

The Church of the Living Dead – Revelation 3:1-6

Introduction

Welcome to My Thoughts and the fifth of seven segments of the Revelation Churches called The Church of Constant Compromise, the Church at Thyatira. So far, we have talked about:

- **Loveless Church at Ephesus**
- **Persecuted Church at Smyrna**
- **Compromising Church at Pergamum**
- **Corrupted Church at Thyatira**

In 1968 the famous “B” movie, “Night of the Living Dead” was released complete with flesh-eating zombies, and a horrible storyline. The zombies were dead, but they moved about as if they were still alive. It’s almost as if someone forgot to tell them that their lives had come to an end.

The Dead Church

Unfortunately, this happens to some churches just like the one at Sardis. They go through all the motions, saying the right things, and by all appearances, seem to be alive. In reality, they are experiencing spiritual death. Open your Bibles to the Book of Revelation 3:1-6.

¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

⁶ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

Jesus wrote to the church in Sardis 2,000 years ago and what He said to them could regrettably be written to many churches today. What we want is to discover everything we can about this

church, so that we don't make the same mistakes. There is a problem, a need, and a reward for the church at Sardis.

THE PROBLEM

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. – Revelation 3:1.

As He has in his addresses to the other churches, Jesus introduces Himself. Here He comes with the **“sevenfold Spirit of God”** referring to the Holy Spirit in all His fullness as poured out to these seven churches.

The **“seven stars”** are either the messengers of each church or the individual churches themselves. The point is Jesus has come with the Spirit and is given in fullness of power to each of the groups He's addressing, but here in Sardis, even though the Spirit has been given, they have two problems.

1. REPUTATION VERSUS REALITY

I have a story I heard years ago about this young man in 7th grade. He was their team's quarterback and was considered to be a pretty tough guy. He was the tallest boy in his class, already had facial hair, and all the girls thought he was good-looking. By the time they reached 9th grade, most of the guys had caught up to him. His athletic skills no longer separated him from the crowd.

The sad part, he still viewed himself as the star. He was benched from the football team and the girls quit paying attention to him. There was a big gap between his reputation and the reality of the situation.

REEVALUATE YOURSELF

Jesus said that the church at Sardis had **“a reputation for being alive,”** but in reality, they were dead. That's what happens to a church that doesn't take the time to do a serious gut check once in a while.

It's very easy to live in our past accomplishments, past blessings, and the time of revival that was experienced years ago. What we really need is to move beyond what was past and move into the glorious future with God. While it is fine and good to recognize how God has worked, it is much more important to see where we are at today and where it is that we're going.

God never designed the church to live in the past, sit back, and expect the Gospel to be carried to the ends of the earth. We must constantly be reevaluating what we have been called to do.

Whether we are accomplishing what God wants us to, what we need to do to change, and to do it at a greater level.

2. RELIGIOUS LIFE VERSUS SPIRITUAL LIVING

In the September 20, 2004, issue of MacLean's magazine, Lianne George recounts this tragic story:

One November day in 2002, Jim Sulkers, a 53-year-old retired municipal worker from Winnipeg, climbed into bed, pulled the covers up, and died. Nearly two years later, on August 25, 2004, police who had been called by concerned relatives entered Sulkers' apartment and found his body in a mummified state. Everything else in his tidy one-bedroom apartment was intact, although the food in his fridge was spoiled and his wall calendar was two years out of date. Mr. Sulkers' death went undiscovered for several reasons:

- **He was reclusive**
- **Estranged from family members**
- **Had a medical condition that prevented his body from decomposing and emitting odors.**

In addition, automatic banking deposited his disability pension and withdrew utilities and other expenses as they came due. The co-founders of the Media Ecology program at New York University, said, "**For many practical purposes, this man was virtually alive throughout that time.**"

VIRTUALLY ALIVE

The phrase, "**virtually alive**" means almost, but not quite. That's close to what Jesus said to the church in Sardis. People think you're alive, but you're really dead. Now how could people be so fooled as to think the church was alive when it really wasn't?

Well, let's look at it this way. A church could have a big building, a professional staff, a huge budget, and from the outside look like they have the blessing of God upon them. Deep down, at the heart of the whole thing, they might not have:

- **Real love for the lost**
- **Real compassion for the unchurched**
- **Might only be trying to minister to those within their own fold**

CHOOSE YOUR SIDE WISELY

While on the outside they might appear to be a loving, caring community. It is possible that they've become cliquish, and love only themselves. They could be extremely religious. Holding

all the forms of religion, getting the liturgy down pat, and at the same time not able to recognize Jesus if He appeared in their midst.

Now if you think that couldn't happen to us, think about Sardis. Everyone thought they were alive, but sadly they were dying spiritually. So that's the problem in a nutshell. Thinking you're one thing when you're really not. So now that we have that out of the way, let's focus on...

THE NEED

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. – Revelation 3:2-3

There are three very basic instructions here we would do well to follow.

1. WAKE UP!

The church at Sardis would understand this command as several times they'd been caught napping and suffered the consequences. They thought their city was impenetrable and had not put any guard around their territory. They were subsequently invaded and suffered great loss. When Jesus says, "**Wake up**" or "**Watch,**" He is reminding them of their past and their need to not allow the same thing to take place in their spiritual lives.

- **"Besides this, you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" – Romans 13:11**
- **"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" – 1 Corinthians 16:13**

SNAP OUT OF IT

I could easily list many verses with the same basic message, wake up, stay alert, keep watch, and move steadily. God is well aware of our tendency to fall into a comfort zone when it comes to our faith. He reminds us to be aware of what is taking place at all times. The message of the Gospel is too important to let it fall into complacent hands:

- **Being aware of the unchurched all around us and doing something about it? If not, then it is time that we wake up.**
- **Do we see people who are unloved and uncared for and go out of our way to love and care for them? If not, then it is time that we wake up.**
- **Are we asleep at the wheel when it comes to being in tune with God's plan, God's purpose, and God's directives in His Word? If so, it is time to wake up.**

I don't know about you, but I don't want to play a part called "**Christian**" for the rest of my life. I want the real thing and to experience it with other people who have the same desire in their

hearts. That can only happen if we are all wide awake and alert to what is going on around us. Are we doing something to change our world by truly manifesting the power of the Holy Spirit through our church?

2. STRENGTHEN WHAT YOU HAVE!

Have you ever heard people say that you need to list your areas of strengths and weaknesses and work on your areas of weakness? That's bogus advice. What we really need to do is work on our strengths so we grow. It is true in life and true for the church. Jesus says that we need to strengthen what remains.

- **So let's say you're a good Sunday School teacher, work on becoming a better one**
- **You're a good leader – work towards becoming the best leader ever**
- **Your gift is music – become a great musician**

The point is we are to do everything that we do, as individuals and as a church, for the glory of God. We must always work toward strengthening ourselves in every possible area where that is being accomplished. It is not only a matter of doing the right things, but of being the right kind of people, and the right kind of church. That happens when we work from our strengths, not from our weaknesses.

3. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!

"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent." – Revelation 2:3.

Do you remember when you first heard the Gospel message and you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ? That's when you first realized that you were a blood-bought, born-again, Holy Spirit-filled, child of God.

It was when you were empowered by the fact that every sin had been removed from your personal account, Satan had been defeated in your life, the promise of eternal life was yours, and our Heavenly Father was truly and completely in love with you.

If we are going to be a church made up of individuals who not only have a reputation for being alive but are really alive, we must remember it all. Because in the time of remembrance, we experience a level of empowerment and ability that will be unknown to us otherwise. The church at Sardis forgot who they were. May that never be said of us?

THE REWARD

Have you noticed that with each church we've looked at, even those that were far away from Jesus, He always ends on a positive note. It's in His nature to always offer hope and encouragement and He does so here.

“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” – Revelation 3:4-6.

1. COMPANIONSHIP

Those who are alive in Jesus will walk with Him clothed in white. In the pagan world, no worshipper could enter the temple with soiled clothes. Here, rather than focusing on external clothing, Jesus uses the same imagery to talk about the purity of our hearts. Because of what He did for us on the cross, we are able to join Him, because every stain of sin has been removed from our lives.

2. RECOGNITION

In the ancient world, the king would keep a register of all the citizens. When the citizen died their name was erased from the registry. Jesus promises that rather than removing our names from the Book of Life, He is going to make an official announcement of our citizenship. Just as we have confessed Jesus as Lord, Jesus now confesses before the Heavenly Father and the angels we are His forever.

3. SECURITY

For many believers, even those who have remained alive in their faith, there is often a sense of doubt when it comes to their salvation. There is coming a time when we find ourselves in the very presence of Christ where all doubt will be removed and we will know the security of being held tight in the arms of Jesus.

When we see the white robe hanging from our shoulders, we read our own name in the Book of Life and hear it announced by the very mouth of Jesus, we will experience the depth of security that we have longed for.

CONCLUSION:

I hope you join me today in a commitment to be a church that not only says it is alive with the power of God, but that really is alive. Resolve our problems, see we have a greater need, and focus on the reward. Not here on earth, but the greater reward waiting for us in heaven, Amen!

I am Dale Van De Bogart and I fully agree on God’s Word!

If you are reading this and never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, what are you waiting for? Click on [FREE GIFT](#) and make Jesus the Lord of your life **TODAY!** Remember, read

your Bible daily, it's good food! Like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and subscribe to our [YouTube](#) channel and watch this and other My Thoughts videos.

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