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NEW THINGS

Malcolm H. Watts

There is something special about “new things”, isn’t there? The Bible tells us that God Himself counts “new things” more honourable.

From earliest times, men were taught that it was highly improper to use in the worship of God anything which had been serving some other use. Only what was new was reckoned appropriate for God.

So, when the Tabernacle was under construction, God said to Moses that He had given skills to men “in all manner of workmanship” that “they may make all that I have commanded thee,” (Exod. 31:6).

For the Temple, Solomon specially “made (i.e. ordered to be made), all the vessels that pertained unto the House of the Lord” (1 Kings 7:48).

It was considered right and fitting for God to have “new things”.

This throws considerable light on some Old Testament practices. It explains why, for example, an unworked heifer or bullock was the only one allowed for sacrifice — “an heifer which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke.” (Deut. 21:3 cf. Num. 19:2).

It also accounts for the choice of “a new cart” when the Ark of God had to be carried to another place. (1 Sam. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:3).

Heaven saw to it that the Lord Jesus Christ was honoured several times with “new things” while here upon the earth:

1. In His birth: He was born of one who could say: “I know not a man” (Lk 1:34 — “a typical Jewish way of stating her virginity.” D. Lenski).

If Jesus Christ had been a man, and nothing more, He would have been born like the rest of us, but His virgin birth was striking witness to the fact that He was none other than God entering the realm of His own creation.

Here was one not conceived and born in the natural way, and because He did not come under the law of ordinary generation, He escaped the defilement of original sin.

This was essential for the purposes of salvation. "Sin shut the gates of heaven; nothing but holiness could set them open again.' (Herman Witsius). "Whosoever is sinful wanteth a Redeemer; and He could have redeemed none, who stood in need of His own redemption. We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ; therefore precious, because of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot." (John Pearson).

2. In His life. He entered Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, "whereon never man sat." (Lk. 19:30). Significantly, The Lord Jesus refused to sit where others had sat. As we have already observed, this was because He was no ordinary man.

It was also true that He was no ordinary King. By this action He declared that He was no man's successor. It was a claim to uniqueness. "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful." (Is 9:6).

It followed from this that He was introducing a new era, an era of abundant spiritual blessings during which God would be willing to show compassion on sinners, offering a full and free pardon to all who put their trust in His Son. By the grace of God we still live in such a time: "Behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor 6:2).

Riding upon a colt never yet ridden was almost certainly a symbolical act. Did it not suggest, further to what has been suggested, that Christ was to reign over those whose nature, like this animal's was unconquered and apparently ungovernable? By the power of His almighty love He would bring man, "born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12), under His control and into complete and perfect submission.

This is what conversion is all about. Even today, the Gospel is “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor 10:5). “Thy people”, says David, “shall be willing in the day of Thy power.” (Ps 110:5). “To Him be praise and dominion for ever and ever.” (1 Pet 4:11).

3. In His death: He was laid, at the last, in a sepulchre “wherein never man before was laid” (Lk 23:53). A new grave, where the decay and smell of death had never entered: this was the proper resting-place for His body, since prophecy had said “neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27).

Take account of this. Unlike all the rest of the dead, He was buried to rise again and then never more to die. He ought not therefore to be buried where others were, as if sharing the same fate. Let a sepulchre be found which will mark the difference. A new one - for “the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5).

He rose as the great Representative of His people and, through His merits and power, they too shall one day triumph over death and the grave and rise to the life everlasting. “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.’ (1 Cor. 15:20—25). This is the Christian’s sure and certain hope.

The three verses taken together preach the Gospel to us.

The first teaches that Jesus Christ was GOD, coming into this world to save men and women from the dreadful consequences of sin.

The second teaches that the King of kings makes men willing to be saved and ruled by Him through the power of omnipotent GRACE.

The third teaches that everlasting GLORY belongs to all who have given themselves to Christ and are truly His.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

“I joy’d when to the house of God.

Go up, they said to me.

Jerusalem, within thy gates

Our feet shall standing be.”

Joyfully and with thankful hearts we returned to our church building, at the end of the second national lockdown, on 6 December for the Lord’s Day morning service. We were pleased to be physically together again and although in number restricted, many joined us by live- streaming at home.

The youth work which had restarted for a brief period in early October was suspended again. We are thankful to the leaders for continuing lessons online and pleased to know they are encouraged by the response. God willing, it is hoped the work can restart in January and we look forward to welcoming the children back to the building. We continue to pray the Lord will do a saving work among our young people.

Regrettably, we have not been able to hold the monthly services at Gracewell and Milford House Care Homes due to the Covid restrictions. We have been privileged to hold these meetings and to know that the residents appreciate our visits. An opportunity has arisen for us to hold online services commencing in the New Year, and we pray these dear people, even in their old age, will come to know our Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

At our midweek meeting on 25 November we hosted a Creation meeting via Zoom. Mr Philip Bell, CEO of Creation Ministries International UK gave an interesting, illustrated talk entitled, “People are amazing - Features that could not evolve”. Several friends from other churches joined with us.

It was with sadness that we learnt of the death of Simon T's eldest brother Daniel, following a short period of illness. Our thoughts and prayers are with Simon and Eva at this time and we trust they will continue to know the peace of God, His comfort and His grace, for all their needs.

On the Lord's Day 13 December Pastor Watts ministered to the church gathered at Chardsmead Reformed Baptist Church, Bridport in Dorset. It was a privilege on that day to welcome the Rev David Kay from Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church Barnstaple, to lead us in worship and minister God's Word. His sermon on the, "I wills" of God's promises, remain in our hearts to encourage and strengthen us as we journey along life's way. May much blessing follow the preaching of God's precious Word.

Mr Graham Chewter representing TBS, met with us virtually for our midweek meeting by Zoom on 16 December. It was a blessed evening hearing of the work of TBS going on apace despite the difficulties caused by the Pandemic. There was a general hunger for the word of God during the crisis and we are encouraged to hear many hundreds of free Bibles have been taken from outside peoples' homes, churches, and other premises around the country. The Society's translation work continues, and it is hoped to have available soon the New Testament in Amharic, an Ethiopian language, for the peoples of Africa. Prayer was requested for a native Dakota speaker from the tribe in America to translate the Scriptures into their own language. We continue to pray the Lord will bless and prosper the work of the society.

Bill and June N

Our friends, Bill and June, are moving to Crawley, to be near Tim and Rachel, their son and daughter-in-law. In Crawley, they will be renting a small apartment to give them time to find a suitable property to purchase. They have been church members here for over 40 years and, during that time, they have faithfully served the Lord in a variety of ways, Bill having been an Elder in the church for many years and June in the role of leading the Women's Prayer Fellowship. In addition, Bill has for many years contributed an *Epilogue* to *The Messenger*, and we know that many have appreciated what he has so helpfully written.

We thank them for all their friendship and fellowship, and we shall certainly miss them in the church. Our prayer is that God will richly bless them both in the years to come.

Christine M

Christine has rendered excellent service in writing for each issue of The Messenger the item called *News of the Fellowship*. She feels now that the time has come for her to give this up this responsibility; and we wish to thank her most sincerely for her valuable contribution to the magazine over so many years. It has been very much appreciated.

THE ELEVEN COMMANDMENTS ON DARTMOOR

It is an easy uphill walk of just over 1km from the car-park at Cold East Cross (SX740743) to the top of Buckland Beacon at 382m, above Buckland-in-the-Moor on East Dartmoor. Lying on the side of the rocky outcrop at the top are two large (about 2m long) granite blocks. On these the words of the Ten Commandments have been carved. The wording on the left-hand block reads:

I AM
Ex. 3:14
The LORD thy God

Underneath are the words of the first 4 commandments. Then follows the dates: "December 15th 1927 - June 14th 1928. Job 33:14" and a poem,

*"But there's a power, which man can wield
When mortal aid is vain,
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain:
That power is prayer."*

The right-hand block has the words of the other 6 commandments, then in the remaining space has been engraved: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. John 13:34." Underneath is a verse from the hymn, *Oh God our help in ages past*.

*“Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame
from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.”*

How did they come to be there? The dates given are the dates of the readings of a bill going through Parliament to adopt the proposed new Book of Common Prayer. This bill was finally rejected, no doubt in answer to the prayers of many Protestants, because they considered this revision to have a “popish trend”. One man that certainly shared this view was the then lord of Buckland Manor, Mr William Whitley of nearby Wellstor. To celebrate this “victory”, he commissioned a certain A. Clement, a sculptor, to engrave the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone on the Beacon. Clement and a colleague first dressed the selected slabs of granite, then with Prayer Book in hand, Clement started engraving them on 23rd July 1928.

Living in a cow-shed at the edge of nearby woods, where his bed was some wire-netting, and his light, a candle, using a nearby stream for water to drink from and wash in, he continued kneeling besides these stones chipping away in all weathers. As we experienced, Buckland Beacon is a promontory very exposed to the prevailing SW winds! He finally completed the work on 31st August. The poem on the first slab was a favourite quotation of Mr Whitley’s, and it was the sculptor’s suggestion that the eleventh commandment and the hymn verse be added to fill up the blank space at the bottom of the second slab. Obviously, he too knew the Scriptures!

When the work was completed, the locals started calling Clement “Moses”, but he said he was nothing like Moses, because he was not going to carry these huge slabs down from the Beacon!

What we thought was noteworthy, is that the stones were re-cut in the summer of 1995, and the letters painted in black. This restoration was carried out by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and the present landowner, so the wording is clear for anyone visiting the Beacon to read.

Contributed by Ruth W

HINTS TO YOUNG PREACHERS, BEING BRIEF OBSERVATIONS ON SCRIPTURAL SUBJECTS

PART 3

The Office of the Spirit: The present dispensation, commencing at Pentecost, is termed “the Dispensation of the Spirit,” because “the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son,” has been given to dwell with God’s people on earth in special power and with new features of operation.

He had been working in the hearts of God’s saints from the beginning, but the blessings attendant on His special mission, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, were of such a character that His presence on earth was to be more than compensation for our Lord’s departure “out of this world.” Thus, we read that “by one Spirit” all true believers “are baptised into one body,” in a real living union with the Lord and with each other.

Again, God dwelt of old in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, in the midst of His people, but *His people themselves are now* said to be “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,” and in this building, “*the house of God,*” “*the Church of the living God,*” composed of all true believers, God now dwells as in His temple. But each believer is also said to be indwelt by the Spirit, as the spirit of “*adoption*” or “*sonship*” (“Ye have received the Spirit of adoption,” literally “*sonship*” (Rom. 8:15). “Because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the *Spirit of His Son* into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).) “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” (1 Cor. 6:19). The Spirit is given also as a “*seal*” and as an “*earnest of the inheritance*” (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22). – a seal wherewith God marks his “beloved” ones as His own, and “an earnest” or pledge that all that has been promised, will in due time assuredly be ours.

Those who study the Scriptures would do well to search them, in the spirit of humility and prayer, in relation to this most important and profitable subject, remembering, on the one hand, that the Spirit is the revealer of no new doctrine, and on the other, that He alone can impart a right understanding of that which has been revealed. The Spirit is the bestower of all power, and the

channel of all blessing. He is given to us to make the written Word the food of our souls, and to glorify the Lord Jesus in us and through us. He abides with us to guide, to lead, to teach, to comfort, to help, to sanctify, to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God, and to fill us with a peace which is beyond all understanding, and a joy which is full of glorious hope. (See John, chaps. 14, 15., and 16; also Rom. 5:5, 8:26, 15:13, &c.)

If such, then, are our unspeakable privileges, so graciously and freely conferred upon us by “the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” should we not ask ourselves, what is our corresponding responsibility? Is it not to honour and practically acknowledge the Holy Ghost in all His offices? Is it not to recognise the unity, divinely constituted and divinely revealed, which binds us together “in the bundle of life with the Lord our God”? Is it not to “love one another with a pure heart, fervently,” as “members one of another;” and, “in all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, to forbear one another in love”? Is it not to seek to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour “in all holy conversation and godliness”? Is it not to “walk in the Spirit,” to “worship” in the Spirit, to “pray” in the Spirit; in short, to “*live in the Spirit*” as the element of our moral being? (Gal. 5:16; John 4:24; Jude 20; Gal. 5:25.)

God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Responsibility: There are two lines of truth pervading the whole of Scripture. One relates to the *Sovereignty of God*, and the other to the *Responsibility of man*. These two great truths are clearly revealed in the Word. The humble Christian, therefore, receives both alike with unquestioning faith. Thus, on the one hand, faith is the gift of God; on the other, it is the duty of every man to believe. On the one hand, Christ is exalted to give repentance; and on the other, men are commanded to repent. Election is God’s act, and yet faith and repentance are voluntary operations on the part of man. We are kept by the power of God, and yet we are to keep ourselves. We are saved by God’s grace, and yet when saved, we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We are “created [anew] in Christ Jesus unto good works,” and yet we are to “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” It was by the determinate counsel of God that Christ was “delivered” into the hands of those who crucified Him; and yet that awful act was the climax of man’s sin.

Oneness with Christ and Substitution: Christ risen is the life of the believer, who is, by the Spirit, made one with Him *as risen from the dead*, (“*Believers are in Christ*, so as to be partakers in all that He does, and has, and is, They died with Him, and rose with Him, and live with Him, and in Him are seated in heavenly places. When the eye of God looks on them, they are found in Christ, and there is no condemnation to those that are in Him: and they are righteous in His righteousness, and loved with the love which rests on Him, and are sons of God in His sonship, (that is, by association with Him in resurrection) and heirs with Him of His inheritance, and are soon to be glorified with Him in His glory. And this standing which they have in Christ, and the present and future portion which it secures, are contemplated in eternal counsels, and predestined before the foundation of the world.” – *The Progress of Doctrine*, p. 161. (The Bampton Lectures for 1864, by the Rev. T. D. Bernard, M.A. -- a volume of peculiar beauty, to which we have much pleasure in referring) and become the Head of the Church. But it should never be said that, *in the same sense*, we were one with Christ on the Cross, for He was there *as our Substitute*, and Substitution and Oneness, in reference to the Cross, are incompatible and inconsistent with each other.

Praying to the Spirit, and for the Spirit: It is the peculiar character of the present dispensation that the Holy Spirit, sent down from the glorified Christ, *dwells in the believer* as the power of life, worship, and service. It is therefore sometimes asked, Is it consistent with Scriptural truth *to pray to the Spirit* when we are praying in the Spirit, it being also one of the offices of the Spirit to “help our infirmities”? (Rom. 8:26.; Eph. 6:18.). Or, Is it consistent with the Scriptural intelligence for a believer to pray *for the Spirit*, as if he had not already “received the Spirit”? Would he not thus virtually *un-christianise* himself? For “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” If we are Christ’s, the Spirit dwells in us. (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:2; John. 14:17; 1 John. 2:27; 1. John 3:24.) But, when Christians pray for the Spirit, what they intend is, doubtless, that they may experience more and more of the power and guidance of the indwelling Spirit. (“To those who are in Christ the Holy Ghost is given as the consequence of their union with Him, and thus there is the Divine presence in the soul of the worshipper; and so, in the highest and most perfect sense, he worships the Father in spirit and in truth, and prays in the

Holy Ghost” – *Progress and Doctrine*. The Bampton Lectures, 1864, p.172.)
May this prayer fill every heart and be abundantly answered.

The World: There are three words in the original Greek which alike are rendered “*world*.” Thus, in Matt. 13:38 and 39 (“The field is the *world*,” and “The harvest is the end of the *world*”), two different words are used, and, as elsewhere, they are unhappily alike translated “*world*” The former refers to the organised world and its inhabitants; the latter more commonly to a period of *time*, and should then be translated “*age*” Thus, the passages quoted should be rendered, “The field is the *world*,” and “The harvest is the *end of the age*.”

“The powers of *the world to come*” (Heb. 6:5) – It is another word that is used, and which literally means “*the habitable earth* as it is about to be.”

C. Russell Hurditch in Footsteps of Truth
Concluded

THE GOSPEL: PASS IT ON!

About two hundred and fifty years ago, a travelling Pedlar, with his bundle on his back, entered a Shropshire village. He called at a farm house, and offered for sale a copy of “The Bruised Reed”, by the Puritan , Richard Sibbes. The farmer bought the book and the farmer’s son read it, and, through it, he found salvation in Christ.

That farmer’s son was none other than Richard Baxter, later another well-known Puritan Minister. He wrote a book called, “The Saints’ Everlasting Rest” which was read by a young man who was led by it to consecrate himself to the service of the Lord. That young man was Dr. Philip Doddridge.

Doddridge, in his turn, wrote a book called, “The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.” This book was perused by yet another young man who, by it, was led to a life of holiness and widespread influence. This young man’s name was William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slaves.

Wilberforce wrote a book entitled, "A Practical View of Christianity", the study of which was wonderfully blessed to Legh Richmond. Again, Legh Richmond wrote a book called, "The Dairyman's Daughter", a book which proved instrumental in the salvation of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Englishmen all over the world.

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

Many years ago a great plague broke out in Marseilles, a city in Southern France. The Doctors in that place arranged a conference and, after intense discussion, it was decided that a victim's body would have to be dissected or they would never know how to halt this fearsome plague. One of those Doctors, a Dr. Guyon, said, "Tomorrow morning I will proceed to carry out a dissection."

He dictated his last Will and Testament. That done, he made spiritual preparation for death. At last he set out for the hospital and, in one of the theatres, he commenced the dissecting of a body. As he did so, he wrote down his observations and the results of the dissection. Very soon he began to feel unwell and within twelve hours he was dead.

At the time, this was rightly regarded as a beautiful self-sacrifice, for his yielding himself like this to death provided the information and knowledge whereby the plague was at first arrested and then completely eliminated.

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, looked down from heaven and beheld Adam's race stricken with sin's dreadful plague and bound over to certain, universal misery and death. In the Eternal Conference or Council, known as the Covenant of Grace, it was agreed that sin had to be dealt with and that God's only Son, in the fullness of time, should enter the reeking hospital of this world and, in a work of pure mercy, should do whatever was necessary for the removal of sin. Hence He came. He made His Will, giving everything of spiritual and eternal value to His people. Then He laid His hand to the work and, under the plague, He suffered and died. In a place outside of Jerusalem, 2,000 years ago, the healthy One laid down His life for the sick, the pure One laid down His

life for the polluted; and the innocent One laid down His life for the guilty. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This was amazing love! This was love beyond degree!

LORD, SAVE US, WE PERISH

With marked effect, an American preacher of the nineteenth century used to relate an incident communicated to him by Pastor Adolphe Monod who was Minister at Lyons, Montauban, and Paris.

Monod told him that a friend of his in Paris related how that when Prussia was at war with France, some men ventured out one night, after darkness fell, to bring back the wounded men. They were afraid to take out lights for fear of being shot at by the enemy.

When they thought they had found all the wounded, and were ready to return to the city, one man ascended a high spot of ground and shouted with a loud voice, that if there were others who wished to be taken into Paris, an ambulance was at hand, ready to take them there.

Before he raised his voice, it was all very silent, not a sound was heard; but the moment he had ceased speaking, wounded and dying men, knew that there was help available and there were cries heard from all over the field.

The preacher said, "I come today to tell you there is One willing to save, that there is help for all of you." Do not lie there, indifferent to your great need. Break the silence and, mustering all your strength, cry out in believing prayer that you may be saved from your lost estate. Scripture says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

LUKEWARMNESS

Malcolm H. Watts

Edward Payson was a great man. Richly graced and highly gifted, he preached the Word of God with extraordinary success. When he became Pastor of the Congregational church in Portland, U.S.A., he had great hopes for the work, observing many encouraging signs. "Christians are stirred up", he wrote, "and there is every reason to hope that God is on the point of appearing for us." Sadly, it was not to be; and those early hopes met with disappointment.

Within a matter of months he was in near despondency over the situation. "In a very melancholy mood", as he admitted himself to be in, he wrote to his sister about "the love of many... waxing cold". To him it was heart-breaking. He asked her in his desperation, "What can I do?" He did not know what more he could do. His concern grew greater as the spiritual state of the people appeared to deteriorate, and the letters written by him during this period reveal something of that depressing spiritual scene in which he ministered. "We are in a most stupid state", Payson wrote in one letter, "and I always come home quite discouraged."

Months passed, then years, but still there was no sign of any significant improvement among the people. He prayed, and earnestly at times, feeling confident that God was about to take the work into His own hands to revive it, but Payson came to a realization which almost broke his spirit. "I fear" he said, "that religion is on the decline among us."

What was the matter? His church was "lukewarm", and in exactly the same condition as was the church at Laodicea to which the risen Lord sent a message, saying: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:15-16)

In recording this church-fault in the imperishable pages of the Scripture, the Lord would seem to be holding out a warning-beacon to all churches through all time. There have been churches, like Payson's, which have had the Laodicean problem. There are churches with it today. Surely this scripture should lead us to examine our hearts. Could we be said to be "lukewarm"?

The subject deserves to be looked at a little more closely.

1. As to **the nature of lukewarmness**, it is clearly a matter of the “heart”, by which we mean the soul, the centre of the personal life. As all thoughts, words, and deeds, whether good or evil, proceed from there (Lk. 6:45), if there is any defect in these, the source of the problem is always in the heart. “Out of it”, said Solomon, “are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23), on which verse the Puritan, John Flavel, helpfully comments, saying that the heart was therefore “the source and fountain of all vital actions and operations... as a spring in the watch that sets all the wheels in motion. The heart is the treasury, the hand and the tongue but the shops; what is in these comes from thence.”

For this reason, the emphasis Scripture places on the heart should not surprise us. Whenever God has dealt with His people, He has made the heart the object of His investigations (1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 7:9; Prov. 21:2; Rev. 2:23, etc.); and this has usually been welcomed by godly persons (Ps. 26:2), because they want to know their spiritual state, so that, through prayer, the Scripture,, and other means of grace, whatever is wrong might be put right (Ps. 139:23-24).

Lukewarmness is, then, a state of heart: an internal, spiritual matter. Christians are generally reluctant to accept that, and are all too quick to blame the church, the ministry, or other believers, for the poorness of their spiritual lives. But it is neither right nor honest to shift the blame from the heart’s door. “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.” (Prov. 17:15) The church at Laodicea could not have blamed external factors, since their privileges included communications from the apostle (Col. 4:16) and edifying ministry from that fervent preacher, Epaphras (Col. 4:12-13). No, quite obviously something was wrong within.

The Lord was grieved at their spiritual indifference and the sad lack of vital godliness among them: so much so that He pressed upon them the need for immediate and radical change: “Be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev 3:19). In that exhortation he tells us exactly what lukewarmness is: it is a spiritual state in which zeal is absent, or, as Dr. Gill described it, a state of being “alive but not lively”.

I wonder how accurately that describes us? Well, if it does, I would only repeat that it is a heart-problem we are faced with, and those eminent pastors from another age who knew most about the human heart add the impressive weight of their spiritual authority to this judgment.

When, in a sermon on “Jacob’s ladder”, Henry Smith said, “Zeal is the love of God”, he implied that smallness of zeal meant smallness of love.

“If we had more love, we would have more zeal”, said the great Thomas Manton, and he added, “if the heart was gained to true religion, we would have more heat and power.”

The last word can be given to another Puritan worthy, Arthur Hildersham, who, in his famous lectures on the fifty-first Psalm, linked together love to God and zeal for God. “No man can thus (i.e. truly) love God”, he said, “but he must needs have the zeal of God in him.” We might observe here that in a letter sent to another of the churches in Asia Minor our Lord made this very point, teaching that there was a connection between “first love” and “first works” (Rev. 2:4-5).

How important it is to attend to the heart! Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” (Jn. 21:15-17).

2. There are **recognizable symptoms of this condition**, and God calls us to subject ourselves to examination. Obviously we cannot look into our hearts as God does, but we can come to conclusions about the in-ward state of things by looking at the way we live. “Let us search and try our ways” (Lam. 3:40). Perhaps a list ought to be drawn up of the more obvious symptoms of lukewarmness, so that we all have something to go on.

- i) The first sign of it is the dying down of true Christian experience, so that, whatever our profession may be, God is “far from [our] reins” (Jer. 12:2).
- ii) Another indication is when we are only superficially impressed and affected by spiritual things, so that we resemble “a cake not turned” (Hos. 7:8), the warmth having not got right through to us.
- iii) When lukewarm, a person is comfortable, and so comfortable that he does not care to engage in spiritual activities. In the words of the book of Proverbs: “a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep” (Prov. 6:10).
- iv) Tending to make us drowsy, as it does, it means that even if spiritual duties are performed, nothing is done properly. “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully” (better rendered ‘negligently’) (Jer. 48:10).

- v) Because not stone-cold, the condition usually accompanies a complete lack of concern with it. Hosea's words could be applied to such: "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth [it] not" (Hos. 7:9). Although there may be clear signs of decay, the person concerned seems to disregard the signs, choosing to remain in blissful ignorance of it (cf. Rev. 3:17). This is perhaps the most alarming symptom.

3. Naturally there are **identifiable causes of the condition**. Much could be written here, but it will be profitable to confine ourselves to two things which always cause this problem. They are:

Too much of some things: I refer to the world, its people and concerns. Make no mistake about it, the world with its unbelief is a spiritual ice-house, and too much contact with it will quickly cool the spirit. I do not say that the world will ever bring you to its own freezing temperature, but I do say that, if it can, it will rob you of much of your heat. The result will leave you neither hot nor cold, but compromised. That was what happened to Israel in ancient times. They were too influenced by the people around them, and God had cause to warn them repeatedly about doing things "after the manners of the heathen" (e.g. Ezek. 11:12).

And not enough of other things: God has given us all that is necessary for the maintaining of spiritual heat. The precious Word of God is one such gift. When ministered to the believer it has a wonderful effect. Do you remember the Emmaus experience? The disciples, later describing it, said: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Lk. 24:32; cf. Jer. 20:9). Then there is the Holy Spirit. He is actually called "the Spirit of burning" (Is. 4:4) and he still falls upon the people of God with holy, love-encindling influence, so that they are baptized "with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Mt. 3:11). At the risk of wearying some, I would say that if we are not, *as often as is possible*, under the ministry of the Word and Spirit, it really can be no surprise to us if we experience a cooling-off process.

You see, without such ministry faith grows weaker, and I have no doubt that unbelief is the root-cause of the Laodicean condition among God's people at the present time.

4. There is **real danger for any, and for all, affected by this.** If to be “hot” is to know the burning of devotion, and to be “cold” is to be altogether unconcerned about Christ and divine things, what did the Lord mean when he said, “I would that thou wert cold or hot”? Is coldness - the chill of spiritual death - a preferable alternative? To Christ it is!

- i) If “cold” we would be entirely dependent upon His mercy for the imparting of spiritual life and heat, but once that is done, God makes us responsible for maintaining the spiritual glow. Sadly, it is something we do not manage at all well.
- ii) If “cold”, God knows we would be free of mixed motives, but a “lukewarm” state is a miserable mixture of opposites, and it means that we are really hypocrites professing that devotion we do not really possess.
- iii) If “cold” we would not be one of His at all, but to be “lukewarm” is to recognise that He is worthy of love – but not much. This is a terrible insult to Christ.
- iv) If “cold”, other believers would be on their guard knowing our real spiritual state, but when “lukewarm” we are often trusted and received, and then we have a detrimental effect upon other Christians by setting such a poor example.

It is no wonder that Christ would prefer “coldness” to “lukewarmness”. It is no exaggeration to say that Christ hates the “lukewarm” state more than any other: witness those awful words “I will spue thee out of my mouth”. For this, churches can be rejected and dissolved, and Christ makes it quite plain that if the situation continues all warnings will cease and all mercies will be withdrawn.

5. I come now to **the only sure and effective remedy.** There must be a discovery of the real state of the heart, leading us to feel our need of spiritual blessing (Rev.3:17-18).

Then the heart must be broken under the Word of God and under the sense of sin, enabling us to truly repent before the Lord (v.19). You see, it is the heart that must be dealt with.

And there is one all-important matter concerning the heart which yet has to be considered.

According to the Lord Jesus, our “lukewarm” state has really excluded Him and shut Him out of our affections; and, before ever the fires of devotion blaze to His pleasure, warming the whole of the inner life with pure and holy love, Christ must be given the place in our hearts which once He enjoyed. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, *“I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”* (Rev. 3:20).

AN EXTRACT FROM THE SERMONS OF THOMAS DE WITT TALMAGE (1832-1902)

“The law tried me for high treason against God and found me guilty. The angels of God were the jurors impanelled in the case, and they found me guilty. I was asked what I had to say why sentence of eternal death should not be pronounced upon me, and I had. nothing to say.

I stood on the scaffold of God’s justice; the black cup of eternal death was about to be drawn over my eyes, when from the hill of Calvary One came. He dashed through the ranks of earth and heaven and hell. He rode swiftly. His garments were dyed with His blood, His face was bleeding, His feet were dabbled with gore, and He cried out, “Save that man from going down to the pit, I am the ransom,” and He threw back the coat from His heart, and that heart burst into a crimson fountain, and he dropped dead at my feet; and I felt of His hands and they were stiff; and I felt of His feet and they were cold; and I felt of His heart, and it was pulseless; and I cried, “Dead!” And angel with excited wings flew upward, amidst the thrones, crying, “Dead!” and spirits lost in black brood wheeled down amidst the caverns, crying, “Dead!’ Expiation! Expiation!

William Cowper overborne with his sin, threw himself into a chair by the window, picked up a New Testament, and his eye lighted upon this, “Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood;” and instantly he was free!

Unless Christ pays our debt, we go to eternal jail.”

ROWLAND HILL AND LADY ERSKINE

C. H. Spurgeon

Once when Rowland Hill was preaching, Lady Ann Erskine happened to be driving by: she was in the outer ring of the circle, and she asked the coachman what all the people were there for. He replied, 'They are going to hear Rowland Hill.' Well, she had heard a great deal about this strange man, accounted to be the very wildest of preachers and so she drew near.

No sooner did Rowland Hill see her, than he said, 'Come, I am going to have an auction, I am going to sell Lady Ann Erskine.' She of course stopped, and she wondered how she was going to be disposed of. 'Who will buy her?' Up comes the world. 'What will you give for her?' 'I will give her all the pomps and vanities of the present life; she shall be a happy woman here, she shall be very rich, she shall have many admirers, she shall go through this world with many joys.'

'You shall not have her; her soul is an everlasting thing; it is a poor price you are offering; you are only giving a little; and what shall I profit her if she gain the whole world and lose her own soul?

Here comes another purchaser- here is the devil. 'What will you give for her?' 'Well,' says he, 'I will let her enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; she shall indulge in everything her heart shall set itself unto; she shall have everything to delight the eye and the ear; she shall indulge in every sin and vice that can possibly give a transient pleasure.'

'Ah, Satan what will you do for her for ever? You shall not have her, for I know what you are; you would give a paltry price for her, and then destroy the soul to all eternity.'

But, here comes another. I know Him - it is the Lord Jesus. 'What will you give for her?' Says He, 'It is not what I will give, it is what I have given; I have given My life, my blood for her; I have bought her with a price, and I will give her heaven for ever and ever; I will give her grace in her heart now and glory throughout eternity.'

'O Lord Jesus Christ,' said Rowland Hill, 'thou shalt have her. Lady Ann Erskine, do you demur to the bargain?' She was fairly caught; there was no answer that could be given.

'It is done,' he said, 'it is done; you are the Saviour's; I have betrothed you unto Him; never break that contract.'

And she never did. From that time forth, from being a gay and volatile woman she became one of the most serious persons, one of the greatest supporters of the truth of the gospel in those times, and died in a glorious and certain hope of entering the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever is willing to have Christ, Christ is willing to have him.

LAW AND GRACE

"Ye are not under the LAW, but under GRACE." (Romans 6:14)

"To be 'under the law' is to be under its claim to entire obedience on pain of death...To be 'under grace' is to be under the glorious canopy and saving effects of that 'grace which bringeth salvation.'" (Dr. David Brown)

LAW gives the knowledge of sin; GRACE gives the knowledge of salvation.

LAW says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; GRACE says, "Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son".

LAW is summed up in the word "Do"; GRACE in the word "Done".

LAW pronounces condemnation; GRACE proclaims justification.

LAW says, "Pay me what thou owest"; GRACE says, "I freely forgive thee all".

LAW addresses the sinner with "This do, and thou shalt live"; GRACE addresses him with "Live, and then thou shalt do."

LAW regulates the outer conduct; GRACE the inner.

LAW says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them"; GRACE says, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered".

LAW demands by the terror of the Lord; GRACE by the love of Christ.

LAW slew three thousand at Sinai; GRACE saved three thousand at Pentecost.

AMPLE PROVISION

Ernest J. Schwenke

When God supplies or provides something, we can be sure it will be ample. Note the generosity of God's supply:

- of salvation, it is "so great" (Heb 2:3)
- of the Gospel, it is "glorious" (2 Cor 4:4; 1 Tim 1:11) and "everlasting" (Rev 14:6.)
- of riches, they are "unsearchable" (Eph 3:8)
- of the gift of Christ, it is "unspeakable" (2 Cor 9:15)
- of grace, it is "abundant" (2 Cor 4:15) and "exceeding" (2Cor 9:14)
- of hope, it is "blessed" (Tit 2:13)
- of the words of Christ, they are "gracious" (Lk 4:22)
- of liberty, it is "glorious" (Rom 8:21) and "perfect" (James 1:25)
- of the works of God, they are "marvellous" (Ps 139:14) and "wonderful" (Acts 2:11)
- of life, it is "more abundant" (Jn 10:10) and "everlasting" (Jn 3:16)
- of redemption, it is "eternal" (Heb 9:12)
- of joy, it is "unspeakable" (1 Pet 1:8) and "exceeding" (1 Pet 4:13; Jude 24)
- of rewards, they are "exceeding great" (Gen 15:1)
- of the gifts and calling of God, they are "without repentance" (Rom 11:29)

CHRIST – OUR ALL-IN ALL

John Stevenson

*Minister in Cury and Gunallow, Cornwall,
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The Lord Jesus Christ is the All-in-All of his redeemed. In every want he is their Friend. In every danger he is their Defence. In weakness he is their Strength; in sorrow, their Joy; in pain, their Peace; in poverty, their Provider; in sickness, their Physician; in hunger, their Bread; in trouble, their Consolation; in perplexity, their Counsellor; in the furnace, their Refiner; in the floods, their Rock; in assaults, their Refuge; in accusations, their Advocate, in debt, their Surety; in slavery, their Ransom; in captivity, their Deliverer; in the day, their Sun; in the night, their Keeper; in the desert, their Shepherd. In life, he is their Hope; in death, their Life; in the grave, their Resurrection; in heaven, their Glory.

Let Christ, therefore, be thy All-in-All, for time and for eternity. With the faithful martyr say, while living, "None but Christ." When dying say, "None but Christ." Through all eternity say, "None but Christ." Let the triumphant name, "The LORD our righteousness", settle every difficulty, solve every doubt, and silence every accusation. When conscience tells thee thy sins are both many and great, answer thou, "Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin." When reminded of your ignorance, say, "Christ is my wisdom." When your ground and title to the kingdom are demanded, say, "Christ is my righteousness." When your meetness to enter within its sacred walls is challenged, say, "Christ is my sanctification." When sin and the law – when death and Satan claim thee as their captive, reply to them all, "Christ is my redemption."

The Law saith, Pay thy debt. The Gospel saith, Christ hath paid it. The Law saith, Make amends for thy sins. The Gospel saith, Christ hath made it for thee. The Law saith, Thou art a sinner; despair for thou shalt be condemned. The Gospel saith, Thy sins are forgiven thee; be of good comfort, thou shalt be saved.