

Let's Discern Worldliness

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine getting ready to eat a mouthwatering meal: roast chicken with stuffing, gravy, spinach soufflé, and piping hot biscuits. You know the chef, and you know that he only uses the freshest ingredients. Yet, when you sit down to partake of the fare, there is a strange odor. The soufflé is sunken and curdled. The biscuits are hard. The gravy has separated. The chicken looks good—until you taste it. You know it is spoiled, so you spit it out before it can make you sick.

What happened? Somewhere between the preparation and the presentation, something went wrong. Distractions may have caused delays, instructions for handling were not followed, things were left uncovered, the fire went out, the air got to it, and the lukewarm roast became a breeding ground for dangerous bacteria.

Just as a cook would never intend for a hot meal, well prepared and ready to serve, to cool down to room temperature, so a Christian would

never intend for his spiritual life to cool down to world temperature. Yet, it happens, and all too often.

The problem is that so few people recognize worldliness. As a result, many find a comfort zone in their Christian lives, and their spiritual heat is reduced to lukewarmness: they are neither cold nor hot, and they have no effect for the Kingdom of God (Revelation 3:16).

This booklet takes a look at worldliness and lukewarmness. It shows how men of God avoid these hazards and instead make an impact on the world with the Gospel.

Chapter One

THE ENEMIES OF THE SOUL

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16:8).

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

Christianity presents the story of the creation of man, his fall, and his spiritual sickness, which extends from the soles of his feet to the top of his

head (Isaiah 1:5-6). It is also the story of hearts so desperately wicked that they cannot be fathomed (Jeremiah 17:9). It is the story of men and women created in God's image in a perfect environment only to choose wrongly. It all started with a single choice—a choice that led to a series of wrong choices.

Our calling is heavenly. It is holy. Fully experiencing God's call includes being in the right location. To receive a prize, it means that we must remain and abide in the call. Ever growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be ever obeying, ever learning obedience, ever learning that to be steadfast and immovable is the only option for Blood-bought, born-again Christians. As steadfast and immovable Christians, with minds and emotions that cannot be moved, we can always abound in the work of the Lord.

The Smell of Hell

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:6-8).

These verses describe the three great enemies of our souls: the world, the flesh, and the devil. This giant world system flashes its bright lights through Hollywood, with its odor of hell. The smell of entertainment is vulgar, base, and disgusting in its representation of the world.

Many Christians are so at ease in this world, putting what *they* want first. Oh, these Christians don't go out and do drugs or go on a gambling spree—though some of them ultimately do just those things. Instead, what they do is quietly and continually make choices in their lives without recognizing the Cross and the price that was paid for their lives. To live one moment or to do

anything—however small, seemingly noble, or good it may be—without the Cross is worldliness.

The Discipline Process

Sooner or later, a Christian who lives outside of the Cross and the protective walls of doctrine will attempt to fulfill his flesh by making a provision for it. But, whatever the believer builds that is not on a godly foundation, God eventually comes in and tears it down (Jeremiah 31:28). If there is still no change, He may wait a few months and then tear it down again. Eventually, if this believer doesn't repent, God will allow him to be crushed through discipline and chastisement. God's purpose is to plant and build upon a sure foundation.

Millions of Christians will find themselves unprepared for the events of the Last Days. They will grow weary in their well-doing (see Galatians 6:9). Without proper rest, a body gets tired. The soul grows self-centered. Inconsistency comes in. Nothing terribly bad happens, but there is no Cross. There is an affliction. It is called worldliness.

The Problem of Being Lukewarm

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

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

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit

with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 3:14-22).

The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ spoke to the Laodiceans. The works of these Christians were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm. They had taken on the comfortability of the world system. The warning here is that continuing in worldly living could prompt God to “spew” or vomit the Church out of His mouth. Here, God’s “mouth” speaks of the breath of fellowship. The Laodiceans were described as being wretched, miserable, blind, poor, and naked. God used these five words because they related to the character of the city of Laodicea, a place where clothes were made, a place where many came to treat eye problems, and a place noted for gold trading.

God was pointing these things out to the Laodiceans because He had such a great plan for them. He was knocking on their door because He longed for them to repent and become zealous. He promised great fellowship if they would only repent.

Worldliness is not discerned by much of

Christianity. It is not named, and it is not understood. It starts with spiritual weariness and descends into passivity, withdrawal, and a lack of concern for the things of God. When it gets to this point, God is left with the option of chastisement to get our attention. But remember that He only chastises His children (Hebrews 12:8). His thoughts toward us are peace and not evil, and He has a plan to bless us. Therefore, He chastises us because of His love.

Chapter Two

MEN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

J.C. Penney's early life was filled with poverty. At age eight, his father told him, "I cannot spend another cent on you. You will have to take care of yourself, because I can't give you anything."

So J.C. Penney went to work, and he worked hard. He also went to the altar and prayed. "God, I promise You—and I am not just saying this—I promise You, if you will bless me, that I will give and give and serve, and I will not withdraw."

God responded: "I will do it."

This poverty-stricken young man came in contact with a couple of men who offered him a business opportunity. "You are such an ambitious man," they said to J.C. Penney. "We will let you become part of our business for an investment of \$500 to \$2,000."

Penney managed to borrow \$1,500, got into

the business, and the business was blessed. Soon the company had thirty-four stores and \$2 million in profits. Oh, yes, the business also carried the J.C. Penney name, which it carries to this day.

Morning, noon, and night, J.C. Penney spent time on his knees. This man's life was dedicated to giving to God, loving God, praying to God, and keeping God's Word. This Christ-centered businessman always sought the Kingdom of God first and God's righteousness. As a result, God just kept adding to him.

Heaven's Moves Produce Earthmoving Ideas

R.G. LeTourneau was a man who couldn't stand sickness, and he could not bear to be around anything related to death and dying. Then, at a critical point in his life, he was involved in a serious accident, breaking his neck in a stock car race. He saw the sick bodies at the hospital, and the scenes nearly drove him insane. The accident should have killed him, but by a miracle, he survived. In the hospital, the place he didn't want to be, Mr. LeTourneau received tremendous ideas from God. These ideas revealed how to engineer, develop, and build a bulldozer. God gave him all the details of how

to create it, make it, and market it. During World War II, LeTourneau's company was producing more than seventy percent of all the earth-moving equipment used by the allied forces.

Before these ideas came, however, R.G. LeTourneau got on his knees in the hospital and prayed. "God, if You will, please bless me and take away my fears and my insecurities. Remove my fear of death and my fear of sickness, and I will give everything in my entire life to You. I will not withdraw."

God answered these prayers, and today, LeTourneau University in Texas specializes in raising up engineers, many of whom use their skills for the glory of God. There are highways named for this man. God blessed him and made him so successful that throughout his life he donated much of his income to support missionary efforts in Africa and South America.

R.G. LeTourneau and J.C. Penney were wise men who did not descend into worldliness, in spite of their wealth. As a result, God raised them up as a testimony and blessing to the world, in the midst of the world.

Chapter Three

FOLLOW FAITHFULLY

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and

I will raise him up at the last day.

“For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (John 6:53-57).

“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said,

This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

“When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth

this offend you?

“What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:60-66).

A group of disciples were walking with Jesus, listening to His words. A number of them were struck by His statement: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

“What does He mean by this?” many in the crowd murmured. They were dull of hearing, unable to discern what Jesus was saying. Jesus wasn't referring to His literal flesh; He was speaking of His Word and His life. Still, many were offended by what He said, and many

turned back and followed Him no more.

What was the problem with these people? They were suffering from worldliness in a lukewarm crowd.

Lukewarm isn't being cold. Lukewarm isn't being hot. Lukewarm is neither. For the lukewarm Christian, going to church is okay—a nice thing to do. But no hunger, no thirst, no living desire for God exists in the worldly, lukewarm Christian. There is no consistency, no energizing motivation, no power within to do God's work without. He has no divine adequacy for human problems, for change, for moods, for what happens in life.

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?"

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:67-69).

Peter declared that he understood the reality of who Christ was and is. "We are not going anywhere," Peter said. "Where You go, we will go. What You say, we are going to say. What You want us to do, we are going to do. No one is

going to stop us. We are followers of You.”

God will not settle for anything less than a life that eats His flesh and drinks His blood. Literally, this speaks of consuming Bible doctrine of how to think in the power of the Holy Spirit. This reflects the New Testament agreement between the Father and the Son to sanctify our conscience and our standing in positional truth (Hebrews 9:14).

The disciples who remained with Jesus were determined not to cool off and flirt with the outer darkness of hell. They were ready to go forward and move on to reveal the living God, morning, noon, and night.

Well Done Christianity

“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28).

These verses are very interesting and profitable. None of us will escape an encounter with

Christ at the Bema Seat. We cannot buy our way out of it, think our way out of it, or work our way out of it. At the Bema Seat, worldliness and lukewarmness will be exposed. This is why it so important to discern it, avoid it, and conquer it by eating the Word of God and drinking in the fruit of the life of the Spirit.

Those who live this way will not be ashamed at the Bema Seat. Rather, they will enjoy a private, face-to-face experience with Christ. There, they will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Are there any words in the human vocabulary that could bring more joy to a Christian? Nothing, I believe, will bring greater rejoicing than hearing Jesus say to us, "You were steadfast and immovable—well done, thou good and faithful servant."

CONCLUSION

In Psalm 16:8 and 11, David wrote, "I have purposed to always set the Lord before my face. He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. He will show me the path of life. In His presence, I find fullness of joy. At His right hand, I discover pleasures forevermore." (See also Acts 2:25).

The only joy, the only real pleasure we can find on earth is in the presence of God's life. Walking in His pathway, we are kept from worldliness. But we cannot walk this way only when we feel like it. We must walk this way because it is right to walk this way.

Go forward with Jesus Christ. Take up the Cross and go where God tells you to go. Be guided where God is guiding you. Be faithful. Just as Jesus did not look back and long to return to Nazareth, you cannot afford to be sentimental and look back to one moment of your past, except to bring glory to God.

Heavenly Father, allow Your Word to become

powerful within us. Light the fervent fire of truth in our hearts—a fire that will burn hot, making the Word quick and powerful in the midst of this world's system, among those who do not know You. Let us have godly wisdom and discernment for every decision and every step we take. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.