

Lukewarmness – Part 3

Welcome to Lukewarmness, Part 3 of 3. I'm keeping this series relatively short so as not to bludgeon you all too much. September 3, 2008. We began lukewarmness by looking first of all at three subsections called compartmentalization, compromise, and condemnation. Last time in Part 2, we covered eight more—namely living by feelings, substitution, playing solitaire, excusism, judgmentalism, ignorance, scriptural filters, and laziness. The whole point of this (for those who have not been here for the first two parts) is to contrast the sour sixteen of the mechanisms of lukewarmness with the sweet sixteen of God that we did in the series just before this one. The point is, if we're not growing into the Sweet Sixteen, it's probably because we are wearing the camouflage suits of lukewarmness. And these sixteen things represent sixteen camouflage suits.

So today we'll cover the last five—namely unbelief, self reliance, response determined, prostitution of time, and cross—what cross? With unbelief, I'll not dwell on this one too long because we covered this in detail back in the Kingdom of God series in the seven part section related to faith. Unbelief or weak faith in God is really the flip side of strong faith in un-God. You remember that God gives us choice and if one choice is God, every other choice is un-God or ungodly. So if we're not walking by faith in God, then we are walking by faith in un-God. Faith in God means a living and daring confidence in God. Recall when you take polls of Americans, like 80-90% believe in God. But belief in God as a big theologic abstraction is not what the Bible is talking about when it describes faith in God. Faith in God means taking God at His Word. It doesn't just mean believing in God; it means believing God. And we believe God by taking His Word as truth. When we do not have that kind of living and daring confidence in God it's usually because we do have confidence in something else and that something else is usually ourselves. Recall that all men walk by faith at every moment of their lives. Every thought, word, and deed that men have can be traced back to a root of faith in something. There's no such thing as non-belief meaning not walking by faith. When we have unbelief in one thing, it is simply because we have belief in something else. There is no vacuum. Weak faith in God means that we are relatively unresponsive to what God has told us about Himself in His Word. For us as Christians that means that at that moment that we are placing our faith in something other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When we are saved by Jesus Christ and Him crucified, yet function by faith, moment by moment in something other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified, then our unbelief is a mechanism of lukewarmness.

The next is self reliance. Self reliance misunderstands our role in the spiritual realm. I use Ohm's Law from the electrical circuitry to make this simple point. Ohm's Law can be written $E \text{ over } R \text{ equals } I$. E is the voltage, the electromotive force. That's the force that pushes current along through an electrical circuit. R is the resistance to the flow of that current. I is the current that flows. When we're functioning in the flesh with self on the throne, it's because we're tending to regard ourselves as the E—namely the voltage or the force that pushes current along. We tend to regard other people or circumstances as the resistance that prevents the flow of current. We view our voltage (that is our push) as more than adequate if the resistance were only less. The truth is that God is the E and we are the R. For the power of God to maximally make current flow, we need to reduce our R towards zero. That's what Luke 9:23 means when it says to deny self. When you deny self, what you're doing is diminishing your R to the flow of current. It's to

have the attitude of John the Baptist in John 3:30 – I must decrease that He may increase. We're called to be earthen vessels. In the flesh, even when trying to do the things of God, we interpret that to mean that we devote ourselves to becoming big and strong earthen vessels. In fact, it means that we're to empty ourselves of ourselves. The Holy Spirit then fills the vacuum (the part that we have vacated by removing self) with illumination, gifts, fruit, and power. Whatever we are doing, however good we may regard it and however much we fancy that we are doing it for God, it becomes resistance to God if we're doing it in our own self reliant strength to do great things for God. It represents self that is occupying space and not an empty earthen vessel that is filled by God Himself. Our example as always is Jesus. Philippians 2:6-7 states (describing Jesus) – that He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself. This resistance that we view as strength is another mechanism of lukewarmness toward God.

The next is response determination. What I mean by this is that we tend to judge ourselves by our initial action in any set of circumstances. Then we judge others by their response to our initial action. That allows us to avoid the deeper truth about ourselves. The deeper truth is that we can more accurately be judged by our response to their response. When we do not get the response from others that we think that our initial action deserved, then we tend to harden our hearts. That becomes our rationale as we seek to justify our cold love toward others. God's love, however, is not response determined. Deuteronomy 7:7 tells us that the Lord simply set His love upon the children of Israel independent of what they were. Just like that we are to simply set our love upon others, unconditionally and independent of their response. In John 13:35 Jesus tells us that by this they will know Me that you love one another. All of us, if we are response determined, can find some reason to withdraw our love from others. But when we do that the world will not know Jesus Christ; because the whole message of grace of Jesus Christ is shown to others when we continue to lavish love upon others independent of their contrary response to our love; because that's what God did through Jesus. He also taught us in Matthew 10:42 that whatever we do to another, we do to Him. So when we withdraw our love from others based on their response, we are simultaneously withdrawing our love from God; because the love of God does not withdraw itself based on the response of others. Cold love that is response determined toward others is also cold love toward God. Being response determined is to build our wall ever higher toward man; and thus, ever higher toward God. Having our love determined by the response of others to our love is another mechanism of lukewarmness toward God. So I'll give the summary statement out of this section. We are not best to judge ourselves and our love by our initial action. More accurately we can judge how true our love is by our response when others reject that message. So one mechanism of lukewarmness is for the Christian to be response determined.

Next poster. The next member of lukewarmness is the prostitution of time. All of us know that time can be thought of in three components—namely past, present, and future. The key point is this. We can worship God only in the precious present—that is to say in the here and the now. We cannot worship God in the past for it is past. We cannot worship God in the future for it has not yet come. The only moment that we can lavish worship upon our God is right here and right now in the precious present. Isaiah 43:18-19 basically tells us to ponder not the past. Matthew 6:34 tells us to take no thought for the morrow. Luke 12:7 tells us to fear not the future.

Next poster. This poster presents the precious present. We have a tendency to take our precious present and carve it up into components. There is such a thing as a valid contemplation of the past. This is when we encourage ourselves in the Lord in the precious present by recalling how God has delivered us in the past. As David said in I Samuel 17:37 – the Lord Who delivered me from the paw of the bear and the lion will deliver me from this Philistine (speaking of Goliath). So David was drawing from his deliverance in the past to strengthen his faith to embrace the thing of God which was to go out and face Goliath with courage in the precious present. However, any part of our precious present that is consumed by a thought life dwelling in the past on such items as unforgiveness or self condemnation is simply a refusal to worship God in the here and the now. Because when you in your thought life are caught up in thoughts of unforgiveness towards someone else or condemnation of yourself from something you've done in the past, it simply means you are refusing to come into the precious present and worship your God. This is at least part of what Jesus meant when He said go and be reconciled to your brother and then come back to the altar; because as long as your thought life is hung up on these issues from the past about yourself and others, you cannot come to Me with a pure heart in the precious present oriented toward worship.

A similar point can be made about any part of our precious present that is consumed by dwelling in the future. There is a valid contemplation in our thought life of the future. That's called our vision. Proverbs 29:18 (in the KJV) tells us that without a vision the people perish. Our vision, simply stated, is made up of the accumulated promises of God. We then live moment by moment in faith, in the precious present, in the full light of the promises of God about our future which is our vision. Those are valid behaviors. But, there is a downside to future considerations in the thought life of the Christian. This is when we consume part of our precious present by dwelling in the future on such things as contemplation of revenge or fear of future events. When we do that it is simply a refusal to worship God in the here and the now. So if my thought life, for instance, is driven in part by fear of what Islamic terrorists may do if they get nuclear weapons, then in that moment I'm simply refusing to engage in worship to God in the precious present. Because the outcome of my future is not dependent on Islam, is not dependent on terrorists, is not dependent on the presence of nuclear weapons in their hands. The outcome of my future is determined by the vision which is the accumulated promises of God. That is the valid contemplation of future events.

But even if our thought life is in the precious present, there's still a progression to be mindful of. The progression can be, simply stated, from the unholy to the good, to the better, and to the best; the best being the maximal worship offered to God in that particular moment. This is not a novel concept. Even unbelievers in the God of the Bible know this truth. This knowledge leads to such well known secular quotes as the following: the good is the enemy of the best. So even in worldly activities, you may engage in something that you define as good; but when you settle for good without contemplation of what could be better, you're going to be stuck in good and not aim for the best. That same principle is true for the Christian in our worship in the precious present. Another secular quote tells us do not ever mistake activity for productivity. I think our churches are truly gifted at filling the calendar and schedule with activities. I'm not sure that we're so good at discerning how much of that results in productivity of fanning the flame and kindling the passion that is within us to become one with Jesus Christ. You'd think that as children of light we would be at least as skilled as the children of darkness are in applying these

principles about not mistaking activity for productivity and knowing that the good is the enemy of the best. So our prostitution of time by carving up the precious present by considerations of the past and carving it up with considerations about the future and settling in the precious present for something less than the best offered in true worship and passion to be one with God at that very moment is a camouflage suit and an expression of lukewarmness toward God.

The next one is cross—what cross? Now this is related to an anecdote related to my twin daughters. By their request when they were young we had gotten them two puppies. They, of course, were to be totally responsible for the care of the puppies. Needless to say, as my twins grew up and the dogs grew up, their attention to the dogs got less and less as they were engaged more and more in things of the world. Eventually one evening around the dinner table, I mentioned something to them related to their dereliction about the care of the dogs. I can't mimic this to make it have its true impact; but they gave each other a blank look and then they simultaneously looked back at me with the same blank look as if to say dogs? What dogs? Do we have dogs? Humorously speaking, we tend to do that when Scripture tells us in Mark 8:34 to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. We tend to give the same blank look and say cross? What cross? Do we have a cross?

Next poster. Our cross tends to be the one that we most tenaciously desire to reject. We do state that we want to bring God glory. We do state that we want to overcome Satan. Revelation 12:11 tells us how – They overcame the evil one by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and they did not love their own lives even unto death. Now here's how this verse plays out most of the time in our Christian lives. We tend to want all of the blood; for that's what pays for all of our sin and assures Heaven. We want some of the Word and we want to pick what part as we apply our Scriptural filters to that part of the Bible which pleases us the most. We want none of our own cross for that involves tribulation, pain, suffering, and death to self even to the point of death period. Rejection of our cross is a major mechanism of lukewarmness toward God. Rejection of our cross is to place greater value on our comfort and our survival than we place on bearing witness of Jesus and giving glory to Jesus regardless of the pain involved in the process. God did not promise comfort as we tend to think of comfort. He promised us a Comforter. When we are comfortable, we have no need of a comforter. We self define comfort to mean an unbothered self. God views comfort as that which the Comforter brings in the midst of ourselves being bothered until self dies. Failure to take up our cross is a mechanism of lukewarmness toward God.

The purpose of this series on Lukewarmness is not condemnation. Remember, condemnation is an expression of compromise. Condemnation drives us from the throne of grace to live in our shame. The purpose of this series is illumination so we give up compromise, give up condemnation, and rush to the throne of grace to receive the greater revelation of the grace of God beyond that which we even knew existed. The purpose is illumination. Once illumined about our lukewarmness, the purpose is conviction. I did it and it was wrong. The purpose of conviction is confession. The purpose of confession is cleansing. The purpose of cleansing is Christlikeness. The purpose of Christlikeness is to bring God maximal glory, to bring others maximal valid testimony, and to access for ourselves maximal communion, maximal abundant life, and maximal rewards stored up in Heaven. This is a good deal. I John 1:8-9 basically says – If we say that we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we

confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So the purpose of illumination is conviction to flow to confession, to flow to cleansing, to flow to Christlikeness, to flow to giving God maximal glory, and others maximal testimony.

Recall that nothing exists in a vacuum in the spirit realm. Lukewarmness toward God has the flip side of fervent passion for self to remain on the throne. If you run back through these sixteen mechanisms of lukewarmness toward God, you'll quickly identify that the implementation of all of these camouflage suits has the commonality of leaving self on the throne unbothered. II Corinthians 10:5 tells us we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. We tend to capture an occasional thought and pat ourselves on the back for doing so and consider our lives before the Lord as being complete. Recall that we're given choice that it may be of love. We're given a will with which to express choosing. So the will is our chooser and more appropriately, can be called our worshipper; because at every moment our will is making a choice between God or un-God. Every moment is a God-given opportunity for us to set the mind on the things of God. We can worship self by refusing to set the mind on Jesus or by refusing to pay attention to the spirit realm with Jesus as the source and basis of all things. But if we do that, we will drift. That's why I commonly quote Hebrews 2:1 where it says we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. When we drift, we default to the flesh with self on the throne. So we do get to choose and every choice at every moment is a God-given opportunity to set the mind on Jesus Christ. When we do that, then we do capture every thought in obedience to Him. We do abide in Him. We do respond to the upward call of God in Him. We do sum up all things in Him. We are then transformed by the renewing of the mind. But if we have a certain degree of apathy, do not recognize that every moment is a God-given opportunity to set the mind on Jesus Christ, then we will drift to a life predominantly in the flesh and then question God for not giving us the abundant life.

Next poster. For those of you who were here in the Kingdom Progression series, you'll know that this is where it landed. This is a summary poster of everything related to our life in the Kingdom of God. You'll see it from time to time because it's such a wonderful summary poster. So don't worry if you weren't here and you don't grasp everything that's on this kind of busy poster. Once we receive illumination and conviction and confession and then deliverance—we don't obtain that deliverance by resorting to self on the throne, not to be lukewarm. Deliverance comes from setting your mind upon Jesus Christ, fixing our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith as we're told in Hebrews 12:2. When we do that we've turned to what the Bible calls the spirit. In the spirit, Jesus is our source, He is our basis, He is the object of our gaze. The means by which we have every spiritual blessing to even know these things is obtained for us through the cross of Jesus Christ. The power in the spirit realm is via the Holy Spirit and it is all by grace. If we try to take our will and turn into the flesh with self on the throne to do the things of God, including not being lukewarm, we have converted it into a system of law where the source is works, the means is our performance, and the power is self. If we function in law, we will result in defeat, failure, and death. That will mean death to the abundant life for us, death to the glorification due to God, death to valid testimony to others, and so on. But once we receive this illumination and this conviction, turn and look into the spirit realm, regarding Jesus and Him crucified as everything that we think about, everything that we know, everything that we teach, and everything that we boast about, we're then bearing witness of Jesus

and bringing glory to Jesus, not bearing witness of our self's ability to perform works. When we are giving glory to Jesus and bearing witness of Jesus, then the power of the Holy Spirit is released; because those are the missions of the Holy Spirit. He didn't come to help us be empowered to perform works. He came to bear witness of Jesus and bring glory to Jesus. So when we're involved in the work of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is then loosed to provide the power for us to do this. But it requires a set of the mind, a turning of the head, a fixing of the gaze into the spirit realm where everything is summed up in Jesus. That leads to victory, deliverance, and life. Deliverance from self; life meaning the abundant life, and victory meaning we then have overcome every single thing that tries to deter us from living life that way as Christians. When we do that, we follow Paul as Paul followed Jesus as he told us in I Corinthians 11:1. The Sweet Sixteen that we reviewed in the prior series were the fragrance of Christ unto God as described in II Corinthians 2:15. These sixteen camouflage suits of lukewarmness are God's sour sixteen; because they are the sour savor of self unto God instead of the sweet savor of Christ unto God.

Next poster. So may we use this series to fulfill its intended purpose to address our lukewarmness by undressing our lukewarmness; to become a sweet savor of Christ unto God. This poster you've seen before. Man tends to think that he's free; but man is not free and here's why. I get to choose. The answer is yes. Why do I get to choose? That the relationship may be of love, and not of mechanical robotic slavery. So God always leaves me with a role to play in how I address these issues and how I make choices. But I do not get to not choose; because when I don't choose Jesus, I'm choosing the flesh. I don't get to choose what the choices are. For us as Christians, the choices are ordained by God—flesh or spirit. I don't get to choose the consequences; because God already has. The one ends in a system of law resulting in defeat, failure, and death; and the other is the system of grace resulting in victory, deliverance, and life. And I don't get to choose both; because I'm living in either one or the other every moment of my Christian life.

Do not forget how these last three series fit together. The Kingdom Progression series taught us how to function in the Kingdom Life stage in the system of grace as opposed to the system of law. When we function in the system of grace as described in the Kingdom Life series, we will grow in love, we will grow in the fruit of the Spirit, and we will grow in the sixteen qualities covered in the series on God's Sweet Sixteen. When we do not function according to the Kingdom Life stage, we will not grow in love. We will not grow in the fruit of the Spirit. We will not grow in God's Sweet Sixteen. The reason most likely is that we are lukewarm and we are wearing one of these camouflage suits that we use to conceal our lukewarmness. That was covered in this series on Lukewarmness. So hopefully we've met our goal of addressing lukewarmness by undressing lukewarmness so that we can see it, receive the conviction, give the confession, and be cleansed of all unrighteousness so as to fulfill our purposes for being on planet Earth as Christians. These include giving God maximal glory, giving God maximal pleasure, giving others maximal valid testimony of our Savior, accessing the maximal abundant life for ourselves, and laying up maximal rewards in Heaven.

We get to choose. We can choose whether to be lukewarm in our approach to our God, or we can choose where to fix our eyes upon Jesus regarding Him as the source of everything, the basis of everything, the object of our affection, the object of our gaze, and giving us every spiritual

blessing purchased by His cross; and with the power of the Holy Spirit to allow us to fulfill our mission of bearing witness of Jesus and bringing glory to Jesus. We get to choose; but we don't get to choose what the choices are. We don't get to choose both. We don't get to not choose. And we don't get to choose the consequences of the choices. So hopefully we have addressed lukewarmness by undressing lukewarmness.

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