



What Makes God Spit

Overcoming Spiritual Lukewarmness

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There are certain words I would never like to hear God say to me. Some of them are found in Revelations 3:14-22

“These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I 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.”

Spiritual lukewarmness makes God want to spit. He finds it disgusting and revolting.

What characterizes spiritual lukewarmness according to the passage above?

This is serious business – and as Christians, we certainly want to avoid taking on any of those characteristics you listed! But lukewarmness has a tendency to creep in subtly. It doesn't jump us all at once – it nibbles away at the edges of our thoughts and actions and attitudes until we find our spiritual life in shreds. In this lesson, we will examine three causes of spiritual lukewarmness – there are others, but these are three significant causes.

Sin

The first cause for spiritual lukewarmness is sin. We can see references to sin in the passage from Revelations – a failure to be committed 100% to good deeds, a prideful attitude, a focus on material wealth ... all leading to the cry from God in verse 19, “Repent!”

How does sin nibble away at us? Consider this quote from Jose Escriva:

“I already know that you avoid mortal sins ... But you are not worried about that constant and deliberate falling into venial sins, even though in each case you feel God’s call to conquer yourself.”

What are some sins you find easy to avoid?

What are some sins you find hard to avoid?

Why do you find it easier to avoid some sins than others?

One of the reasons that sin can take hold of us is because we sometimes don’t realize that certain attitudes, thoughts, words, or actions are sinful. You simply may never have been taught that something is sinful. You may assume that it is “just part of my personality” and not an attitude or action under your control. You may be justifying it in some way. You may be blinded to it. You may have grown up with it and consider it normal, acceptable behavior.

Therefore, it is imperative to become familiar with the attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions that God has declared to be sinful in his Word. One way to do so is to study lists of sins that the Bible provides, and examine your own heart and life to see if you have committed them.

Recognizing sin for what it is is the first step to overcoming it. The second step is to understand how sin actually takes hold in our lives – the process that temptation takes.

Read James 1:13-15. How does temptation work? What steps happen along the way?

Consider three of the sins from your list on the previous page. For each sin, describe how the process of temptation might work in someone's life to drag them down into that sin.

Consider the quote from Jose Escrivá again – he writes, “you are not worried about that constant and deliberate falling into venial sins ...” What do you think about those two words: “constant” and “deliberate”?

Why would one sin constantly in an area?

Why deliberately?

Do Christians ever sin constantly and deliberately?

What does God say about this? Read I John 1:5-10.

What is our usual reaction when confronted with our habitual sin? Why do we react that way? What does it take to get us to change?

How do you get out of habitual sin? What steps do you need to take?

Are there any habitual sins you need to confess and repent of at this time?

Laziness

The second culprit of spiritual lukewarmness is laziness. Sometimes laziness precedes sin, so that we sin because we have become spiritually lazy; and sometimes it follows it, so that we become spiritually lazy because we have allowed sin to creep into our lives. Regardless, sin and laziness go hand in hand.

We can see laziness in the Revelations 3 passage quoted earlier – they were resting on their laurels: “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” The cure is found right next to the word “repent” in verse 19: “Be earnest!” In other words, “Get up and DO something!”

Jose Escriva has commented powerfully on this area of our lives:

“Will-power. A very important quality. Don’t disregard the little things, which are really never futile or trivial. For by the constant practice of repeated self-denial in little things, with God’s grace you will increase in strength and manliness of character.”

“Fight against the softness that makes you lazy and careless in your spiritual life. Remember that it might well be the beginning of tepidity ... and, in the words of the Scripture, God will vomit out the lukewarm.”

Why are we often lazy?

How does laziness manifest itself in our spiritual walk?

What effect does physical laziness have? Does something similar happen if we are spiritually lazy?

Do you think the Christian life should be easy? Read I Corinthians 9:24-27 before answering.

Can you be busy in other areas of your life – work, home, even church – but lazy within? If so, how?

What part does prioritization play in overcoming laziness?

What do you need to do if you find that you have slipped into a lazy lifestyle? Can you change all at once, or do you think that you should set a series of small goals? What part does accountability play in overcoming laziness?

Complacency

The third reason we can become spiritually lukewarm is because we become complacent toward God and all he has done for us. We take everything for granted.

In Revelations 3, we see the church's complacency clearly – they are neither cold nor hot, their focus is on themselves and what they have, they have no words of respect or worship or gratitude for God at all. They have taken his grace for granted.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in the first chapter of his classic work *The Cost of Discipleship*, wrote a compelling section on “Costly Grace.” Consider his words carefully:

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. We are fighting today for costly grace.

Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?

. . . In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin . . .

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was . . . Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

If we live our lives realizing that this is costly grace, how will this affect our understanding of God and Jesus Christ? Our response to God?

If we live our lives realizing that this is costly grace, how will this affect our understanding of God and Jesus Christ? Our response to God?

Oftentimes, we hold attitudes about God that deny the reality of costly grace. It is important to examine our understanding of God and correct any lies or distortions we have believed.

Examine the following attitudes that deny the reality of costly grace. What verses would you use to counter these attitudes? Do you hold any of these attitudes? If so, memorize at least two verses to help you live in the truth of God's Word.

God is a policeman

God is distant

God doesn't care about me

God won't forgive me when I do wrong

Sin. Laziness. Complacency. Three major causes of spiritual lukewarmness. Commit to memory the words of the apostle Peter in I Peter 5:8-11 – words that can defend you against lukewarmness, no matter how it tries to creep into your life:

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your fellow believers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

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Sin

Laziness

Complacency
