



Historic Situation	Name Interpretation	Positive Affirmation	Corrective Exhortation	Eternal Motivation	Prophetic Revelation	Personal Application
Ephesus First Church	Let Go/Leave Darling/First Love	Perseverance Discernment	Left (not lost) First Love	Eat From the Tree of Life	Approximately 70AD to 170AD	Remember Repent and Repeat
Smyrna Persecution	Myrrh when it's Crushed is Fragrant	Rich in Poverty and Suffering	NONE	Receive the Crown of Life	Approximately 170AD to 312AD	Better not Bitter when Crushed
Pergamos Satan's Throne	Perverted/Adulterous Marriage Union	Remained True Didn't Renounce	Sexual/Spiritual Adultery/Idolatry	Hidden Manna and New Name	Approximately 312AD to 606AD	Purity not Adultery with the World
Thyatira Jezebel Doctrine	Continual Sacrifice	Love Faith Service Perseverance	Tolerate Deceptive Seductive Teachings	Authority Over the Nations	Approximately 606AD to The End	Bought at a Price as a Living Sacrifice
Sardis Rest on Laurels	Invincible Remnant	Hard Work Good Name	Wake Up and Watch Before it's too Late	Clothed in White Name in Book	Approximately 1520AD to The End	Be Watchful for The "Thief in the Night"
Philadelphia 2-Brothers Built	Brotherly Love	Little Strength kept God's Word/Name	NONE	Kept from the 7- Year Tribulation	Approximately 1750AD to The End	Known as Disciples by love for another
Laodicea Lukewarm Water	The Laity Ruled as the Diocese	NONE	Rich but Poor See but Blind Clothed but Naked	Sit with Jesus on His Throne	Approximately 1900AD to The End	Hot or Cold for and to Jesus

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

DAVID: We just wait for this time, Lord, when You come to take us home with You, Lord. We lift up this time to You, Lord, Father, all that You do in our lives, Lord. Keep our hearts and our minds always focused on You, Lord. And may Your word go out and never come back void, Lord. We lift You up and we thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. And good morning. Welcome. How are you doing?

[Congregation says, "Good!"]

Okay. You can be seated then. Glad you're here. Those of you online that are - joining us, we're glad that you are. Before we get started, I do want to mention though, that Tamayo Perry's Celebration of Life is today, on the North Shore. It will start at 3:30.

I want you to know that I've already talked with the pastor about going too long — because I know him — this service. If you're visiting, from, you know, off island, I will — I would love to meet you, but I do have to run after the pastor's done, which hopefully won't go very long. That'll give us enough time. And I need to get there, of course, in order to officiate the Celebration of Life.

But as I'm sure many of you know, Tamayo and his wife, Emilia, were part of our church and had been for a number of years. And we would just ask that you pray for Emilia, his wife. Pray for the North Shore, especially right now. This really came as a shock. And I truly believe with all my heart that God is going to use Tamayo's death to bring people to eternal life just because of the nature of his death and the shark attack. And he was so well known. And God's going to use that.

And so please pray. Pray for me. I, like the Apostle Paul, you know, he was so humbled to ask for prayer. I'm going to humble myself and ask for prayer like Paul, for boldness to preach the name of Jesus this afternoon. So please pray for me. It will start at 3:30. And please pray for the people of the North Shore.

All right. *Revelation Chapter 3*. Let's get to it. Our text is going to be *verses 1-6*. I'll have you stand if you're able. If not, where you're seated is just fine. You can follow along as I read. John is writing, but Jesus is dictating, inspired by the Holy Spirit, these seven literal letters to seven literal churches.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

And we now come to the church in Sardis, and we read *Revelation 3:1*. **“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of Him who holds the seven spirits of God [Hang on to that] and the seven stars. I know your deeds; [Your works] you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up!**

Strengthen [Verse 2] what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds [Works] complete in the sight of My God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Yet [Verse 4] you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with Me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the Book of Life but will acknowledge his name before My Father and His angels. He [Verse 6] who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Let's pray. If you would join with me, please. Father, thank You. We have before us, Lord, an interesting letter to this very interesting church. And it's for that reason that we would ask for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher and our guide as we navigate our way through this letter and take - from it all that You have for us in this letter, that which You would have us to hear with our ears to hear and see with our eyes to see that which You would speak into our lives so that we would apply it to our lives. Because certainly that's why we have this letter to this church in our Bibles.

So, Lord, will You speak very directly, clearly? Please speak clearly, Lord, so clear that a fool could not err thereof into our lives, in and through this letter to this church. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen and amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you today about the deadly danger of self-reliance in the life of a Christian, a Christian who operates in their own strength, the strength of their own flesh.

This is what happened to the Christians there in this church in Sardis. They had relied on their selves, their good name, their good reputation. It seems they had a good name at one time. They were known for being alive and growing and glowing and going and — is there another one? You fill in the blanks.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

But apparently, as they saw themselves, it was the polar opposite of how God saw them. They saw themselves because they relied on themselves as being alive. God saw them as being dead. It's my hope and prayer that all of us, myself included — I hope you know that I always include myself because I cannot impart to you that which I do not possess. I gotta — translated: I gotta own this before I can deliver this, okay?

So just so you know, it's your fault - that I have the week that I have before I deliver a sermon like this, okay? I'm not upset. Just, it is what it is. But seriously and sincerely, I do hope and pray that all of us would allow the Holy Spirit unfettered access to those of us who have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, His church today.

I'll start by quickly referencing the map from our overview, and I do so to give you a snapshot of this very interesting city and church. In fact, I would even encourage you in your own time if you want to do some searching online, you'll see the remains, the ruins of this ancient city of Sardis.

It is absolutely fascinating. It was located on this steep hilltop with sheer cliffs. When I say sheer cliffs — by the way, I tried to get a photo, but they're all copyrighted, and the last thing I need is — I need that like I need a hole in head. And I've already got enough holes in my head. But you go online, you look at these photos of ancient Sardis, 90 degrees straight up and down, sheer cliffs on three sides.

And on the fourth side — check this out — they had a moat. None of the other cities had a moat. I mean, you might say this city is secure. Nobody is getting up here. I mean, we're safe. No way. Thousand feet high, these three steep sheer cliffs on three sides of Sardis and then the moat on the other side.

I mean, if anybody's going to get in, they're going to have to get through that moat with all of those alligators and, you know, crocodiles. And we also put piranhas in there. That's no extra charge.

Now, Pastor, are we getting a geography lesson here or a history lesson? Why is this important? You'll see. This is going to be very germane to our understanding of this letter as we'll see next. Pictured here is also the chart from our overview which shows how that the Sardis church fancied themselves as being invincible.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

You know, the name is the nature. They relied on their own strength, their own reputation, their good name. They, as we would say, rested on their laurels and they fancied themselves as being invincible. I mean, I would too. Sheer cliffs and a moat.

So they were at rest with this false sense of security in which they relied upon themselves. And what would happen is they would let their guard down. And this letting their guard down would lead to their downfall just as a city within the Empire of Rome, but more importantly, as a church there in Sardis.

Check this out. Not only was Sardis situated on top of this seemingly impenetrable cliff, with this moat on the other side, this was a place that nobody could get in and out of, and that would be the very reason that it would fall. Here's how. You would think they would come by way of the moat, right, as I mentioned. But those steep cliffs were actually made of clay, and they began to erode and form cracks.

That's kind of like our Christian lives left unattended. We are clay, vessels of clay, earthen vessels. And so isn't it true that when we think we stand strong, as Paul writes to the Corinthians in his first epistle, *Chapter 10:13*.

Be careful if you think you stand secure, you're self-reliant. You're secure atop the steep cliffs. You're fine. Be careful if you think you're safe and secure and you stand, lest you fall. And this is why it is — and ask Peter about this. Actually don't. It won't matter when we get there anyway. But we tend to fall in the areas of our greatest strengths. Why?

Because those are the areas that we think, yeah, no, that's not where I'm vulnerable. We shore up our areas of weakness, and the enemy is more than happy to have us do so because while we're shoring up that area of weakness, we're neglecting the areas of strength that we think we stand firm and strong in. And then that's where he comes and attacks. And that's exactly what happened to Sardis.

So here's these cracks in these - steep cliffs, and it begins to erode. And the cracks are now going to be exposed to their enemies who would then access it. It happened twice. In the year 549 BC. — go online. This is so fascinating — a soldier on watch fell asleep. His helmet dropped over one of the steep cliffs. I guess he had — he was assigned to that one side that night. When he woke up, he realizes his helmet had fell over.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

So he goes down to retrieve it. How does he go down to retrieve it? Using one of the cracks in that cliff that had eroded to get his helmet before his boss found out. Well, unbeknownst to him, the Persians were watching, and they discovered that he had used one of these cracks in the clay to climb down and get his helmet. And they wasted no time in using that same path in a surprise attack to conquer what Sardis believed could not be conquered.

Fast forward 335 years later, in the year 214 B.C., the same exact thing happened, and the city was taken in the same exact way. You know those sayings: “History repeats itself,” “History teaches us that nothing is learned from it,” and “Those who don't learn from it are doomed to repeat it.”

I actually hate it when people quote these sayings because it's just doom. And they were doomed. They were dead. They thought they were alive. They were living the life. You have no idea, Sardis, you're dead. You don't even know it. And this is why we have this letter written this way.

Such was the case with this church in Sardis, in the spiritual sense. They rested assured, slept safely and securely, giving no thought, no need. Because who's gonna — who's gonna scale those walls? Who's gonna cross that moat? Nah, we're good. No. Jesus said you're not good. You're dead. Wake up before it's too late.

Enter the text before us today in this letter that Jesus has John write and not only write but sent to this church to warn them. Why is He going to warn them? Because He loves them. Why does the Lord warn us ahead of time? Because He loves us too much, so much that He doesn't want us to needlessly suffer unnecessarily the consequences of our own folly. As with all seven letters to all seven churches, Jesus has John use specific wording applying to that specific church.

I know I mentioned this. I'll just say it quickly again because it's germane to our understanding. You cannot send the letter written to the church of Sardis to Laodicea. It doesn't work. They would have went, huh? They wouldn't have got it.

No, He wrote this letter specifically to this church saying these specific words, because they would have got it. They would have understood why Jesus had John write what he wrote, given their past history.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

Remember now, this is about 95 A.D. They've already known the history of their city, Sardis, how it fell twice. Here they're thinking they're self-assured, rest assured, relying on their own strength, the energy of their own flesh, and not just as a city, but as a church.

So Jesus is now calling them out on it, putting His finger on it. What does He put his finger on? Their false sense of security. That's where it starts. And then it leads to this self-confidence, self-reliance which lulls us into a spiritual sleep and could cost us our life if we don't wake up. I want to approach this letter and teach it by sharing with you three ways — I went back and forth on this.

I'm like, man, there's just so much here, Lord. I want to — I want to highlight and emphasize that which would be of benefit to us. And I won't look at anybody when I say this because I'm speaking for myself. I have a Ph.D. in self-reliance, relying on my own strength, my own savvy, leaning on my own understanding, trusting in my own, you know, knowledge and not the Lord. I'm very good. I mean, I could — I won't, but I could.

I could tell you just how good I am at doing things in my own strength, fighting spiritual battles with my own carnal weapons. I've got a — you should my armory of carnality at the ready. And the Lord's like, Well, how's that working out for you? Well, actually, it's not. I'm kind of like Sardis. Every time I just — I end up, you know, I fail, and I fall.

Well, why don't you repent? Which just means, by the way, just do a 180, turnaround.

Wake up. Repent. Strengthen that which remains. So I want to share three ways to avoid what I'll affection refer to as Sardis Christianity. Does that work? The Sardis Christian: three ways not to be — in fact, I should have retitled it: 'Three Ways to Not Be a Sardis Christian.' Because believe you me, you don't want to be a Sardis Christian, because the Sardis Christian does not rely on the Holy Spirit.

And that's our first one in *verse 1*. Their reliance was on self, their own strength, their past, their history, their own wisdom, their own knowledge. And this is why, right out of the chute, Jesus identifies Himself using this reference from Chapter 1, as He does with all the letters, only this time He draws upon from Chapter 1 this picture of Him as the seven-fold work of the Holy Spirit. Stay with me. This is really important.

He has John write, **“These are the words of Him who holds the seven spirits of God.”**

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

Don't get messed up on that. Hang on. Meaning the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit. And I highlight 'work.' Why? Because He just got done saying, "I know your works." I know your work. But it's not the work of the Holy Spirit. It's your work. You're doing the work. The Holy Spirit's not doing the work. You're relying on yourself to do the work. You're not relying on the Holy Spirit to do the work.

And that's why He presents Himself as the one who holds the seven spirits of God. One thing that probably is becoming apparent here is the conspicuous absence of any commendation from the Lord to this church. Did you notice that? All — even Laodicea was commended.

But this church, no commendation. I mean, the closest we get to is — I don't think it's a commendation. I think it's a rebuke. I know your works. I know that changes the complexion of it. You got, I know your works, like, you know, good job. I know your works. I know what you're doing. I know how hard you're working. No, no, no. It's more like this: I know what you're doing. Repent because you're *[You're]* doing the work. You need the work of the Holy Spirit, not your work.

And that's why He points this out. I know your deeds. I know your work. By the way, interesting — just a side note. In the original language of the Greek New Testament, this word for works or deeds that some of your translations render, is the Greek word *ergon*, from which we get our English word *energy*. Did you connect those dots?

Sardis, Sardis Christian, you're living your Christian life in your own energy, the energy of your own strength. It's your energy, your work, not the Holy Spirit. So we need to correct this before it's too late. And you need to repent. And now it needs to be the work/energy of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit, not your flesh, not yourself. In other words, they were relying on their own energy instead of relying on the Holy Spirit. It's an either/or proposition. It's not both. It's kinda like, no, I'm relying on the Lord. But there are some times when I'm, you know, I kind of rely...

No, no, no, come on. You're either relying on your own energy and strength — which, by the way, the Christian to be pitied the most is the one who tries to live the Christian life in their own strength. The only way to live a holy life is by the Holy Spirit. Did you catch that?

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

I know this is deeply profound. Holy spirit = holy life. He empowers you, enables you, strengthens you if you prefer, gives you the energy and ability to live the holy life. Here we are. We make vows and promises to God. God, I promise I will never do it again. How's that working out for you, Sardis Christian?

Okay, I'm going to — I'm going to pick myself up by the bootstraps and I'm going to try to do better. No, you're going to fail. You know, you're going to leave church today — I'm not going to look at anybody again — you're going to leave church today.

Okay, Lord. You recommit to the Lord. I'm going to just I— I'm going to read my Bible more. I'm going to pray more. If you — please don't get that out of this sermon, please, especially after all the time I put into preparing it. I don't want you leaving here today, going, man, I need to be a better Christian. I need to pray more. I need to read my Bible more.

No. Stop! What you need is the Holy Spirit. Because He's the one that does the work for you instead of you. So you walk out of here and you make it to Kam Highway. You've already blown it, right? Am I right? Thank you. You're just saying that, so I'll move on.

So this explains — stay with me on this and think through this with me — this explains why, like with Sardis then, many churches now have to come up with gimmicks to make up for the lack of the presence of, the absence of the power of the Holy Spirit. See, if you would have went to this church, man, you would have walked out of there going, wow!

But it was them. I mean, I would imagine the worship team was just, I mean, these guys were really talented. I mean, they were really good. In fact, nobody was actually even worshipping. They were just gawking at the worship team and being entertained. I'm going to go further, so don't worry. It's going to get more...

And then the pastor would come up. Because now remember, they're not relying on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's not leading the church. In fact, dare I say, the Holy Spirit has been organized out of the church. We don't need the Holy Spirit because we got this. You see what kind of people we've got? We recruited some of the best talented musicians. We got some administrators. These guys, man, they can do an org chart. You should see our organization chart.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

Well, let me take a look. You look at the organization chart. Where's Jesus? Where's the Holy Spirit? He's not there. You organized the Holy Spirit right out of your org chart. How's that working out for you? No, we got this.

So the pastor gets up there. Now the Holy Spirit isn't there. So what's he going to do? He has to manufacture something to keep people's attention, at least for 20 minutes, because he can't go any longer than that. The only reason any pastor or someone can sit under the teaching of God's Word for any length of period of time is because the Holy Spirit's the one that gets the attention and keeps the attention. Thank God that's not in my job description. If that were in my job description, I'd fire myself.

[Laughter]

That's a crushing weight. Man, you gotta keep it moving. Keep it relevant. I hate that word. We're relevant. You're relevant? I thought the Bible was relevant, alive, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to cut between bone and marrow, soul and spirit.

Oh, wait, I forgot. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Forgive me. The Holy Spirit isn't in this. So you're doing this so... And the Holy Spirit's like, Listen, I'm only here to exalt the name of Jesus, not Sardis. So if you're going to promote your denomination, your affiliation, your name or whatever, anything other than the name of Jesus, I'm sorry, I just, I have to leave.

That's — I — that's not what I'm here for. I'm only here to exalt the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit's grieved and even quenched. And in effect, He's kicked out of the Sardis church and many a church today. So now the Holy Spirit's gone, and it's not Holy Spirit led. The Christians in that church are not Holy Spirit filled.

And so you've got to come up with something to fill the void. So you got to come up with gimmicks. Give away free iPads. You got to advertise. Advertise? As God is my witness, if you see anybody advertising for this church, would you please let our staff know? I mean, we're not going to — that sounded really you know — (Threatening voice) (Chuckle)

[Laughter]

You know what? I'm going to keep moving because I'm really digging myself into a puka. The Holy Spirit's nowhere to be found here. It's like, I guess you don't need Me. I guess you

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

can just — you just — you got this yourself. So see, ya; wouldn't want to be ya. And this is not a Sardis church in 95 A.D. This is the church today. How many churches are coming up with everything and anything just to get the people to come back. And so they keep the sermon short, and they take stuff out that, you know, people don't want to hear because, you know, we want them to come back.

So we're going to, you know, kind of soften it up, tone it down, you know, especially the part about you sinner! You need to repent! You know, we're going to take those words out. That's kind of — that's kind of offensive to people.

The Gospel is offensive. The Gospel is offensive. I'd rather offend you into heaven than flatter you into hell. I hope I offend you in Jesus' name. That was mean. I didn't have to say it like that, but I did.

[Laughter]

So the Holy Spirit's gone. Now they can — man, could you imagine the crushing weight that these guys were under having to rely on their own strength, absent the power of the Holy Spirit? Could this be why it is that Jesus would refer to Himself as the one who has the words of Him who holds the seven spirits of God?

This is a reference to *Isaiah 11:1-2*. Let me read them. Listen to this. **“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, [That's Jesus] and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. [That's Jesus] [Verse 2] [Watch this. Let's count together] The Spirit of the Lord [One] shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom [Two] and understanding, [Three] the Spirit of counsel [Four] and might, [Five] the Spirit of knowledge [Six] and of the fear of the Lord.” [Seven]**

That's the seven, complete work of the Holy Spirit. Don't you find it curious that Jesus would say to Sardis, I have found your work incomplete? Seven, the number of completion. It's incomplete. You need to complete the work. And the only way you're going to complete the work is if it's the work of the Holy Spirit.

And by the way, look what you forfeited in your self-reliance, Sardis Christian. Not you. Somebody else that's a Sardis Christian. You're forfeiting the Spirit of the Lord. Wow. That box doesn't get checked. The Spirit of wisdom. That alone.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

Oh, how many times do we as a staff and leadership and pastors pray, “Oh, God, oh God, give us the wisdom from above.” We don't know or have a clue what we're doing. People ask, well, what's your secret? I'm going, secret? What's your mission statement? I'm like, pff! I didn't know I was supposed to have one.

I think it's in *Acts 2*, by the way, *2:42*. What's your — what's your, strategy? Strategy? We don't have any of that. We just show up and stay out of God's way. It's His church. Holy Spirit, have Your way. We're going to stay out of Your way. Understanding.

How's this one? Understanding, wisdom and understanding; those two right there. I'm done if I don't have the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and understanding and the Spirit of counsel.

And how about this one: might, power, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. You mean to tell me that they had none of that? No. Jesus is. They had forfeited all of that, which explains the strength of verses 2-3 where Jesus has John write to them, **“Wake up!”**

This is what's known as real talk. I like real talk. The Lord is not pulling any punches, so to speak. Again, why? Is it because He's angry? No. Because He loves us. Think about it. You, with your own children, even grandchildren. If you didn't love them, you wouldn't bother. That's why you tell them this is going to hurt me a lot more than it's going to hurt you. Like they're going to believe that. And I'm disciplining you because I love you.

Okay, you know what? Love me less, and then we'll spare both of us of this misery and pain. But the writer of *Hebrews* says that God — this is how you know you're God's child when you get a spanking, because you're not going to spank somebody else's child. I wouldn't recommend it. But God disciplines those whom He loves. That's how you know you're a child of God because you're getting a spanking. That means you're His kid.

You're in the store, you — well, not nowadays. You'll get arrested. You see a parent disciplining their child, you go, that must be their child. Duh. You think? It's not somebody else's child. This is corrective and it needs to be. God is spanking them and us by extension, telling us to wake up before it's too late. **“Strengthen what remains before it dies.”**

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

In other words, you guys are on life support, man. And this is — the only reason I'm even writing you this letter. It's a love letter. I know it doesn't seem like it. It's pretty strong, but I'm — I love you so much that I need you to correct you.

And He says if you don't repent — and we talked about this in the Update. In fact, that was the title of the Update: 'A Thief in the Night.' This is an amazing idiom. We went in-depth into that First Service.

But He says if you don't repent, then you're going to be caught off guard because I'm going to come to you as a thief in the night. And believe you me, you don't want Me to come like that to you, catch you off guard at a time that you expect not, like your city had happened two times prior.

You were caught off guard as a thief in the night when the city was taken by surprise. That's the idiom of a thief in the night. That's why Jesus likens His coming to a thief in the night. It's going to catch many off guard who aren't watching, people who are sleeping.

You know when you're sleeping, you're not aware of anything around you, especially you deep sleepers. I already beat up on you guys First Service. I won't do it again. But you know, if you can get deep sleep, the Lord loves you.

There's a — I think it's Isaiah. The Lord gives sleep to those whom He loves. Which makes me wonder if He loves me anymore. But you know, you're such a deep sleeper. You could change the sheets and you wouldn't even wake up.

[Laughter]

No. For real, right? But when you're in that state of REM sleep, that deep sleep, you are totally unaware of anything going on around you. Conversely, you know, sometimes when you're kind of sort of not quite asleep. You're still kind of, you know, aware of what's, you know, going on, which probably describes the vast majority of us in this day in which we live with the stressful lives that we have.

But I mean, you're laying in bed and trying to fall asleep. And you get some sleep, and then you wake up, and you think about, you know, that bomb that just went off in your life and

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

you can't go back to sleep. And so that's why we don't like deep sleepers. I'm just saying, I just...

[Laughter]

So He's saying wake up because see, if you don't wake up and start watching, I'm going to catch you off guard by surprise, as a thief in the night would. I mean, you'll forgive the silly illustration, but I think you'll get it. You're never going to have a thief text you at 11 p.m., say, Hey, I'm your local thief. I'm planning to come at 2:00 a.m.

Would that be a good time for me to come as a thief in the night at 2:00 a.m.? Yeah. Bring it. I will be expecting you. Well, that's exactly what Jesus is saying. They were sleepy Christians. They needed to wake up, start watching, have this expectation that Jesus could come.

I want to spend the remainder of our time on this last one. I think you'll see why in *verses 4-6* because it deals with what I would argue is one of Satan's most successful and destructive lies from the pit of hell concerning the assurance of our salvation. Stay with me.

When Jesus says to them, Sardis, **"I will never blot out your name from the Book of Life."** Many have taken that completely out of context and twisted the scriptures and concluded falsely, playing right into the devil's hands, that it's possible, as a born-again Christian, to have your name blotted out of the Book of Life and that you can lose your salvation.

Please, I implore you. In fact, you know what? I just want to pray right now, real quick. Just let me pray. Father, the enemy doesn't want anyone to hear this. So will You focus our attention? No distraction. Nothing that would cause our minds to wander on this powerful point in conclusion to this letter. Please, Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Once you're saved, you're saved. When you're born-again, you cannot be un-born-again. Think about it like this. Again, you'll forgive the silly illustration. When my three living children were born, they could not be unborn. Though there were times where... Never mind. (Chuckling)

They're born. They're not going to be unborn. You know, birth announcement. How about the un-birth announcement? Another child unborn. What happened? If you're born-again,

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

you cannot be unborn. If you're saved, you cannot lose your salvation. Please, I'm begging you. I'm pleading with you. Don't let the enemy do that to you.

Yeah, but Pastor, you don't know what I did.

I don't care. I actually don't want to know. The Lord knows.

Yeah, but it wasn't good.

What, you think you caught the Lord by surprise as a thief in the night when you did that? What's God going to say? You know what? That's it. I've had it up to here with you! I've told you till I'm blue in the face. You even vowed to Me you would never do that again. You did that again. That's it. You're done!

Gets the whiteout and starts taking your name out of the Book of Life. How absurd is that? And by the way, wouldn't it stand to reason — can I just appeal to your logic? Am I yelling? I'm not angry.

But this is a very passionate problem, for lack of a better way of saying it. And I tell you, Christians, they're getting — they're breaking, they're breaking, their lives are breaking because of this demonic doctrine, the doctrine of devils.

Paul says to Timothy, **“Doctrines of demons.”** This is why Paul said, **“Put the helmet of salvation on.”**

That's the battleground is the mind to protect the mind from the enemy who will start putting doubts in your mind about whether or not you're still saved after what you did, again. No, the helmet of salvation protects the mind. You know, I was sharing First Service about, you know — I have utmost respect for those of you that are very health conscious. I'm not. If it looks good, it's going in my body. I'm eating it.

Some of you are very careful about what you let into your body, what you eat, you know. But what about our minds? We'll let anything into our minds. **“Take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ.”**

Listen, when Satan comes knocking with a lie like, you know, you might not be saved anymore. And you're like, whoa! Yeah. Because now you're outside the realm of the Spirit. Because remember, now you're not relying on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is gone. So

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

you're starting to rely on and lean on your own understanding. And it makes sense to you. And it kind of works because, yeah, you know, that was pretty bad. It does make sense that I would have possibly lost my salvation. But this is where I'm appealing to your logic. Then wouldn't it stand to reason that if that were the case, that you would have to work to re-earn it back? Well, if that's the case, then you better — don't do this — you better start ripping some pages out of your Bible.

Start with *Ephesians 2:8-9*. **“You're saved by grace through faith. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

Once you're saved, you're saved. Oh my goodness, if you could only — don't, don't read my inbox. But if you knew the kind of vitriolic emails that we get. All I have to do — and they use the acronym. They're so clever, these people. OSAS: Once saved, always saved. That's what my Bible says.

And this — when Jesus says, **“I will never,”** what does the word never mean? Never. **“I will never blot your name out of the Book of Life.”**

Maybe it was because they realized that they needed to repent. But they also needed in that repentance the assurance of their salvation. I'll tell you, that can be a game changer for some. I know early on in my walk with the Lord — I've been walking with the Lord for over 40 years, 42 years now. Whatever. Don't do the math. I was five when I got saved. That's a long time ago, now. I had hair then. But that's another story.

I mean, I remember early on in my walk, I mean, this was an issue for me, I have to admit, I have to confess. Because, you know, I'd been so ingrained with this notion that if I'm a good boy, then God's going to be good. But if I'm a bad boy, I'm gonna get it. And see, I always viewed my - relationship with my Heavenly Father through the lens of my relationship with my earthly father.

And it took me years — and God in His grace and His mercy and His gentleness finally got through to me. You know, some people are thicker than others. Again, I won't look at anybody. You know who you are. And God just finally got through to me and ministered to me. Don't view Me through the lens of your earthly father. I love you. You're saved. There's nothing you could do that would make Me love you less.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

See, here's what happens with a verse like this that's misused and abused is it's twisted into Jesus threatening that you can lose your salvation. This is not a threat to us that we can lose our salvation. This is the loving Savior reassuring us that we're secure in our salvation. We could never — I will never blot your name out of the Book of Life.

I know, but that was really bad.

No. I'm not going to blot your name out. I know Satan told you that fact. In fact, Satan, I think he told you that because you know, you let him. He came knocking. You invited him in and had him over dinner. And he's telling you, yeah, I think your name is already out of there. I saw the whiteout. It's over, you know? So now you gotta work to get saved again.

Could you imagine? What did Jesus die on the cross for then? Could you — It is finished. Period. Aren't you glad that's not a comma? Aren't you glad Jesus didn't say it is finished if, or however, or contingent upon? Because I did My part. You do your part now. That's works.

This is another thing. And I — just real quick, let me have this one, please, I humbly ask. This is another problem. This breaks my heart. It's a false teaching known as the partial rapture theory. What's the partial rapture theory? The partial rapture theory is that only the on-fire, I mean, full-on for the Lord, all-in Christians are going to be taken up. But if you're a lukewarm, backslidden, Sardis Christian, you're not going to go up in the rapture, man. That's works.

And by the way, where's the line on that one? Where's the gauge? So wait, so I'm saved, but I'm not really saved. It's kind of like a definite maybe that I'm saved. That's kind of like, you know — I better not use that metaphor. It's a good one, though, but I won't use it.

In other words, I'm saved by grace through faith. It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. But now I've got to keep that going in order to be worthy to go up in the rapture.

Because if I'm not doing so well in the Lord — I'm saved, but my walk with the Lord is not as close as it once was. The fire doesn't burn as bright as it once did. And then the trumpet sounds. What's God going to say? You know, you came pretty close. You got an 85%. But only the 100 percenters go up.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

That's from the pit of hell. I've had plenty of conversations, slash debates, translated, arguments with many a pastor, by the way, on this point. Because you have to understand that the partial rapture theory is roommates with the, once saved always saved being a false teaching, that once you're saved, you're not — you, you've got to stay saved. You got to stay saved. The common denominator between both are works. Works.

And that was the whole thing with Sardis. Your works: it's incomplete. It will fall short. It will never be enough. It will never be complete. The only way will be the Holy Spirit who **“faithful is He who began the work in you to complete it.”**

How? By the Holy Spirit. What — the Galatians — I'm actually almost done. So there's hope. The Galatians. Paul: “Who bewitched you?” Who put you under their spell? What in the world are you guys thinking? This is a very loose paraphrase. You began in the Spirit. What, you're going to finish in the flesh now? You started off good in the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, powered by the Holy Spirit. Now you're trying to finish the work of the Holy Spirit in your own strength? What is the matter with you? Who bewitched you? Who put you under their spell? In another — (Frustrated sigh)

He says — listen. I love this because it's got that sanctified strength to it. Even if somebody were to come down, an angel from heaven and preach a different gospel, let him be accursed. That's strong. That'll preach. I mean, I love the strength of that. In other words, don't — and this is the key word — let no man deceive you. Let. He writes to the Philippians, **“Let the Holy Spirit rule.”**

That's the word in the Greek that we get umpire. Let Him do the final ruling, the Holy Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit umpire in your life. The power of the Holy Spirit in Acts is *dunamis*, where we get the English word dynamite. That's the power, the power to live a holy Christian life comes only by the Holy Spirit. No other way.

So here's these Sardis Christians. They're probably thinking, man, we blew it so bad Jesus is threatening to blot our names out of the Book of Life. No He's not. He's reassuring you that I'll never blot your name out of the Book of Life. He's trying to encourage them.

But you need to get back to the Holy Spirit. You need to repent. You need to turn, and you need to do a 180. Have a change of mind so I can change your heart and fill your heart with

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

the Holy Spirit so you're filled to overflowing so that your life will become like torrents of living water.

Have you seen how powerful flood waters are? They take whole houses downstream like toothpicks. That's the power of the Holy Spirit. And we're relying on ourselves? And we have unfettered access to that power? Omnipotence. We have access to omnipotence. God, the Holy Spirit, God is omnipotent, all powerful.

And He indwells us? Jesus says to the disciples, Listen, I'm going to the cross. Peter is like over my dead body. Jesus is like, get thee behind me, Satan. Other disciples are going like, Peter, can you just shut up for a change? Sorry. That was — anyway, I'm going somewhere with this. It's very profound, by the way. It's worth the wait.

But I'm going to leave you. They didn't want Him to leave. No! Don't go. And Jesus said, no, actually, I have to go. And truth be made known, you want Me to go. Because if I don't go, I cannot send the Holy Spirit to indwell you and empower you and fill you. So now, instead of having God with you, you can have God in you. Okay! You still have Me. I'm just not going to be with you. But I'm going to be in you, indwelling you, empowering you.

They didn't get it. Just kind of like the looks on some of your faces right now. And I don't think I did a very good job of explaining it. But God indwells us. And He's there at the ready to empower us so we can rely upon Him for everything. I mean everything. We quote it, we sing it — and I'll close with this: *Proverbs 3:5-6*.

How many of us love this promise? Three things that we do. He does one. That's like *Philippians 4:6-8*. Don't lean on your own understanding. Acknowledge the Lord in all your ways. Trust the Lord with all your heart, and He will straighten out the mess you made, make your paths straight, direct your paths.

We love that, right? But when is it that we acknowledge the Lord in all our ways? When we don't understand. When is it that we don't acknowledge - the Lord in all of our ways? When we think we understand. No, we don't call to the Lord because no, I got this. I'm not going to bother the Lord. I got it.

Okay. The Lord is not going to force Himself on us. And here's the Holy Spirit writhing inside of us, grieved in His indwelling of us, at the ready if you, JD— I'm taking one for the team —

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

JD, if you would just but look to Me, rely upon Me, allow Me to do this, I will empower you, enable you in My strength and My might and My power, for you instead of you.

***Zachariah 4:6.* “It is not by might. It is not by willpower. It is by My spirit, says the Lord.”**

And here he sees this vision of two endless, inexhaustible supplies of olive oil that are fueling this lamp, endless source. And we have access to that.

Matthew 25, it's for Israel, but the 10 bridesmaids. Five of whom — they all had lamps. The lamp is the word. **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.”** But only five had oil: the Holy Spirit. And the other five when the thief in the night came, the bridegroom came, the ones that didn't have the Holy Spirit, the Sardis ones, asked the other five that did, hey, can we have some of yours? No. Doesn't work like that.

Well, and there's no time. You should have — you should have been awake and watching. You were sleeping. And the Holy Spirit seals us for redemption. These were not — they're not saved. Again, they use that. They twist that. Hey, you can still be a Christian but not have the Holy Spirit, and you won't go up in the rapture. They said it just like that. I've been watching too many videos, maybe.

So can I just close this way with an encouraging word concerning the assurance of salvation? If you're born-again of the Spirit of God — and real quick, I was asked one time. It was a good question. In fact, I stumbled and bumbled and fumbled through it initially because the question was, how do you know if you're born-again? I should know this. I didn't go to cemetery, I mean, seminary or a Bible college.

But wait, I know the answer. And I humbled myself. I said, you know what? That's a really good question. And one for which I did not possess an answer for at this time. Can I get back to you? He said, yeah.

So I'm digging through the Word. I'm praying, God, how do you — and it was so simple. I love it when God just makes it simple for me especially. Because as my wife says, you have the gift of complication. And I try to tell her that's not a gift. But she says you have it anyway, so you'll complicate something. So and I was doing that. I was complicating it, and it was so simple.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

And He simplified it for me. He said, how do you know when your child's born? I mean, you're not going, where they really born? No. Is that too much? No. You know they're born. Why? Because they want to be nursed all the time. Our firstborn son is born. Never slept. We haven't slept since, by the way. Here, honey. Nurse him! He's craving the milk.

And then when he started teething. Oh, those are (Painful sound) the teething years. Remember that parents? You thought you couldn't sleep before? You're never sleeping now. They're teething, and it is painful, and they're — the teeth are coming in so they can now go from the milk to the meat. And they're going from crawling to walking to running and then — ha — and jumping and climbing and everything else that you gotta discipline them for. There's no question.

Well, what's your point? I'll close with this point. You'll know you're born-again when you crave the milk of God's Word, and you grow in grace and mature in Christ. And then you teethe as a Christian, and then you start craving the meat of God's word.

Hebrews is very clear, very strong. You should be teachers by now. Some of you are still walking around. You came to Christ. You're five years old. You're still sucking on that bottle. Shame on you. You should be teaching by now. You never matured. You can't even handle meat. Grow up is basically what he's saying. Mature.

And you go from crawling to walking in the Lord to running the race. As you grow, there's going to be no question that you're born-again. So here's the end. In fact, David, come on up so it has to be the end. And why don't you stand up so that I can end.

If you're born-again, you're going to know it. Remember that song from Sunday School?

♪ If you're saved and you know it, clap your hands. ♪

♪ If you're saved and you know it, clap your hands. ♪

♪ If you're saved and you know it, ♪

♪ then your life will surely show it. ♪

And then stomp the feet. Don't stomp your feet.

[Laughter]

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

You get the point. Be assured — this isn't a threat. This is a — an assurance, a reassurance. There's still hope.

Yeah, I've been distant from the Lord, relying on my own strength. I haven't. I haven't had the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in my life in a very long time. It's been so long, I don't remember.

I want to pray for you today in closing, that God will baptize you afresh and fill you anew in the power of the Holy Spirit. So when you walk out of this church today, you will not walk out the same way that you came to this church today. You need the power of the Holy Spirit. So let's pray.

Father, will You? And you know the heart. We only see the outward appearance. You know every heart in this place, every heart of everyone watching online. And You know the emptiness of that life, that heart. Will You now fill them with the Holy Spirit? Baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

Lord, You said, if we would just ask. Like an earthly parent for bread, You're not going to give us a rock. How much more, those who ask for the Holy Spirit, You're going to give us the Holy Spirit? All we have to do is ask. James says we have not, because we ask not. So, Lord, I just pray, for myself included, fill me afresh. Baptize me anew. And forgive me because I'm a strong personality. I'm driven, I'm strong and I know I'm competing with the power of the Holy Spirit when I operate on my own strength.

And You let me know when I'm doing that. So Lord, forgive me for my self-reliance, relying on my own strength, my own abilities and talents and gifts. The ones that You gave me in the first place. They came from You. Every good and perfect gift came from You.

But Lord, I just pray that as we make our way and go our separate ways today, that we would do so with a new spring in our step, a new song on our lips, in the power of the Holy Spirit and never turn back.

And Lord, for anyone who is doubting their salvation, I pray that it ends right here and right now, never to return again. Because you'll never blot our names out of the Book of Life. If we are born-again and know You, our name is never coming out of that book.

Revelation 3
The Danger of Self-Reliance
Pastor JD Farag

So thank You for that, Lord. We needed that reassurance. And thank You for the Holy Spirit.
In Jesus' name, Amen.