

# Escape the Laodicean Church

by Andrew Strom

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*Andrew Strom's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for Christians to recognize and overcome spiritual lukewarmness in a comfortable, modern society.*

**Duration:** 54:57

**Scripture:** Revelation 3:15

**Topics:** "Spiritual Alertness", "False Teachings"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on the dangers of lukewarmness in the church, emphasizing the need to guard our hearts and maintain a fervent spirit in a comfortable and seductive world. It highlights the importance of being spiritually alert, avoiding deception, and staying focused on serving Jesus amidst distractions and false teachings.

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## Transcript

Alright, please turn with me to Revelation chapter 3. It is, we're going to begin by speaking about the Laodicean Church tonight. You know, it struck me for some time that this is the greatest danger in the West, by far. Is that we live in such a comfortable environment, we really live in a lukewarm environment such as never existed before in history.

There's always been rich people, but for very few years has there ever been a wealthy middle class in the world. Probably happened only in the last hundred years. And we have a situation now where anybody in our countries, you know, I come from New Zealand and I've lived in Canada, UK, United States and so on.

You know, you go worldwide and it's very clear that we're probably the most comfortable generation in those Western countries that has ever existed in history. The most comfortable generation. And the reason that worries me is because I've also been to the third world countries and there is such a difference in the level of hunger of the Christians.

Because we're so comfortable, the natural thing for us to do is to relax, including spiritually, just sort of becoming part of the culture that's around us. And it concerns me desperately because this can invade us in such ways that we don't even notice it's happening. So I wanted to start with this scripture tonight.

Revelation 3:14 says, The angel of the church of the latter sins writes, These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. So it's Jesus speaking. He says, I know

your works, that you are neither cold nor hot.

I would that you are cold or hot, so that because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Now isn't that the most drastic thing you can imagine being said to the church or to a church? I think we're in this modern day the epitome of lukewarm. You know, I've been to Africa in situations where you're out in the back blocks preaching to people in the open air.

And there's hardly any Christians, there's far more idol worshippers in the audience than Christians. Down below is a whole town made of what we would think of as tin shacks. And no Australian or New Zealander in their right mind would live there.

But the entire, everybody lives in one of those. And the astounding thing to me is that every night the crowds grow bigger of people sometimes walking five or more miles to come and hear the preacher rebuke the idols. And say you must repent and turn to the only one true God.

And you would think that people would shrink back from that because you're touching on something that is very personal to them. And the idols that they worship in that area and yet the crowds would grow and grow every night. And I compare that sadly with often when I'm in the West and if I start preaching repentance and conviction of sin and things that are liable to make anyone uncomfortable.

You know, the crowds are likely to shrink and shrink. And it really concerns me so greatly because I feel that when we are, you know, in a sense we're treating Jesus this way. You know what I mean? In a sense when we treat the word of God this way or when we treat perhaps a message or a convicting message, I mean Jesus preached uncomfortably every day.

We don't realize, we think he's a nice guy that went around saying lovely things. He didn't, you know, after his first sermon it says they took him to a cliff and went to throw him over, you know. You don't get thrown off cliffs for preaching things that make your audience happy.

You get thrown off cliffs for things that make the audience unhappy, amen. I don't know if you've been threatened with cliff throwing lately from what you've been preaching. You know, Stephen, what does it say about Stephen once he preached his sermon in the book of Acts? It says they ran at him gnashing at him with their teeth, they picked up rocks, they threw the rocks at him until he was dead.

Stephen was the first martyr in the church. You say, well, preaching like that, such as we don't ever hear or if we do, we run a thousand miles in the other direction in the modern world. Why? Because we live in a marketing culture.

Because for the last 50 or 60 years we've conducted a giant experiment on ourselves and the experiment goes like this. I wonder if we can sit under a deluge of advertising and entertainment and ear tickling and flattery and nonsense, you know, beamed into every home every day. The average American household, for instance, watches four hours of television every single day.

You think of that over a lifetime, he was talking probably years of sitting in front of a box. Now, you know, sitting in front of a box is neither here nor there except for the fact of it's obviously influencing us. It's obviously influencing us.

Why? Because I don't think there's ever been a collapse of the morality and just simple lifestyle of any people than what we've gone through in the last 50 years. I think it's unprecedented. Our life is

unprecedented.

The ease with which we live, the comfort that we live in is unprecedented. Our shiny cars and beautiful houses and everything we have mostly has never ever happened in history before except to princes and kings. You know, again, in Africa, you go into a village somewhere and you find out what they call a king.

You know, they'll say, oh, we're going to take you to the king of the village. So, you know, okay, let's go see the king of the village, no problem. So you boil up to this guy's place and it's not as nice as most of us live in right now, but he's a king over there.

Everybody else is living in a tin shack and his thing's made of, you know, whatever. And it's bigger than all the rest. And I tell you, we don't realize how close to this absolute Laodicean state that we're in.

Because the warning that Jesus gives to Laodicean church, it's unlike any warning given to any people by Jesus. He's saying, because you are neither cold nor hot, you're not freezing cold down there. You're not way up hot, fervent and really, you know, laying down your life.

You're somewhere in the middle. And he says, because you're neither cold nor hot, I'm about to spew you. Well, God is about to spew you out of his mouth.

Pretty serious stuff. Okay. And then what does he say? Verse 17 says this, because you say, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.

And you do not know that you are rich and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So you notice this enormous disparity between what the lukewarm people think of themselves as a church. I mean, they may well be thinking to themselves, you know, our worship team in the modern day, you can think of this kind of conversation happening in people's minds.

Our worship team is so good lately. You know, the sound system that they bought last year, my goodness, it's just wonderful. You know, the Christian bookshops that we have, you know, in every city.

And the things that we can get, the DVDs we can buy, all of the teaching materials from around the world. We must be just the most blessed church in history. Seriously, we're rich, we're increased with goods, even of the spiritual kind.

Rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. And what is Jesus saying about the very same people? He's saying you're wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Think about that.

Think of the disparity between those two things. And I'll tell you the most serious one of those, in my opinion, and that is the blindness. Because you can be utterly lukewarm and all around you can be lukewarm.

And so you look at them and you say, I guess I'm doing okay. And you look at it and even if, you know, even if you look hard at the situation because the blindness is upon you, you're never going to see it. The most serious problem that the lukewarm people have is that they're blind.

So nothing's going to get through to be able to show them, hey, things are not really rosy. In fact, they're desperately bad. Because what is Jesus searching for in the hearts of every people that he wants to reach? I tell you, it's in the Sermon on the Mount.

It's when he says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God. So we're looking at a situation where I go over there and the thing I'm feeling in these people, these desperately poor people who have no education.

Some of them probably cannot read a word of the scriptures. And yet they'll come out to these meetings, way in the far distance, they'll walk for miles. Why are they doing this? Because they're hungry.

That's why they're doing it. You know, hunger makes all the difference. And I mean every ounce of difference.

If you lose hunger out of your culture, out of your church culture, or even out of the surrounding civilization that you live in, you're in terrible trouble with God because you're unlikely to ever get out of where you're at. Hunger is the thing that drives you closer to Jesus, drives you into making those incredible self-sacrifice decisions that only hungry people ever make. Hunger is the most important thing.

That's why in the sin on the Mount, it almost takes prominence of place with Christ. Prominence of place. We had better find hunger, or if we've had it, or if we have it, not to lose it.

And yet how can that possibly be done, because we're living in a culture that thrives on lukewarmness. That thrives on being comfortable and entertaining yourself to death, you know. And just living for the sports shows and the, you know, whatever absolute nonsense is coming over.

You know, I'm a New Zealander, so I used to follow rugby before I went to America. When I was in America for four years, I suddenly realized there's hardly one person, there might be one and a half people in America that care about the All Blacks. One and a half people.

And I came to the conclusion, you know, this is a complete waste of my time. I'm not going to care anymore. And when I got back to New Zealand, it's kind of like, I'll end up watching the odd game if somebody sticks it on in front of my face.

And you know, what are we doing, what are we living our lives for? What do we care about? What's our hunger after? What are we doing with our lives? You see, these African people, because they have nothing, and I mean they really have nothing, they have everything to hunger after. Because we have everything laid on. Because we can all go and hop in a vehicle and drive down the road and find food somewhere.

And we have supermarkets just laden with goods. I was so shocked when I was first taken into what they call the supermarket in Africa, because basically in New Zealand that would be what we call a dairy, or I think what you guys call a milk bar over here, but I'm not sure about that. So they take me into this kind of small shop.

They said, see, we've got supermarkets here. Look, we're rich. We're increased with goods.

We're liable to be, in this culture that we're living in, we are the most at risk of becoming the Laodicean church without even knowing it's happened. We are incredibly at risk. So I would come back from Africa, and I've been over there maybe five or six times, and I would come back from Africa, and every time I would come home, or come to whatever western country I was living in or whatever, and I would go, I was thinking to myself, I wonder if anyone is going to be saved from out of our countries.

That's how bad it was. I wonder if anybody's going to be saved. Because all the hunger's over there.

All the hunger's over there. It really worried me so much. So this blindness is part of the lukewarmness.

I think it's the most deadly aspect of it, because you can't look at yourself and see and go, oh yes, we can see the lukewarmness. It becomes blurry before your eyes, and everywhere around you is lukewarmness, and the whole culture has turned into one massive tepid pool of mediocrity as far as hunger goes. And so we look around us and say, well, I must be doing all right.

And I'm sure that's what these people did. What does it say? Verse 18, Jesus is still speaking. He says, I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and white raiment, white garments, that you may be clothed.

And that the shame of your nakedness does not appear. And anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see. Anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.

As many as I love, he says, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent. Do you know how many preachers in the modern western church are willing to issue a rebuke? You know what Jesus just said here? He said, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

But in the modern church, do you know what? We can hardly find a rebuke anywhere. We cannot find chastening, though the modern church desperately needs it. Why? Because every preacher just about in the whole western universe is wanting to tickle the ears and is worried about his offering.

He's worried that if he preaches the real truth like Jesus did, or like the apostles did, everybody's going to stand up and go walking down the road to the next church and go, you know, they've got a better worship team down there anyway. You know what I mean? It's a selfish, selfish culture that we've created, and the church has played into it because what's it all about? It's about marketing, it's about entertainment. It's not about the piercing word of the Lord, is it? It stopped being about that a long time ago.

And the few poor guys that are left that actually preach truth, those guys get no invitations to the big conferences, they don't get on Christian television, those guys are at the bottom of the barrel, scraping around down there. The guys that make all the money in the modern church and build big ministries, what are they mostly doing, if you listen to them carefully? I don't know if you've ever heard the guy Anthony Roberts or Tony Roberts. He's a motivational speaker.

He's not a Christian, but I know him. He's a motivational speaker in the United States. He spends all his time uplifting people and encouraging them to go for their dreams and dream bigger and make it higher and, you know, hey, praise God.

I don't mind the odd encouragement every now and again, but I want to tell you, the modern equivalent of that in the church is where you don't mention the cross, you don't ever mention sin, you think God was a teddy bear in the sky that exists only to bless and bless and bless, and you issue no rebuke. And I say that that kind of preaching does not love anybody enough to tell them that they're about to go off the cliff. That's not love.

Jesus just exercised love in some of the hardest words he says to any church. He says, as many as I love, I rebuke and I chasten. In other words, what's he doing? He's laying down his life.

Every preacher that truly preaches truth, you know what they're doing? They're laying down their life. They're saying, you may get offended, you may feel pierced in the heart and jump up and go down to the church down the road, but I will lay down my life in order to speak truth to you whether you abandon me or not. Jesus was like that all the time.

All the time. He had crowds of people that would follow him one day and hear him say something and they literally turn on their heel and all walk away, muttering under their breath because of what he was saying. So we live in a day where all the old preachers that we used to have in the 1970s and everything are all drying up and disappearing.

And we can hardly find a rebuke in the land just when we most need it. And we can hardly find any chastening of the lukewarm church even though this is the moment when it needs to be done the loudest. And, you know, it's been that way now for at least 20 years and it's getting worse every year.

So if you want to build a big cathedral for yourself, if you want a big giant ministry, you learn in the modern age how to tickle people's ears and if you're really good at it, you can build yourself a crowd. Amen? And we see evidence for that everywhere and if you really want to build it big, you get yourself the best worship team in town and the nicest sound system and you entertain people so that they will come and the message better be entertaining as well. That's the modern church and that's the way it's going.

It's been heading that direction for quite some time. It's a church really built around self, not around the cross. What did Jesus say? What's the true gospel say? Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me, said Christ.

Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. We have, in the modern day, invented a gospel that has no cross at the center of it. Everybody wants to jump straight over to resurrection.

Don't go through the cross anymore. We're not going to preach that thing because it's offensive. You will not be convicted of your sins in this church.

That's virtually what we're saying. And do we get any real disciples, I put it to you, probably not unless it happens sovereignly by the power of God coming upon a person because the preaching certainly won't get us into that place. Okay.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous, therefore and repent. How do we survive spiritually in a lukewarm age? There's a verse down here that tells us. Verse 21 says, To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame.

And I will sit down with my father in his throne. Overcoming. In a lukewarm age, just the same as, you know, he's just had seven messages to seven churches here.

In every case, he tells them what they must do or tells them that they must overcome. What's the thing that we have to overcome? Living in an utterly lukewarm environment. Now that is an incredible ask.

Do you know, I think it's easier to have your spiritual fire stay alive in a persecuted environment than it is in a lukewarm environment. I really believe that. Think of this for a second.

There are prisoners in jail and this happens continuously. There are prisoners in jail who become Christians while they're in there. They may be in there for five years and the day comes when they're

going to get out.

And while they're in prison, they're attending Bible studies, they're going to the prayer meeting. For all the world, they look like they really are devoted Christians. The day comes when that clanging door opens and lets them out into this modern world about and before you know it, they're gone.

They're back to their old life or sometimes even worse. You know, the drugs have come back, everything else. You go, what happened? This world that we're living in is probably the most seductive spiritual environment in history.

We have invented for ourselves distractions that have never existed before. Have you ever tried to have, you know, a conversation with a thoroughly modern person? It's actually difficult now to even talk with people because they spend all their time looking at their phone and thumbing through it while you're talking to them. It's kind of like, how distracted can we possibly get? We're connected all day not to one another.

I had someone telling me the other day about five teenagers who were all introduced in the old days. Those teenagers would have started talking to one another as they sat around the table. Now what they do was everybody got out their phones and started flicking through it.

I would say that, I would say that behavior has ceased being human because we used to do a strange little thing called talking to one another. You know, talking to one another. Weird, I know.

Strange, odd behavior. But, we live in a world where we have created the most spectacularly seductive toys and pastimes and distractions and every other thing. It's not that every one of them should be outlawed and we should make a set of rules.

Thou shalt not do this, this, this, and this. The whole point of it is this, is that if it's diminishing our hunger bit by bit, if it's entertaining us to death, if all it is is distracting us from the real things, you know, the mission that we have, the love of Jesus, the laying down of our lives to go and do and to love people and to do the things He said. You know, if this is what's going on, can we even recognize it when it happens to us if we're so surrounded? So I tell you, overcoming that, overcoming, to him that overcomes at the end of this long passage, Jesus says that, to him that overcomes, he will sit with me in my throne just as I have sat down, you know, in the throne of the Father.

Isn't that amazing? It's a promise from God of the reward to him that overcomes. It's getting worse in our countries. Our countries are becoming secular, more secular every day.

I came back to New Zealand after quite a few years away and I was just shocked. I felt like spiritually while I was away, year by year, something must have just been draining out of Christianity because I felt like so much of the fervor had gone, just in the space of, let's say, five or six years. It was so noticeable to me.

I bet if somebody went away from Australia and came back and was a preacher and had gone around the churches in Australia, they could say the same thing. Something is happening because of what we live in. It's affecting all of us more than we know.

One of the saddest things you can do, or I guess eye-opening things, you know, you go to Africa and you notice that all of the, most of the teenagers you speak to haven't got that look in their eye of kind of bored, bored, semi-arrogant indifference, which we find in the West wherever we look. They look at you with

respect. It's like they want to say, sir, can I help you with something? There's still that, there's still that respect and that looking in the eyes and that, you know, it's almost completely gone when we go around here.

We go around our countries. It's almost completely gone. There's the odd family that's raising their children that way.

That's all. And that used to be across the board. It used to be, let's say, 40 years ago that our children were like that, that our teenagers looked that way, that they had respect for their elders, that they, you know, we think these are old-fashioned things.

I tell you, they're just part of normal culture all down the centuries. It's just that we've lost some of the very basics of our society. They're gone and they're permanently gone.

They're not coming back. We're living in a world that's going to become Sodom and Gomorrah. It's trying its best to become that as fast as it can.

We are living in an age where things are in such decline, but because we're watching it happen on television, we are gradually becoming immune to it. And so we don't know what's happening. But if I was to take you back 40 years and show you what was permissible on TV then and what's permissible on TV now, I tell you, you would be absolutely shocked if I was to get someone from 1965 and bring them forward and say, this is what's on TV now, and our children stay up watching this, they would be so shocked they'd just about fall on the ground.

And I'm not talking about Christian people, I'm talking about your average person. They would be so incredibly shocked. To us, it's become normal.

We're living in something unprecedented. Do you realise that our culture is not going to survive what it's become? You know that, eh? You know that our culture, that our civilisation is dying, just like Rome was dying, except Rome took hundreds of years to die and we're just taking decades. Why? Because we're feeding ourselves stuff the Romans had no dreams of.

We feed it, we drink it down like water in our modern culture. It's killing us. It's killing us.

I believe over the next hundred years, Western civilisation is going to bury itself in the ground. It's falling, the example of Rome, all the way down. So, lukewarmness.

What are some of the practical things that we can do? What are some of the practical things that we can do? I don't know if you've ever noticed, going out on the streets and trying to talk to people has now become almost impossibly difficult. Not because they won't ever hear you, but because there's such little interest. This is, you know, across all of our cultures, people are so busy going to and fro, that they will not hear.

They will not even stop and listen that long. One of the things that I believe can keep us alive as a people is to start focusing outward. What have we got all around us in the local area here? We've got Papua New Guinea to the north.

I think it's like a \$250 plane flight to Papua New Guinea. You've got Vanuatu, one of the poorest island nations in the world. You have the Solomon Islands.

Vanuatu and Solomon Islands both have had major revivals 30 years ago. They are open to the gospel. They're hungry for the word of God.

If you want to go further afield, I get emails from Africa every day, or just about every day, asking me to go over there. You know, hundreds of these emails, I cannot even begin to think about answering. There's a wide open field.

They need teaching. They need sound basics taught to them. Do you know what happens to people that get involved with hungry people? I tell you, it rubs off on you and affects you, and your understanding will maintain its fire.

If you allow yourself merely to just sit and be in the middle of a compromised generation, you have to beware, lest it also befall you. Amen? So we have to become outward looking. We have to keep doing the works of God.

We have to be looking around for ways in which we lay down our life and say, God, send me, or God, do this through me. We have to keep our prayer life up. It doesn't matter what anybody else in the world is doing, anybody else in the neighborhood is doing.

We keep our prayer life up. We've got to keep close contact with God, because this thing here, this will eat us alive. It will have us for lunch if we let it.

It's the most seductive environment on the planet in history. Nothing has ever existed like what we have now. Nothing.

We have to realize it. Isn't it interesting that we're meeting here in a little old hall that probably was started by some people that loved Jesus, I dare say, 80 years ago or something like that. There's probably been all these great sermons preached in here over the years and these things slowly fall into decay.

I was in Wales. We held a couple of conferences. We lived in Wales for six months and we held a couple of conferences where the Welsh revival started.

450 people can fit into this beautiful chapel and there's only 18 people left and they're all old. They're like 70 plus years old and when they die I don't know what's going to happen to that place because all the chapels in Wales are just getting sold off and used for apartments and so on. Out the back there's the grave of Evan Roberts, one of the greatest revivalists that's ever lived.

His grave is sitting there and you can go and see the statue of Evan Roberts and people say, wow, a Welsh revival and you know, Wales is down to 7% church attendance. The place is like, it's like a nuclear bomb went off and wiped out Christianity. And you go, how did that happen? In the space of 100 years you've gone from being the most on fire revival country in the world and now you're down to 7% church attendance and you can hardly find anybody.

You find plenty of people that want to talk about their rugby team, you know, their rather somewhat lack luster rugby team. And there's hundreds of people that want to talk to you about that. You can't find hardly anybody that even knows, even living nearby.

We're like living 6 miles away. The Welsh revival are? I don't know. Maybe I've heard something about that.

We're living in just unprecedented times. Just, how can that happen? It happened by lukewarmness, that's how it happened. It happened by compromises here and there.

It happened with a comfortable life. It happened with taking notice just of the garbage that's fed to us over the tube every day. Taking notice of Jesus.

It's a slow thing. Do you remember the peril of the sower and the seed? You know, the thing that strikes me about it, of course there's the seed that springs up quickly, there's a seed that Jesus talked about where it digs down deep and grows roots, you know. And there's this other thing he talks about, he says it springs up and then he says thorns come and strangle that plant.

He said, what are the thorns? The cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. It always struck me, what an interesting phrase, the cares of this life, the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, deceitfulness. And I always think, wow, that is so true.

These things that we think often are blessings can be that thorn that sneaks up deceitfully behind our backs and we don't even know it's happening and before we know it we've gone into lukewarm mode and our downward trap is like that. The deceitfulness of riches, my goodness. Turn with me please to Matthew 25.

Okay, Matthew 25, this is the wise and foolish versions which I'll talk about more than read it out because it's a whole passage there. But it begins by saying this. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

So we've all heard this carol. Who is Jesus aiming this at? He's actually just been speaking a whole chapter on the last days. He's just spoken a whole chapter to his disciples, you know, Matthew 24, all about the last days, the time of the end, the end of the age.

What's going to happen? In other passages we find out that in the last days they will be seducing spirits, that it will be a day of deception. When, you think about that, imagine living in days. You know what the very elect means? You know, that's a rare phrase.

It's not often spoken even by Jesus. Didn't say, didn't use that term very often. He's saying the very elect of God, those who are known by God from the foundation of the world, those who are known in advance by Jesus, the very elect of God, those chosen from the foundation of the world, and he's saying if possible it would even deceive them.

This is what the environment is in the last days. Now, it's not just the type of deception, you know, I've spoken against various deceptions in the church, but there's a broad general deception that's kind of, I would term it, the rise of self, the rise of self, and the desire for just materialism and affluence and comfort, is a kind of self-deception which will be so massively widespread, and already is, and it deceives us. So here, he's saying at the end of that, and talking about all that, he starts telling parables to his disciples to beware it, to pass this warning on.

Why? Because the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish, are all believers. Every one of them is a believer, they are all virgins waiting for the bridegroom to come, so they expect to be in the wedding. Amen? There's not one of them that doesn't expect that they belong there.

This is even more frightening in my opinion. Why? Because we're about to lose 50% of them. They're going to go.

They go for only one reason, their oil is in short supply. They have to go and get some more while they're going to get the oil, which usually in Scripture represents the Holy Spirit, and I say particularly the fullness of the Holy Spirit. So they're off to get the oil.

While they're away, the bridegroom comes, he says, come in with me, the wedding feast is going to begin, the door is slammed shut as he goes in. The five foolish come back. They say, let us in.

They're fully expecting, surely we belong in there. We too have been waiting for the bridegroom. We too are part of this company.

We only went away for a short time because we were lacking in this. But with that, Jesus says to them, I do not even know who you are. I don't know who you are.

He says, then they went away into wailing and gnashing their teeth, weeping, wailing, gnashing their teeth. Why? Because they knew they were supposed to be in there. We just lose 50% of these people.

Bang, they're gone. You see, Jesus is returning, it says, for a bride that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. How is he going to get a bride like that? Through suffering, through obedience, through the laying down of our life, through our hearts, washing, through wearing the white garments.

He spoke one time, a parable, about the man who arrives in the wedding feast and he hasn't got the white garment on. He said, how did you get in here without the garment? He says, bite a hand and foot and throw them out into the outer darkness, they'll be weeping and gnashing their teeth. You know, I'm telling you, this is serious stuff.

We're not talking about small things here. I don't like the sound of it when it says that the lukewarm will be spewed out of the mouth of God. It sounds bad to me.

I don't know about you, it sounds bad to me. I don't want to find that on judgment day when Christ is in holiness and judgment mode and that is all that he's in. You know, people will be coming up to Jesus as though saying, oh Jesus, can I sit on your lap? I prayed a little prayer to you years ago, here I am, I've arrived here.

We're talking about the holy man of God who says, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away. That's who we're dealing with. We're not dealing with effeminate pictures of Jesus with blue eyes and nice brown hair and only says nice things all the time.

That's not who we're dealing with. We never were dealing with that. And so, here we are in the kind of age that's prophesied, in the kind of environment that's going to suck everybody in, a kind of environment where people are so gullible.

I don't know if you've been to, if you've sat through lately, a church conference or something, where you saw that the guy up the front was spouting things that are just plainly unscriptural and the entire room is going along with it. It's hardly anything more frightening than that. You know, you can imagine being in Germany while Hitler was coming into power and standing there at the back of a rally and watch every single person putting their hand in the air going zig hiles and hiles and if you had any sense or wits about

you, you would say this guy's a maniac and if he takes us to war, we're all going to die.

That's what a logical person would do, you think. Stand at the back of the rally and be horrified. But no, the whole of Germany was sucked into that vortex and lo and behold, everything was completely and utterly destroyed, including most of Europe, before the end of it, because they were following basically a lunatic who was going to destroy everything.

And I kind of have this horrible sense when I see that massive gullibility in the modern church and people will tell me about it. They say, Andrew, you know, I was at this conference in the weekend and they said, the guy said this and no one said a word. The guy just said like outright heresy, the most blatant obvious thing, you know, questioning the divinity of Christ or doing some blatant bananas thing, it's kind of like everybody just sits there placidly.

Or some weird, weird manifestations are going on that look like, you know, strange spirits have invaded the room and everybody just sits there or goes along with it or goes up the front for prayer, you know. Or the guys come in and say, okay, if you want a personal prophecy, it's going to be \$15 or, you know, grace my palm with a note, you know, and people are just rummaging through their bags to try and find, you know, some money to, I mean, this is the doctrine of Bilal. This is as bad as it gets.

It's blatantly terrible as you can imagine, this garbage. And it's happening, starting to happen on an epic scale. This stuff goes on in Africa every day.

You know, the saddest thing you can see in Africa is that the people are so hungry and that there's so many wolves amongst them. It's so awful. We taught the Africans prosperity doctrine and the way they put it into practice is not that everybody gets rich, it's that the preacher gets rich and everybody else stays poor.

That's how it works. And so the preachers literally drive around BMWs. I've been in the home of a preacher where he had this massive, I think the biggest television I've ever seen in my life, the biggest TV screen I've ever seen in my life.

He had a brand new Lexus and Mercedes and everything like that. You know, an African guy in Lagos, Nigeria. And I was preaching in his church and what I saw was that his audience was loaded, as everybody there knows, with very, very poor people.

Probably some of the widows. Many of them couldn't afford more than one set of clothing. Many of them wearing flip-flops on their feet, that's all they've got for shoes.

That's it. That's in his audience on a mass scale. What is Jesus going to do with this guy? And why can't they even see that? It's extraordinary.

So the giant mess that's Africa, do you know what? I prefer it to what we've got. I prefer it to what we've got. Why? Because they at least have the one thing that I believe, Jesus Christ, above everything else.

They have hunger. They've got hunger and therefore the gospel is advancing despite all the garbage. The gospel advances every year.

One of the reasons the Muslims in the north of Africa are getting so stirred up is because they see that Christianity advances by leaps and bounds in Africa every year. I believe Africa is going to become a very

Christian continent this century. It already is.

But it's going to become a very Christian continent this century. Why? Because they have hunger. The Muslims are being driven back.

They are responding with violence. That's all they know how to do. Because they feel desperate.

So, we've spoken tonight about the lukewarmness. I guess, you know, in closing, the most important thing that we have before God, the most important thing that every one of us has before God right now is the state of our heart. Amen? That's the state of our heart.

People are into all kinds of outward things and they think, you know, if I do this or do that, of course I believe in obeying the words of Jesus, absolutely. But prior to it comes the state of our heart before God. We have to guard our hearts.

If we are going to survive this, and you think of it this way, that I believe in the lukewarm age comes, you could almost call it a spiritual plague, a spiritual plague of seductiveness that sounds so good and feels good and really is attractive on a scale never seen in history. So it's like a spiritual plague goes through a plague of locusts and the question I have, how do I survive that? Who will be standing at the end of that? And I tell you, the overcomers who have guarded their heart and made sure that they are looking outwardly at how to find ways of serving Jesus and loving Jesus in such a world. As I said, we're surrounded by poor nations all above us.

All over, you know, Fiji, Manawatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Philippines. They're a plane flight away. They're \$500 each way, whatever it is.

All this. It's not rocket science. We have to continuously be asking ourselves, am I the real thing? Is my heart right before God? Am I clean before Jesus today? Have I let that washing go deep in me that makes my heart truly, not just clean, but kind of supple before God where God can say, you need to go over there and I hear Him because my heart is inclined towards God.

This is the only way of survival. You know, if there was a terrible plague, which at the moment there is overseas, if there was a terrible plague coming here, you would want to know what the one thing is that could allow you to survive that. You'd want to get ejected with that, whatever it is.

This is the only thing that will do it. Guard your heart so that inside of you is a fire that does not go out and that is looking around at the world and saying, I wonder where I could find some hungry people to minister to. I wonder what could be done there.

I wonder what I can pray into. I wonder what I can get involved in. I wonder how I can keep that heart fire alive.

Amen? It's crucial. It's critical. We are in an hour when we need to really ask these questions and our heart is the place where it starts.

Please stand with me. Let's pray. So if you really agree with this and you want to say before God tonight that you really want to be on fire like that and you want to have that fire reignited inside of you or continuously burning and you don't want to lose it, if you really desire to be one of those wise virgins waiting for the bride groom, please just raise your hand to heaven if it's a commitment and a surrender to

God.

So I want to pray for us all. Father God, I pray for all of us who are raising our hands before you right now, Father. We're saying, oh God, that we desire to fully surrender to you, to be used of you in these last days.

Father, that we want to be truth speakers, that we want to be real disciples of Jesus, that we don't want to be half way, that we don't want to be lukewarm, God. That we want to be found that our heart is hot still, Father God, even in a lukewarm generation, Father. That we would not be seduced by this world and every distraction in it, oh God.

That Father, you'll save us from out of the midst of this, that we would be overcomers, that we would hear Jesus say, well done good and faithful servant. Father, let it be true of us, Father God. Show us what it is you would have us do.

Let us remain in prayer, let us remain to be hot people on the inside. And Father, send us forth and show us where we should be, what we should be doing, what we should be involved with in these lukewarm and seductive times. Oh God, help us Father.

And we pray, let us be continuously real disciples of Jesus, the wise virgins and not the foolish. Oh God, please let it be so for all of us. We pray these things and we surrender to you in a new way.

Thank you Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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