

## Who Are the Lukewarm?

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (**Revelation 3:15-16**, ESV).

Most of my life I've heard this passage explained in terms of being on fire for the Lord. The conclusion is drawn that God would rather someone be completely turned off to Him than only halfway on fire. That may indeed be what Jesus meant when He revealed this letter to John. However, I'd like to suggest an alternative understanding.

Jesus doesn't use the picture of fire, but of hot and cold drinks. What benefit do hot or cold drinks provide? A hot drink is soothing on a cold day. A cold drink is refreshing on a hot day. A lukewarm drink provides little benefit on either. In fact, if you are expecting hot or cold and you get lukewarm, it is shocking and disgusting. The natural reaction is to spit it out.

What makes a drink lukewarm? Picture a piping hot cup of coffee, tea, or cocoa sitting on the counter. You've gotten distracted taking care of things around the house. You walk back through the kitchen and see the cup. You grab it ready for another taste of the steaming-hot goodness, take a swig, but it has grown tepid. Why did that happen? We could explain it scientifically by the process of conduction, but really we all understand the room temperature influenced the drink to cool down. We can imagine the exact same process with an ice-cold glass of sweet tea or lemonade waiting on the counter for us as we work in the yard. But we come inside only to discover it is no longer refreshing, it's disgusting. What happened? The room temperature influenced the drink to warm up.

What is the common denominator between a hot drink and a cold drink? They influence us. They warm us up or cool us down. What has happened to the lukewarm drink? It has ceased to be an influencer because of the influence of its surroundings.

I suggest that is what Jesus is accusing the Laodicean church of. They had ceased to be the influencers and had become the influenced. Like a cold drink warms up to its surroundings and a hot drink cools down to its surroundings, the Laodiceans had fallen into lockstep with their surroundings. Perhaps they “went to church,” but for all intents and purposes they didn't stand out. They weren't influencing.

Of course, we need to look to ourselves. We serve a risen Savior. He dwells within us and guides us by His Word. Do we stand out? Are we influencing? Or are we the influenced?

There is a war for our souls going on. And here is the shocking thing. For the dragon to win, he doesn't have to make us like the wicked of the world. He only has to make us like the world. If we are not careful, we can become like the Laodiceans, “going to church” but other than that pretty much like the world around us. Do we care about the same politics, enjoy the same entertainments, get motivated by the same factors, think the same thoughts, value the same riches, chase the same goals, long for the same company, pursue the same pleasures, find comfort in the same escapes? We are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We each need to ask, am I being influenced or am I influencing? Have I become lukewarm, or am I hot or cold?