

## To the Saints of God at Topeka, Kansas December 13, 2015

- 1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*
- 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*
- 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*
- 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*
- 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*
- 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Rev. 3:1-6).*

Sardis is the 5<sup>th</sup> church in Revelation 2 and 3 that Christ speaks to. Sardis was about



50 miles east of Smyrna. Sardis was an ancient city that dates back to 1300 BC. At the time of John it was a city of Asia Minor. Like Ephesus, Sardis had a temple of Artemis (known as Diana of the Ephesians by the Romans).

*And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*

– Christ keeps close tabs on His churches and He knows their works. As you will recall, for most of the churches, Christ notes their good works including charity, labor, patience, and faith among others. Notice beloved that Christ makes no commendation for their good works at Sardis. It is painfully missing. They have no good works significant enough for Him to mention. That is an exceedingly sad state of affairs. They bring zero good works to the table.

The people at the church at Sardis made a profession of faith, but it was in name only for most of the congregation had settled on their lees, they were at ease. They were not what they purported to be or what their reputation was in days gone by. They had *become great, and waxen rich and fat... Shall I not visit for these things?* (Jer. 5:27-29). *And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.* (Zep. 1:12). *Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,...* (Amos 6:1). Beloved, it is easy as pie to be slothful and not be diligent in these things of God and to be corrupted by this world but still think everything is fine.

Adapted from Robert Haldane (1764 – 1842):

*There is hardly any doctrine which has not been of late years exposed to the corruptions and perversions of men who profess to be believers of Divine revelation... It is common to regard the scriptures as the production of ordinary men, treating its subjects as if they are of ordinary importance, instead of containing, as they do, the Message of the Most High God, revealing life or death to every soul to whom they come. Christians ought to be particularly on their guard against tampering in any degree with the Word of God. We should never forget that when we are explaining any expression of Scripture, we are dealing with the very words of the Holy Ghost, as much as if they had been spoken to us by a voice from heaven. The human mind is ever prone to soften the strong features of Divine truth, and to bring them more into accordance with its own wishes and preconceived notions. This is a mistake! In these days of boasted liberality, it may appear captious to oppose with zeal the spiritual errors of men who have acquired a name in the*

*Christian world. The mantle of charity, it will be said, ought to be thrown over mistakes that have resulted from a free view of the Scriptures.*

*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (2nd John 1:8-11).*

Beloved, the church at Sardis speaks to why we must with zeal oppose spiritual error, wherever it exists, even when it is in the church. The greater part of the members of the church at Sardis were dead in trespasses and sins; and dead in the exercise of grace and in the discharge of their duties. Most of the people filling the pews were zombies. They are moving around like people that are alive, but under closer inspection they are spiritually dead and there is death in that pot. Like zombies, these that are spiritually dead have a virus and if left untreated the virus will spread and effect the whole church until everyone is spiritually dead. Christ first eludes to this concept of spiritually dead people in Mt 8:22 *But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.* Gill: *Christ's meaning is, let such who are dead in trespasses and sins, and dead to all that is spiritually good, bury those who are dead in a natural or corporal sense.* You can have a lot of activity in a church such as bible studies, trunk or treats, choirs, pot luck dinners and such, but if the core is spiritually dead or the root is dead, it doesn't matter. It will eventually rot from the inside.



They were under great spiritual decay.

Worldliness had crept into the church. It's a code Blue, break out the AED and the big paddles and attempt to revive the patient. Death is imminent unless something drastic takes place. Only a few were alive in a spiritual sense. The antidote is repentance, which will only come from Christ, our all

in all! They had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5). Their pastor was spiritually dead, their ministry was dead, their praying was dead, their conversations were dead and having found a spiritually dead church the Lord is ready to remove the candlestick. Brother James warns about this in James 1:22 *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."* They became *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God* (2 Tim. 3:4).

Adapted from C.H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892) – *There was general defilement in the church at Sardis. They had a vast amount of open profession, but little of sincere religion. In going up and down in this land, I am obliged to come to the conclusion that throughout the churches there are multitudes who have a name to live and are dead. Religion has become fashionable. The shopkeeper can scarcely succeed in a respectable business if he were not united with a church. You can scarcely meet with a man who does not call himself a Christian and yet it is equally difficult to meet with one who is, in the very marrow of his bones – one who is thoroughly sanctified to the good work of the kingdom of heaven. We meet professors by the hundreds. The whole nation appears to have been Christianized in an hour. But is this real? Ah, we fear not. How is it that professors can live like other men? How is it, that there is so little distinction between the church and the world? How is it that men who make high professions can live in worldly conformity, indulge in the same pleasures, live in the same style, act from the same motives, deal in the same manner as other people do? Are not these as the likes of Noah's days when the sons of God have made affinity with the sons of men? We have an abundance of cold, calculating Christians and a multitude of professors. We have those that enter the*

*ministry for a piece of bread and who flinch and flat refuse to speak the whole truth of God. A new age, this, when lies and truth can kiss each other. New times, these, when fire and water can become friendly. Glorious times, these, when there is an alliance between hell and heaven and when there is concord between light and darkness. Lies and errors are linked hand in hand – we are all brethren – is the cry now. Where is the zeal of the apostles? Where is practical godliness? Where is inward piety (or blessed godliness)? Where are the people of God that count not their lives dear unto them? Those that are left are held in contempt. They are called peculiar. They are hissed at as oddities. They are called bigots and narrow minded. Oh, church of the Living God, awake! Awake! Once more write, truth, upon your banner! Stamp truth upon your sword! And for God and for His Word, charge home! You knights of truth, charge home! Spare not, but slay. Let error die before you, until the church of God and the truth of God, alone, shall sit king over the whole world! Do this and you will walk with me [Christ] in white!*

*“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).*

***Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God*** - The Lord Jesus Christ admonishes the church at Sardis to be watchful. Goodness knows they have not hither to been watchful. They have been just the opposite – slothful. They are to immediately strengthen and reinforce the good works they had done in the past (and the little good works and good people that remained) lest they all be dead and completely extinct. Whatever the current works of the Church were, they were nearly spiritually lifeless and were hollow and empty. The language of the text suggests

that they “were about to die” or “ready to die.” The few that were walking right must take action to rebuke and convince the majority to repent lest the candlestick be removed; and not give in to the majority to walk with them. The Church at Sardis, unlike the Church at Philadelphia was without strength. The members were spiritually sick, faint and dying, and nearly ready to be buried. The Church needed immediate reform. This is a cautionary tale for every church.

***Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee*** – The Church at Sardis received great blessing, light and words from the Holy Spirit at its beginning. This was such a great and precious blessing, but now there are some that despise the light they had, they hold it in low regard and lightly esteem it, and they are ready to sell it for a mess of pottage. These that have corrupted themselves, must come to those that are still good and not the other way around. The Lord Jesus is instructing them to remember those times and take them to heed and change their behavior and do right. This is along the same lines as the Church at Ephesus who had left their first love.

*For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. (Heb 10:30-34).*

The only thing they can do at this time is to repent. The state of the Church at Sardis is that it is likely that they will not heed Christ’s warning to leave their gross sin and error, therefore he tells them what he will do if they do not what he bids them. This is the only warning they will get, no more after this – just quick destruction when he comes back.

***Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment*** - Some say the word “names” is persons or souls – thou hast a few persons (souls) even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. Even in this polluted place, the Lord had a few that still yearned and walked after him. There is no “slipping into the kingdom.” The roll of WBC is not going to be called and everyone let in – this is a specific call of credentials – are your credentials in order or not? The Lord Jesus Christ knows exactly what is going on in his Churches – who is saved and who is not; whose deeds and garments are pure and whose deeds and garments are defiled. You either have a proper wedding garment on or you do not (Matthew 22:11-12). You cannot counterfeit these credentials. The 144,000 Jews for example will have a seal in their forehead. *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads* (Rev. 7:3).

*But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands* (Isaiah 49:14-16).

And, these few persons are in fact known by their names to God Almighty and the Lord Jesus Christ. Their names are written in the Lambs book of life. Here is what Gill says:

*“God will have a few in whom he will be glorified in the most declining times; and the Lord knows and takes notice of these few; and for their sake the church state is kept up, the Gospel and its ordinances are continued; nor is a church to be judged of by the number of its members, nor is a multitude to be followed to do evil.”*

It is as if Christ said - *These souls have been loyal to Me while they lived on earth and have not spotted their garment in that filthy world and turned aside after Satan and have proved their true citizenship, so I will be loyal to them in the next life.*



*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity (2Ti. 2:19).*

These few were not defiled by filthy practices. They worked hard to keep their behavior obedient to Christ Jesus, even when others did not. They did not embrace false doctrines, immoral practices or spiritual fornication. If they continue in this way, Christ promises to walk together with these souls in shining robes of immortality and glory and/or fine pure linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints. Nothing defiled can enter the heavenly city! Pure members of an impure church are kept separate in the eyes of Christ.

Adapted from Robert Haldane: *The life of true believers is derived from Christ; they are planted together with Him; buried with Him; risen with Him; walked in him and lived and died with Him. We must have the mind of Christ and walk in holiness as He did. He was rich, but for our sakes become poor and we through his poverty became rich. We must be motivated to have a holy life, to be chaste as a member of Christ's body (and not of Satan's).*

*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey [that be ye] his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death [Satan], or of obedience unto righteousness [Christ]? Romans 6:16*

***And, I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels*** – The Book of Life is the official registry of heaven. If you are to gain entrance to heaven and to everlasting life, your name must be recorded here as an heir of the heavenly city and the blood of the Lamb. On the Great Day of Judgment this blessed registry will be consulted. To those that overcome the Lord Jesus will not blot out his or her name, but He will give testimony of praise for us before God Almighty and the angels and acknowledge that we are His followers and that he owns our sins! *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (2 Thes 1:10).* For those who names are written,



their names can never be blotted out because the love of God is unchanging - the same yesterday, today and forever. The reference to blotting out comes from such places as:

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book (Ex. 32:33).*

*Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven.(De. 9:14).*

*Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities (Ps. 51:9).*

Christ makes a statement of promise that he will confess our lowly, sin-laden, names before His Father and the innumerable company of angels. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Mt. 25:31-34).* The word confess means: thank, promise, profess, acknowledge openly and joyfully, to celebrate and give praise to.

I love you all. Amen.