

Rev. 3:16. the Charity of the Lord Jesus

by Horatius Bonar

Christ's love and condescension are extended to all, regardless of their spiritual temperature or faith, and He rewards even the smallest efforts made for Him.

Scripture: Isaiah 42:3, Matthew 10:32-33, Matthew 12:30, Mark 9:40, Luke 9:62, Romans 14:4, 1 Corinthians 10:21, 2 Timothy 1:7, James 4:4, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Lukewarmness", "Faith and Commitment"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the grave danger of spiritual lukewarmness in his sermon on Revelation 3:16, warning that being neither cold nor hot is an abomination to Christ. He contrasts the indecisive with those who are genuinely for Christ, highlighting that even the timid and weak in faith are accepted by Him. Bonar encourages believers to be vigilant in their spiritual temperature, urging them to avoid complacency and to recognize that even small acts of faith are valued by the Lord. He reassures the faint-hearted that Christ's charity extends to all who do not openly oppose Him, offering hope and encouragement to those struggling with their faith. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a passionate commitment to Christ, warning against the dangers of a diluted faith.

Transcript

"Neither cold nor hot."--Revelation 3:16.

"He who is not with me is against me."--Matthew 12:30.

"He who is not against us is for us."--Mark 9:40.

"Neither cold nor hot." This first of these texts proclaims as a ruinous sin what many regard as 'a mere misfortune which cannot be helped'--lukewarmness. To be neither cold nor hot is an abomination in the sight of Christ, awakening disgust, and leading to entire casting away. It is not lukewarmness occasioned by the cold passing gradually into heat, but that produced by the heat passing into the cold. Once there was warmth; now that warmth and glow are giving way, and the hateful lukewarm condition is coming on. Church of the living God, beware of letting your temperature sink even one single degree. Christian man or woman, watch! Mark your spiritual thermometer; take alarm when it begins to go down, though but a hairbreadth. See that it rises, and rises from day to day.

How loathsome to the great Master is the tasteless, tepid, vapid Christianity of multitudes in our day! One can hardly tell what it is, or where it is tending. Neither cold nor hot! Making the best of both worlds; mixing up heaven and earth; a compound of zeal and indifference; a dilution of genuine religion, to such an extent, that the original element has almost disappeared. Alternate folly and wisdom; levity and seriousness; the ball and the prayer-meeting; the concert and the communion; the opera and the committee; the gay evening party and the mother's meeting or the Sabbath school; the cup of the Lord and the cup of Belial mixed together--such is the condition of things among multitudes who name the name of Christ.

"He who is not with me is against me."--Matthew 12:30. This second text points not so much to the lukewarm and half-

hearted, as to the deliberately undecided--those who, from prejudice, or fear of man, or love of ease, willfully stand aloof from Christ--while yet not openly joining with His foes. Their conscience says, 'Join Christ; follow Him.' But there is a lion in the way--they must take up their cross, and deny self; they must incur loss, or hatred, or shame. So they shrink back, all the while defending their indecision, and soothing their consciences with the thought that they do not oppose Christ or His cause. Of such Christ here says, he who is not with us is against us. He that stands aloof--afraid, perhaps, of being called a saint or a bigot, unwilling to commit himself to a life of decided religion, reluctant to come wholly out from the world, or set himself against its opinions and ways--

is as if he were an enemy. For no man can serve two masters, or follow two religions. Why are you halting between two opinions? is God's appeal to such; and Balaam stands in history as the awful specimen of the double-hearted.

"He who is not against us is for us."--Mark 9:40. This third text speaks to a very different class from either of these. If Laodicea, with her lukewarmness, is the representative of the first, Philadelphia is the representative of this last--'You have little strength, yet have kept my word, and have not denied my name'. How cheering and gracious to the feeble-hearted the Master's words, 'He who is not against us is on our side!' How like him who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax! How encouraging are His words, in circumstances in which we might have expected rebuke and sternness! He thus comforts the feeble-minded, supports the weak, and shows His patience toward all men. He accepts the will for the deed; the weak effort for the accomplished fact. If the spirit be willing, he overlooks the weakness of the flesh.

There is one Old Testament character which seems to illustrate this affirmation of our Lord--Abijah, the son of Jeroboam--who is evidently reckoned upon the Lord's side, and yet all that can be said of him is that there was found in him 'some good thing' towards the Lord God of Israel. We may conclude the same respecting the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. They had not come out openly--they had been so timid that even Elijah did not know of their existence--yet in silence they had cleaved to Jehovah, and He owns them as His own. They had not been against Him--and He proclaims them as with Him.

How gently the Lord deals with fearful ones! How tender and charitable His judgments! He bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. He heeds the faintest breath that goes up to Him; He despises no petitioner, even the most troubled and timorous.

There are two New Testament characters whose history brings out this--Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They are for more than three years very timid witnesses for Christ. One can hardly call them disciples. They do not follow Him; and even when the council plots against Him, all the length they go is, 'Does our law condemn a man before he is heard?' Yet they are owned of the Master, and are examples of the gracious truth, "He who is not against me is for me." And then what a reward they get! What an honor is put upon them even for this weak protest! They are filled with boldness, and stand forward in behalf of Christ when all others have shrunk back. 'The last becomes the first, and the first last.'

What grace is this! What tender love and condescension! What a charitable construction our Master puts on all we say or do! He makes the best of everything in our behalf. He puts the kindest possible interpretation on every effort, however faint, put forth for Him; on every word, however feeble, spoken for Him. And even when we speak now words, and do no deeds, if we do not deny Him, He says, 'He who is not against me is for me.'

What encouragement is this to those who are cast down about their acceptance! They afflict themselves; they write bitter things against themselves; for they fear they are not the Lord's. O sorrowful doubter, O weary, troubled spirit, hear the Master's gentle, loving words, 'He who is not against me is for me!' He owns your feeble faith, and does not cast you off. And what encouragement to those who are depressed because of their poor, poor work for Him! He thinks more of your work than you do. He is well pleased with that cup of water which you gave to one of His brethren. He owns it now--He will own it hereafter!

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