

REVELATION 3:1-6

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 3 as we continue our study through the book of Revelation and the Word of God.

We are in a section that deals with letters that Jesus wrote to seven churches located in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

And the reason we are taking our time with these letters is they are also written to us, the church.

You see, at the end of each letter Jesus says, **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** Revelation 2:29.

And as we have seen, these were historical churches that Jesus was writing to. They can also be looked at individually or we can apply them to our lives individually.

And lastly, these letters have a prophetic component to them as they give us a picture of church history from the apostolic church all the way to the last days church.

And I will deal with that in a minute.

As we have done with the previous letters we have studied, we will be looking at the seven key principles of this letter: the *destination*, the *title* or *description of Jesus*, the *commendation* except for Laodicea, the *rebuke* except for Smyrna and Philadelphia, the *exhortation*, the *warning* except for Smyrna and Philadelphia, and the *promise* that Jesus gives to all who will listen and obey these words that the Spirit is speaking to them!

Now, prophetically speaking, look at what we have seen so far.

We have seen the church of Ephesus as the church that left its first love. We call this church – ***THE LOVELESS CHURCH!*** And their light or their witness of Christ was removed because they refused the warning of Jesus to remember, repent and repeat; to fall in love with Jesus. This represented the apostolic church or the church of the first century that lasted to around 63 A. D.

Then came the church of Smyrna or – ***THE PERSECUTED CHURCH!*** They faced intense persecution and yet they remained faithful to their Lord in the midst of this intense persecution and poverty. And as they were crushed by this persecution the fragrance of Jesus was released in their lives touching the lives of others. The persecuted church represented the church from around 63 A. D. to 312 A. D. where some 5 to 6 million Christians were put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ by Rome!

We also looked at the church of Pergamos or – ***THE COMPROMISING CHURCH!*** This church wanted to be liked, they did not want to rock the boat, they did not want to face any persecution or trouble and they compromised what they believed in. This church represented the church from around 312 A. D. to the 5th century where the church married the state and in doing so, they compromised what they believed!

In our last study we looked at the church of Thyatira or – ***THE CORRUPT CHURCH!*** The corrupt church or the church of Thyatira lasted almost 1,000 years, from around 590 A. D. to 1517 A. D. And we know this period of time as the ***Dark Ages***. And as we have seen, the church of Thyatira represents the Roman Catholic Church, prophetically speaking. And for the first time Jesus says that if they don't repent, they will be cast into the Great Tribulation! (Revelation 2:22)

This evening we will be looking at the fifth letter that Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and this letter is written to the church in Sardis. We might call this – ***THE DEAD CHURCH!***

Let me share this with you and then I will expound on it. I think you will see where we are going this evening. We are told,

We remember hearing a leader of one of the great Evangelical Missionary societies commenting on what seems to be the natural development of many an organization.

He said, there is a man.

The man creates a movement or a mission.

The mission gradually becomes a machine.

Finally, the machine ends up being a monument.

Only the power of God can prevent a Christian organization from becoming a monument to the man who under God brought it into being.

- Prairie Overcomer

Like I have said, this letter Jesus wrote to the church in Sardis has the thought of it being the dead church, it was lifeless.

In other words, a man or woman was moved by God and a movement began. But soon God is being prepackaged and you have the movement become a machine. And within a short period of time this movement becomes a monument to a man, it is dead!

With that as the background, let's begin reading in Revelation chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

REVELATION 3**VERSE 1**

As we can see, the *destination* of this letter is Sardis. And like I have said before, Jesus wrote this letter specifically to the pastor of the church in Sardis who would then share these words of God with his people.

As we have done before, I want to take a few minutes looking at the city of Sardis and as we do I think you will understand this letter that Jesus wrote to the church in Sardis a little better.

The city of Sardis was located about 30 miles south of Thyatira and some 50 miles southeast of Ephesus.

The city itself was built upon a 1500-foot plateau, which made them feel very secure against their enemies. The city was easy to defend from the enemy and on one side, because of the cliffs, they did not worry too much that the enemy would attack from that direction because they would have to scale the mountain walls to get into the city.

You see, because of this complacency, because of this lethargy, the city was overtaken two times.

First in 549 B. C. we see the enemy scale the side of this city that was supposed to be impregnable, and thus, they did not guard it.

The Persians, under the leadership of Cyrus their King, came in with ease and captured the city.

But, at first, to accomplish this Cyrus and his soldiers surrounded the city. But there was a problem. It seemed impossible to capture the city.

They tried for two weeks, and Cyrus offered a reward to any of his soldiers who could find a way into the city!

One day one of Cyrus's soldiers noticed the enemy up on the wall of the city of Sardis. And this soldier dropped his helmet down a very steep slope of the plateau.

And he observed this soldier go down the slope to retrieve his helmet, and he disappeared. He was not sure how he got down there. Then, after he got his helmet, he once again disappeared and then reappeared on the top of the wall once again!

From what this soldier saw, he deduced that there must be a path or passageway that could be used to climb up into the city and then down from the city.

That night some of the men of Cyrus went down and found the passageway, which was hidden in a crevice in the mountain plateau, and they were able to make their way into the city!

As they entered the city, to their amazement, they found the whole city sleeping. There was not one soldier guarding the city!

I guess they were confident that no one could attack them, they felt their city was impregnable and they let their guard down, went to sleep and the enemy came in and destroyed them!

Keep that in mind because I think that is what we see going on with this church.

Then, in 218 B. C. Antiochus the Great was also able to capture the city, invading once again on the side that was to be impregnable, and thus, it once again was not guarded. Because of apathy, because of too much confidence, it led them to feel safe, to feel secure and thus, they were overtaken!

Listen to what took place.

Antiochus the Great spent a whole year trying to find a way to defeat the city of Sardis. And once again we see that a soldier discovered that secret pathway into the city.

Again, at night, a group of soldiers made their way through this pathway into the city and once again everyone was asleep. No one was guarding the city! They did not learn their lesson the first time that they were captured!

Interestingly enough, after this there was a saying that the city of Sardis was taken as a ***“thief in the night.”***

And Jesus picks up on that, on their history and He will use it to warn the church of Sardis that if they do not watch for His return and repent of their sins, their apathy and overconfidence, He would come upon them **“as a thief”** and catch them off guard! (Revelation 3:3)

We will pick up on that more as we read on.

In 133 B. C. the city came under Roman control, which was not such a bad thing.

You see, the city did suffer a catastrophic earthquake in 17 A. D., which destroyed the city of Sardis.

But, with the help of the Roman Emperor Tiberius and a very generous financial assistance, they were able to rebuild!

Of this city, Barclay makes this observation. He wrote, ***“Sardis was a city of peace, not the peace won through battle, but the peace of the man whose dreams are dead and whose mind is asleep, the peace of lethargy and evasion.”***

That was the weakness of the church, as we will see!

Also, as it is with all pagan cities, not just most, their morals were not much to brag about.

In fact, the reputation of Sardis was well known as Herodotus, the Greek historian said.

The citizens of this city had a reputation for lax moral standards and open licentiousness or decadence.

Of this Barclay wrote, *“The great characteristic of Sardis was that, even on pagan lips, Sardis was a name of contempt. Its people were notoriously loose living, notoriously pleasure-and-luxury loving. Sardis was a city of decadence.”*

Not something you would want to advertise about your city if you were a Christian, but if you weren't, maybe they were proud of it!

The primary god they worshiped was the goddess Cybele, which is the same goddess worshiped in Ephesus as Artemis, which was her Greek name or Diana, which was her Roman name.

This temple to the goddess Cybele had its main columns some 60 feet high and 6 feet in diameter according to the ruins that are still in existence today.

Again, keep in mind that this goddess was worshiped with all kinds of sexual immorality and impurity.

But the light of the Gospel pierced the darkness of this city, probably as Paul ministered in Ephesus. We are told in Acts 19:10, **“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”**

Interestingly enough, the city of Sardis was called *“a cemetery of a thousand hills.”*

The reason for that is seven miles away you could see this huge acropolis that rose above the city and on the top was the Temple of Cybele!

Also, there was a cemetery that had hundreds of mounds filled with tombstones that you could also see from miles away. I guess death was a way of life in Sardis.

Again, keep that in mind because it will play a role in what Jesus says about this church!

Also, one of the most prominent leaders in the church there in Sardis was Melito. He was an apologist or one who defended the Christian faith. He was also the bishop or the senior pastor of the church in Sardis toward the end of the second century.

So historically speaking the church of Sardis did exist during John's day.

But today the church is gone. All that remains is a small Muslim city called Sart. I guess you can say that the city *DIED!*

Prophetically speaking, where does the church of Sardis fit into the church age?

We have seen the church of Ephesus represent the church that left their first love or the apostolic church that lasted from the start of the church to about 63 A. D.

Then we came to the church of Smyrna or the persecuted church from around 63 A. D. to 312 A. D. where some 5 to 6 million Christians were put to death for their faith by Rome.

From there we move to the church of Pergamos or the church of compromise as they married the state or became part of the state. What persecution couldn't do, weaken the church, this compromise did! This church lasted from around 312 A. D. to 590 A. D.

And last week we saw that compromise led to corruption within the church as we came to the church of Thyatira, which we said represented the Roman Catholic Church with their idea of salvation being Jesus plus works, that it is a continual sacrifice. In other words, the work of Christ is not completed but our good works need to be done also to be saved. And this covered a period of time from 590 A. D. to 1517 A. D., almost 1000 years of corruption and a period known as the dark ages!

But as dark as those times were, there were those who held onto the truths of God found in the Word of God.

And so, from the dark ages we moved into a period of time known as the Renaissance, which literally means ***“rebirth.”***

It is the name given to the great awakening of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating with the sixteenth century reformation in Europe!

You see, even back then God was stirring the hearts of good Catholic people who were seeing the errors of the church.

Back in 1330 A. D. a man by the name of John Wycliffe was born in England. As he grew up, he became an Oxford scholar and a Catholic priest. But he recognized the need to do away with the papal edicts and get back to the Word of God, the Bible. Because of his public questioning of the doctrines of transubstantiation and continual sacrifice, he was excommunicated by the powers of Rome, the Roman Catholic Church.

Now they were not able to get their hands on Wycliffe, but they were able to get their hands on his disciples, John Hus and Hugh Latimer, who were burned at the stake for their faith.

But their deaths did not put out the fire, it only fanned the flames as the reformation began to burn throughout England.

Then, in Eisleben, Saxony Germany, in the year 1483 a coal miner and his wife gave birth to a baby boy they named Martin.

His father said, ***“This boy is not to follow me into these mineshafts.”***

Martin studied Law at the university. Then, one day during a violent storm, Martin cried out to St. Anne, who was the patron saint of coal miners and he said, ***“If you save me from this lightning, I will become a monk.”***

He was spared and he enrolled in the seminary and got his doctorate in theology in two years.

The problem that just tormented Martin was he realized he could never be righteous enough to earn God's favor. Sounds a lot like Paul the apostle!

Because of that he would regularly beat himself. He would sleep out in the cold. He would go and fast for long periods of time and yet, none of this helped him.

He longed for but never had the reality of God in his life or that he was righteous before God.

Martin decided to travel to Rome to sort this all out, because he truly desired to have a close relationship with God and he figured that the Pope would be able to help him sort this all out.

I do love our God because, as the Scriptures say regarding people finding Him, "**And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.**" Jeremiah 29:13.

He was serious about finding God, this man called Martin.

On his way to Rome, he became very sick with a fever and had to recover in an Alpine monastery.

While he was there one of the monks noticed the struggles that Martin was having and suggested to him to read the book of Habakkuk.

So he did and as he was reading the Word of God, his eyes were opened to the truth and he cried out, "*That's it! If I'm going to be just, it's not because of what I do or who I am, but by faith in what God's done and who He is.*"

What did he read that opened his eyes to this truth?

In Habakkuk 2:4 we are told, "**Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.**"

I love that. Paul said, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” Romans 10:17.

May we not forget that point. Faith comes by hearing God’s Word and as we hear and read God’s Word it is opened up to us by the Spirit of God!

But that is not the end of the story for Martin.

As he continued his travels to Rome, when he got there, he was shocked at what he saw. He was shocked by the abuses that were going on within the church, the hypocrisy of the church there in Rome.

He saw the teachings of the church as wrong, especially the indulgences.

One writer said, “*Some of those who sold indulgences encouraged people to believe that they were actually buying forgiveness of sins for themselves or for others when they bought an indulgence.*”

How sad and it is still going on today!

And so, disappointed at what he saw, he returned to Germany and then, on October 31, 1517, this man known as Martin Luther posted on the church door in Wittenberg Germany his 95 Thesis, which nearly all related to indulgences and struck at the authority of the Pope.

Three and a half years later Rome responded with these words, “***Retract or die.***”

Not many words but Martin Luther knew they were not going to accept what he was saying and by 1521, as his teachings were growing, as people were excited to hear the truths of God found in the Word of God, the Diet of Worms was convened and they gave Luther another chance to recant his words, but he responded by saying, “***Here I stand. I can do no other, so help me God.***”

And as this reformation was growing it gave rise to the Jesuits, who were an order that were dedicated to enforcing papal power. They were kind of the Mafia of the church!

Of this we are told, *“Of the four million people living in Bohemia in 1600, 80 percent were ‘Protest-ants’ – sympathizers of the Reformation. Two years later, the population of Bohemia numbered a mere eight hundred thousand. Austria and Hungary were also early hotbeds of the Reformation.”*

What happened to all those people?

The Jesuits did their job, but they were killing the people of God and you can see why these countries today are mostly Catholic!

This persecution by the Roman Catholic Church against the Reformation movement was the worst bloodshed in history against the church until our day when Muslims are putting to death thousands of Christians for their faith!

It is not a pretty picture, but this corrupt church was trying to stamp out those who loved the Lord and loved His Word, the Bible.

They tried to stop those that were promoting these truths from Luther in Germany to Zwingli in Switzerland and Knox in Scotland – as they called for the people to return to the Word of God, the Bible!

And this Reformation, in spite of this persecution, spread like fire across Europe. And so, *prophetically* speaking, we see this Reformation covered a period of time from 1517 A. D. to 1750 A. D.

One of the key forerunners of the Reformation was Bohemian John Hus. He devoted himself to Scripture and taught that Christ, not the Pope, is the Head of the Church.

In 1414, Hus was called before the Council of Constance to defend his beliefs. He was convicted of heresy and sentenced to be burnt at the stake unless he recanted.

But Hus stood firm. On the day of his martyrdom, he said: ***“God is my witness that the evidence against me is false. In the truth of the gospel I have written, taught, and preached, today I will gladly die.”*** As the crackling flames consumed him, he joyfully sang a hymn.

William Tyndale, first translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into English, making a Bible for the common people. That was illegal to do in England.

In 1535 he was betrayed by a friend, taken prisoner to Vilvoorde Castle where he continued to work on his translation.

He was unable to finish his work because he was sentenced to die a heretic’s death: strangulation and burning at the stake. On October 6, 1536, he cried out his last words.

Before he died one man cried out, ***“We are better to be without God’s laws than the popes.”***

And Tyndale’s response is one of the most famous in church history. He replied back to this man, ***“If God spares me, ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures than you do.”***

He did not fail for his friend, Miles Coverdale, by command of King Henry VIII had approved a new English Bible and 70% of Tyndale’s work was in this.

And in 1604 James I approved a new translation of the Bible into English and Tyndale’s work became the basis for 90 percent of the King James Version!

And look at the many Bibles we have today, his work was not in vain!

Now the ***title*** or the ***description of Jesus*** that He takes for Himself out of Revelation chapter 1 is very significant for this church as it was for all the churches He wrote to.

Jesus is described as the one having **“the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.”**

As we have seen in our study of this book so far, the number seven in the Bible speaks of completeness and thus, it is speaking of the complete working or the manifold working of the Holy Spirit.

The seven stars, according to Revelation 1:20 are the pastors of these churches that Jesus is writing to. And here He is specifically writing to the pastor of the church in Sardis.

Now, to sum this up, I believe Jesus is saying that it is the Spirit of God that gives life to this church and any church, any believer. For without the Spirit of God, the church is dead!

This is true in our own lives. Without the Spirit of God in us we are not saved, we are spiritually dead.

That is what Paul said in Romans 8:9, **“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”**

And once we are saved, we need the Spirit of God to empower us for the work we are to do. That is the problem in the church today, they are trying to run the church like a business instead of allowing the church, as a living organism, to move by the power of God’s Spirit!

Warren Wiersbe summed it up like this. He wrote, *“All of the church’s man-made programs can never bring life, any more than a circus can resurrect a corpse. The church was born when the Spirit of God descended on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and its life comes from the Spirit.”*

Absolutely. Are we going to try to accomplish the work of God in the flesh or the Spirit?

A. W. Tozer wrote, *“If you took the Holy Spirit out of the early church 90% of what they were doing would have come to a halt. If you take the Holy Spirit out of the work of the church today 10% would come to a stop.”*

How true and how sad that is!

The church of Jesus Christ in America has moved away from the power of the Holy Spirit to build God’s Church and has moved more towards man and a reliance on man to do the work of God.

Listen again to what Tozer wrote, *“It is scarcely possible, in most places, to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God. One can only conclude that God’s professed children are bored with Him, for they must be wooed to meetings with the stick of stripped candy in the form of religious movies, games and refreshments.”*

Sad but true as you look at what draws people to churches today and for the most part, it is not Jesus!

Now we don’t see a *commendation* for this church. You will not find Jesus speak of commending them, but He does say that He knows their works.

Make no mistake about it, Jesus knows all, everything we do, even before we do it. So I truly doubt if He is commending them here.

The *rebuke* is interesting. They saw themselves as alive; they had a name for themselves. But Jesus saw this church as being dead!

What does that mean?

It means that they were resting on their past laurels, their past achievements, they were not completing anything they had started, and they were dead, there was no life in them!

All that was left was an empty shell of what it once was!

Interestingly enough, historians give us some insight to this. They tell us that you could walk into the city of Sardis back then and you could hear people talking about their past accomplishments, their past glory!

This is exactly what we see here with the Protestant church!

And if you think I am going too far with this, then you need to open your eyes and take a good look at what is happening in the Protestant church!

And what I mean by the Protestant church is that they had separated themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, at least they did when this movement began!

Look at the Protestant church throughout Europe today and you will see beautiful churches, and you know how you will see them?

When you take a tour of them, because otherwise they are empty, many don't go to church in Europe anymore. They are a museum you might say, lifeless!

In fact, in Sweden, Denmark and Norway it has been estimated that only 3% of the population attends church each week!

What happened?

The Reformation movement was badly needed to confront the corruption within the Roman Catholic Church, but what began with life ended in death.

Think of it like this.

There was a man, like Martin Luther and others who wanted reformation, wanted to get back to the truths of God found in the Word of God.

Then the man created a movement or a mission.

But then, years later, it becomes a monument to the man who was used by God, who was involved in a great work of God.

And folks, a monument is dead, it is cold, it is lifeless and that is like many churches today.

It is like cutting the head off a chicken, it may run around for a while because it does not know it is dead, but it will finally just fall over!

Any work of God, if it looks to what it has done in the past and is not open to what God is doing now, will see the work come to an end!

I think Barclay sums it up very nicely for us as he says, the church ***“is in danger when it begins to worship its own past. . . . When it is more concerned with forms than with life. . . . When it loves systems more than it loves Jesus Christ. . . . When it is more concerned with material things than spiritual things.”***

The Protestant Reformation was a great move of God, and it was badly needed, but it became stalled because of tradition and apathy.

They came out of a corrupt system, but never far enough.

You see, it did begin with a man who had a vision.

That led to a great movement.

But tragically, like many good movements, they became very mechanical, like a machine where they prepackage God.

And it all turned into a monument; hard, cold, and lifeless!

Again, Barclay makes this comment, ***“The church of Sardis was at peace – but it was the peace of the dead.”***

Interestingly enough, when Jesus says they have a **“name”** He uses the Greek word ONOMA, which is where we get our English word ***“denomination”*** from.

Look at the traditional main line Protestant denominations like Lutherans, Presbyterians, Wesleyans, Methodists, Congregationalists and how they are wary of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And folks, as you start chipping away at God's Word, what you believe, apathy sets in and not only do the individuals become cold and lifeless, but so does the church!

That is not to say that every one of these churches is evil or dead, but when you begin to look at these denominations and see what they believe, I think the denominations are in trouble!

And what we see, like the church in Sardis, they speak of their past glory, their past heritage and that is all that they can speak on because they are dead and nothing new is happening or can happen if they remain dead!

And folks, God does have His faithful remnant even here in Sardis, as we shall see.

But let me show you where we are at today with just one story. You see, America is just as bad as England in regard to the Protestant church. We are told,

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has taken more steps in its rapid decline into apostasy as it appointed the denominations first transgender bishop.

Megan Rohrer was elected on 8 May to lead the Sierra Pacific Synod of what is the largest Lutheran institution in the United States with 3.3 million baptized members and over 8,900 local congregations.

The newly elected bishop will oversee around 200 local congregations in Northern California and Northern Nevada in the next six years, starting in July.

It was also announced that the bishop-elect should be addressed with the pronouns "they/their".

According to this group, there are over 390 queer ministers in the ELCA at this point.

The ELCA is known for its strong theological shift in the last 15 years towards an “inclusive” theology, except when it comes to Israel.

Last year the Danish Bible Society, which is run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, came under heavy fire for the Danish “translation” of the Bible that virtually wipes out “Israel” from the New Testament.

In the Greek New Testament, the word “Israel” occurs more than 60 times, however it is found only once in the new Danish version called Bibelen 2020. That’s right, just once. And that one occurrence is a direct quote from an Old Testament verse. Otherwise, “Israel” is gone.

The reason for this the society argues is that Christian readers must not connect “Israel” in the New Testament with the nation of Israel today. The ELCA has long promoted the idea of “replacement theology”, also called supersessionism, which essentially teaches that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan. Adherents of replacement theology believe the Jews are no longer God’s chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel.

- <https://bit.ly/2RXtFPA>

They have died!

How can I say that?

Because they are going against what the Word of God has said and thus, they are dead to the Spirit of God!

And I can go on, but you get the idea. What started as a move of God has now become dead! In fact, we now see the Protestant church saying that the Reformation went too far, and they are now embracing the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, the One World Religion is coming together!

One last point before we move on and that is this.

I want to be clear on this. Any move of God can turn into stone when it becomes rigid in tradition and unyielding to the Holy Spirit. God is showing us by His Spirit how to reach people here in Manitowoc, yes, He is fully aware of us here.

Now, what if we, as part of Calvary Chapel depended on what was done in the past to reach the people here in Manitowoc. We would have to reach out to the hippies because back in the 1970's that is what Calvary Chapel did.

Now I am not good at guessing, but I don't think there are too many hippies in Manitowoc today. Maybe one that I have seen.

Thus, God will give to us fresh ways to minister to people and to show them the love of Jesus.

But if you become rigid, unyielding to God's Spirit, hard like a stone and drowning in tradition, you won't go anywhere.

I have never seen a monument move or walk on its own, have you?

Of course not, we need to be alive in Christ and as we are people will be drawn to Him!

VERSES 2-3

Here we see Jesus give the church of Sardis a five-fold *exhortation*.

First of all, to the city that fell to the enemy because it was not watchful, He admonishes them ***TO BE WATCHFUL*** or to stay awake, pay attention to what is going on.

They were not listening to what God was saying, these people came out of church as they went in – unchanged!

It is hard to talk to dead people, they just don't seem to respond and the giver and sustainer of life, Jesus Christ is telling them to **WAKE-UP!**

Secondly, they were to **STRENGTHEN THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN** because the little life that remained was about to go out, it was about to die!

You need to fan those embers to re-ignite that fire so that it can burn brightly once again.

Thirdly, they were to **REMEMBER WHAT THEY HAD RECEIVED AND HEARD**, where they had come from.

Go back to the beginning when you were on fire for the Lord and do those things that you did then. Don't dwell on them but do them!

And here is the thing. If you have to reach back into the past and you say things like, "**I remember when . . .**" then you are in trouble because you are saying God is not doing anything now. And God is not dead, but are you, spiritually speaking?

The fourth point is to **HOLD FAST** or to get back into the Word of God and hold onto the truths of God.

You see, God's Word is living and powerful and it is able to transform our lives if we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us.

And the fifth point is to **REPENT** or to have a change of mind that will lead to a change in your behavior, a change in your actions.

We are not just saying, "**I'm sorry**" and then going out and doing the same thing over and over again.

You agree with God that sin is wrong, and you are going to change and by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you, it can be done!

The **warning** is simple; if you refuse to obey the Lord is going to judge you!

And it is possible that what the Lord is saying here is if you don't have a relationship with Him, this church, these people will be cast into the Tribulation Period, which is a time of God's judgment being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world!

And look at what many of these Protestant churches believe today about the Rapture, they deny it.

Many of them believe in Kingdom Now theology, which says that we are going to prepare the earth for the Lord to come back by making the nations of the world Christian!

We see the Protestant church uniting with the Roman Catholic Church and other cults to form the end times one world religion!

And Jesus is saying - ***WAKE UP!***

You see, Jesus never comes to His true Church as a thief. He comes as a Bridegroom!

He only comes to the dead, apostate church as a thief, and that's who He is addressing in the Church of Sardis, those who are spiritually dead (religious unbelievers), not the few who were spiritually alive (born-again).

Remember what I told you about Cyrus and the Persians invading Sardis. They did so under the cover of night. Climbing up to the top of that 1500-foot hill and reaching the plateau, and the city, they encountered no resistance because there was no one guarding the way. Their complacency, their lethargy, allowed the Persian army to walk into the city before anyone knew what was happening.

And remember what was said of Cyrus and his army. That their invasion came like a ***“Thief in the night, before anyone had time to put his shoes on.”***

Jesus wants us to be on guard. He wants us to be looking for His return.

And I truly believe that if you are walking with the Lord, there is a joy in your heart and an anticipation in your soul for His return.

This day will not overtake us, but to those who are spiritually dead, even though they may be in the church, they will be unaware, they will not be ready because they will not be looking!

And like the church of Thyatira, this church will also go through the Tribulation Period if they do not repent of their sins and get right with God.

This church is also in existence in the last days!

VERSES 4-5

The name “**Sardis**” means “*remnant*” and there were those, even in Sardis that were true believers in Jesus and lived accordingly.

You see, applying the blood of Christ to our lives saves us; we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone!

Outside of Christ our righteousness is like filthy rags but as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

Now, our garments are as white as snow, we are holy before God because of what He has done and not because of what we have done!

And it is easy to look at denominations and come down hard upon them, but we must also remember that this was a work of God that ended up dying and yet, there are the faithful who remain in these churches!

One historian gives us this insight. He wrote,

Protestantism has produced some great men, and I will mention some, although I am going to leave out a great many.

I think of the Reformation leaders: Martin Luther and John Calvin stand out, head and shoulders, above all others.

Of course, there was John Knox, a great man of God who did so much for Scotland. Later on, there was John Bunyan, the great Baptist who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, which tells of his own life and how God marvelously saved him.

John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist church. God marvelously saved that man and used him in such a way that he is given credit by historians for saving England from the revolution which destroyed France and prevented it from ever becoming a first-rate nation again.

Wesley has been called the greatest Englishman of all. He certainly did more for that country than any other Englishman who has ever lived.

Then there was a man like John Moffat, the Scotchman who went to Africa, and David Livingstone who first opened up that continent. William Carey went to India and later was followed by a sickly young man by the name of Henry Martyn. Finally, I always like to include Titus Coan, who led the greatest revival since Pentecost out in the Hawaiian Islands.

Protestantism has had some names who didn't defile themselves and were true to the Word of God. There are quite a few such men living today, but I wouldn't dare to begin to name them because of the fact that I would be apt to leave some out who ought to be included.

Protestantism has certainly produced some great men of God. Romanism did the same thing, even during the Dark Ages, but that does not mean to commend the system. The system of Romanism and the system of Protestantism, as they are revealed in the great denominations which have departed from the faith, to me are the organizations which will eventually bring in the apostate church because they have departed from the great tenets and doctrines of the Christian faith.

- Source Unknown

Now the *promise* is for those who overcome, they will walk with Jesus because their garments are clean, their names are written in the book of life and Jesus will confess their names, our names before the Father!

Now what is this Book of Life?

In the ancient world a King kept a register of his citizens. When a man would commit a crime against the state or when he died, his name would be removed or blotted from the register.

I believe every person's name is written in the Book of Life. All have the same chance of entering into the Kingdom of God.

No one is refused as long as they are wearing white garments, obtained through Jesus Christ.

If you try to enter any other way, or dressed in any other garment than the white robes of righteousness that Christ gives to us, then you will be rejected from entering in. Your name will be *blotted out of the Book of Life* or erased from the Book of Life!

If you doubt that, listen to the Parable of the Marriage Feast found in Matthew chapter 22, beginning in verse 2 where Jesus tells us, **“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”** Matthew 22:2-14.

If you are not clothed in the garments that He has provided, you will not enter in, that is just the way it is!

But if you are clothed in His garments, well, I like the way the Kenneth Wuest put it as he wrote, *“Your names have been written in heaven and are on permanent record there.”*

What a joy that should bring to each of us. What a joy that Jesus, our Advocate, will go before the Father and tell Him we are one of His, purchased by His blood!

VERSE 6

To this church that had a name, was powerful in their past actions, their past accomplishments, Jesus is telling them to *“Wake-up!”*

He wants them and us to listen to what the Spirit of God is saying and repent of your sins. If you don’t repent judgment is coming because you rejected the life-giving power of the Spirit of God in your life.

You see, don’t leave here this evening as you came in, unchanged! But be transformed by the power of God. Paul put it this way in Romans 12:1-2, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

Make no mistake about it, the Protestant Reformation was badly needed but it didn’t go far enough, and it eventually fizzled out. Something that was born of God and had light and life became dark and dead as the church became formal, ritualistic and worldly.

It is not enough for people to hear how it was back in the *“good old days”* but what is God doing now!

But many would rather hold onto dead orthodoxy, dead tradition and they love it because they are spiritually dead!

Keep in mind Jesus had nothing good to say to this church, which started out so well. It is a sad commentary on a work that started out so well and how easily it can become cold, hard, lifeless!

Let me share this with you about the Life Saving Station. We are told,

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea.

With no thought for themselves, they went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, and new crews were trained.

The little lifesaving station grew.

Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Now, the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely because they used it now as sort of a club also.

Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work.

The lifesaving motif still prevailed in this club's decoration and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club initiations were held.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half drowned people. They were dirty and sick and some of them had black skin, and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club.

Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station.

But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives of all those various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast.

So, they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old.

It evolved into a club and yet another lifesaving station was founded.

History continued to repeat itself and if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore.

Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

- Life Saving Station

May that never be the case here at Calvary. May we see ourselves and this church as a lifesaving station to bring people in who are drowning in their sin and rescue them in Jesus!

God is not going to be impressed with our building, our dress, but what are we doing with what He has given to us, are we reaching out to people, are they seeing the joy of the Lord in us and desiring to have what we have?

Or have we become dead in our walk with the Lord, dead to the Spirit and thus lifeless?

That is something we have to look at in our own lives and constantly be aware of in this church!

Let me leave you with these words from Paul in Philippians 3:12-14 to comfort and exhort you, as he tells us, **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

May we keep pressing on, staying alert and moving forward for the Lord and drawing close to Him!

Be on fire for the Lord and let people come and watch you burn!