

Lukewarmness

By A. G. Gafford

Lukewarmness is one of the most deadly soul diseases of the last days. Its attacks are as subtle as are the germs of polio. It is more repulsive and offensive to God than outbroken sin.

Lukewarmness is a human imitation of the fire of God on the altar of the heart. It is the zeal of human religion. Its hottest flame offers both entertainment and protection to carnally-minded folk. It takes the chill out of bold Christ-rejecting air, and has what might be called a thermostatic control that saves from all extreme devotion to God.

Lukewarmness satisfies two classes of folk: (1) those who desire to be religious but have never been awakened by Holy Ghost conviction for sin, and (2) those who have at some time failed to walk in the light which demanded a death to all carnal advantages.

Folk can be warmed up with human enthusiasm and have a desire to be spiritual, but never go past the lukewarm stage. To keep this class lukewarm, one must give them an opportunity to display their talents and to push for the advancement of carnal interests. Real, living, hot-hearted fellowship with God which counts all carnal interests as dross is unknown to lukewarm folk.

Others may have had the fire of divine life burning on the altar of their hearts at one time, but to keep that fire burning means continually to increase one's devotion to God. Such devotion is challenged by opportunities to take an easier way than to hold to the blood-marked path the Saviour trod; opportunities to be understood by carnal relatives and friends; to be more readily appreciated as being a "good" Christian: to be less hard on one's own carnal nature: to let a little pride slip—which is only "using good judgment" under certain circumstances: to let a bit of resentment, tainted with anger, slip—circumstances also justified that: to gain a much desired reputation, have more earthly treasure, and become noted as an outstanding religious worker. The question is—will the follower keep a devotion strong enough to consume all these carnal affections and let self, with all its interests, be burned at the cross? If he does not, he exchanges heart devotion for carnal zeal, and becomes lukewarm.

A lukewarm heart seems hot enough to itself and to carnal religion. That pleasant glow of **human** warmth is attractive to the carnal mind. Folk who have backed down from the demands of God's holy fire flock to lukewarmness as flies gather around a porch light on a warm summer evening. That lukewarm glow gives a sentimental feeling of dwelling in heavenly light. It is so gentle that it never scorches fuzzy pride or wilts the flowers of self-esteem. It never causes one to question his profession of holiness. It offers the consolation that many backsliders have longed for. It is highly esteemed among men, but is an abomination to God.

The protection against lukewarmness is to enter the devotion which means death to self and causes one to be baptized with Holy Ghost fire, and then ever to live in the **utmost abandonment** which that covenant relation called for until the last of physical energy is burned out by that fire, and man's spirit ascends to heaven with that parting flame.—Emmanuel.

GIVING—WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

Harvey Knowlton

When I was first saved, twenty-nine years ago, one of the first things that came to me was the fact that one-tenth of my income belonged to God. So I started tithing my income. The Lord blessed and prospered me financially. About fourteen years ago I asked the Lord for more income. Then I was impressed that if I was to have more income, I must give the Lord fifteen per cent. The very next week our income was increased by several dollars. The Lord blessed and prospered us financially.

About seven and one-half years ago we came to Houghton with our family of small children. We decided about five years ago to give the Lord twenty-five percent of our income. Again the Lord prospered us financially. He has more than given back to us all we have given to Him every time we have increased our giving. The Lord will be debtor to no man.

In all of this giving it now seems to me that there was a feeling that God would reward us either in this world or in the one to come for what we felt was generosity on our part. In the October revival the Lord wonderfully revived our whole family. Now giving to Him has entirely changed. It is no longer a duty or hardship or even a sacrifice to give—first ourselves, then everything we have. God is still prospering us financially, but so far above all that is the spiritual prosperity. Now all have one thought in mind—to serve the Lord and Him only.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Shall have my soul, my life, my all."

What does giving to the Lord mean to me? It means giving first, myself, then everything I have. I feel that this is the only true giving that is pleasing to God and that will glorify Him. Friend, won't you experience with me the joy and blessedness of such Christian giving?—Houghton College Campus in Wesleyan Youth.

DEATH TO SELF

"Can ambition, that lusts after praise and place, preach the gospel of Him who made Himself of no reputation and took on Him the form of a servant? Can the proud, the vain, the egotistical preach the gospel of Him who was meek and lowly? Can the bad-tempered, passionate, selfish, hard, worldly man preach the system which teems with long-suffering, self-denial, tenderness, which imperatively demands separation from and crucifixion to the world? Can the hireling official, heartless, perfunctory, preach the gospel which demands the Shepherd to give His life for the sheep? Can the covetous man, who counts salary and money, preach the gospel till he has cleansed his heart and can say in the spirit of Christ and Paul in the words of Wesley: 'I count it dung and dross; I trample it under my feet; I (yet not I, but the grace of God in me) esteem it just as the mire of the street, I desire it not, I seek it not'? God's revelation does not need the light of human genius, the polish and strength of human brains to adorn or enforce it; but it does demand the simplicity, the docility, humility, and faith of a child's heart."—E. M. Bounds.

Preaching is More...

By G. E. Failing

Preaching is more than reciting the message of redemption.

Preaching is more than argument. Its purpose is not to prove a position but to win a soul. Logic has its place but it can never supplant love.

Preaching is more than denunciation of sin. When sin has been thoroughly condemned one has only locked the sinner up under law. It's the offer of grace and life that helps. Have you ever noticed that hope and joy in the pulpit makes it easier to get souls to an altar?

In II Thessalonians 2:8 Paul writes: "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

This verse explains several things. First, only a pure, earnest person can properly impart this glorious gospel. The word spoken must not only be God's word, but spoken as from God's mouth. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing where to I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10, 11). In other words, no gospel word can have immediate inspiration unless it come through a consecrated person.

Second, the degree of power attending the word of the gospel is directly proportionate to the spiritual power energizing the preacher. It is a waste of time to prepare gospel essays without the prayer and faith which characterizes a saintly life. Words are driven by the power of character.

Third, the gospel ministry is strenuous precisely for this reason: it is impartation of one's own life, his own spiritual vigor, into another soul. It is a process of birth, not just a process of teaching. True pulpit ministry, true prayer ministry, is not a collection of good and weighty words, but the pouring out of a soul in behalf of others. Life must beget life, and this always costs. Paul uses the phrase, "as a nurse . . . as a father." The casual preacher will never give birth to souls.

Finally, the gospel preacher must expect this constant life-drain, this sacrifice for others. There are two compensations. One is the wonder of God's grace supplying physical and spiritual energy to carry forward this ministry. The measure of the strength of God's people to carry on a task otherwise impossible amazes the world. The answer is in Romans 8:11: "But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The second compensation is the joy of spiritual parenthood, the thank you's of souls released from sin's snares. Character is strengthened now, and eternity will have richer blessings for those who can say in that day, "Behold I and the children God has given me."—End.—Wesleyan Methodist.