 9 and 10.

We will see by the example given to us about the Israelites coming out of Egypt which represented their freedom from slavery and then being tested in the wilderness to see if they would fight the good fight and not give in to sin and lawlessness, to see if they would go on to maturity and prioritize righteousness and to prove their faithfulness even against a land of giants. Even Paul declares that he must beat his body and make it a slave in order not to be disqualified. All of these really have one thing in common and that is the knowledge of God. Knowledge of Him which is what the Lord says the answer to life is understanding and knowing Him.

Jeremiah 9:24 says “but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.” The Scriptures present that if we will give up our lives as a living sacrifice to come to know God then we will be known by God. First Corinthians 8:3 reads, ”but if anyone loves God, this one is known by him.”

The word known is important to understand that this is an experiential knowledge that has to be tested and proven. Even in the story of the 10 virgins, five of them we're not allowed entrance and Jesus responded to them by saying "I do not know you."

I think it's important at this point to clarify the current common view of the gospel message. I believe the common view of the church in the presentation of the gospel message is to evangelize and not to truly make disciples. The problem with this is first of all it's not what Jesus commanded and next it focuses on making a decision to receive forgiveness and go to heaven.

*Note: When we go out to evangelize all we care about is that someone has made a decision to follow Christ without the knowledge of the second part of the gospel which is the motivating factor for being His disciple, which really means discipline. Notice the difference between those two words "disciple" and "discipline" is the word "line". You must toe the line to be a disciple of Jesus!

Today's western church doesn't prepare its body to be holy, truly set apart from the world in righteousness, and prepared to meet Christ. They predominately see the gospel as a message of salvation to heaven and to do work for the poor and the needy. So we have lost the emphasis that Christ gave to obey His teaching in order to inherit His Kingdom. The gospel has two conditions to it. The first part of receiving forgiveness is conditioned upon our ability to know we need a savior and to place our faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice by grace through faith. Part 2 is conditioned upon our walking by Grace through Faith. Paul makes this clear by his word choices. Walking means how we live out our lives.

Even the famous verse of John 3:16 has been radically undermined and misunderstood or I should say miss applied to its direct context. Its context is given in the discussion Jesus is having with Nicodemus about being born-again and receiving entrance into the kingdom.

For example, Genesis 2:17 "But of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

The question you have to ask yourself is did they literally die physically that day. The obvious answer is no but what did happen is they got kicked out of "The Kingdom/Garden". So when you read John 3:16 that "For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that he may have age long life".....what He is saying in context is that by placing the faith in the person of Jesus Christ you will possess Kingdom life and not be denied that life." This verse is not about going to heaven as the Christian church teaches today.

Even the reference to the serpent being lifted up in the wilderness with the Israelites is not a reference to salvation from hell but a “healing” from their current disobedience. Remember they were already rescued (saved) from slavery in Egypt which represents being taken from the kingdom of darkness into God's kingdom of light. The normal way the apostle John represented our message of salvation is actually found in Chapter 1:12 "to all who received Him to all who believe in His name He gives you the right to become children of God." To receive the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the forgiveness of sins is actually the initial step of transferring us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and adoption into God's family but it is only the beginning of "the race."

I believe it's important to identify that Jesus proclaims His gospel by declaring the good news of the kingdom of God. We must understand that He initially came to His own people and to the lost tribes of Israel which He states (Matt. 15:24). His people already had a firm understanding of the need for forgiveness in the law of Moses and the need for blood as an atonement. The transfer obviously is that this atonement would now take place by Jesus himself and would be available by faith and no longer by the works of the sacrificial law. Most of his parables concerning his kingdom is how to live and please him and gain entrance and access through him. The book of Acts is a great way to see how the apostles understood the gospel message that needed to be delivered: this message was delivered to all 12 tribes of Israel and to the Gentile nations of which the apostle Paul was the primary apostle.

In Acts chapter 19 starting in verse 8, Paul is primarily witnessing to the Jewish nation "and he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. Verse 9 continues, "but some were hardened and did not believe but spoke evil of "the way". This reminds us of John 14:6 where Jesus says, "I am the way the truth and the life ,no one comes to the father but by me". The way has a twofold meaning which is the way to get right with God and the way to enter the kingdom which Jesus will be setting up on his return. As we move forward to Acts Chapter 20 starting with verse 21 we read "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 24. But none of these things move me nor do I count my life dear to my self, so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God". Let's pause and notice that the word "race" is in the word "grace" and let's also remind ourselves of the definition of grace and it's continuing work found in Titus 2:11-14

“for the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works.”

Moving to verse 32 “so now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”.(literally set apart)

We then move to Acts chapter 26 and in verse 17 where Jesus is commissioning Paul ” I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you”. Verse 18 states “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me”. It is crucial to note that there remains “an inheritance” available among those already set-apart/sanctified in Christ.

Verse 20 “but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance”. This “inheritance” is conditioned upon doing works befitting repentance!

It gets pretty obvious that there is a two part message about God's kingdom.

First, it is to accept the king salvation from darkness which was accomplished by the father's only begotten son given as a ransom for the sins of the world and that by faith in him you may receive forgiveness of sins.

Second, which seems to flow seamlessly with the first part of the message, is to gain the inheritance of a child of God to receive entrance and access into the Kingdom of God when Christ returns to rule and reign 1,000 years. Not all of Gods “saved” children receive this when Christ returns, in fact it’s an important note that only the “1st” born received a double portion of the inheritance.(see key to inheritance)

The book of Hebrews tells us that the “day of rest” is still available and it is available to those who are obedient and walk by faith. This is made clear and very evident by the use of the example once again of the Israelites not being able to enter the promised land and receive the “rest” of the promise of God and that hopefully we will achieve what they did not, through Christ! (Support with scripture from Hebrews)

In conclusion, what causes a lukewarm church is that they have lost the vision for the” high calling” of God as quoted by Paul in the book of Philippians chapter 3:12-14 and we

have also lost the fear of God (Romans 3:18, 2 Corinthians 7:1). Philippians Chapter 2:12 tells us to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling".

When you think you are rich and in need of nothing and you believe that in Christ you're entitled to everything for free now, this deception has undermined the "striving" to finish the race that we have been placed into. Hebrews chapter 12 speaks so intensely, like a coach encouraging his athletes. If we don't understand that God's children are required to grow up in order to receive His promises and that there are real consequences for not being ready at the end of our lives or when Christ returns, it only makes sense that without that needed perspective we would choose to overlook the pressure of finishing the race and fighting this fight and enduring in the faith.

Insight - The word authority in the bible always goes to Christ and to the husband. Headship and authority always belong to Christ to the church or the husband to the wife. Submit to governing authorities. Honor mother and father (submit to Christ's authority).

Additional Scriptural Evidence

Matthew 3:8 "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance"

Luke 3:1-9 "Bear fruit begetting of repentance."

1 Corinthians

Hebrews

Laboratory Research

Agape = sacrificial love. God's love.

Phileo = brotherly love.

Contemplation/Application

How should this motivate us as the Church?

Are the rewards and loss of rewards and unpleasant words and consequences from our Lord motivate you to fight, finish, and keep the faith?

Ponder what a coach tells his team before the season starts? How does he motivate them to go through the suffering and agony needed to obtain the goal/prize at the end?