



Rediscovering our First Love

Text: Revelation 2:2-5

Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. Read Jesus' words to two ancient churches in Revelation 2:1-7 and 3:14-22.
 - a. Put in your own words Jesus' positive description of the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:2-3. In what ways would you say this could be true of the American church in general and/or even your own personal Christian life?
 - b. On the flip side for what reasons specifically does Jesus send words of judgment to each church, the church in Ephesus, and the church in Laodicea? Note the lack of overt evil in the sense that we normally think of it.
 - c. How does this expand your understanding of sin? (See also James 4:17.) Conversely, how does this expand your understanding of what Jesus has called each disciple and the church collectively to?
2. How would you describe your current spiritual state? Are you riding a spiritual high and "on fire" for Jesus? Are you in a spiritual recession? Are you somewhere in the middle and might describe yourself as lukewarm? Share with the group why you describe your current spiritual life that way? Be honest and specific.
3. In the verses referenced in questions #1, how does Jesus extend grace to each church? What does He call each church to do to reach (or return to) greater spiritual heights? What do you need to do personally to obey and apply these texts?
4. Read Psalm 51.
 - a. What does godly repentance look like?
 - b. What do you need to repent of? In this instance, think particularly in terms of lukewarmness, spiritual apathy, and sins of omission (things we should do that we aren't).
5. Read Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-14, Hebrews 10:19-25, and 2 Peter 1:3-11.
 - a. We are saved by grace through faith, but what does Jesus ask of us? In other words, what type of people did the Lord Jesus give himself to make?
 - b. What clues do we have in these passages on how to fight spiritual apathy and strive to live as the people God has called us to be?

Challenge: Is your soul in recession or revival? If you find yourself in recession, commit doing to the steps found in Revelation 2:5. (Remember, repent, return). Join Faithbridge in praying for revival!

SPECIFIC PRAYERS FOR REVIVAL AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

- 1. Ask God to bring deep conviction of sin, spiritual brokenness, a holy fear of God and genuine repentance among His people.** There will be no revival without these elements and only God can produce them in His people. After all we cannot program or work up genuine brokenness and repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- 2. Pray for deep cleansing, genuine repentance, and spiritual power to engulf pastors and Christian leaders.** Revival and spiritual awakening are extremely unlikely without a mighty move of God in pastors and Christian leaders. Renewed pastors are absolutely crucial to a move of God in our day! (Ephesians 6:14-20)
- 3. Pray for God to bestow spiritual hunger in His people and draw them to fervent intercession.** God has to grant people the genuine faith and the fervent desire for prayer. With all our promotion and programming, we cannot “produce a genuine prayer movement. (Philippians 2:13)
- 4. Pray that God will bring loving unity in our churches and a deep harmony between our churches.**
- 5. Pray for God to fill His people with a passion to see people saved.** Only God can give a genuine burden for souls. Until God’s people intensely pray for the lost and do aggressive soul winning revival will tarry. Be sure you are constantly praying for many lost people by name. (Romans 9:1-3)
- 6. Pray for God to give His people a passion for missions and starting churches.** Great revivals produce an explosion of mission projects, new ministries, and new church plants. Only God can grant a genuine passion for missions. (Matthew 28:19)
- 7. Pray that God will call thousands into ministry, missions, and Christian service.** Many churches are dying for lack of soul winners, teachers and church workers. Furthermore, we can start only as many churches as we have church planters to start them. (Matthew 9:37)
- 8. Pray that God will pour out His Spirit like a mighty purifying flood.** Ask God to purify our “motives as we pray for revival. After all it is possible to pray for revival for selfish or ambitious reasons. Our motives must be solely for: (a) the glory of God, and (b) the increase of the kingdom of God. We must not pray for revival just to solve our own problems or make our church successful in the eyes of men. (James 4:2)

STUDY DEEPER

How to Fight Lukewarmness

As we give thanks to God for his “abounding faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6), it is good for us to examine our own faithfulness. How faithful are we? This is important because “it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). And a gauge of our faithfulness is our level of lukewarmness.

Don't Grow Grey with Age

Lukewarmness is the dying of conviction. And conviction often dies the slow death of a thousand compromises.

When I was 22 years old, I worked at a company where my supervisor was defrauding customers and asking me to comply by fudging inventory reports. I refused and raised serious concerns about his conduct. This got back to the company owner, who one day asked me into his office and sagely said, “When I was your age I also saw things in black and white. But I've come to learn that things are mainly shades of grey.” That was baloney. Fraud isn't grey. If the customer became aware of the fraud, the colors would have sharpened very quickly.

But what had happened to this owner that made his youthful black dilute to grey with age?

Well, now that I'm near the age he was back then, I understand more. I know how longer, broader life experiences can season and temper the soul. But I also know that his sort of “greying with age” is not the tempering of age-acquired wisdom. It is the result of failing to be faithful, of being lured and enticed and ensnared by our sinful desires (James 1:14).

Truth does not grey with age. Rather, our moral eyes cloud from the cataracts of compromise. And with each compromise we lose more resolve to see truth and be faithful to it. We call black grey only to ease our consciences.

Lukewarmness Is a Symptom of a Disease

Most of us in the prosperous West live in modern day Laodiceas (Revelation 3:14–22). Our faith is not endangered by persecution but by the constant temptations of worldly compromise. Jesus, the “faithful and true witness” (verse 14) rebuked the Laodiceans for having grown “lukewarm” (verse 16) in unfaithfulness and exhorted them to “buy from [him]. . . salve to anoint [their] eyes” (verse 18) to heal their cataracts of compromise.

If a fever is a symptom of disease in the body, lukewarmness is a symptom of the disease of unfaithfulness in the soul. And like all of us experience bodily fevers and fight disease, all of us experience lukewarmness to greater or lesser degrees and must fight the disease of unfaithfulness.

Jesus's Prescription for Unfaithfulness

If we feel lukewarm, how do we fight the disease? Our faithful and true Physician gives us his prescription: "be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

But how does a lukewarm person just "be zealous"? Isn't that the problem – not being zealous? No! The problem is not perceiving the disease of which lukewarmness is a symptom. If you think all that you have is a cold, you may not think much of a fever. But if you find out that cancer is causing your fever, suddenly zeal is not a problem. Lukewarmness is a symptom of the cancer of unfaithful unbelief in the soul. If left untreated it will result in an unspeakably horrible experience: Jesus will spew you out of his mouth (Revelation 3:16). It is not the unfaithful who receive the eternal reward. The reward goes to "the one who conquers" (Revelation 3:21) – the one who fights and overcomes.

How does a lukewarm person repent? Don't wait for some emotional muse. Repent right now! Turn around and get moving in the right direction. Take one step and then another. When it comes to repenting, rarely is our problem not knowing what to do. The Spirit shows us what to do if we want to repent. Our problem is wanting to repent. (To address that problem read the above paragraph again.)

Grace to the Unfaithful

Jesus's hard words of warning to the Laodiceans was grace. He wasn't telling them to earn their salvation by being faithful. He was telling them that lukewarm unfaithfulness might be evidence that they didn't have saving faith. It was a "you have cancer" moment. And he had the treatment. He was telling them to repent and come back to him for healing. That's the grace he extends to most of us followers who, like Peter (Luke 22:60–62), fall at some time into the sin of unfaithfulness. Repentance is the evidence of real, if deficient, faith.

Fierce Fidelity

To remain faithful is not merely a struggle. It is war. To be faithful to God, our spouse, our children, our church, and our vocation, requires that we fight every day against the indwelling sin that presses us toward compromises. Don't coddle little compromises. Kill them. Fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12) by fighting fiercely for fidelity.

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Repentance becomes a holy habit of the faithful fighter. The sin of compromise is always crouching at our door and we must rule over it (Genesis 4:7). We do this by cultivating the skill of taking every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

In your thanksgiving, thank God for the grace of his hard words that, in kindness, leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4). Resist the devil (James 4:7), repent of any greying of black, and fight lukewarmness like the plague.

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-fight-lukewarmness>