

KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Revelation 3:7-13**
“On the Fence”

Have you ever had a friend betray you? It seems that it is often easier to deal with open enemies than with false friends. Sadly, I'm afraid so many in the church are, to varying degrees, betraying Jesus with a kiss (Luke 22:48). They act as if they are Jesus' friends on Sunday, but otherwise they can't seem to make up their minds. I believe we can learn several steps from the church of the Laodiceans about being loyally on fire for Jesus Christ rather than being lukewarm.

1: Affirm the truth (v14). The first step to standing for God, rather than being on the fence, is to affirm the truth. I love it how Jesus says He is **the Amen**. In language, words require something higher into which to root their existence. I.e., words lose their meaning if they simply reference other words, which reference other words, etc. They must be backed up by experiences in the physical universe, which in turn requires a cause for its existence, leading back to the Ultimate Cause, God. Jesus Christ needs nothing into which to root His reality, since He is God and supernatural; He can "Amen" Himself, so to speak (Exodus 3:14, Hebrews 6:13). Do we say a hearty "Amen" to the truth of God? Or are we wishy-washy on the clear teachings of Jesus Christ (Luke 9:26)?

Like Jesus, we are to be **faithful witnesses** in that we don't back down when the battle gets hot; and we should be **true** witnesses in that we don't tamper with the message to reduce the world's hatred for us. Going back to the concept of logic, Jesus is the **beginning**, or the "source", **of the creation of God**; everything can trace its origin ultimately back to Jesus Christ, just as all the tributaries and creeks and rivers in a particular area can trace their origin to the headwaters of a great river.

2: Pick a side (v15-16). Jesus **knows their works**; He keeps unfiltered records, perfectly accurate; and He knows if you're "on the fence" and undecided about Him.

Interestingly, He would rather you be **cold**, or indifferent and outright ungodly, than to be lukewarm. If we ranked people morally, oftentimes we would tend to put the real on-fire Christian first, the snake-in-the-grass (but seemingly squeaky-clean) church member second, and the drunken sailor third. But interestingly, I believe Jesus would place the drunken sailor as morally *better* than the snake-in-the-grass church member (Matthew 21:31). Why? Probably for the same reason that an enemy is most dangerous as a traitor, or that a rotten plank over a pit is more dangerous when painted to look strong and fresh. Having no watch at all is better than having a stopped watch, since it fools you into accepting the *wrong* time. Jesus doesn't want unbelievers pretending to believe, lest their evil heart spread (Deuteronomy 20:8).

Lukewarm church members have a "comfortable Christianity": one that adjusts its temperature to the surroundings, fitting in with the culture. Are you a "chameleon" Christian, blending in with spiritual talk on Sundays and dirty jokes on Mondays? If so, Jesus **will spue you out of His mouth**; violently, repulsed by your hypocrisy. Just pick a side and don't sit on the fence (Joel 3:14, I Kings 18:21).

3: Humble yourself (v17). This church gave God a "faulty income report" in a sense, **saying that they were rich**. Today, they would probably have been debt-free, with lots of CDs and financial stability, a beautiful pipe organ and state-of-the-art technology. They said they were **increased with goods**; their closets were likely stuffed with nice, unused things and their nursery with an abundance of toys. They **had need of nothing**, breathing a sigh of satisfaction at all of their physical things; not a worry in the world!

Yet they **knew not** their actual, terrible condition; one of the saddest phrases in the Bible is when Samson "wist not that the LORD was departed from him" (Judges 16:20). Likewise, many churches have no clue that God has departed. They were **wretched**; a lot of problems today are attributed to some form of an inferiority complex, but really, most people have a *superiority* complex, as did this church. They were **miserable**; have you ever felt sorry for a rich person who didn't have any joy in the

Lord? They may seem happy at times; but when the music fades, the emptiness sets in. They were **poor**; they made a lot of financial ripples, but few *spiritual* ones; God's bank ledger in heaven shows them among the poorest. They are **blind**; they see beautiful stained glass, beautiful artwork, and large offerings; whereas God sees the cold hearts, hidden sin, and sensual music. Though they have financial goals, spiritually they are like a large group of nomads wandering around without direction, gathering others to do the same thing with them. And sadly, they were **naked**; we must make sure we are covered by the blood of Jesus, because our own righteousness will never hold up in the day of judgment.

4: Change suppliers (v18-19). Jesus **counsels them** for free; when we **buy of God** riches, we get an incredible conversion rate and wire money directly into a strong, secure heavenly vault (Luke 12:33). It's an investment, not a waste, to give God your time and money. God's **gold** is **tried in the fire**; we will be persecuted for living for Jesus (II Timothy 3:12), but we will **be rich** as a result (II Corinthians 4:17). We must get saved so we can have **white raiment**, our wedding garments (Matthew 22:11-13). How embarrassing for us not to **be clothed** on judgment day, having the **shame of our nakedness appear**; many people think they will fare really well with their good works, or mass, or money they have given to the church; but in reality, when judgment day begins, none of those things will be able to cover our sin. Many people have **eyes** but don't **see** (Matthew 13:13); we need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes.

Jesus **rebukes** us verbally and **chastens** us physically not because He hates us, but because He **loves** us. God doesn't spank the devil's children (though He will destroy them one day if they don't repent). Instead of pouting when punished, the better reaction is to **be zealous therefore, and repent**—get "revenge" on your sin (II Corinthians 7:11).

5: Let Jesus in (v20-22). Whereas the previous church in Philadelphia may be called the church of the *open* door (Revelation 3:8), this church could be called the church of the *closed* door; they hadn't let Jesus in, Who was **standing at the door, and knocking**. And He's not just knocking; He says "**if any man**

hear my voice", meaning He must be shouting, asking to come in. The more we reject Jesus Christ in our hearts, the more our ears grow dull; what was once a loud knock and shout becomes fainter until it is a small whisper, then it vanishes completely. Jesus is knocking just as hard; but our hearts have shut Him out. Don't risk that—let Him into your heart today!

A true gentleman waits until *you open the door*. Jesus doesn't kick your heart's door in. Maybe you're embarrassed that when **He comes in to you**, he will see your junk and poverty; but don't worry about that; just open the door! He will clean up your life. More than that, He **will sup with you**; can you imagine Jesus pulling up a chair, grabbing utensils, and having a meal one-on-one? And it's not an awkward one-sided conversation; He is the ultimate Gentleman and makes sure that **you** also sup **with Him**, meaning the conversation is two-way and balanced.

Better yet, if we open *our* door, He will open *His* to us, so much as **granting us to sit with Him in His throne**. What a deal! We certainly get the far better end of that deal than He does. A little child may come barging into his father's office and jump up into his chair because he feels comfortable; and likewise, I believe that we, glorified and sinless, will feel comfortable in a similar sense around Jesus in heaven.

In summary, we need to repent as a church of being lukewarm, especially today. We can do this by first affirming the truth, heartily saying "Amen" in our hearts to *the* "Amen", Jesus Christ. We can choose the side of Jesus Christ rather than try to be on two opposing sides at once. We should humble ourselves, praying for discernment to see our spiritual condition, not just our financial condition. That will help us to change suppliers, buying *spiritual* commodities instead of just physical ones. And finally, we must let Jesus Christ into our hearts and into our churches instead of leaving Him outside of something that is supposedly for Him in the first place. When we let Jesus Christ into our hearts, we will have sweet fellowship with Him and enjoy the remarkable benefits only He can provide.