

I Wish That You Were Cold or Hot

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon emphasizes the dangers of spiritual lukewarmness and the importance of responding to God's Word with repentance and accountability.

Duration: 57:22

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 7:38, John 15:1, Romans 2:24, Hebrews 12:6, Revelation 3:14, Revelation 3:17

Topics: "Lukewarm"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the danger of losing focus on God amidst worldly success and prosperity. He highlights the story of a wealthy city that had become self-sufficient and arrogant, but God saw them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. The preacher challenges the common preaching style that focuses on personal introductions and prayers, instead urging the congregation to seek God's glory and help. He quotes Jeremiah 9:23-24, reminding listeners that true boasting should come from understanding and knowing God, who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness. The sermon concludes with an exhortation to repent, overcome, and open the door for Jesus to come in and dine with believers.

Transcript

It's a great privilege for me to be here this evening with all of you and kind of give something of an introduction to maybe what the Lord would be doing a week or so from now. But before we go on to anything else, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before you in the name of your Son.

I know that apart from him, I would have no part with you. Yet you are a gracious God and you have provided a sacrifice, a victim to carry away your wrath, to satisfy justice. It is in him and in him alone that we stand with full confidence and privileges of the sons of God.

Father, I pray that tonight you would get glory for yourself, that you would help your church and help your people. Lord, who am I? Oh Lord, I need your grace, your mercy, your power, your wisdom, your word. Father, help us and we will be helped.

Strengthen us, we will be strong, but only in you. Let all flesh be abased and let God alone be exalted. In Jesus' name, Amen.

It is a great privilege, as I said, to be here. And I want us to look at a text in the book of Revelation, in chapter 3, verse 14. The message of Jesus Christ to the church in Laodicea.

Now whenever I direct people to that passage, automatically there is a trembling in the heart and maybe even in the spine. And they brace themselves in the pew thinking, well, we need to get ready for it tonight because we are going to get waylaid. Well, maybe you need to be waylaid.

But this passage, like all passages in the Word of God, is not negative. And it is not designed to hurt God's people. It is designed to build them up, to edify them, to correct them, to do all that is necessary so that they might be made conformed to the image of Christ.

If you stand here, sit here tonight outside of Jesus Christ, without Him, the Bible says you are under the wrath of God. But if you are found in Christ Jesus, there is no wrath for you. There is no changing disposition.

The only thing upon you is the love of God. And no matter how God speaks, no matter sometimes how hard His Word, His disposition toward you will never change. Because Christ paid for everything on that tree.

For you, every word is spoken in love as a father to a child and not as a judge to a criminal. Now let's look at this text. We'll take it line by line.

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write, the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God says this, I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing. And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold refined by the fire so that you may become rich.

And white garments so that you may clothe yourself and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed. And eyes have to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love I reprove and discipline.

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 in to him and will dine with him and he with me.

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Now, I want us to look at several things in this text.

Mainly, I want us to look at the text and see all the truth here that is for you and for me, individually and collectively, as a body. Now, first of all, he says, To the angel of the church, let us say a rite. Now, there has been all sorts of debate on exactly what is this referring to.

It seems to be referring to a messenger. Most commentators down through the history of conservative Christianity have thought that it was a message given to the leadership. A message given to a messenger to share with the body in Laodicea.

Now, I want to stop here and talk to you a moment about preaching. Today in America, it seems churches are just about entertainment and meeting felt needs of people. No, churches are about the communication of truth.

Churches are to be about learning the truth of God and applying that truth to our lives. And one of the means through which God does that is through preachers, and not only preachers, but pastors and the leadership of local autonomous churches. And what I want you to see here for a moment, first of all, in our country we have come to, in a sense, despise authority.

Not only that, but we're a democracy. No one's going to tell us what to do. But in the New Testament, we see a completely different view.

There is a sense of authority in a church. There is a sense. There are shepherds and leaders and pastors and teachers and those who have authority, not because of their calling, but only to the degree that they live according to and administer, preach according to the Word of God.

Now, I will not be coming back here in a week to entertain you. I will not tell you jokes for 20 minutes and then give a long extended invitation in order to manipulate you to do something that God's not in. My job is to come here and communicate truth.

And that is extremely dangerous. That's extremely dangerous for me and that's extremely dangerous for you. Now, why is that? Well, first of all, it's extremely dangerous for me.

Teachers will be held in a higher account. A greater condemnation, an old translation puts it. That to be a teacher is a privilege, but at the same time, to be a teacher and a preacher is a very dangerous thing.

Because if I teach you something that is not in accordance with the Word of God, I will be judged. Now, that works two ways. If I positively teach you something that is not God's Word, I will be judged one day.

Also, if I hold something back from you because I'm afraid of you, I will be judged. I'll never forget one time I was preaching and afterwards a young man came up to me. The sermon caused quite a stir, I guess, among several people.

And a young man came up to me and he said, You're not afraid of anybody, are you? And I said, Well, as a matter of fact, I'm probably the most fearful man in this room. He said, How can you be afraid? You just stood up there and told a bunch of men stuff that made them so mad they want to beat you up. What do you mean you're fearful? I said, Son, it's all a question of relation and degree.

I can be more afraid of men than anybody in this room. But if I fear God more than I do men, I can still be bold. You see, it's just a question of one fear driving out another.

If I'm going to be fearful, I may be fearful of you. But there is someone much greater than you. And if I am to fear someone, it should be Him.

Because Jesus Christ said, Don't fear men who can kill you. Fear God, who can not only kill you, but can cast your soul into hell. So the preacher is doing a dangerous thing.

Every time your pastor gets in this pulpit, it is a dangerous thing. Because one day he will be tried. If he preaches something that is not correct, that is heresy.

If he withholds things from you, that is the fear of man. And so preaching is very dangerous for the preacher. But also preaching is extremely dangerous for you.

Now if I stand up here, or anyone else, the pastor or anyone else you might bring into this pulpit, and we preach something that is not true, then it does not bind you. You will not be held accountable for it. It is false.

You should not follow it. You are free. But, if a preacher stands up here and preaches according to God's Word, and what he says is in conformity to the Word of God, then you should be afraid.

Why? You will be held accountable for that Word on that great day. In the same way that the preacher is held accountable for preaching it, you are held accountable for receiving it. Now let me talk for a moment about authority, which is very, very important.

You know, we have all these TV preachers today, and they are all marching around making their millions and doing all the things they are doing in the name of some special authority that they have. Some men think they have authority because they have been called to preach. Some men think they have authority because they have got some special anointing that no one else has.

Let me tell you where true authority comes from. I have authority only to the degree that what I tell you lines up with this book. If it does not line up with the book, I have no authority.

But if what I say lines up with the book, I have authority. Now, let's just get personal for a moment. I have heard so many people, not only when I have preached, but when other preachers have preached faithfully the Word of God, and as I have watched people, as they have gone out the door of the church after the service, they will say something like, well, I just do not agree with that.

Okay, that is okay. But then you have to answer another question. Why? Is it because it goes against your personality? Or goes against something you have heard? Or something you have always believed? Or is it because you can open up the Bible and show where the preacher was wrong? You see, you just cannot walk out the door and say, I do not agree with it.

There has to be a biblical reason for not agreeing with it. And if you do not agree with it, in the name of love, you are to come back and talk to the preacher in order to try to help him. You see? Or sometimes people will say, well, I just do not like his attitude.

I had a young man come up to me one time. He was pretty angry. And he said, I just do not like the way you said that.

And I said, well, I have often been known to be in the flesh at times. I apologize. But now, it does not matter how I said it.

The question is, is it true? Do you see that? I mean, I have always said that preachers are God's living example that he still speaks through rocks and donkeys. So if God sends a donkey to speak with you, you will not be able to dismiss what he says simply because he is a donkey. The question is, what the donkey said, is it true? Because if it is true, you will be held accountable on the day of judgment whether you liked his personality or not.

Do you see? And then some people will walk out. And this happens. We see this in the political realm, in media and things.

For example, someone will make a politically incorrect statement. Let's say that it is a biblical statement, but it is politically incorrect. No one will deal with whether or not the statement is true.

They will just attack the person who said it. Well, sometimes we will hear a preacher, and when he says something, the question in our heart is not, is it true? But automatically we put up these defense mechanisms. Well, I don't like the way he said it.

I don't like him. I don't like his personality. I don't like his delivery.

And we think that somehow that will shield us from being responsible. It won't. If what he says is true, it is true because it conforms to this book.

And if it conforms to this book, both you and I are bound by it. Do you see that? So, not just when I come here in a week to preach, but when your pastor preaches. The question is not, did we do it that way before? The question is not, that doesn't agree with my personality.

The only question that has to be answered is, is it in the book? Is it in the book? Is that what Jesus says? So, there's a sense of authority and he's writing to the angel of the church in Laodicea. Now, who is writing? Who is speaking here? This is absolutely essential. Now, I'll tell young preachers.

I'll tell them, now look, young preachers, most of you are preaching this way. You're facing the congregation and you're speaking to them as though it was your authority and your word to correct them. But what you need to do, maybe, is almost preach at them sideways.

To let them know that it's not you speaking your opinion, but it's God's word coming to both the preacher and the one sitting in the pew. You see, this word is not only binding upon you, the hearer, it is even binding more upon me, the speaker. So, who is really speaking? If we're speaking according to God's word, it is Christ coming to us.

Christ coming to us in His word, irregardless of the man. If what he says is true, and it's the word of Christ, it carries his authority. Now, let's look for a moment at the one who is speaking to us.

I'll give you an example. I was preaching down at the University of Alabama last week to a group there. And after I finished, the leadership came up to me and they said, Brother Paul, anytime you want to come here and speak, just come back.

Other mature Christians came up to me and said, Boy, that was really helpful. When I get back to my office a few days later, I get this letter from someone who was just really mad about the whole deal. Now, I didn't take the letter that seriously.

Why? Because the leadership there, the mature Christians, and everything else, were all in agreement with what was said. So, what I'm trying to tell you is this. When someone comes to us speaking a word, we always need to look, who is this person? If a person comes to us with no integrity, no authority, no power, no place, maybe we don't have to listen.

If someone comes to us mean-spirited, whom we know does not love us or care about us, maybe we can turn a deaf ear to what they're saying. So, who is the one speaking to us through the word? Well, here in

the Bible it says in verse 14, it is the Amen, the faithful, the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Who is this? Jesus Christ, in His Word, comes to you and speaks to you.

That is why it is so dangerous to come to church on Sunday. Because you get into a commonality. You get into this thing of just, okay, I'm here.

Can you tell me what was preached this morning? Have you fed upon the Word that was given? Have you taken serious consideration so as to think your life must change because of what you heard? Don't you realize that even this morning, if what was preached was the Word of God, you're accountable to it. Because the one coming to you is Jesus Christ. It is never a common thing, even when the most humble and most uneducated man of God gets in the pulpit, it is not a common thing.

Because if he preaches the Word of God, it is dangerous. Now, the one speaking to us is the Amen. What does this mean? Let me read a passage from 2 Corinthians 1.20. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes, therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

What is he saying? Who is the Amen? Jesus Christ is the Amen. What does it mean? It means He's the fulfillment, the completion of every promise God ever gave you. The one who speaks to you in the Word, who sometimes even comes to you with a hard thing to hear, you can hear Him.

Why? Because He has kept every promise to you He's ever made. Can't you listen to someone like that? I can. He's not someone against you, someone who spitefully wants to use you, or to hurt you, or manipulate you.

The one who comes and speaks to you through the preaching of God's Word is the one who has fulfilled every promise He ever made to you. You ought to listen to Him. Not only is He the Amen, He's the faithful and true witness.

My dear friend, we all know about appearances, don't we? We all know about appearances. I had a young man come to me one time, a reporter, after I was preaching, and he came to me and he said, I don't believe man is as bad as you say he is. I said, Sir, if I could take, right now, and put your entire life on a video film strip, and I could show it here tonight in this auditorium, you would run out of this building, and you would never show your face here again because you have fought and done things so wicked, you cannot share it with your closest friend.

And he just bowed his head. He knew it was true. And the same can be said about everyone in this room.

The One coming to you, you can't hide from Him. You can't cover up from Him. You can't run away from Him.

He's the faithful and true witness about everything that you are and everything that you've done. He is omniscient. He knows everything.

And He knows everything instantaneously, exhaustively, and without making any effort or investigation. He's not like a doctor who can misdiagnose you. He knows everything about you.

Can't you listen to someone like that? When He tells you, you can come to me and maybe misunderstand and say, Brother Paul, I think you're this way, and you could be totally a million miles off the mark because maybe you're judging by appearances and you don't really know. And I could say the same thing about

myself toward you. But when Jesus comes and begins to speak a word to us, He doesn't misdiagnose.

He knows everything. But let me share with you something. That's good! That is good! I love the fact that I have a Savior from whom I cannot hide who knows everything about me.

Isn't it easy to open up our lives to Him knowing He's not going to misunderstand? He's not going to misdiagnose? Not only is He a faithful witness though about you and me, He's a faithful witness about God. In my opinion, the greatest preacher that's ever lived since the apostolic times is Charles Spurgeon. I can't think of a greater, more balanced preacher-theologian that's ever been.

And yet, Charles Spurgeon was not the faithful witness of God. He could be wrong. He was a man.

We can all be wrong. But the One who speaks to you through the Word, and this is the reason why you need the Scriptures so much, not only in the pulpit, but in your personal life, you need the Scriptures because the One speaking to you is the faithful and true witness of God. Everything He tells you about God will be right.

Absolutely everything. And I want you to know something. As I quoted earlier, loosely, from Jeremiah 9, if you're strong, don't boast in your strength.

If you're wealthy, do not boast in your riches. If you're going to boast, let a man boast of this, that he knows God. The greatest need of this congregation is the knowledge of God.

Greater knowledge of who He is and what He has done for you. And that is found in the person of Jesus Christ. You need Christ.

You need Christ to speak to you through His Word. Now, he goes on and he says also, he's the beginning of the creation of God. This comes from a Greek word, *arkis*, which can mean origin or source.

Now, the Jehovah Witnesses take this passage and totally twist it to say that Jesus was the first thing or the Son of God was the first thing created. That is not at all what it means. It means two things.

First of all, He was the source of all creation. The Bible teaches, I think quite clearly and almost all conservative theologians would back me up on this, that the Son of God has always been the mediator. Always.

God created. God the Father created the world. How? Through His Son.

God revealed Himself, even in the Old Testament, through His Son. Isaiah says, He saw the Lord high and lifted up in His train, filled the temple, and above Him stood the seraphim, each one having six wings. John 12 tells us that Isaiah saw the Son and His glory.

God created the world through His Son. God the Father revealed Himself to the world through His Son. God the Father saved the world through His Son.

And God will one day judge the world through His Son. He's the source of everything. Christian, this is for you.

Do you not realize, Jesus says in the Gospel of John, you do not have life in yourself, nor do you have light in yourself. You cannot live the Christian life just running around out there, cut off from Him. He is the

vine.

You are the branch. He is the food from which you must eat. He told a very terrible thing to a group of Jews one time.

He said, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, and they go, hold it, that's going too far. But what He's saying is this, Jesus Christ must be the source and sustenance of your entire life, and you must feed upon Him. Now, He goes on and He says, beginning of the creation of God.

This not only means that He's the source of all life. The One who comes to you to instruct you is the One who is the source of your life. Now let me look at it this way.

How insane could it be for a man on a life support system to do everything in his power to cut the line? That's absolutely insane. And that is why sin is insane. Because in sinning, we're trying to cut the line of life that flows from Christ to us.

He's the source of life. The One who speaks to you. But not only is He the source of all creation, He also means that He is the ruler of all creation.

Make no mistake about it. I always hear evangelists say, you need to make Jesus Lord of your life. Absolutely preposterous.

The only thing you can make is an idol. Jesus is the Lord of your life. He was the Lord of Hitler.

He was the Lord of every atheist and God-hating individual that ever walked on this planet. He is Lord. You don't have to make Him that.

Now you can decide whether you want to keep running in rebellion or you want to bow down on your knees, but He's Lord. It says God has made Him both Lord and Christ. Do you know that in the Greek New Testament Jesus is called and one of the words translated Lord or Master is the word despot.

You ever heard despot? That man is a despot? Or that ruler is a despot? It literally means someone with absolute power that can do anything they want at any time. Now despot when used towards men always has a negative connotation because men are corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. But Jesus is the despot.

He has absolute authority over everything. And you will. You will acknowledge that.

You will. But why do it in judgment when you can do it in a day of mercy and grace? Why? Make no mistake, the one who talks to you, if you're lost or you're saved, know this, the one who talks to you is the ruler of all things. I don't know how many things are out there, but whatever's out there, He rules over them.

All. He lifts up His hand and no one can hold it down. He holds His hand on the table and no one can pry it up.

He rules over everything. And to rebel against Him is rebellion indeed. It's like the Puritans used to say, they would say, it is not against the mayor of some small village that you have rebelled.

That would be enough. But you have rebelled against the Lord of glory. Now, that's the one who speaks to us.

Now, look what He says in v. 15. The natural flow of logic. He says, I know your deeds.

There ought to be two responses in this room right now. If you do not know Christ, do not care to know about Christ, you love the world and the things of the world, your friends are of the world, you're a worldling. It is obvious at this moment, this very moment, you have no idea what I mean when I say, He knows your deeds.

Because if you did, you would be utterly terrified to think that this ruler of all creation knows absolutely everything you have done and will one day hold you accountable for it. If you're a Christian, I can tell you, you do not fully understand these words, I know your deeds. Because if you did, you would be rejoicing right now with tears in your eyes worshiping God, praising Him, throwing your hands up in the air because you would say, He knows all my deeds, but He took all my wicked deeds that He knows and He nailed them to a tree.

And I am free. I am free. I am free.

He knows your deeds. Church, He knows your deeds. Some in the church should hear that, who are genuine Christians and says, He knows my deeds.

That needs to spur me on to greater works because I'm not serving Him as I should. Others of you are serving Him, but you struggle with doubt and depression. You wonder, is anything you're doing any good? Does anybody see? And Christ goes, I know your deeds.

Though no man recognize you or see what you're doing, the prayers you make in the evening when everyone else is asleep, no one sees all that you're doing in my church, but I know your deeds. That should encourage you to go on and abound. We do not do deeds so that they can be seen by men.

That's what Pharisees who go on into hell do. We do deeds because He knows our deeds. Now He goes on, I know your deeds.

And He says, You are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. He says cold or hot.

The word hot here, very important word, comes from the word zestos. It means boiling hot. I would that you would be boiling hot or that you would be cold.

Not just hot. Boiling. Now, what does this mean? Well, let me go through a few different things.

One of them will be a kind of interpretation that you've probably heard before. Another one will be kind of unusual. Let me give you the unusual one first.

It could have some grounds to it, but it's not mentioned much anymore. It used to be more by the older guys. And it was the idea, you always think of cold or hot.

I'd rather have you all the way for me or all the way against me. Some interpreters have taken it this way. I would rather have you cold or hot because, well, cold water I can use.

I can use it to refresh, to bless, to quench the thirst of my people. Or hot, because with hot water, I can use that in order to purify and clean. If you were cold, I could use you for something.

If you were hot, I could use you for something. But the fact of the matter is, you're lukewarm and I can't use you for anything. And the idea here may be usefulness.

Because you see, one of the signs in Romans 3 of a lost man is that he has altogether become useless to God. He's not useful for anything. He doesn't serve God in any way.

Let me ask you a question. This is a personal question. How do you serve God in the context of your family first and in the context of your local New Testament church? How do you serve God? You know, we have that thing that everyone's always saying, 80% of the people do 20% of the work and 20% of the people do 80% of the work.

And sadly to say, that's in the church. Are you useful to Him? Or has service to God simply been reduced down to nothing more than, bless God, I attend. I don't forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

But you've got to read on. There's a reason for assembling yourselves together. It's not just to hear a sermon and to listen and to sing some songs.

It's to spur one another on, to love and good deeds. It's to be actively involved in the fellowship. Are you actively involved? Well, that's one unusual way of looking at it, and it may hold some credence, but the most common interpretation of this is he's saying, you're either with me or you're not.

It would be better for you to be zealously following after me or totally rejecting me than just being this lukewarm in the middle. Now, I want to give you a few reasons why. Because we sit there and go, okay, Lord, I could figure out why it would be better for someone to be hot, zealously following You, but why would it be better for someone to be just totally cold and rejecting the Gospel completely than following along lukewarm? These are some of the reasons.

One, a person who is totally turned off to the Gospel, makes no identification and no association with Christ, does no damage to the kingdom. But a person who gathers together with a congregation and yet they really don't follow Christ and they pretty much live in sin and rebellion, does much harm to God's church. As a matter of fact, God says, Jesus says, they are a seed that was planted in God's field and planted by the devil himself.

They do great, great damage. Because if you have a hundred sheep and they're all walking with God and you have one person who's not really a sheep but is identified with a sheep and he goes out there and commits all kinds of sins, the people in the town are not going to talk about the 99 faithful. They're going to identify the 99 faithful with the one wicked.

Someone who is lukewarm does far more damage to the church than someone who just says, I don't have anything to do with the church at all. Another reason. Lukewarmness is a breeding ground for disease.

It really is. I served in Peru and in the jungles and in the mountains and stuff for ten years. The most dangerous thing in Peru is not a jaguar or an anaconda.

It's water. You're out in that jungle. You forgot your purifying tablets.

You don't have a carbon strainer. There's no fire. You better hope it rains and you can collect some rainwater.

Because if you start dipping in to that lukewarm water in those creeks, you'll be dead in the sight of a few days. We all know this. Lukewarm water is just a breeding ground for disease.

Now, just listen to me for just a moment, church. I want to help you. I want you to think about this.

Churches are democracies. We do what the majority says. Is it not true, though, that the majority of the people in church are lukewarm? And you mark it down because it's happened and it's happened over and over again.

The majority carries the vote. The majority is usually lukewarm. And a lot of times, the small majority of people who really want to serve the Lord cannot because the church is so filled with lukewarm people who want to do things that are outside of the will of God.

That's terrifying. Terrifying. Someone comes in and preaches a truth that's biblical, it's historical, it's Baptist, and a bunch of people rise up and say, no, we're not doing that.

We're not doing that. But a small majority of the people who are out there soul winning and praying and listening to the Word and reading their Bibles go, oh, that's so true. I wish we could do it.

It's scary, isn't it? It's scary. Lukewarm is very dangerous because it's a breeding ground for disease. But one other thing.

It is better to be cold than to be lukewarm because there's a greater chance that a person who is cold is going to actually be saved one day. It is better to be a Saul of Tarsus who is kicking against the church, slandering it, trying to kill its members off and everything else. Because he has more chance of being saved than a Judas who walks with Jesus and yet is a hypocrite.

Has just enough religion to kill him. He thinks he's safe because he goes to church some, because he's been baptized, because maybe this or that. Just enough religion to kill him.

Very dangerous. Very dangerous indeed. Now, verse 16.

He says, So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. Now, church, I want to stop here for a moment. The literal word here is vomit.

That literally in Greek. Now, just bear with the logic for a moment. The church is the bride of Christ.

He gave His own blood for her. He loves her. And He's working to cleanse her.

Do you honestly think He's going to vomit His bride out of His mouth? No. Then what's going on? Here's what I want you to understand. We hear today all the time this.

There's just as many liars in the church as outside of the church. There's just as many sinners in the church as outside of the church. Just as much adultery and immorality in the church as outside of the church.

The church is just as ugly as the world. What's the difference? That is a lie. And I'm going to show you how.

Let me tell you about the church in the United States of America. She is beautiful. She is broken.

And she, although stumbling and sometimes taking three steps back and two steps forward, she is following her Lord and she is growing in beauty. Here's the problem. What you're calling the church is not the church.

Because the Southern Baptist Church has left off completely the idea of compassionate church discipline, our churches are filled up with lost people. And the people He's going to vomit out of His mouth in the congregation is not that small group of people that are truly saved and truly loving Him and following Him. He's going to vomit out of His mouth the people who've been in His church, but they're carnal, wicked, never been converted.

And He's going to cleanse His church. You see, my dear friend, when we water down the Gospel so that we can tell people it will just take five minutes of your time to pray this prayer, we're allowing lost people to come into the church. And then when we have people who are members and they can openly be involved in every sort of public sin, and we do nothing about it because we claim to be so loving, we're not being loving.

We're condemning them instead of practicing the very things that could save their soul. And the church is filled up with lost people who on Saturday night are living like hellions. And on Sunday comes the church.

And the whole community identifies the church with those people. And the prophecy is fulfilled. The name of God is blasphemed among the unbelievers because of the way the supposed people of God are acting.

Now you understand why I preach in a lot of places only once. But he says it. Look, these are the words of Jesus.

One time a friend of mine went to a deacon body and he said, but this is what Jesus said. It's right. It's what He said.

And the head deacon goes, I know it's right. No, he said, I know it's in the Bible. It still ain't right.

But I just quoted you something in the Bible. Are you saying right now it isn't right in your heart? You see, it is right. And we need to get back to Scripture.

Now, he goes on and he says this. Now, verse 17, because you say, I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable, poor, blind and naked. Now, what is it? And this is even for those of us who are believers, this is for us.

What is it that could do this? Make us independent. Make us like we didn't need Him very much. I'll tell you something.

I'll tell you what it is. It's the ease of life that we have in this country. Just like here, this was a very wealthy city.

They could make it on their own. Isn't it true? I don't know if it's ever happened here. I hope it hasn't.

But someone in the fellowship that you dearly love... The church is going along okay, but someone in the fellowship that you dearly love is struck with cancer... or some disease that doctors cannot cure. Isn't it true that at those moments the church starts praying like never before? Clinging to God like never before? You

see, there's a good thing about living in this country in that we could do so much in the name of the Lord with all the privileges He's given us, but there's another thing that's dangerous. The materialism in this country can creep in to the point where you don't need to pray about it.

You can just go get a loan. You don't need to pray about it. You can just slap down a credit card.

I mean, there are doctors. There's food. Somebody's going to take care of you.

I mean, there's not persecution, at least not right now. I mean, all these things, although they are in a sense blessings, they have a way of tearing us away from all that is right and true and good. The eternal is exchanged for the temporal and the worldly.

The love of the world. When I was a missionary, someone asked me one time, they said, it must be so tough going out on the Amazon and on the Modiglione River and up in the Andes Mountains and living in a tent. And at that time, there was a civil war going on in Peru and people were dying everywhere.

23,000 people were killed. Our church windows were blown out with a bomb and machine gun fire everywhere. They said it must be so hard to live for Christ.

No! It wasn't! It was the easiest thing I've ever done to live for Him there. Because He was all you had. You waited in line for hours to get a bag of rice.

He was it! There wasn't anything else. It wasn't difficult until you get on that plane in Lima and you fly to Miami and you land in Miami and you're getting ready to take another plane to fly home and you sit down beside another guy your age and he's a lawyer or this or that and very prosperous and very respected in nice clothes and all of a sudden, what happens? Your vision starts getting foggy. You get so bombarded with all these things that you stop.

You lose your focus. That's when it's hard. That's why when winds of adversity blow up on the church, they're God's way of wooing us back to Him.

Come to Me, My people! Come to Me! And see, this is what had happened here. This was one of the wealthiest cities in the empire. And they had just lost themselves, thinking themselves so prominent.

But God doesn't see things like men see things. He says... What does He say? He says, you're wretched and miserable and poor, blind and naked. Let me tell you something.

The type of preaching I hear today that goes like this... I hate it. It goes like this. I call it yuppie preaching.

The preacher, you know, gets up and he says, you've got a wonderful education. You've got a wonderful job. You've got a wonderful wife and wonderful kids and you live in wonderful suburbs and you're driving two wonderful SUVs and your life is just wonderful.

You just lack one little thing. You lack Jesus. I hate that kind of preaching.

It would be more biblical to say, since you do not have Christ, everything in your life is nothing. It is rot. It will all pass away.

The only thing that matters is Christ. It's like I was sharing. A young guy came up to me one time and he said, you're right, Brother Paul.

Jesus is all we need. I said, young man, Jesus is all we have. Apart from Him, there's nothing.

And they had forgotten this. And quickly, we've gone over time, but I want to get to just what it is that's going on here. In verse 18, he says, I advise you to buy from me.

Now look at this. Who is the source of everything you need? Jesus Christ. Not a theory of Jesus Christ.

Not even a doctrine of Jesus Christ. The person of Jesus Christ. A personal, intimate relationship with Him.

Following Him. Sustaining your life by feeding on Him. He's inviting us.

He's saying, look, I advise you to buy from me. And he goes on in Isaiah 55. He says, Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

You who have no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread and your wages for what it does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in abundance.

Look what he's saying here. He says, why do you spend your wages for that which does not satisfy? I mean, you can desire something for six months. That's all you think about.

All you think about is getting it. And once you've got it, it's like it's gone. It doesn't satisfy.

Nothing in this world satisfies but Christ. Now that doesn't mean that we're all to walk around like paupers and hermits. Some of the poorest men I know are ungodly and some of the richest men I know are godly.

But I want you to know this. You must be directed toward Him. Nothing matters but Christ.

Everything else is worthless. And you know that. You're just like me though.

You need to be reminded of it constantly. You see, there isn't a whole lot of new things that any of you need to learn. You need to be reminded, and so do I, of all the things we've forgotten that we once learned.

Alright, now let's quickly go on. Look at what He says they need. He says, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourselves, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed.

And I salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. There's three things here. Gold.

Tried by fire. In 1 Peter 1-7, we understand that faith is tested by fire, is more precious than gold. I think what He's talking about here is dependence.

Reliance. Turn from trusting in everything else. Turn from seeking life and joy and all these other things and trinkets and everything in this world.

Turn from it and rely, depend on Me and My Word. I want to tell you something. The believer who depends upon Christ and draws his sustenance from Christ, he may be burned at the stake, but he'll never be empty.

He may suffer poverty, but he'll never be empty inside because out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. Man! John 15-1, I am the vine and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away.

And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. I want you to know something. Have there been times when God, and you knew it, God disciplined you and pruned you and cut you? Has that ever happened to you? If it has, get on your knees and thank God that's a sign of sonship.

If you run like a wild dog sometimes and try to feed upon the world and it leaves you empty and wretched, you need to praise God. That's a sign that you've been made a new creature and you can't be sustained by the world. You need God.

If God's ever pruned you and blown adversity in your life in order to draw you back to Him, you need to praise Him because that's a sign that you are a son. But I want to tell you something. If you can dive into this world and eat it and drink it and love it and be satisfied, that's a sign you're lost.

That's a sign you're lost. You've been recreated. You're a child of God.

You're too high for the things of this world. They will not satisfy you. You may jump in there for a while and think, but you'll just be deceived and you'll come out mourning and running back to your Father.

Now, finally, he says also, gold and white garments, holiness and righteousness. Oh, there's two hours here. But I know, you know, you've got to get home.

Christian, you do glorify God by your deeds. That is true. But here's something I want you to understand.

God is not so much glorified by what you do for Him. He's glorified by what He's done for you. So many Christians, even though they're trusting in Christ and they're truly Christians, are in bondage because they haven't come to see their perfect, righteous standing before God.

And they try to make themselves good enough to come to God. And when they sin, they go in the penalty box for a few days and do penance and then try to come back to God and restore their relationship. And so many Christians walk around condemned and feeling horrible and thinking, well, God can't love me.

Look at this and look at that. And what you're doing is you're trying to gain your own righteousness and your own holiness. And it's nothing more than filthy rags.

Cast aside every hope you ever had in attaining anything and throw yourself on Christ and realize that in Him you're declared righteous. It's Christ and Christ alone. If the devil were to come in here right now and start accusing me, he could accuse me and accuse me and accuse me and many of the things he would point out would be true.

But I would yawn at him and mock him because it's not about me. My standing before God has nothing to do with my ability to keep God's law. My standing before God is fixed in the perfect person and perfect work of Jesus Christ.

Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling. Do I fail? Daily! Does He ever fail? Never! And in Him we are righteous.

It's what He has done for us. Don't try to attain some status before God through your works or anything else. Realize that all of it, Paul said, is like excrement.

Just trust in Christ. It is enough. So he says, put on white robes, and then I salve.

What is that? Let me quote a verse to you. Jeremiah 9, 23-24 Thus says the Lord, let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth. For I delight in these things, declares the Lord.

People can have so much knowledge of so many things, and yet it cannot buy them eternity. My little boys have one five and a half and another that's three. I've got a girl coming.

I guess she can learn how to hunt. I don't know. My wife sometimes is so wise, and she's such a rebuke to me.

Because I'll sit there and go, well, you know, maybe our little boy needs to learn how to play the violin, and maybe he needs to know how to do this, and know how to do that, and this, and that, and everything. And after I finish my discussion, she just kind of sits there and looks at me. More than anything, on the face of the earth, our little boys need the knowledge of God Almighty.

Who cares if they go to the university? Who cares if they get the accolades of men? Who cares if they're the wisest of the wise, if they then perish in hell? That they might know God and walk before Him in fear and love, and it is enough. We will teach them the Word of God, and we will teach them to work. And it is enough.

I'll leave you to that. So may God do with His Word what He would choose. And after we get done here, if someone needs to talk, that would be fine.

I'll just turn it over to the pastor for now.

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