

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com
E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE Conflagrant or Complacent?

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Revelation 3:14-20

SYNOPSIS The Lord loathes lukewarmness and wants hearts ablaze for him.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ **Conflagrant or Complacent?**

We've been talking about the fire of God the last few weeks. Elijah showed us how to catch fire when he challenged the prophets of Baal. Then we saw how Jesus wants to be a consuming fire in us, refining us into his image. We also talked about fanning the flame by using our gifts to bless others. And last week was about keeping the fire burning with daily disciplines, self-sacrifice and giving our best to the Lord. Today, we hear the heart of the Lord that wants us conflagrant rather than complacent.

Conflagrant = blazing; burning; on fire.

Revelation 3:14-20

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that **you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!** 16 So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 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. 18 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. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 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.

LAODICEA - a great and wealthy center of industry, famous specially for the fine black wool of its sheep and for the Phrygian powder for the eyes, which was manufactured there. In the vicinity was the temple of Men Karou and a renowned school of medicine. In the year 60 AD, the city was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake, but its citizens were so wealthy that they rejected the offered aid of Rome, and quickly rebuilt it at their own expense.

So we have a city that is prosperous and seems to need nothing, but the Lord sees the real heart of the people and notices that their spiritual fire is nearly burned out.

☞ **Indifference smothers the fire**

"I know your deeds." "Neither hot, nor cold. Lukewarm." In other words, not on fire.

Jesus is watching us as a church, and he's watching each one as an individual. What he sees in us is much more important than what we see in ourselves. What does he see? I hope it's not



indifference. Indifference = lack of interest, concern, or sympathy; lack of enthusiasm; an apathetic attitude. It's lukewarm.

Spurgeon described the **lukewarm** church:

- They are content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigor and zeal are considered to be vulgar.
- They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars is to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion.
- Everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not.
- Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the skeptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all around.
- The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means.

☞ **Love will find a way--indifference will find an excuse.**

The core problem is not that we are too passionate about bad things, but that we are not passionate enough about good things.

It's not that we throw water on the fire in our souls; it's that we leave it unattended too long because we're distracted with other things – personal pursuits and the pleasures of this world. God isn't against us enjoying life unless it's at the expense of our fire for him.

☞ What's the message? **If we are simply going through the motions**, if our heart is not in it, if we are not living and working for Christ everyday of our lives, **we are of no benefit to Him!**

Laodicea, as rich as it was, had a serious water problem. The city's water was "piped in" from six miles out. It came to them along an aqueduct. By the time it arrived it was lukewarm. The city of Hierapolis, just seven miles north of Laodicea, was famous for its hot springs. Colosse, less than ten miles away, was known for its cool water. What was Jesus saying to them in His desire that they be cold or hot? He's saying their spiritual condition is of no benefit. He would rather they be spiritually beneficial like a refreshing drink of cold water or like the soothing warmth of the hot springs!



“Hot water heals, cold water refreshes, but lukewarm water is useless for either purpose.” It was as if Jesus said, “If you were hot or cold I could do something with you. But because you are neither, I will do nothing.”

Actually, God said he was about to spit them out of his mouth (vomit). To keep the fire burning, we cannot afford to be indifferent, complacent, and apathetic.

☞ **Incorrect self-image smothers the fire**

The Laodicean’s self-image was wrong. They thought they were wealthy, self-sufficient, and didn’t need a thing. There were some serious contrasts in what they thought and what Jesus saw. They weren’t what they thought they were. While their city was wealthy, the believers there were actually spiritually bankrupt.

Here’s what Jesus saw in them:

Wretched & Pitiful

Poor – there was plenty of money here, but they were spiritually destitute.

Blind – known for eye salve, yet it wouldn’t cure their spiritual blindness.

Naked – known for the world’s finest wool, but it couldn’t clothe their spiritual nudity.

☞ **You might think you’re good with God, but what would Jesus say?**

An airplane pilot is not to trust his own instincts in a storm, but to trust the instrument panel. Instincts can be wrong if he experiences vertigo. Just as a pilot can get so jostled around that he loses his sense of up and down, we can get so jostled around by the philosophy of this world that we lose our sense of right and wrong. We have an instrument panel that is more reliable than our own feelings. What does God’s instrument panel say about you?

Most of the evil in this world does not come from blatantly evil people. It comes from people who consider themselves good.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-

☞ **5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.**



The change in the Laodiceans had to begin with understanding their spiritual poverty. We must seek these things from Jesus instead of relying on them ourselves. And, don't presume this warning is only for somebody else.

A preacher once said that a good many of his congregation would be lost because they were too generous. He saw that the people looked rather surprised so he said, "Perhaps you think I have made a mistake, and that I ought to have said you will be lost because you are not generous enough. That is not so; I meant just what I said. You give away too many sermons. You hear them, as it were, for other people." There are a good many who listen for those behind them; they say the message is very good for neighbor so-and-so; and they pass it over their shoulders, till it gets clear out of the door.

To keep the fire burning, we need an accurate self-image from God, not from self.

☞ Investing in God's kingdom builds the fire

After his verdict, Jesus offers them a solution: Buy from me gold, white clothes, and salve.

☞ **From me** = from God; we need to **connect with God!** Sometimes we get so caught up in our own pursuits that God goes to the wayside. We need to reconnect with him. He's got the fire.

☞ **Buy gold, to be rich** = we need strong **conviction**. 1 Peter 1:7 compares faith to gold. We need to invest in our faith, having strong convictions about who God really is and what Jesus has done for us on the cross. We need such strong faith that it affects every area of our lives, making us faithful followers of Christ. Instead of being passive and indifferent, God wants our passion and investment.

☞ **Buy white clothes to cover nakedness** = **Christlikeness**. Revelation 3:4 talks about unsoiled believers walking in white clothes. The Lord wants us to invest in righteous living, putting him first in all things. When we continue to dabble in things of this world, rather than focus on our relationship with him, we dirty ourselves and lose our Christlikeness.

☞ **Buy salve, to see** = **consider eternity**. 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." We need a stronger eternal perspective. There is so much more than life in this world. There is eternity ahead of us, and what we do now has an impact on that future. We need to invest in eternal things rather than just the temporary.



☞ **Jesus is inviting us to a closer walk. Here I am! Standing at the door** = “I’m waiting!” (He has to knock at his own door!) He is standing outside wanting an invitation to come inside for fellowship. You must invite Christ to come in and become the center of your life. The opportunity is yours to accept or reject.

Be earnest and repent = restore your fire; think differently; turn around

Hear his voice = listen; pay attention. Can you hear him knocking?

Open the door = welcome him in. The Lord wants a seat at your table. He wants your time and your affection. Will you let him in? Will you give him a seat at the head of your table of life?

Don’t let apathy lead you astray. Do an assessment of yourself. Are you ablaze for God or is your fire being smothered? Let’s not be lukewarm and lacking. Let’s be fervent and filled with the Spirit! Let’s not be complacent. Let’s be conflagrant – on fire; ablaze for Jesus!

Song: Here for you