

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XVII

August 17, 2008

No. 33

Lukewarm: A Symptom

Jerry Fite

By definition, a symptom is a “sign” or “indication” of something else occurring. For example, fever is a symptom of infection occurring somewhere in the body. The fever is not the disease, but an indication that some disease is present.

Jesus observed the works of the church in Laodicea and responded with, “*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold or hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth*” (Revelation 3:15-16). A cold drink is refreshing, and a hot drink can be soothing. But the Lukewarm works of the church in Laodicea brought no refreshment or benefit to the Lord. Therefore, He was ready to spew them out of his mouth, like one would tepid water.

What was the cause for the spiritual apathy in the church of Laodicea? Jesus observes a deeper problem: “*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing...*” (Revelation 3:17). Physical riches had made them feel self sufficient and blind to their impoverished spiritual condition.

They had “gotten riches”, so what need did they have for a providing God. With God out of mind, serving the Lord loses its luster. Materialism is the disease in Laodicea, and being lukewarm is the symptom.

Jesus warns us in the parable of the sower of the spiritual effects of focusing upon the material things of this world and the physical pleasures around us. “*The care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becometh unfruitful*” (Matthew 13:22). Notice the person becomes unfruitful. But this is the symptom of the disease of materialism.

Our money and our possessions deceive us into thinking that we are self-sufficient. It is what we have done that leads us to lay up treasures for ourselves and not be rich toward God (Luke 12:21). We are blinded to the fact that it is God who gives us the power to get wealth, and has given us richly all things to enjoy (Deuteronomy 8:18, I Timothy 6:17). Therefore, we should not be so high minded in our wealth, nor have our hope set on the uncertainty of riches. We should be looking up to God. With material blessings in their

proper perspective, we should serve our providing God by being rich in good works. We should share with others what God has blessed us with, not hoard them for ourselves (I Timothy 6:19).

Instead of being lukewarm in our work, God wants us to be “*zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:14). This will happen when we keep in mind the spiritual realities that have come before us. Jesus Christ “gave himself” to “redeem us from all iniquity.” By his blood He also “purified” us “for his own possession.” He died for me so I could be redeemed to live. Therefore, I will be lukewarm and apathetic? Knowing the sacrifice of my Lord, I will be “zealous of good works” in my life.

When we become “lukewarm” in our spiritual service, maybe we should think upon the sacrifice of our Lord. The material things and physical pleasures that have us captivated and spiritually lethargic, cannot maintain their deception in light of so great a sacrifice. Be “*... fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*” (Rom. 12:11).