

The Lukewarm Church

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon addresses the dangers of spiritual complacency in the Laodicean Church and calls for a passionate commitment to Christ.

Duration: 57:26

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22

Topics: "Spiritual Revival", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being passionate and zealous for God, addressing the dangers of being lukewarm in faith. It highlights the need for repentance, genuine spiritual wealth, and a close relationship with Jesus. The message encourages listeners to open their hearts to Christ's love, overcome spiritual complacency, and reign with Him in His kingdom.

Transcript

Okay, a few things to announce. There's a fundraiser for the Children's Ministry Austria missions trip at Yogurtland, and that is on the 27th, Friday and Sunday. From Friday, oh, it's Friday through Sunday.

And that's at the Yogurtland over in the Target Center there, Baker and Harbor. So again, if you mentioned Calvary Chapel, they give a part of the proceeds to these guys. You know, what happens, it just, you know, we have all these fundraisers lately, and, you know, sometimes that can be a little bit negative, but it all depends on what you're raising the funds for, I think, and how you're going about it.

And I think everybody goes about it pretty tactfully, and they work hard. And it's basically to help these people get to these destinations and to be able to minister when they go. So we have the annual conference in Austria where missionaries and national pastors from all over Europe and Eastern Europe come together.

And what these guys do is they go over, and they raise their own support, they go over, and they spend the week not, you know, lounging down at the lake or enjoying the Alps or any of that. They spend the week just serving and taking care of everybody. And that's, you know, such a noble thing.

So it's great that we have these opportunities to assist them. And it's really great for places like Yogurtland and, you know, Chick-fil-A, some of the different places that have helped us out over the years. I think that's a real blessing.

So anyway, Friday through Sunday this week, there will be yogurt available that will help these guys get over for the children's ministry there. Also, the Hands of Hope, Hands of Hope Ministry is our ministry that, it's quite diverse, really. A lot of different things happen through the Hands of Hope Ministry.

We go into a number of different schools in the area here in the Santa Ana District and help out, you know, feeding the poor and the homeless and a variety of different things. But what they're looking to do is to get some help for the kids in the Santa Ana School District by having a backpack drive. So if you would like to donate a backpack or school supplies for some of the kids in the Santa Ana District, as you know, there's lots of kids over there that don't have the means to provide themselves with these things.

So if you'd like to donate a backpack or school supplies, you can drop those things off at the front office or the Hands of Hope offices over here by the bookstore, just this end of the bookstore building. And so that's gonna be August 4th is when they're gonna do the backpack drive. So if you wanna help out with that, church office or the Hands of Hope office.

And another quick announcement here. As you've heard mentioned, it's almost a year out, but they're taking early registration for it. There's going to be a couple's retreat on a cruise ship.

So that's a different kind of a thing. But it's a great ministry opportunity. You get to eat lots of great food and witness to all kinds of unsaved people.

And of course, spend some time together bonding with other believers and just having a good time. So if you would like to be part of that, that's gonna be May 12th, 2013. But again, they have a registration deadline to get signed up for that.

So if you're interested in doing that, you can put down a deposit. I think it's like \$50 or something like that. Okay.

Now, a couple things to pray about. Praise the Lord. We wanna thank the Lord for touching and ministering to and raising up little Brian Rogers.

You remember we talked about his appendectomy. He ended up in the hospital for nine days, but praise the Lord, he got to go home yesterday. And we're thankful for that.

And we know his family's blessed. And I'm actually wearing these shoes tonight in honor of Brian because he bought these for me. Can you believe that? A little 11 year old kid got these for me.

I saw him wearing a pair. I go, those are the coolest shoes. A little while later, he comes into my office with a little box.

He wanted me to have shoes like his. So I wore them in honor of him tonight. And I wore my Creation Fest T-shirt in honor of Myron here tonight who made it for me.

Thank you, Myron. You're very gracious. So anyway, that's a great report for Brian, and we're thankful for that.

And of course, John and Jackie are very thankful for everyone's prayers. The tragedy in Aurora, Colorado. No doubt you've heard all about that.

I don't know if any of you have seen on any of the, you know, coverage of this that Calvary Chapel Aurora has been right smack in the center of this whole thing. They had youth pastor, kids from the youth group, some kids that we know from former students at the Bible College, they were all in theater eight during that whole tragic thing. And by God's grace, none of them were wounded or none of them were killed, thank God.

But of course, many were. But they have had an amazing opportunity to minister to the people of Aurora. And God's really using that church, and I'm sure other churches in the area.

So I thought it would be nice tonight if we just would pray for the families and pray for those that are ministering to them and pray that God would continue to bring that, you know, that comfort and just, you know, how do you even address that? But of course, the Lord knows. So let's pray for them tonight. Father, we do pray for these families, Lord, and those that have lost loved ones, Lord.

It's just inconceivable to us a tragedy like this, Lord. Just people going out for an innocent good time and this kind of thing happening. Lord, we pray in ways that only you could, that you would minister, Lord, to those that have lost their loved ones.

We pray, Lord, that you would use your people. We thank you for the witness of the church and that community. We thank you for the way they've risen to the occasion and they've been there to help and to minister 24-7 since that event.

So bless, be with Pastor Ed Taylor and the staff there and all those who are serving that community at this time, Lord. We pray for Mike McIntosh as he's gone back there now as well to try to give some assistance. We pray you'd bless Mike and use him there.

And Lord, we just want to commit the whole thing to you. Lord, we know there are people that are still teetering between life and death. We just pray for mercy there.

We pray, Lord, for the wounded. We pray that you would touch and heal. And, Lord, we pray that through this tragedy that you would be glorified to the salvation of many.

So we commit them to you. And, Lord, now as we open your word tonight, as we look at this final letter to these seven churches, we pray that you would speak to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Okay, Revelation 3. So real quickly as we're turning to Revelation 3, just to give you sort of an overview of what's going to be happening in the month of August, Pastor Chuck will be doing the service the next two Wednesday nights. Next Wednesday is communion, and he'll take the communion service and the teaching and then the following week as well.

The third week, we have a guest from Australia, a scientist who is a creation scientist, and he's going to come and give a presentation. Pastor Chuck will, of course, direct that as well. So that'll be a great night.

And then we get back the following week. So I'll be here the following Wednesday night, and the Harvest Crusade is coming up that following weekend. So we'll probably do something that just kind of, you know, speaks to us about the gospel and evangelism.

And then the final Wednesday of August, I'm kind of working it to where, you know, covering all the Wednesday nights in August. We'll do one more thing, and I think what we're going to do, I haven't made a

final decision yet, but I think we're going to do something on reaching out to Muslims. And so we'll save that for the last Wednesday night of the month, but I think that's what we're going to do, and I think that will be really good, because, of course, many Muslims in our area, and they need Jesus.

So we need to be equipped to do that. So that's what's happening for the month of August on Wednesday nights, and then we'll be back in September. We'll get into full swing with another study, and I'm thinking that we're going into 1 Corinthians, as I mentioned, but you never know.

Things could change between now and then, so we'll see what happens. All right. So we come now to verse 14 of the third chapter, and let me read to you verses 14 through 22.

And to the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

So then because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich and have become wealthy and need nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich, and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed, and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, therefore be zealous and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne.

As I also overcame and sat down with my father on his throne. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So now we come all the way through, and coming to this final church, once again a literal historical church with this message originally going to them and having application to their situation at the time.

But then remember also, the condition that the church could potentially fall into throughout the long ages of church history, and no doubt there have been many, and there are many today that would fit into this particular category, this category of being lukewarm. And as we've mentioned that each of the churches, the very cities that the churches were situated in, in some cases, some of the events that had transpired historically in the cities, Jesus would refer to them and use them as means of teaching, lessons that he wanted them to learn. Sometimes the very name of the church or the town that the church was in had some connection with the church or what was going on in the church.

Pergamos was the church that was sort of married to the world. The word Pergamos is, the Greek word is the word that we get the word bigamy from, which of course means to be married to more than one person. Now Laodicea, they say that the word, the root for this word Laodicea means the rule of the people or something like that.

And so in a sense you see that this was probably part of the problem, that it was the, it was kind of more of a democratic kind of a situation versus a theocratic, which is what the church is supposed to be. The church is not a democracy. We might have a democracy in this country, we might, we might not, but the church is not a democracy, the church is a theocracy.

And the difference is in the democracy the people rule, in a theocracy God rules. And so it would seem that what happened in the Laodicean church is that the people were ruling, the people were sort of setting the agenda, calling the shots, and the Lord was being excluded from having His way and speaking His word into that congregation. And of course the apostle Paul warned that these kinds of things would occur throughout the history of the church.

He said that there would come times when people would not give heed to sound doctrine. He said that because they had itching ears they would heap up for themselves teachers who would basically tell them what they want to hear rather than tell them what God's word said. And so that seems to have been part of the problem here in Laodicea.

But once again Jesus as He's done all the way through these letters, He introduces Himself to them and using very significant terms to refer to Himself in relation to their situation. So these things says the Amen. The Amen.

The word Amen we often say well Amen means so be it. And it does mean that, but it means more than that. The word Amen really is, the idea behind it is really truth.

So the Amen is basically the one who's speaking is the one who is the truth. And so when we say Amen what we're doing is we're affirming that that is true. So sometimes we'll hear a message and something will really resonate with us and we'll go Amen.

And basically we're saying yeah true that is true. Jesus here to this church He speaks to them and He tells them that He is the Amen. He is the one who is true.

And of course this is extremely relevant to the church and it's happened over and over again historically and it's happening this very hour that men tend to think that their word should have some authority within the church or in some cases that their word should be the authority in the churches to the exclusion of the words of Jesus. We have churches all over the country and around the world today that basically say we don't take the Bible seriously. We don't wanna hear people telling us what Jesus said about this that or the other thing.

We're gonna make up our own minds. We are gonna decide what is right. We are gonna decide what is true.

We are gonna decide what we're going to believe. We're gonna decide what's proclaimed from our pulpits. And you know that's in the culture that's created absolute spiritual chaos.

Because as you know today what people will do is they will say well we'll just take the hot topic. It's as hot as anything has ever been. The hot topic of homosexuality.

And you will find people today that will argue and say well you know lots of Christians say it's fine. Lots of Christians say it's a perfectly legitimate alternative lifestyle. And you can certainly go into churches and you can hear messages that would indicate that and you can listen to bishops pontificate and people talk about the virtues of that particular lifestyle.

And then they well you know but then these other Christians who disagree and say that it's improper and it's unrighteous and it's sin. You know so there's this confusion. But it's a good example of what we're talking about here where men have usurped authority in the church, ignored the plain statements of

scripture, disregarded what God's word says about morality, and decided that we're going to just do it the way we think it ought to be done.

Now of course God allows these things to go on. And they're going on right now in an intense way all around us. But just remember this.

Jesus says he is the amen. He is the truth. His word is the truth.

And any church, any pastor, any bishop, any synod, any council that contradicts, denies, disobeys the word of God, they might have their moment of seeming success and maybe approval from the world at large or whatever. But know this. The Lord will have the final word.

He is the amen. And nothing's going to get around that in the end. So sometimes we have to be patient and God allows things to deteriorate to degrees that we would have never thought that he would, but nevertheless he does.

But in the end, his word will stand. And that's what he's reminding the Laodiceans of. These things says the amen, the faithful and true witness.

Jesus is the faithful and true witness. The witness of God. The witness of who God is.

Jesus came and his testimony to God the Father was faithful. He could say when Philip said, Lord, show us the Father and it will be sufficient. Jesus said, Philip, have you been with me so long and you don't recognize me? Philip, he that has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say show us the Father? You see, Jesus was the faithful and the true witness of God. He came and he brought to us a clear and an accurate picture of who God is. He is the beginning of the creation of God.

The beginning of the creation of God. Not he's the beginning in the sense that the creation started with him being created first. Some people suggest that that's the case.

That's not the case. He's the beginning of the creation of God in the sense that he's the one who created everything. Creation originated with him.

That's the idea. He's not created. He's not a creature.

He is the creator and everything originated with him. And so, again, as he's going to address this church that has pretty much decided to go on their own, he's first reminding them of who he is. He's the amen.

He's the faithful and true witness. He is the origin, the originator of all things, the creation of God. I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot.

I could wish you were cold or hot. So here's the situation. They're neither cold or hot.

Jesus said, I wish you were one or the other. That's interesting. Now we can understand why Jesus would wish they were hot.

Jesus wants his people to be on fire for him. He wants us to be passionate about him. He wants us to have an intensity about our relationship with him and our love for him.

He wants us to have that. But he says, I could wish that you were either hot or cold. Why would he even suggest that being cold would be better than being lukewarm? Well, because if you're cold, then there's always the possibility that you might want to come out of that coldness.

But if you're lukewarm, you see, the idea here is there is a contentment that is wrong in this case. There is a self-satisfaction. There is a complacency.

There is just an attitude of, hey, you know, just, right, you're just kind of in the middle with no real passion for God but not cold enough to realize you need to thaw out. So Jesus said, I would that you're one or the other. But the problem is they were lukewarm, lukewarm.

In the city of Laodicea, the water that came into the city was generally lukewarm. It had to travel approximately six miles through an aqueduct, and it originated from a hot spring. And so it would travel that six-mile distance, and many times it would cool off from what it originally was when it came out of the hot spring, but it never got cold.

And so the Laodiceans understood how disgusting lukewarm water can be. Now, maybe you've had an experience where you're really thirsty, and you're really dying for a cold drink, and somebody hands you something lukewarm, and that doesn't satisfy, does it? Sometimes I have a lot of half-drunk bottles of water in my car. I drink part of them, and then I throw them in the backseat or something.

So every week or so, I'll clean out seven or eight bottles of half-drunk water. But once in a while, maybe I've gone on a run or something, I get in the car, and I'm so thirsty, and I grab this thing, and I take off the lid, and I start to drink it, and it's not cold. It's not refreshing.

It's that lukewarm thing. So just from that standpoint, even you think about it with our food, you kind of either eat your food cold or hot, right? If your food is set on the table, having just come out of the oven or out of the frying pan or whatever it was, the idea is you want to sit down and eat it at that point, right? You don't put it on the table and then wait an hour and a half and then go eat it. If you do, you're sort of like, oh, this just doesn't taste right.

So Jesus is using this kind of illustration. This is unpleasant. And this is what He's saying about these Christians in Laodicea.

You're neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other. Because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you is really what it says.

I will vomit you out of my mouth. This is just under lukewarm. So it's okay.

Man, I just got this tickle like in your throat where it feels like something's jabbing you. Well, it's a great thing to have when you're trying to speak. This does happen to me occasionally.

So, all right. Let's try to keep going here. So this is, now I was thinking about, remember Ephesus was, you know, commended, great church, many, many things that they had going.

And yet the Lord says, I do have this against you. You've left your first love. Remember from where you've fallen, repent and do the first works or I will come and remove your lampstand.

So we've got there the heart that's, it's grown a bit cold to the Lord. But then remember Sardis, Sardis had, Jesus said, you have a name that you live but you're dead. And he challenged them to strengthen the

things that remain.

So, you know, in my mind I'm thinking, okay, you've got the left your first love, you've got the name that you live but you're dead. And then here you've got the lukewarm. And none of these conditions are acceptable to Jesus.

But this lukewarm one though, this one really seems to be the one that he is most disgusted with, if you will. This is the one. And, you know, so thinking about that, it's like, well, Lord, you know, what are the differences between these conditions and why is this one so particularly repulsive to you? And, you know, I guess it seems anyway to me that it's really what Jesus is repulsed by here is this attitude that just is satisfied with outward form, religious form, but just there's no real relationship.

I think it's kind of like what Paul said when he told Timothy again about the days that would come and he spoke of these people that would come onto the scene and he speaks of them in ways that are comparable to the way he speaks about the pagans in the first chapter of Romans. You know, the first chapter of Romans, Paul talks about all of the wickedness and depravity of the ancient pagan world. Now, and right into Timothy, Paul has a list that's similar to that.

He talks about those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They're back biters, they're traitors, all of these things are idolaters. But the interesting distinction between the two groups is one of them, Romans 1 group, are those outside the church.

The ones that Paul is talking about are inside the church. And this is what he says about them. He says they have a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof.

And that's, I think, what Jesus is really dealing with here. He's dealing with those who have a form of godliness. They go to church.

They say they're Christians. They do things that are religious in nature so they have this form of godliness but there's no power. There's no real life there.

There's no real relationship with God. And that has been the thing, as I was saying earlier, that has brought such disrepute upon the church over the centuries. Those who have been masquerading as Christians but are not Christians.

Those who have gone about as holy, righteous people but, like the Pharisees of old, they were corrupt and they were full of wickedness and perversion and this has happened and this still does happen. And I think this is the group of people that Jesus is really talking about here. Those who are just content to have the outward show of religion and notice this is their estimation of themselves.

Because you say, I am rich, increased with goods and have need of nothing. That's how they thought of themselves. Now, Laodicea was a wealthy city.

Out of the seven cities that the churches were in, Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven. And so, evidently, there were wealthy people in the congregation as well. And so their estimation of themselves was basically that they were fine.

They were a rich church and they probably looked at that as some sort of a blessing. We've got prosperity. God's blessing is upon us.

We are increased in our wealth. We don't have any needs. This was their estimation of themselves but Jesus had a completely different picture.

He said, you don't realize it but you're actually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Now, this is something that we have to take seriously because what it shows us here is how easy it is for us to be self-deceived. It is very easy to be self-deceived.

We can fool ourselves into thinking that we're spiritually rich. We're increased with goods. We have no spiritual needs at all but the Lord would say, well, no, the fact of the matter is you're wretched.

You're miserable. You're poor. You're blind.

You're naked. And listen, I have heard people over the years say that very kind of thing. I'm rich, increased with goods.

I don't need anything. And yet they're living in sin. They're living in outright rebellion to God.

Somebody was telling me yesterday about a person who has made decisions and moved in a direction that is completely contrary to everything we know to be sound Christian living. And this person was talking to the other person and just, you know, kind of out of curiosity, asked him, well, what about the Lord? Because obviously the things they're doing are indicating that they're nowhere with God. But the response of the person was, I'm doing better than ever.

Oh, wow. Wonder what Jesus would say. See, that's what the Laodiceans were saying.

Hey, we're doing better than ever. Jesus said, oh, really? Well, here's the facts. You're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

And any one of us can, you know, potentially we could go in this direction because it's easy to delude ourselves. It's easy to deceive ourselves. It's easy to see the faults and the sins of other people.

It's very difficult to see our own faults or sins, isn't it? And not only is it difficult to see them, but we have this very amazing ability of rationalizing and justifying the things that we do and excusing them when we would never tolerate that with anybody else. But with ourselves, we're just sort of like, well, you know, that's okay. And the Lord understands.

Can't tell you how many people over the years have told me when they're living in, you know, flagrant, blatant sin, well, you know, the Lord understands. I love the Lord. I do.

And the Lord knows I really love Him. Well, according to the Bible, Jesus says, if you love me, keep my commandments. He that does not keep my commandments doesn't really love me.

So we have to be careful, lest we fall into the same place, lest we come under the same kind of a delusion. But look at the description that Jesus gives. This is really intense.

Wretched, that's a strong word. Miserable, poor, blind, naked. They thought they were rich.

Now remember, this is a church. And of course, churches are made up of individuals, so He's speaking to individuals, but He's speaking to a congregation as well. You know, the longer I live, the more I realize how detrimental to one's spiritual life riches can become.

There's a reason why the Bible warns us over and over again about covetousness, about the desire for material things and so forth. Because these things can come in and they can steal our hearts. They can steal our spiritual lives away from us.

We have to be so careful. But this is where these guys were at. Because they were materially wealthy, they were smug and self-satisfied and saw that they didn't have any other needs.

Remember, Jesus spoke of riches as the deceitfulness of riches. Riches are deceptive. They fool us.

And one of the ways they can fool us is that they can make us think that everything's okay. Because we're rich. But we're not really rich necessarily.

Like they were not rich. So Jesus says to them in verse 18, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire. Okay, you think you're rich, you're not.

But I'll show you how you can become rich, Jesus says. Buy from me gold. So what is He talking about here? He's talking about seeking to be rich spiritually.

Coming to Him and buying that gold, that spiritual wealth and richness that He will offer to us. That's true wealth. True riches is not in material possessions or in the amount of money one has in the bank or at their disposal.

True riches are intangible in that sense. They're spiritual. Remember the church of Smyrna, they were poor from the material standpoint.

They were poor, but Jesus said you're rich. See, the church of Smyrna was poor, Jesus says you're rich. These guys are rich, Jesus says you're poor.

Let's not be deceived by riches. Let's not be thinking that that is an indicator that everything's fine because it isn't necessarily. Jesus says this is what you need to do, buy from me gold refined in the fire that you may be rich and white garments that you may be clothed that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.

So Jesus said they're naked, meaning that spiritually they were not cleansed. They were not covered. All throughout the scripture there's this, the picture of the garment, the white garment that covers the filth of our sin and of course it's figurative.

The garment is figurative of the blood of Christ covering our sin. But that's what Jesus is saying to them. You're naked and the shame of your nakedness is showing through.

Trying to stand before God in our own righteousness is like standing before him naked and filthy because our righteousness as Isaiah declared or the Lord through Isaiah, all of our righteousness is before the Lord as a filthy garment. So Jesus is really calling them to apply by faith his salvation to their lives that they might be truly clothed and then he said anoint your eyes with thysel that you may see. Let me just, so just on a side note, Laodicea was famous in the ancient world for having developed this ointment that was for the healing of eye problems.

So Jesus says again, he's saying, you know, you might have the eye salve that you can pick up there at the, you know, over there with the doctor but you need something that I will provide for you. Anoint your eyes with thysel that you may see. So Jesus is saying to them, come to me and I will give you real riches.

Come to me and I will clothe your nakedness. Come to me and I will heal your vision so you can see things as they really are because they obviously could not see how things really were. They thought one thing.

They saw themselves in one way but they were obviously much different. And so listen to what he says though in verse 19. This is the one to me that is so astounding.

He says, as many as I love, I rebuke and chase it. Why did Jesus say this stuff to this church? He said it because he loved them. He said it because he loved them.

You know, we sometimes fool ourselves in thinking that if somebody really loves us they will only say sweet and pleasant things to us. And some people think that, well, since God loves us we should only talk about sweet and pleasant things pertaining to our relationship with God. We should only talk about God's love for us and we should never talk about judgment or chastisement or the need to repent or anything like that.

Well, that's not the way God sees it. Jesus didn't say to these guys, hey, you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked because he hated them. He said it because he loved them.

Paul in writing to the Galatians, Paul's, you know, saying some hard things to the Galatians because they have turned away from the truth of the gospel. And he says to them at one point, he says, have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth? But isn't that how it works sometimes? You tell people the truth and they get angry. They'd rather have you lie to them.

And there's a whole mentality in our culture today. Don't tell me the truth. I don't want to hear the truth.

Just tell me what I want to hear. Tell me everything's okay. Tell me my lifestyle's okay.

Tell me what I'm doing's all right. Don't tell me that I'm wrong because that's not loving. Don't tell me that there's a God that's going to judge me.

That's not loving. Oh, don't talk about a God who sends people to hell. That's not loving.

That's not a God of love. No, that's love because these are realities. And it would be contrary to love to know that these things are true and the end of these activities and not to warn somebody that, hey, this is where this road's headed.

If I knew somebody was barreling down the road and ultimately going to go over a cliff and I didn't tell them, would that be loving? It wouldn't be loving at all. And if I see somebody who's in sin and I don't want to hurt their feelings so I don't say anything about it, I'm not really loving them. I'm not really doing anything for them.

I've had many times over the years in, you know, teaching and preaching where I've been saying hard things sometimes in the pulpit and people, you know, get up and walk out of the church. They're mad. They don't want to hear that.

I'll never forget one lady years ago. She told me later, she said, you know, I just hated you because every time you got up there, you just said this stuff that really bothered me. And I just thought you were so unloving and you were so uncompassionate and you didn't care.

And she was telling me all this after, you know, God had gotten a hold of her and she said, you know, thanks for saying what you said. Even though it really made me mad, it was true and it was in the end what I needed to hear. So you see, the truth, sometimes it might be painful.

But people who tell you the truth love you. People who don't tell you the truth don't love you. God loves you.

God loves me. God loves us, his people, so he tells us the truth. You think this about yourself? No, here's the reality.

This is what it is. So Jesus says, as many as I love, I rebuke and I chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.

Be zealous. These guys, they had no zeal, no passion, no fire. Jesus is saying, here's your opportunity right now.

You can be passionate. Be zealous and repent. And the Lord wants us to be, he wants us to be on fire for him.

And if we are, it will make all the difference. It will make all the difference in our lives personally. It'll make all the difference in the world that we live in.

Sheryl and I were in Chicago this past weekend and we actually stayed out in Wheaton, which is a few miles outside of Chicago. And in Wheaton, you have Wheaton College, a Christian college. It's been there for many years.

And at Wheaton College, Billy Graham attended there as a young man. They have the Billy Graham Center. And so we went and walked through the museum at the Billy Graham Center.

And walking through the displays, and I've read Billy's autobiography, I've read biographies on him, and of course, like many others, you know, fairly familiar with his life and ministry. But, you know, walking through this and just looking at the whole thing, and kind of seeing it all, you know, from start to finish there in the museum, you know, I came out of there just so excited about this man's life and about the great passion that he's had for all of these years for Jesus. And I said to Sheryl, finally, I said, you know, if every Christian was like Billy Graham, the world would be a different place.

And not in the sense that every one of us would get up in a pulpit and, you know, preach, you know, to large groups of people, because not everybody's called to do that. But if everybody had that same simple faith in Christ, that same unswerving belief in the Word of God, and that same graciousness and love for their fellow man that Billy has displayed all of these years throughout, you know, these decades of his life, if we were like that, and, you know, I just read yesterday just a statement that Billy put out, you know, he's 96 years old, and he just a couple days put out a statement about his concern about the nation, and just going through the various points that are, you know, very troubling to him at this point, I think, man, you know, here's a guy that has been on fire from the time he came to Christ when he was 18 years old, and now he's 96. You can never accuse Billy Graham of being lukewarm.

But you know what? None of us have to be lukewarm. Jesus says, be zealous, therefore, and repent. Repent.

If we are lukewarm, if we've lost our passion, if we're no longer excited, if we've come to a place where we're just sort of lackadaisical about our faith, what do we do? Well, you got two options. You can keep going down that road and ultimately get sucked back into sin and back into the world and have all kinds of tragedy befall you and misery and everything else. You can do that and maybe end up in hell.

Or you can do this. You can be zealous and repent. You can come to Jesus and say, Lord, change my heart.

Lord, forgive me for whatever there has been that has caused this condition to develop. Lord, I want to be hot. I want to be ablaze for you.

And we can come to him. And so he tells us, behold, I stand at the door and knock. Now, here's that famous passage.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. This famous passage that we hear so often in evangelism, and it's a perfect evangelistic passage, so I'm not going to say we shouldn't use it. We should.

It's great. But notice the context isn't necessarily evangelism. The context is the church.

Jesus is talking to people in the church. Where's Jesus? He's outside. He's talking to the church that has shut him out.

He's talking to the Christian that shut him out. He's saying, be zealous, repent. I'm standing at the door knocking.

And if anyone hear my voice and open that door. You see, that's the thing. God loves us so much that even when our hearts grow hard, and even when we get into sin, and even when we go away, you know what? He will keep knocking on that door.

And there it is. There's those moments of conviction. There's those moments where you just realize that I need to repent.

I need to return. And, you know, don't turn a deaf ear to that. Because we don't know how long he's going to knock.

But he's knocking. And he says, if anyone hears my voice, opens the door, I will come in and dine with him and he with me. And the idea behind dining, of course, is a close, intimate relationship will be restored.

But what does he say? He says, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door. See, this is the thing that we have to remember. God will never force you to love him.

He will never force you to love him. He will never force you to obey him. He will never force you to yield yourself to him.

He will not kick the door of your heart down to get in. But the moment you open it, he'll enter in. See, that's left in our hands.

We've got to open the door. We've got to invite him. As many as received him, we've got to receive him.

And so, to him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne as I also overcame and sat with my father on his throne. Jesus has a throne. He's sitting at the right hand of the father in heaven right now.

But he has a throne that's going to be established here on earth. Jesus is going to sit on the throne of David, and he's going to rule over the house of Jacob. And guess who's going to rule and reign with him? His church.

That's what the book of Revelation is partially about. It's about the coming reign of Christ on the earth and his people ruling and reigning with him. And so, for those who overcome, for those who overcome that lukewarm state by being zealous and repenting, we have the promise of reigning with Christ.

And then again, the final words, he who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. Now, I assume that most of us here tonight, I mean, the very fact that you're here is because you have a heart for the Lord. That's wonderful.

But it could be that in a crowd this size, that there are those here and there that you're not where you need to be. You're neither hot nor cold. You're lukewarm.

And that's repulsive to Jesus. But he loves you. And that's why he's telling you, you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

So you can receive true riches. So you can be clothed in his righteousness. So your eyes can be opened.

What do you do? Be zealous and repent. Repent. It's just a matter of turning.

Turning right in your heart, right this minute, Lord, I'm turning to you. God, have mercy. Lord, do a fresh work.

Lord, forgive me. Jesus, take over my life. Fill me once again.

Lord, you know my issues. You know my problems. You know my sins.

You know what I need. He's God. He can do it.

He will do it. He stands at the door and knocks. All we gotta do is open it.

Lord, we thank you that that's true. We thank you that you love us. And because you love us, Lord, you tell us the truth.

And Lord, we need to hear it. Lord, we need to know if we really are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Because you know so often, Lord, we think we're rich and increased with goods and we don't have any need.

So often, Lord, we're content with church attendance or we're content with some religious duty or affiliation and we console ourselves with that. That's okay. That's enough.

Lord, help us not to be deceived. And Lord, we pray tonight. Lord, we don't want to be cold.

We don't want to be lukewarm. Lord, we want to be on fire. So Lord, rekindle that flame in our hearts if it's diminished at all.

And Lord, as we've looked at these churches, Lord, you know all of those different things that you address, Lord. Having left the first love, Lord, if there's any tonight that have grown just a bit cold in their hearts toward you, still involved in all the Christian things and service and ministry, but there's a coldening. Lord,

change our hearts.

Change our hearts, Lord. Lord, any that have allowed compromise to come in, idolatry, sexual immorality, spiritual deadness, lukewarmness. Lord, any of those things, we thank you that every one of these letters have been a plea and a call out to people to return, to receive your mercy.

We thank you, Lord, that that's who you are, that you're the God who loves us even in our lukewarm state. And you invite us over and over again to repent. And so Lord, help tonight those who need to repent to do that.

Thank you, Lord, that your arms are stretched out wide. Thank you, Lord, that you're the one knocking. Help those that need to to open that door, that you might come in and be to them and do for them all that you want to be and do.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Let's stand together.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/MzzdxWZQvCY.mp4>
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