

*and who also swear by Molech,
those who turn back from following the Lord
and neither seek the Lord nor inquire of him.”*

— Zephaniah 1:4-6 (NIV)

Have Christians today become complacent in following the Lord and inquiring of Him (through Bible study)? Have we started accepting the *world's* view that there are *many* paths to God so it's ok to swear by the Lord *and* by the Molechs of today? Have Christians quit believing that no man comes to the Father *except through* Jesus Christ (John 14:6)? Have Christians stopped believing that the Bible *means* what it says? Have Christians accepted the world's attitude that it's just not tolerant to tell someone that there *is only one* mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5)? Have Christians accepted the *world's* attitude that everybody has a right to his own belief and it's just not “loving” to tell *anyone* that his belief is wrong? Are Christians looking for “positive message only” churches instead of looking for those who proclaim the *whole* will of God? Are today's Christians more *comfortable* with *partial* truth? Have we become “religious” people looking for a false hope that *excludes* an appetite for obedience?

The Laodiceans were “religious” people. They weren't out on the streets committing horrible crimes. They weren't thieves or murderers or drunkards. God wasn't angry with them because of what they were *doing* — He was angry because of what they were *not* doing. They were ordinary people who had become *stagnant* and *lethargic* in their relationship with God. They were people who had a smug satisfaction with their existing situation. God *surly* would continue to take care of them — He had in the past — they had need of nothing. The Laodiceans probably attended worship regularly and wore the name “Christian” — *when* it wasn't threatening — or — *when* it didn't run the risk of losing a friend — or — *if* it didn't take too much time away from their other interests — or — *when* it didn't mean taking a lonely stand *against* the “many paths to God” idea. They were doing pretty well — they *thought!*

We're doing pretty well today — *aren't* we? *We* haven't become lukewarm — *have* we? *We're* not basking in a feeling of security while unaware of potential danger — *are* we? And we've surely not settled into complacency — *have* we? God would *never* spit *us* out of His mouth — *would* He? Have we ever thought about that very much? Maybe we should. Could it be possible that we too — like the Laodiceans — just *think* we're doing pretty well?

Guess we'll all have to answer those questions for ourselves.

*“Diligence” is a privately funded publication of:
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DILIGENCE

*“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end,
in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11*

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

Volume 7

August 15, 2008

Issue 14

Complacency

*“And it shall come to pass at that time
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
And punish the men
Who are settled in complacency,
Who say in their heart,
The Lord will not do good,
Nor will He do evil.” (Zephaniah 1:12 NKJV)*

“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. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 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. 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. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.” (Rev. 3:14-19 NIV)

The dictionary defines *complacency* as “a feeling of security, often while unaware of some potential danger or smug satisfaction with an existing situation.” *Lukewarm* is defined as “lacking conviction or enthusiasm; indifferent.”

Many years ago, our oldest son came home from some sort of outing in which he was the passenger in a car with several other teenagers. He related to us an incident that had occurred while they were in route to where ever it was they were going. He, as well as the other teens in the car had been somewhat embarrassed by the action taken by the adult driver of that vehicle. They had come to an intersection where there was a crosswalk and the driver stopped to allow an individual to cross the street in front of her car. The individual stepped slowly off the curb and proceeded to make his way across the street. Completely *aware* of the fact that the driver of the vehicle had politely *stopped* to allow him to cross in front of her, he began to saunter — at an *unbelievably* slow pace, with an almost *defiant* attitude — across the street in front of her stopped car. When the young man was about half way across the street, the driver of the vehicle

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opened her car door, stepped part way out of the car and shouted in a loud voice: “Young man — walk like you have purpose!!”

While we wouldn’t particularly recommend doing that, the woman driving the car *did* make an interesting point. If in fact the young man crossing the street in front of her would have been on his way to enthusiastically accomplish some purpose, he would have most likely been walking faster. He either lacked the *conviction* to accomplish a purpose or he lacked *having* a purpose.

In an age when the world has convinced even some who call themselves “Christians” that there are *many* paths to God, it is very easy to become complacent in our own faith and either walk without conviction to our purpose or “conveniently forget” that we *have* a purpose. For many years, we as Christians, have lived in a country that has given us a wonderful feeling of security. We have perhaps even settled into a sense of smug satisfaction that there really *is* no danger. After all, this is America — and God would never let anything bad happen to America.

Turn back to the front page and re-read that first Scripture. Who is it that will be punished? Those who are *settled in complacency*. That verse then goes on to explain that those who are *settled in complacency* are those who believe the Lord will neither do good nor will He do evil. He’s just — there! He won’t punish those who fail to obey Him *nor* will He reward those — no — wait a minute — in *today’s* mind set — *everyone* goes to heaven! God is far too loving to condemn *anyone* to eternal *punishment*! Talk about smug satisfaction! But isn’t that pretty much what we hear in the world today when God’s Word is watered down to *exclude* teaching that there *will* be a day of judgement at which time some will go to eternal reward and some will go to eternal punishment? *No one* will *escape* God’s judgement. Just as in the destruction of Jerusalem — no one will be able to *hide* from His lamp at the final judgement. One commentator put it this way:

“There are many people who would like to rule this subject of judgment out of the Bible entirely. There are those who tell us that the God of the New Testament, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the kind of a God who can never move in judgment. His heart is so tender, his love is so gracious, his patience is so infinite that there never will be a time when God will move in vengeance.” (Ray Stedman)

We hear more and more television evangelists preaching *only* a message of love. Paul, in his final words to the Elders of Ephesus said that he had “*not hesitated to proclaim the whole will of God*” (Acts 20:27). Paul knew that a *partial* truth was no truth at all and it was therefore his responsibility to teach that God was not only a *loving* God but also a *just* God. Partial truth can be as misleading as an outright lie. The “positive message only preachers” focus *entirely* on seeking *comfort* from the Bible and ignore the requirement of obedience. They’re not the *first* one’s who chose to fill their listeners with false hope and ignore God’s wrath toward those who despise Him.

“*This is what the Lord Almighty says:
‘Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you;
they fill you with false hopes.
They speak visions from their own minds,
not from the mouth of the Lord.
They keep saying to those who despise me,
The Lord says: “You will have peace”
And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts
they say, “No harm will come to you.”
But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord
to see or to hear his word?
Who has listened and heard his word?
See, the storm of the Lord
will burst out in wrath,
a whirlwind swirling down
on the heads of the wicked.
The anger of the Lord will not turn back
until he fully accomplishes
the purposes of his heart.
In days to come
you will understand it clearly.
I did not send these prophets,
yet they have run with their message;
I did not speak to them,
yet they have prophesied.’” (Jeremiah 23:16-21 NIV)*

Jeremiah tried desperately to get the people of Judah to understand just how low they had sunk yet was never successful in getting them to heed his warnings. They never took him seriously *nor* did they take God seriously. They worshiped various idols and had become so full of themselves that they apparently had decided they were pretty much indestructible. The mentality of the people to whom Jeremiah was prophesying was that they were great because of *themselves* — *not* because of God. They failed to realize that the God who had given them their greatness also had the power to take it away when they were no longer morally *fit* to possess it.

Zephaniah — a prophet who was contemporary with Jeremiah also prophesied about the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

“*I will stretch out my hand against Judah
and against all who live in Jerusalem.
I will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal,
the names of the pagan and the idolatrous priests
those who bow down on the roofs
to worship the starry host,
those who bow down and swear by the Lord*