

## Lukewarmness – Part 1

Welcome to the new series that we're beginning today. This series is on Lukewarmness; it'll be given in three parts, today being Part 1. We'll cover sixteen aspects of lukewarmness; not because there's anything magical about the number sixteen, but it just is where I landed as I prepared for this series. The key revelation is this. At every moment all Christians are either worshipping Jesus Christ or worshipping self. When we are worshipping self, then we will be displaying lukewarmness in one form or another. When we're worshipping Jesus, we will be growing in love. We will be growing in the expression of the fruit of the Spirit that flows out of that love. And we will be growing in God's Sweet Sixteen which flow out of the fruit of the Spirit. And we will be growing in Christlikeness which is the summation of all those various aspects. But if we're not worshipping Jesus, we will be lukewarm. So the question isn't are we lukewarm or not; the question is, are we worshipping Jesus or not and if we're not we will be lukewarm. Lukewarmness in Christians most commonly wears camouflage. A fuller title of this series could be: Lukewarmness – Addressing It by Undressing It. I've chosen sixteen methods by which Christians wear this camouflage of lukewarmness. The camouflage of course, may fool ourselves and it may fool others, but it does not fool an omniscient Being. These sixteen types of camouflage of lukewarmness could be thought of in contrast to our prior series as God's sour sixteen. If we are not growing in God's Sweet Sixteen, it is probably because we are wearing God's sour sixteen.

Recall the moonwalk made famous by Michael Jackson. It gives the appearance of moving forward while one actually moves backwards. These sixteen behaviors of lukewarmness are a type of spiritual moonwalk because they give the impression that we're moving forward when in reality we're slipping backward in our spiritual walk. The result of these is that we continue in self worship while appearing to worship God. We have to understand this truth in order to be set free. We are free in Christ, but remember, it is for freedom that He set us free. And we cannot access the freedom for which He set us free except we relinquish at least these sixteen camouflage suits of lukewarmness. You may be tempted to skip this series, because most people don't like to hear messages like this. One of my favorite quotes is...I love good advice; I'm always quick to pass it on to someone who really needs it. But try to listen anyway in order that you have even more good advice to pass on to all of those that you know really need to hear this talk. As always, we get to choose, but we never get to choose what the choices are; and we never get to choose the consequences of the choices. We can put on lukewarmness and have spiritual stagnation. Or we can put on the Lord Jesus Christ and experience the abundant life. Remember this series started in the pursuit of the abundant life that Jesus Christ came to give. So I get to choose; but I do not get to choose the choices nor the consequences of the choices. So in the context of this series, the consequences will be either to choose lukewarmness and have spiritual stagnation or choose to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, bring Him glory and access the abundant life.

The root of lukewarmness, we can begin to approach in Revelation 3:15-16 (Jesus says) – I wish that you were hot or cold, but since you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of My mouth. Early in my Christian walk, I had trouble understanding this Scripture. It made no sense. I think part of the reason; I was looking at it through my natural mind. To the natural mind, the proper order with these three categories (if they're placed sequentially), would be hot, lukewarm, and cold.

Well here's a simple analogy to help us begin to approach the foundational understanding of lukewarmness. Most of us have had the opportunity to walk into a busy social event and having no one respond to our presence. They did not respond to the reality of our being. You've all seen human nature at work in such a social setting. When there is movement at the front door, all eyes give at least a furtive glance toward the door in a millisecond to see who is coming in. And that involves not only seeing who is coming in, but assessing who is coming in. All do notice and all do assess; thus, all are without excuse. The assessment goes beyond simple recognition and perceives to an assessment of relative worth. The assessment in that setting is to assess and evaluate the desirability of conversation with the new arrival compared to the desirability of continued conversation with the person that you are presently conversing with. If conversation with the new arrival is judged to be preferable, then planning is unexpressed; but does proceed as to how to end the present conversation without it being apparent that you did so only to shift to the new arrival. That would communicate to others that you did, in fact, place greater value on conversation with the new arrival and would thus demean the person that you were having conversation with at the time.

If you judge the new arrival to be of less value than your present conversational partner, then you conceive a plan, unexpressed but real, about how to continue your present conversation uninterrupted. That may require you to turn your back toward the front door. It may require you to steer the person gently to another location that's further from the front door so as to decrease the likelihood of having the new arrival interfere with your previous lifestyle. No matter how surreptitious you are, the new arrival notes your behavior. He notes that you placed a lower value on him than your present life and that you may even be hostile toward him.

There is a third behavior and this is the critical one to understand lukewarmness. This one does not seek conversation with the new arrival. This one does not flee from conversation with the new arrival. This one simply behaves as if the new arrival does not exist. He gives no response of any kind. He knows that the new arrival exists, but he behaves as if the new arrival does not exist. If the new arrival walks up this one continues his conversation as if nothing happened. He does not seek him out. He does not flee from him. And he does not engage him.

Now return to lukewarmness. The hot knows of God, acknowledges His reality, assesses His proper value, and responds to rush to Him with passionate pursuit. The cold knows of God, acknowledges His reality, and responds to Him with active avoidance so as not to have to give up self worship. But the lukewarm knows of God; but he doesn't even acknowledge the new arrival. He gives no response. He behaves as if God does not exist. This one fulfills Romans 1:28 – They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer. God is in their knowledge, but they did not see fit to acknowledge which means to behave as if He is in your knowledge. To acknowledge God is to know that He exists and to behave as if He exists. Not to acknowledge is to know that He exists, but to behave as if He does not exist. That is the lukewarm one. A response of any kind at least indicates that you consider God a factor to be reckoned with in your life, either to approach Him or flee from Him, but to respond in one way or another. That at least places some value on God. The ultimate devaluation of God is to behave as if He is not even a factor to be reckoned with; thus no response of any kind is given. This is the lukewarm one. Understanding that allows us to see that the root of lukewarmness is continued self worship. The ultimate judging of God is to declare that He does not exist. That's the atheist. Then self

worship continues unfettered. Lukewarmness in the church is simply a sinister technique to arrive at the same result. Lukewarmness knows that God exists, but then judges that He is not worth responding to. This also allows self worship to continue in the heart of a Christian unfettered. God would prefer that you be hot over cold or lukewarm. God would prefer that you be cold over lukewarm. God would prefer that you be at least overt in rebellion against Him and in your continued self worship. The one that God detests the most is the one who behaves as if He is not even worth responding to, to either flee or pursue. This is the one that is passive aggressive towards God, although saved. He is covert in his rebellion against God, continuing in his self worship while devaluing God to the extent that he behaves as if his con game will not be noticed by an omniscient Being. Can you imagine a greater devaluation of God as to think that you can play a con game with God to continue in self worship and He somehow won't notice or judge it as something worth His paying attention to?

From this point on in this series, the subtitle could be Lukewarmness...Addressing It by Undressing It. Lukewarmness is rebellion in a camouflage suit. It is self worship in a camouflage suit of worship of God. And it has to be undressed to be recognized. No list is all inclusive and I never pretend that I make an all inclusive list. But this list that I have chosen for this series is, I think, sufficient for our purposes of recognizing the underlying truth that most Christians to one degree or another wear camouflage suits in their continued lukewarmness in their response toward God. Today we'll cover compartmentalization, compromise, and condemnation.

With compartmentalization, we have a tendency to divide the universe of our lives into compartments of spiritual and non-spiritual, important or less important. We do attend church. We may even attend noon Bible studies. We may study the Bible. But these are in our spiritual compartment. We then largely click an off switch as we leave the spiritual compartment and enter that which we have self declared to be the non-spiritual compartment. We then largely behave in our non-spiritual compartment as if what we have seen and heard in our spiritual compartment does not exist. We tend to view the Kingdom of God at one end of the spectrum, the kingdom of Satan at the other end of the spectrum, and a vast middle ground in between which indirectly represents that kingdom which we desire to rule. Why do we behave that way? Because it allows us to remain in self worship through large compartments of our lives, in our own kingdom in this vast self declared presumed unoccupied territory in between the two kingdoms of God and Satan.

The more appropriate model for us is the football field with its line of scrimmage. You know we can see spiritual truth in all sorts of natural examples. With the football field there are two opposing teams and there is no neutral ground. There's not one millimeter of neutral ground in that battle between these two kingdoms. And no team backs off the line of scrimmage and leaves any area on its side of the line unoccupied. Each team aggressively defends its own side of the line and aggressively seeks to take the territory on the other side of the line from the other team. Whatever compartment of our lives that we do not aggressively occupy with the things of God we will, in fact, forfeit to the kingdom of Satan. In our presumed compartment of neutrality in between the two kingdoms, we will function in self determination. Self determination is the root of self on the throne. Self on the throne is the root of the flesh. The flesh is the root of the system of this world. And the system of this world is the kingdom of darkness which is the

kingdom of Satan. That's why compartmentalization in our lives is one mechanism of expression of lukewarmness toward God.

The second on the list is compromise. To compromise is to go part of the way toward God, but then to stop, all the while pretending that we have completed the process of worship of God. We then expect God to be pleased with how far we came and unconcerned with the fact that we have not come all the way. Let us use repentance as an example.

Next poster. Repentance is a seven step process. We seldom press through all seven steps. We more commonly come part of the way in our compromise and then stop. The first is I did it. This is to acknowledge responsibility. It could be worded in the opposite of a sin of omission—that which you should have done, but didn't. I'm stating it with one polarity of a sin of commission as if what you should not have done, you did. But the same truth applies with either polarity. I did it means to accept responsibility for that which you did. It was wrong is step number two. This tells everyone around that you know that there is a higher standard and I violated that higher standard. Third, I am sorry. This is to truly regret violating the higher standard. Without sorrow there is no true repentance. The next stage is, please forgive me. This is to ask forgiveness from the one whom you violated; because repentance is not finished until you have asked forgiveness. The next is I purpose not to do it again. Here I contrast my original revelation which was I promise not to do it again; but no man can keep a promise. Only God can keep a promise. But we can purpose—that is to set the mind to live consistent with a higher standard that has been revealed to us in the future. But these five steps do not complete the repentance process. Step number six says I am growing in hatred of that which I am repentant of. You do not grow in the love of truth until you grow to hate untruth. They are two sides of the same coin. As I grow in godliness, I grow in hatred of that which God hates. That's why the Bible tells us the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. If you don't hate evil, then you're not operating in awe and reverence of a Holy God. Lastly, I am growing in love of the opposite of what I am repenting of. I now passionately pursue the opposite of what I am repenting of. As I grow in the love of God, I grow in the love of what God is and grow in the love of what God loves including all that He is, including righteousness. These last two steps are what fulfill Matthew 3:8 by being the fruit of repentance. If you abort the process of repentance by stopping anywhere before stage seven, then there will be no deliverance. There will be no true fruit of repentance. If we compromise by stopping after stage five, then we will simply continue a repetitive cycle that allows us to remain in self worship by always stopping short of deliverance. Such compromise is a mechanism of lukewarmness toward God; because in that area where we declare we can stop, it is by our self declaration, not the declaration of God; because God says complete the process of repentance by growing into My very likeness. But if we abort the process by compromise then we have declared then in the remaining steps of repentance, we behave as if God does not exist. We behave as if how God views reality has no impact upon our decision making,

The third is condemnation. Many Christians do this. This can be thought of as a corollary of compartmentalization and compromise. Condemnation receives conviction; but then aborts the process of repentance. Let's go back to the next poster and this is the poster on repentance. Notice that the first two steps of repentance are: I did it and it was wrong. These two taken together represent conviction. Condemnation does proceed to the next step. I am sorry. But

then instead of continuing repentance, to go to the throne of grace, condemnation self declares that there's a better pathway. Condemnation declares that whatever you did is unforgivable. Condemnation then wallows in shame and guilt. This appears to many in the church to be humility; but in fact, it is pride. We must undress it to look at the deeper levels to see what self condemnation and wallowing in shame really says. It negates Romans 5:20 – Where sin abounds, grace even more abounds. Condemnation says, no, that's not true. Condemnation says that my capacity for sin exceeds God's capacity for grace. So we self declare that truth is how I view this reality, not how God views this reality. Acts 10:9-16 tells the story of Peter's vision about all of the animals in the sheet from the sky. By the law that Peter had operated in many of these animals were considered unclean. The command of the Lord was arise Peter; kill and eat. The response of Peter was no way Lord for I've never eaten anything unholy or unclean. Then the voice of the Lord said to Peter what God has cleaned, no longer call unclean. In context, that is to point out to Peter that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is also for the Gentiles and he'll draw on that vision years later when the incident of the house of Cornelius comes into full play. When Paul comes to visit, Peter recalls the vision and then acknowledges the truth of what Paul is saying at the Jerusalem council that this Gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

But there's a spiritual truth applicable to our subject of condemnation. Self condemnation negates the command of God not to call unclean what He has called clean. As Christians, we are clean by virtue of the blood of Jesus. Self condemnation says no, that's not true; the truth is I am still unclean. The weight of my sin I self declare to outweigh the value of the blood of Jesus Christ shed on that cross for my sin. I'm a better judge of my continued guilt before a Holy God than the Word of God is. Romans 8:1 says there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Self condemnation negates that Scripture and overrules that Scripture. Condemnation is just one more way of keeping the focus on self rather than on Jesus Christ. It attaches more value to continued self worship than it does to Jesus Christ. It continues to judge God as being a lesser judge of truth than how you judge this reality. It views truth as what I think about my sin in relation to your grace rather than viewing the truth as being how God views the reality of your sin in relation to His grace. It's to remain more responsive to self than to Jesus Christ. That's why self condemnation is simply one more form of lukewarmness and of continued self worship.

Next poster. On this poster I've written a few aspects of my guilt before a Holy God. One is denial. Denial is my judging that I am simply not guilty. This is done when self is on the throne. The next is conviction. This is my knowledge of my guilt. Recall that these two represent the first two stages of repentance. I did it and it was wrong. That's conviction. Next is shame. Shame is my emotion of my guilt before my Holy God. That is an appropriate emotion. But it is to be a transient phase rather than a lifestyle; because we are to take our guilt and our shame to the throne of grace where it is washed away by the transcendent grace of God revealed through the blood of His Son. Self condemnation says my judging of my guilt is better and preferable than taking it to the throne of grace. This continues self worship because it continues to position self as the judge of your continued guilt; and thus, clinging to your continued shame. My guilt in an eternal sense is one of these last two. Rejecting Christ means to hang onto your guilt forever for all eternity. This represents the lost.

The last, number six, is to accept Jesus Christ as having paid for your sins. This makes the statement which is how God views reality that when you do so, you are NOT GUILTY. And I

wrote that NOT GUILTY in capital letters; because even Christians who are spiritually alive as a result of the new birth can choose to function in spiritual death by remaining in self condemnation and continuing to wallow in shame as a lifestyle. But to continue to do that is to continue to compartmentalize your life and declare that this area of your life, you will judge rather than God being judge; and to continue to compromise because you've continued through the first few steps of repentance but refused to complete the process of repentance all of which allows you to continue in self worship and all of which are expressions of lukewarmness; because in these areas where you choose which compartment God does not belong in and you choose which compartment God is not to be fully surrendered to and you choose whether condemnation or your release from condemnation represent how God views reality are all forms of self worship. And in the Christian, thus, their expressions are forms of lukewarmness because you are behaving as if in these areas God does not exist or how He views reality simply is not true because it is overridden by how you view this reality. And this is your kingdom and you're not going to give it up. You'll come this far but you'll come no further. And you'll cling to self condemnation and shame because based on how you view reality, the grace of God cannot possibly exceed your sin and thus your shame, which is nothing more than self worship which is nothing more than a camouflage suit of lukewarmness toward God as you continue in your rebellion but passive aggressively so rather than overtly so. And that's why God hates lukewarmness in these areas.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.