

The Letter to the Seven Churches of Asia: Sardis

- I. Introduction:
 - a. **(Rev 3:1-6)** “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. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 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. 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. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
 - b. The City of Sardis
 - i. “It was moreover one of the oldest and most important cities of Asia Minor, and until 549 B.C., the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. It stood on the northern slope of Mt. Tmolus; its acropolis occupied one of the spurs of the mountain. At the base flowed the river Pactolus which served as a moat, rendering the city practically impregnable. Through the failure to watch, however, the acropolis had been successfully scaled in 549 B.C. by a Median soldier, and in 218 by a Cretan” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)
 - ii. “No city in the whole Province of Asia had a more splendid history in past ages than Sardis. No city of Asia at that time showed such a melancholy contrast between past splendor and present decay as Sardis.” (W.M. Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia)
 - iii. This was city that was once alive and now dead!
- II. Christ Description
 - a. **(Rev 3:1)** “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...”
 - b. Christ is the one that has:
 - i. “Seven Spirits of God”
 1. Seven = complete, perfect, or full
 2. Spirit = “power, truth and testimony” of God
 3. **(Rev 4:5)** “And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”
 4. **(Rev 5:6)** “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven

eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

a. Perfection of the truth which is the hands of Christ

5. **(Isa 11:1-4)** “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

ii. “Seven Stars”

1. **(Rev 1:20)** “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.”

2. “Stars” – “Angels” = Messengers

a. Symbolic Messenger – the overall spirit of the church

2. **(Rev 1:16)** “And he had in his right hand seven stars.”

a. In the right hand of Jesus – position of protection, security, and Jesus’ control of the destiny of the churches

3. **(Eph 1:22-23)** “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

c. Christ has the truth and the destiny of His church in His hand – What you do with the true testimony will determine what Christ will do with the destiny of the congregation

i. **(John 12:48)** “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

III. Condition of the Church

a. **(Rev 3:1)** “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

b. “I know thy works” – Divine Knowledge

i. Christ knows what’s going on in and to His church

ii. He knows their works – Both good and bad

iii. **(Prov 15:3)** “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”

c. “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead”

i. “Name” = Reputation

1. They were like the city of Sardis – once had a reputation of great splendor – Great work – But now are dead – in a state of degeneration.
 - ii. They had a reputation for being a living and sound church – there is no mention of any false doctrine, no heresy, and no persecution from within or from the outside!
 1. If one would have spoken of this church they would've rendered it a sound living congregation
 2. A good reputation is a good accomplishment
 - a. **(Prov 22:1)** “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.”
 3. Christ knows better – Christ knows the inwards condition
 - a. **(Ps 90:8)** “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.”
 - b. **(Ps 44:21)** “Shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.”
 4. Reputation is not everything
 - a. **(John 7:24)** “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”
 5. Good reputation needs to have good character
 - a. People give you a reputation, you give yourself a character
 - b. Because Reputation is what others say about you and Character is who you really are!
 - d. The church at Sardis had a reputation of living congregation but they gave them self the character of being dead and Jesus knew it! – He knows your true character too
 - e. Why were they considered ‘dead’? Jesus gives the answer.
- IV. Encouragement to repent
- a. **(Rev 3:2)** “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”
 - i. “Be Watchful”
 1. Complacency was the reason for their dead state – They felt themselves to be in a good situation with God and did not think it needful to be watchful
 2. They had a false sense of security
 3. The church at Sardis was reliving the downfall of the city of Sardis itself
 - a. City felt an overestimated sense of security
 - b. The king Croesus in 549 BC felt that the city of Sardis was impenetrable and decided not to keep watch because he thought that no one could ever find a way up the side of the steep cliffs.
 - c. According to Herodotus, a Persian soldier witnessed a Lydian soldier scale down the cliff side to recover

a dropped helmet. That night the Persian army, using the same way that the Lydian soldier used, scaled the mountain side and took the city by night

4. This church was satisfied with their past
 - a. **(Phil 3:14-15)** “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”
 - b. We cannot as a congregation or as an individual Christian get to the point that you are satisfied with your progress! – Keep pressing forward!
 - c. Scale new religious heights – Keep growing and continue
5. This church no doubt had the correct form of doctrine and worship
 - a. But dead because of Complacency
 - b. They were as the Pharisees
 - i. **(Matt 23:27)** “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.”
 - c. Outwardly Godly appearance – but inwardly is the reek of Death!
 - ii. “Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.”
 1. The problem with complacency is that work does not get finished.
 - a. Complacency causes work that has been started to just die off and remain unfinished. This is the action of slothful children of God
 2. We need to strengthen our work and continue in it so that we will not be a slothful child of God
 - a. **(Rom 12:11)** “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”
 - b. **(Heb 6:12)** “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”
 - c. **(1 Cor 15:58)** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
 3. We must not be slothful!
 - a. **(Matt 25:26,30)** “His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather

where I have not strawed... ..And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

iii. “I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

1. “Perfect” – πληρω – “Finished, Accomplished, Completed”

a. Not perfect as in perfection but they were satisfied before the work was done!

b. **(Rev 3:3)** “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.”

i. “Remember” – The remedy for complacency is a good dose of remembering how that we have received our inheritance

ii. We need to remember the great sacrifice that Christ did for us.

1. **(2 Cor 5:21)** “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

iii. If we fail to remember, we neglect this great sacrifice

1. **(Heb 2:1-4)** “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

iv. By remembering the great sacrifice that God gave to us through Christ, we are motivated to continue the course and to finish our work

c. **(Rom 3:3)** “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.”

i. If we are not watchful, Christ will find us unprepared

1. **(Mark 13:34-37)** “For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

V. The Recognition of the Faithful

a. **(Rev 3:4)** “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.”

- i. This shows that while Christ was writing to entire congregations, we will be judged as individuals. The church as a group was dead, but these few have not defiled their garments.
 - 1. **(Rev 22:12)** “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”
 - 2. You are not judged by what your brother or sister is doing. You will be judged according to what you are doing!
 - 3. **(Rom 14:12)** “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”
 - b. They walk with Christ in white – purity
 - c. Only way to walk with Christ is to be in agreement with Christ
 - i. **(Amos 3:3)** “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”
 - d. Must walk in the light
 - i. **(1 John 1:7)** “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”
- VI. Divine Promise
- a. **(Rev 3:5)** “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.”
 - b. Clothed in White Raiment – Purity
 - i. Their defiled raiment will be washed – forgiveness
 - c. Blot out his name out of the book of life – must have our name in this book if we want to enter into our eternal home
 - i. **(Rev 21:27)** “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”
- VII. Invitation
- a. If your name is not written in the book of life – do so today!
 - b. Make it that Christ can confess you before His Father
 - c. **(Rev 3:6)** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”