



# Chronicles of Diversity

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## Chronicles of Diversity Contact Information:

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## *The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekking International, Gnostic Materialism*

When you write a weekly column there are two things that are really needed. One is a certain amount of time, the other is inspiration. The latter being the most important, because time can come from a number of sources, like, for example from your desired hours of restful slumber. Inspiration is many times determined by outside circumstances which may have been caused by an incident that has little, or a sidewise relevance to the topic at hand.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah wrote a book called Lamentations which is really a poem of his perceptions concerning the circumstances of the exile and dispersion of the remainder of Israel and more specifically Judah. Approximately half way through the prophet's lament is one of the most quoted and sung portions of scripture.

That of course is found in  
Lamentations 3:22-24:

*Through the LORD's mercies we  
are not consumed,*

*Because His compassions fail  
not.*

*They are new every morning;*

*Great is Your faithfulness.*

*"The LORD is my portion,"  
says my soul,*

*"Therefore I hope in Him!"*

It is wise counsel to look closely at the prophet's words in context, as a backdrop for the modern Christian sin of materialism. In the middle of the grief of Jeremiah, is this contrasting nugget of pure gold. In the middle of all this bad stuff the truth of God's mercy prevails.

Within that context however, how can the Lord's compassions be as He intended, if they are



obtained, or purchased secondhand. I suppose recycled and reused inspiration is better than no inspiration at all. To recycle another well used, this time worldly saying, "If it wasn't for other's inspiration, I would have no inspiration at all."

I have lost track of some good Christian friends that used to have Christian radio playing in the background all the time. This was not the plastic music of the contemporary Christian music business, but the well crafted teachings of some of the most gifted men of God. Over time this began to wear on me, because they were substituting an recycled air wave message from God, for the real thing. Their radio got in the way of what God really wanted to say and to do through them. They were settling for lukewarm substitutes.

The portions of last week's message that were not part of my initial inspiration, concerned the references to the churches of Revelation. Again I had planned on letting it go at that, without mentioning the church of Laodicea, but why not finish up the topic.

The messages to the churches in total are really a lament of Jesus to the churches throughout the church age. But to the lament, pain, and admonishment felt in the messages to the first six churches, anger is more the tone set as Jesus chastises the lukewarm church of Laodicea.

As I mentioned last week, I have never attended any church where we were encouraged to look at ourselves as anything but the church of Philadelphia. I might add, I have never talked with anyone who has attended a church that is not part of the brotherly love fellowship either. But evangelicalism in American and the west really fits the model of Laodicea much more than any other church. Why? Because we are so surrounded by second hand inspiration that we are lukewarm, and we are so conceited that we call it a blessing.

One of the first heresies that entered the church was that of Gnosticism. The root of that belief stems from the concept of the Greek "gnosis," which is really an intuitive spiritualization of stuff. Put another way, things

are created by spiritual inspiration, once they are created, they enter the realm of stuff, and the spirit of inspiration that created it, no longer exists as inspiration, but as the common, or as theologians say, it is part of common grace.

Gnostic Materialism is really an oxymoron. In the things of God the common cannot be spiritual except through gnosis. Of course the old fashioned name for Gnostic Materialism is idolatry. But idolatry is such a hard, cold word.

"Repent of your idolatry, or burn in the fires of hell!" Such statements really don't fit with our concept of the love of God. Just because idolatry makes up the first table of the Ten Commandments really doesn't mean it is important to our generation. After all, they took that Ten Commandments statue out of the court house in the south. Wasn't it Mississippi, or was it Alabama, I just don't remember, I'm just too busy.

So why is it so bad to take the Ten Commandments out of the public buildings and the schools, when a generation earlier we took the Ten Commandments out of the church?

The fresh brewed cup of coffee I am now drinking from my insulated cup, will probably be tepid by the time I finish this installment. Scientifically tepidness comes from entropy. Lack of the addition of either heat, or cooling, brings tepidness. But Praise the Lord, if it were not for tepid coffee, I would have no coffee at all. Or actually, I would have to nuke this cup or make some more. I'm too busy right now to do either, so I guess I will have to settle for the lukewarm.

Come to think of it, I really would not have had to make my coffee at all this morning, I could have gone to the espresso stand, or bought a bottle of Starbucks to store in my pantry. But both, most people would say, are superior to this cup of Walmart select, and they are probably right in a sense. In the sense that frozen entrees are better than home cooked, why not get every meal from someone else. Donuts and coffee for breakfast, MacDonalds for lunch, and Stouffer's, or Pizza Hut for dinner, and our bread of life, Jesus, from the radio or the TV. Man, we have got it made in the tepid shade.

What is missing from this equation? I have not experienced anything first hand. I have been

loaded down with sugar, fat, and salt even in the preaching and I dare not ask, "Is this all there is?" All the stuff may have been served either hot or cold, but my life is really, sincerely lukewarm.

Back to the church of Laodicea, I have never heard a sermon illustration of a promoting the cold church, "We are always to be on fire for the Lord." At least till we get into the car and turn on the radio to see how the 'Hawks are doing, or to catch the Spirit of 105.3.

Gnostic Materialism perhaps is better illustrated in the most misquoted verse in the Bible, that appears in this chastisement of Laodicea. That of course is Revelation 3:20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Chapters two and three of Revelation are messages to the churches, they are not messages to the potential brethren. To use this verse in evangelism may appear cool, but it is definitely out of context. But why is this evangelistic emphasis so pervasively used for this verse? Because of second hand inspiration, to intuitively give this verse a spiritual meaning that cannot be deduced from the written context.

Why proclaim something that relates to God's fresh daily mercies for His children, when I want it to change the life of the heathen? So I will just repeat this false application of what I heard someplace when I was younger.

Let's look more closely at the true context, verse 19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. The context of that rebuke to the church begins in verse 15 18: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

"How could a loving Jesus use such strong words to His church that dwells within these warm, hallowed, walls? We're not like that, we love everybody that comes through the doors. After all, I'm the greeter that gets to hand out all the warm fuzzies."

Perhaps, the recycling of Christians from one church to another, without any real growth, is the fact that the worldly can see, our tepid, ugly, wealth, and they are either too gracious, or are not convicted to bother with our illusions of true piety. Then again, perhaps that is why Christians recycle themselves, they are searching in vain, for the real things of God, and all they find is preachers who have a study full of the things of God and the unction of others, but have not the unction of God in their preaching.

Therefore, these are our fruits of the curse of Gnostic Materialism, which is visible down to many of the padded seats of our congregations. *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!* 1 Timothy 3:1 5 Amen.