

Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.05.07

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Sermon recordings

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Speaker-AM: Steve Helterbrand

Title: Learn The Truth

Recording:

tinyurl.com/SteveTruth

Speaker-PM: Kraig Benney

Title: What Can I Do?

Recording:

tinyurl.com/KraigWhatCanIDo



And ye shall know the truth, and the truth
shall make you free.

— JOHN 8:32 KJV

For this is what the Lord has commanded us:
“I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation
to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 13:47

Lukewarmness, 10/31/2022 by Matthew W. Bassford

Lukewarmness among the people of God is hardly a new problem. Malachi warned against apathy explicitly, and signs of apathy are evident as far back as the Exodus. Unsurprisingly, preachers today also often warn their hearers about the dangers of indifference.

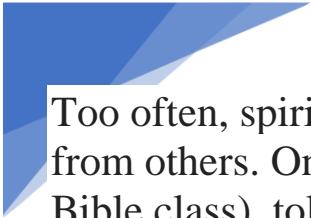
I read one such warning recently, and it led me to consider my own heart. I searched for signs of lukewarmness, and I found none. I still have plenty of spiritual problems, but a lack of emotional commitment to God is not on the list. I am blessed to be a member of a congregation with good preaching and good singing, but even if the preaching were amateurish and the singing cringeworthy, I would be determined to assemble faithfully for as long as I was physically capable of so doing.

My motivation is simple just as my life is simple. Thanks to ALS, I have no options remaining but to trust in Jesus. He is the branch that can keep me from going over the cliff. Without Him, I am utterly ruined and hopeless.

These are familiar sentiments. We sing many hymns about our need for Christ and our helplessness without Him. The problem is that while we give intellectual assent to these concepts, we don't really get them. I know I didn't before my diagnosis. It's the difference between the abstract acknowledgment that seatbelts save lives and the realization that your seatbelt just kept you from being launched into the path of an oncoming eighteen-wheeler.

Such abstraction provides fertile soil for the growth of indifference. The less we gut-get our absolute need for Jesus, the more likely we are to be apathetic in our worship and service.

I was pretty impressed with myself for figuring this out until I realized that the apostle John had gotten there 2000 years before I did. In Revelation 3:18, he rebukes the Laodiceans, "For you say, 'I'm rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing,' and you don't realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked." Their lukewarmness started with their conviction of self-sufficiency.



Too often, spiritual apathy leads us to expect less of ourselves and demand more from others. On the one hand, it excuses our sporadic attendance (especially at Bible class), tolerance of sin, and halfhearted worship and service. On the other, it leads us to find fault in the contributions of others.


We would attend more if only the preaching were more interesting. We would have had an easier time worshiping if only the song leader chose our favorites. We would associate more with Christians instead of the worldly friends who are dragging us off to destruction if only the Christians made a special effort to include us. All this is to say nothing of how much better things would be if only the elders listened to us!

Thoughts like these are not an excuse for complaining or bad behavior. Instead, they are an urgent call to examine our own hearts. We do not fuss over details when we are rock-solid convinced that Christ is all that stands between us and eternal damnation. When we've had a massive heart attack and are on the way to the Emergency Room in an ambulance, we do not grumble that the paramedic has bad breath!

Instead, we start griping when we believe that we are in control and the other is dependent on us. We have no problem sending back an overcooked steak at a restaurant because we know the manager is afraid of losing our business, so he will accommodate us. He needs us more than we need him.

So too with a lukewarm, exacting attitude toward the things of God. The assembly is not a product, and Christians are not consumers. It is not the job of the elders, the worship leaders, or our brethren to cater to our every whim, to make sure that everything is just so before we deign to become emotionally involved. We are wretched supplicants before the throne of the great King, and we need to act like it.

If we find Christianity tiresome, we have no one to blame but ourselves. The issue is not that some Christians need God more than others; it is that some acknowledge that need more than others. The cure for the disease is not everybody else getting their act together; it is time spent in meditation and prayer about our desperate need for Christ and how much He has done for us. When we recognize the magnitude of our debt to Him, the imperfection of others can neither stifle our devotion nor prevent us from expressing it.



Practicing Faith, 5/4/2023 By Sam Bunyard

Jazz icon Louis Armstrong said, “If I don’t practice for a day, I know it. If I don’t practice for two days, the critics know it. If I don’t practice for three days, the public knows it.” Success at anything takes diligent, habitual practice!

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (He 11:6). The faith of a Christian is never stagnant or regressive. “We are not of those who draw back to perdition but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (He 10:39). Faith isn’t something we just have – it is something we must practice!

Practiced faith is growing faith. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins” (II Pe 1:5-9). If we are not practicing our faith to grow, our ‘spiritual muscles’ will atrophy!

“Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (I Ti 4:8).

The atrophy of physical muscles can have serious health consequences; but how much more serious is the atrophy of our spirit – both for this life and the next!

We must get in the habit of practicing our faith – “praying without ceasing” (II Th 5:17), “searching the Scriptures daily” (Ac 17:11), “take up our cross daily” (Lk 9:23), “discipline your body” (I Co 9:27), “sing psalms” (Js. 5:13), “bringing every thought into captivity” (II Co 10:5), and “examining ourselves” (II Cor 13:5). Let’s practice faith!