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A SERMON

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SERMON XV.

THE DANGER OF LUKEWARMNESS IN RELIGION.

REV. iii. 15, 16.—*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

THE soul of man is endowed with such active powers that it cannot be idle; and, if we look round the world, we see it all alive and busy in some pursuit or other. What vigorous action, what labour and toil, what hurry, noise, and commotion about the necessaries of life, about riches and honours! Here men are in earnest: here there is no dissimulation, no indifferency about the event. They sincerely desire and eagerly strive for these transient delights, or vain embellishments of a mortal life.

And may we infer farther, that creatures, thus formed for action, and thus laborious and unwearied in these inferior pursuits, are proportionably vigorous and in earnest in matters of infinitely greater importance? May we conclude that they proportion their labour and activity to the nature of things, and that they are most in earnest where they are most concerned? A stranger to our world, that could conclude nothing concerning the conduct of mankind but from the generous presumptions of his own charitable heart, might persuade himself that this is the case. But one that has been but a little while conversant with them, and taken the least notice of their temper and practice with regard to that most interesting thing, Religion, must know it is quite otherwise. For look round you, and what do you see? Here and there indeed you may see a few unfashionable creatures, who act as if they looked upon religion to be their most interesting concern; and who seem determined, let others do as they will, to make sure of salvation, whatever becomes of them in other respects; but as to the generality, they are very indifferent about it. They will not indeed renounce all religion entirely; they will make some little profession of the religion that happens to be most modish and reputable in their country, and they will conform to some of its institutions; but it is a matter of indifferency with

them, and they are but little concerned about it; or in the language of my text, they are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot.

This threatening, "I will spew thee out of my mouth," has been long ago executed with a dreadful severity upon the Laodicean church; and it is now succeeded by a mongrel race of Pagans and Mahometans; and the name of Christ is not heard among them. But, though this church has been demolished for so many hundreds of years, that lukewarmness of spirit in religion which brought this judgment upon them, still lives, and possesses the Christians of our age; it may therefore be expedient for us to consider Christ's friendly warning to them, that we may escape their doom.

The epistles to the seven churches in Asia are introduced with this solemn and striking preface, "I know thy works:" that is to say, your character is drawn by one that thoroughly knows you; one who inspects all your conduct, and takes notice of you when you take no notice of yourselves; one that cannot be imposed upon by an empty profession and artifice, but searches the heart and the reins. Oh that this truth were deeply impressed upon our hearts, for surely we could not trifle and offend while sensible that we are under the eye of our Judge!

I know thy works, says he to the Laodicean church, that thou art neither cold nor hot. This church was in a very bad condition, and Christ reproves her with the gravest severity;* and yet we do not find her charged with the practice or toleration of any gross immoralities, as some of the other churches were. She is not censured for indulging fornication among her members, or communicating with idolaters in eating things sacrificed to idols, like some of the rest. She was free from the infection of the Nicolaitans, which had spread among them. What then is her charge? It is a subtle, latent wickedness, that has no shocking appearance, that makes no gross blemish in the outward character of a professor in the view of others, and may escape his own notice; it is, Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot: as if our Lord had said, Thou dost not entirely renounce and openly disregard the Christian religion, and thou dost not make it a serious business, and mind it as thy grand concern. Thou hast a form of godliness, but deniest the power. All thy religion is a dull languid thing, a mere indifferency; thine heart is not in it; it is not animated with the fervour of thy spirit. Thou halt neither the coldness of the profligate sinner, nor the sacred fire and life of the true Christian; but thou keepest a sort of medium between them. In some things thou resemblest the one, in other things the other; as lukewarmness partakes of the nature both of heat and cold.

Now such a lukewarmness is an eternal solecism in religion; it is the most absurd and inconsistent thing imaginable: more so than avowed impiety, or a professed rejection of all religion: therefore, says Christ, I would thou wert cold or hot" i.e., "You might be anything more consistently than what you are. If you looked upon religion as a cheat, and openly rejected the profession of it, it would not be strange that you should be careless about it, and disregard it in practice. But to own it true, and make a profession of it, and yet be lukewarm and indifferent about it, this is the most absurd conduct that can be conceived; for, if it be true, it is certainly the most important and interesting truth in all the world, and requires the utmost exertion of all your powers."

When Christ expresses his abhorrence of lukewarmness in the form of a wish, I would thou wert cold or hot, we are not to suppose his meaning to be, that coldness or fervour in religion is equally acceptable, or that coldness is at

all acceptable to him; for reason and revelation concur to assure us, that the open rejection and avowed contempt of religion is an aggravated wickedness, as well as a hypocritical profession. But our Lord's design is to express, in the strongest manner possible, how odious and abominable their lukewarmness was to him; as if he should say, "Your state is so bad, that you cannot change for the worse; I would rather you were any thing than what you are." You are ready to observe, that the lukewarm professor is in reality wicked and corrupt at heart, a slave to sin, and an enemy to God, as well as the avowed sinner; and therefore they are both hateful in the sight of God, and both in a state of condemnation. But there are some aggravations peculiar to the lukewarm professor that render him peculiarly odious; as, 1. He adds the sin of a hypocritical profession to his other sins. The wickedness of real irreligion, and the wickedness of falsely pretending to be religious, meet and centre in him at once. 2. To all this he adds the guilt of presumption, pride, and self-flattery, imagining he is in a safe state and in favour with God; whereas he that makes no pretensions to religion, has no such umbrage for this conceit and delusion. Thus the miserable Laodiceans "thought themselves rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing." 3. Hence it follows, that the lukewarm professor is in the most dangerous condition, as he is not liable to conviction, nor so likely to be brought to repentance. Thus publicans and harlots received the gospel more readily than the self-righteous Pharisees. 4. The honour of God and religion is more injured by the negligent, unconscientious behaviour of these Laodiceans, than by the vices of those who make no pretensions to religion; with whom therefore its honour has no connection. On these accounts you see lukewarmness is more aggravatedly sinful and dangerous than entire coldness about religion.

So then, says Christ, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth;" this is their doom; as if he should say, "As lukewarm water is more disagreeable to the stomach than either cold or hot, so you, of all others, are the most abominable to me. I am quite sick of such professors, and I will cast them out of my church, and reject them for ever."

My present design is to expose the peculiar absurdity and wickedness of lukewarmness or indifferency in religion; a disease that has spread its deadly contagion far and wide among us, and calls for a speedy cure. And let me previously observe to you, that if I do not offer you sufficient arguments to convince your own reason of the absurdity and wickedness of such a temper, then you may still indulge it; but that if my arguments are sufficient, then shake off your sloth, and be fervent in spirit; and if you neglect your duty, be it at your peril.

In illustrating this point I shall proceed upon this plain principle, That religion is, of all things, the most important in itself, and the most interesting to us." This we cannot deny, without openly pronouncing it an imposture. If there be a God, as religion teaches us, he is the most glorious, the most venerable, and the most lovely Being; and nothing can be so important to us as his favour, and nothing so terrible as his displeasure. If he be our Maker, our Benefactor, our Lawgiver and Judge, it must be our greatest concern to serve him with all our might. If Jesus Christ be such a Saviour as our religion represents, and we profess to believe, he demands our warmest love and most lively service. If eternity, if heaven and hell, and the final judgment, are realities, they are certainly the most august, the most awful, important, and interesting

realities: and, in comparison of them, the most weighty concerns of the present life are but trifles, dreams, and shadows. If prayer and other religious exercises are our duty, certainly they require all the vigour of our souls; and nothing can be more absurd or incongruous than to perform them in a languid, spiritless manner, as if we knew not what we were about. If there be any life within us, these are proper objects to call it forth: if our souls are endowed with active powers, here are objects that demand their utmost exertion. Here we can never be so much in earnest as the case requires. Trifle about anything, but oh do not trifle here! Be careless and indifferent about crowns and kingdoms, about health, life, and all the world, but oh be not careless and indifferent about such immense concerns as these!

But to be more particular: let us take a view of a lukewarm temper in various attitudes, or with respect to several objects, particularly towards God—towards Jesus Christ—a future state of happiness or misery and in the duties of religion; and in each of these views we cannot but be shocked at so monstrous a temper, especially if we consider our difficulties and dangers in a religious life, and the eagerness and activity of mankind in inferior pursuits.

1. Consider who and what God is. He is the original uncreated beauty, the sum total of all natural and moral perfections, the origin of all the excellencies that are scattered through this glorious universe; he is the supreme good, and the only proper portion for our immortal spirits. He also sustains the most majestic and endearing relations to us—our Father, our Preserver and Benefactor, our Lawgiver and our Judge. And is such a Being to be put off with heartless, lukewarm services? What can be more absurd or impious than to dishonour supreme excellency and beauty with a languid love and esteem; to trifle in the presence of the most venerable Majesty; to treat the best of Beings with indifference; to be careless about our duty to such a Father; to return such a Benefactor only insipid complimentary expressions of gratitude; to be dull and spiritless in obedience to such a lawgiver; and to be indifferent about the favour or displeasure of such a Judge! I appeal to heaven and earth, if this be not the most shocking conduct imaginable. Does not your reason pronounce it horrid and most daringly wicked? And yet thus is the great and blessed God treated by the generality of mankind. It is most astonishing that he should bear with such treatment so long, and that mankind themselves are not shocked at it: but such the case really is. And are there not some lukewarm Laodiceans in this assembly? Jesus knows your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; and it is fit you should also know them. May you not be convinced upon a little inquiry that your hearts are habitually indifferent towards God? You may indeed entertain a speculative esteem or a good opinion of him, but are your souls alive towards him? Do they burn with his love? and are you fervent in spirit when you are serving him? Some of you, I hope, amid all your infirmities, can give comfortable answers to these inquiries. But alas! how few! But yet as to such of you as are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, you are the most abominable creatures upon earth to a holy God. Be zealous, be warm, therefore, and repent. (ver. 19.)

2. Is lukewarmness a proper temper towards Jesus Christ? Is this a suitable return for that love which brought him down from his native paradise into our wretched world? That love which kept his mind for thirty-three painful and tedious years intent upon this one object, the salvation of sinners? That love which rendered him cheerfully patient of the shame, the curse, the tortures of

crucifixion, and all the agonies of the most painful death? That love which makes him the sinner's friend still in the courts of heaven, where he appears as our prevailing Advocate and Intercessor? Blessed Jesus! is lukewarmness a proper return to thee for all this kindness? No; methinks devils cannot treat thee worse. My fellow-mortals, my fellow-sinners, you who are the objects of all this love, can you put him off with languid devotions and faint services? Then every grateful and generous passion is extinct in your souls, and you are qualified to venture upon every form of ingratitude and baseness. Oh was Christ indifferent about your salvation? Was his love lukewarm towards you? No: your salvation was the object of his most intense application night and day through the whole course of his life, and it lay nearest his heart in the agonies of death. For this he had a baptism to be baptized with, a baptism, an immersion in tears and blood; and how am I straitened, says he, till it be accomplished! For this with desire, he desired to eat his last passover, because it introduced the last scene of his sufferings. His love! what shall I say of it? What language can describe its strength and ardour? "His love was strong as death the coals thereof were as coals of fire, which had a most vehement flame: many waters could not quench it, nor the floods drown it." Cant. viii. 6, 7. Never did a tender mother love her sucking child with a love equal to his. Never was a father more anxious to rescue an only son from the hands of a murderer, or to pluck him out of the fire, than Jesus was to save perishing sinners. Now to neglect him after all; to forget him; or to think of him with indifference, as though he were a being of but little importance, and we but little obliged to him, what is all this but the most unnatural, barbarous ingratitude, and the most shocking wickedness? Do you not expect everlasting happiness from him purchased at the expense of his blood? And can you hope for such an immense blessing from him without feeling yourselves most sensibly obliged to him? Can you hope he will do so much for you, and can you be content to do nothing for him, or to go through his service with lukewarmness and languor, as if you cared not how you hurried through it, or how little you had to do with it? Can anything be more absurd or impious than this? Methinks you may defy hell to show a worse temper. May not Christ justly wish you were either cold or hot; wish you were anything rather than thus lukewarm towards him under a profession of friendship? Alas! my brethren, if this be your habitual temper, instead of being saved by him, you may expect he will reject you with the most nauseating disgust and abhorrence. But,

3. Is lukewarmness and indifference a suitable temper with respect to a future state of happiness or misery? Is it a suitable temper with respect to a happiness far exceeding the utmost bounds of our present thoughts and wishes; a happiness equal to the largest capacities of our souls in their most improved and perfect state; a happiness beyond the grave, when all the enjoyments of this transitory life have taken an eternal flight from us, and leave us hungry and famishing for ever, if these be our only portion; a happiness that will last as long as our immortal spirits, and never fade or fly from us? Or are lukewarmness and indifference a suitable temper with respect to a misery beyond expression, beyond conception dreadful; a misery inflicted by a God of almighty power and inexorable justice upon a number of obstinate, incorrigible rebels for numberless, wilful and daring provocations, inflicted on purpose to show his wrath and make his power known; a misery proceeding from the united fury of divine indignation, of turbulent passions, of a guilty conscience,

of malicious tormenting devils; a misery (who can bear up under the horror of the thought?) that shall last as long as the eternal God shall live to inflict it; as long as sin shall continue evil to deserve it; as long as an immortal spirit shall endure to bear it; a misery that shall never be mitigated, never intermitted, never, never, never see an end? And remember, that a state of happiness or misery is not far remote from us, but near us, just before us; the next year, the next hour, or the next moment, we may enter into it; is a state for which we are now candidates, now upon trial; now our eternal all lies at stake; and oh, sirs, does an inactive, careless posture become us in such a situation? Is a state of such happiness, or such misery, is such a state just before us, a matter of indifference to us? Oh can you be lukewarm about such matters? Was ever such a prodigious stupidity seen under the canopy of heaven, or even in the regions of hell, which abound with monstrous and horrid dispositions? No; the hardest ghost below cannot make light of these things. Mortals! can you trifle about them?

Well, trifle a little longer, and your trifling will be over, for ever. You may be indifferent about the improving of your time; but time is not indifferent whether to pass by or not: it is determined to continue its rapid course, and hurry you into the ocean of eternity, though you should continue sleeping and dreaming through all the passage. Therefore awake, arise; exert yourselves before your doom be unchangeably fixed. If you have any fire within you, here let it burn; if you have any active powers, here let them be exerted; here or nowhere, and on no occasion. Be active, be in earnest where you should be; or debase or sink yourselves into stocks and stones, and escape the curse of being reasonable and active creatures. Let the criminal, condemned to die tomorrow, be indifferent about a reprieve or a pardon; let a drowning man be careless about catching at the only plank that can save him: but oh do not you be careless and indifferent about eternity, and such amazing realities as heaven and hell. If you disbelieve these things you are infidels; if you believe these things, and yet are unaffected with them, you are worse than infidels: you are a sort of shocking singularities, and prodigies in nature. Not hell itself can find a precedent of such a conduct. The devils believe, and tremble; you believe, and trifle with things whose very name strikes solemnity and awe through heaven and hell. But,

4. Let us see how this lukewarm temper agrees with the duties of religion. And as I cannot particularize them all, I shall only mention an instance or two. View a lukewarm professor in prayer; he pays to an omniscient God the compliment of a bended knee, as though he could impose upon him with such an empty pretence. When he is addressing the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, he hardly ever recollects in whose presence he is, or whom he is speaking to, but seems as if he were worshipping without an object, or pouring out empty words into the air: perhaps through the whole prayer he had not so much as one solemn, affecting thought of that God whose name he so often invoked. Here is a criminal petitioning for pardon so carelessly, that he scarcely knows what he is about. Here is a needy, famishing beggar pleading for such immense blessings as everlasting salvation, and all the joys of heaven, so lukewarmly and thoughtlessly, as if he cared not whether his requests were granted or not. Here is an obnoxious offender confessing his sins with a heart untouched with sorrow: worshipping the living God with a dead heart; making great requests, but he forgets them as soon as he rises from his knees, and is

not at all inquisitive what becomes of them, and whether they were accepted or not. And can there be a more shocking, impious, and daring conduct than this? To trifle in the royal presence would not be such an audacious affront. For a criminal to catch flies, or sport with a feather, when pleading with his judge for his pardon, would be but a faint shadow of such religious trifling. What are such prayers but solemn mockeries and disguised insults? And yet, is not this the usual method in which many of you address the great God? The words proceed no further than from your tongue: you do not pour them out from the bottom of your hearts; they have no life or spirit in them, and you hardly ever reflect upon their meaning. And when you have talked away to God in this manner, you will have it to pass for a prayer. But surely such prayers must bring down a curse upon you instead of a blessing: such sacrifices must be an abomination to the Lord: Prov. xv. 8; and it is astonishing that he has not mingled your blood with your sacrifices, and sent you from your knees to hell; from thoughtless, unmeaning prayer, to real blasphemy and torture.

The next instance I shall mention is with regard to the word of God. You own it divine, you profess it the standard of your religion, and the most excellent book in the world. Now, if this be the case, it is God that speaks to you; it is God that sends you an epistle when you are reading or hearing his word. How impious and provoking then must it be to neglect it, to let it lie by you as an antiquated, useless book, or to read it in a careless, superficial manner, and hear it with an inattentive, wandering mind? How would you take it, if, when you spoke to your servant about his own interest, he should turn away from you, and not regard you? Or if you should write a letter to your son, and he should not so much as carefully read it, or labour to understand it? And do not some of you treat the sacred oracles in this manner? You make but little use of your Bible, but to teach your children to read: or if you read or hear its contents yourselves, are you not unaffected with them? One would think you would be all attention and reverence to every word; you would drink it in, and thirst for it as new-born babes for their mother's milk, you would feel its energy, and acquire the character of that happy man to whom the God of heaven vouchsafes to look; you would tremble at his word. It reveals the only method of your salvation: it contains the only charter of all your blessings. In short, you have the nearest personal interest in it, and can you be unconcerned hearers of it? I am sure your reason and conscience must condemn such stupidity and indifferency as incongruous, and outrageously wicked.

And now let me remind you of the observation I made when entering upon this subject, that if I should not offer sufficient matter of conviction, you might go on in your lukewarmness; but if your own reason should be fully convinced that such a temper is most wicked and unreasonable, then you might indulge at your peril. What do you say now is the issue? Ye modern Laodiceans, are you not yet struck with horror at the thought of that insipid, formal, spiritless religion you have hitherto been contented with? And do you not see the necessity of following the advice of Christ to the Laodicean church, be zealous, be fervent for the future, and repent, bitterly repent of what is past? To urge this the more, I have two considerations in reserve, of no small weight.

1. Consider the difficulties and dangers in your way. Oh, sirs, if you know the difficulty of the work of your salvation, and the great danger of miscarrying in it, you could not be so indifferent about it, nor could you flatter your-

selves such languid endeavours will ever succeed. It is a labour, a striving, a race, a warfare; so it is called in the sacred writings: but would there be any propriety in these expressions, if it were a course of sloth and inactivity? Consider, you have strong lusts to be subdued, a hard heart to be broken, a variety of graces, which you are entirely destitute of, to be implanted and cherished, and that in an unnatural soil, where they will not grow without careful cultivation, and that you have many temptations to be encountered and resisted. In short, you must be made new men, quite other creatures than you now are. And oh! can this work be successfully performed while you make such faint and feeble efforts? Indeed God is the Agent, and all your best endeavours can never effect the blessed revolution without him. But his assistance is not to be expected in the neglect, or careless use of means, nor is it intended to encourage idleness, but activity and labour: and when he comes to work, he will soon inflame your hearts, and put an end to your lukewarmness. Again, your dangers are also great and numerous; you are in danger from presumption and from despondency; from coldness, from lukewarmness, and from false fires and enthusiastic heats; in danger from self-righteousness, and from open wickedness, from your own corrupt hearts, from this ensnaring world, and from the temptations of the devil: you are in great danger of sleeping on in security, without ever being thoroughly awakened; or, if you should be awakened, you are in danger of resting short of vital religion; and in either of these cases you are undone for ever. In a word, dangers crowd thick around you on every hand, from every quarter; dangers, into which thousands, millions of your fellow-men have fallen, and never recovered. Indeed, all things considered, it is very doubtful whether ever, you will be saved, who are now, lukewarm and secure: I do not mean that your success is uncertain if you be brought to use means with proper earnestness; but alas! it is awfully uncertain whether ever you will be brought to use them in this manner. And, O sirs! can you continue secure and inactive when you have such difficulties to encounter with in a work of absolute necessity, and when you are surrounded with so many and so great dangers? Alas! are you capable of such destructive madness? Oh that you knew the true state of the case! Such a knowledge would soon fire you with the greatest ardour, and make you all life and vigour in this important work.

2. Consider how earnest and active men are in other pursuits. Should we form a judgment of the faculties of human nature by the conduct of the generality in religion, we should be apt to conclude that men are mere snails, and that they have no active powers belonging to them. But view them about other affairs, and you find they are all life, fire, and hurry. What labour and toil! what schemes and contrivances! what solicitude about success! what fears of disappointment! hands, heads, hearts, all busy. And all this to procure those enjoyments which at best they cannot long retain, and which the next hour may tear from them. To acquire a name or a diadem, to obtain riches or honours, what hardships are undergone! what dangers dared! what rivers of blood shed! how many millions of lives have been lost! and how many more endangered! In short the world is all alive, all in motion with business. On sea and land, at home and abroad, you will find men eagerly pursuing some temporal good. They grow grey-headed, and die in the attempt without reaching their end; but this disappointment does not discourage the survivors and successors; still they will continue, or renew the endeavour. Now here men act like them-

selves; and they show they are alive, and endowed with powers of great activity. And shall they be thus zealous and laborious in the pursuit of earthly vanities, and quite indifferent and sluggish in the infinitely more important concerns of eternity? What! solicitous about a mortal body, but careless about an immortal soul! Eager in pursuit of joys of a few years, but careless and remiss in seeking an immortality of perfect happiness! Anxious to avoid poverty, shame, sickness, pain, and all the evils, real or imaginary, of the present life; but indifferent about a whole eternity of the most intolerable misery! Oh, the destructive folly, the daring wickedness of such a conduct! My brethren, is religion the only thing. which demands the utmost exertion of all your powers, and alas! is that the only thing in which you will be dull and inactive? Is everlasting happiness the only thing about which you will be remiss? Is eternal punishment the only misery which you are indifferent whether you escape or not? Is God the only good which you pursue with faint and lazy desires? How preposterous! how absurd is this! You can love the world, you can love a father, a child, or a friend; nay, you can love that abominable, hateful thing, sin: these you can love with ardour, serve with pleasure, pursue with eagerness, and with all your might; but the ever-blessed God, and the Lord Jesus, your best friend, you put off with a lukewarm heart and spiritless services. Oh inexpressibly monstrous! Lord, what is this that has befallen thine own offspring, that they are so disaffected towards thee? Blessed Jesus, what hast thou done that thou shouldst be treated thus? Oh sinners! what will be the consequence of such a conduct? Will that God take you into the bosom of his love? Will that Jesus save you by his blood, whom you make so light of? No, you may go and seek a heaven where you can find it; for God will give you none. Go, shift for yourselves, or look out for a Saviour where you will; Jesus will have nothing to do with you, except to take care to inflict proper punishment upon you if you retain this lukewarm temper towards him. Hence, by way of improvement, learn,

1. The vanity and wickedness of a lukewarm religion. Though you should profess the best religion that ever came from heaven, it will not save you; nay, it will condemn you with peculiar aggravations if you are lukewarm in it. This spirit of indifferency diffused through it, turns it all into deadly poison. Your religious duties are all abominable to God while the vigour of your spirits is not exerted in them. Your prayers are insults, and he will answer them as such by terrible things in righteousness. And do any of you hope to be saved by such a religion? I tell you from the God of truth, it will be so far from saving you, that it will certainly ruin you for ever: continue as you are to the last, and you will be as certainly damned to all eternity, as Judas, or Beelzebub, or any ghost in hell. But alas!

2. How common, how fashionable is this lukewarm religion! This is the prevailing, epidemical sin of our age and country; and it is well if it has not the same fatal effect upon us it had upon Laodicea; Laodicea lost its liberty, its religion, and its all. Therefore let Virginia hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. We have thousands of Christians, such as they are; as many Christians as white men; but alas! they are generally of the Laodicean stamp; they are neither cold nor hot. But it is our first concern to know how it is with ourselves; therefore let this inquiry go round this congregation; are you not such lukewarm Christians? Is there any fire and life in your devotions? Or are not

all your active powers engrossed by other pursuits? Impartially make the inquiry, for infinitely more depends upon it than upon your temporal life.

3. If you have hitherto been possessed with this Laodicean spirit, I beseech you indulge it no longer. You have seen that it mars all your religion, and will end in your eternal ruin: and I hope you are not so hardened as to be proof against the energy of this consideration. Why halt you so long between two opinions? I would you were cold or hot. Either make thorough work of religion, or do not pretend to it. Why should you profess a religion which is but an insipid indifferency with you? Such a religion is good for nothing. Therefore awake, arise, exert yourselves. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; strive earnestly, or you are shut out for ever. Infuse heart and spirit into your religion. Whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. Now, this moment, while my voice sounds in your ears, now begin the vigorous enterprise. Now collect all the vigour of your souls and breathe it out in such a prayer as this, "Lord, fire this heart with thy love." Prayer is a proper introduction: for let me remind you of what I should never forget, that God is the only Author of this sacred fire; it is only he that can quicken you; therefore, ye poor careless creatures, fly to him in an agony of importunity, and never desist, never grow weary till you prevail.

4. And lastly: Let the best of us lament our lukewarmness, and earnestly seek more fervour of spirit. Some of you have a little life; you enjoy some warm and vigorous moments; and oh! they are divinely sweet. But reflect how soon your spirits flag, your devotion cools, and your zeal languishes. Think of this, and be humble: think of this, and apply for more life. You know where to apply. Christ is your life: therefore cry to him for the communication of it. "Lord Jesus! a little more life, a little more vital heat to a languishing soul." Take this method, and "you shall run and not be weary; you shall walk and not faint." Isaiah xl. 31.

FOOTNOTE

* She was as loathsome to him as lukewarm water to the stomach and he characterizes her as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." What condition can be more deplorable and dangerous?