

"Wake Up!"
Revelation 3:1-6

- I. The remedy for spiritual dryness/death.
 - A. The purpose of the letter to the church at Sardis—and to us—is to remedy spiritual deadness.
 - B. The church in Sardis is a spiritually “dead” church.
- II. The city of Sardis.
 - A. The oldest of the seven cities—est. 1200 BC. It was the most important of the seven cities—the capital of the Lydian empire; a very wealthy city; industries of textiles, dyes, carpet, and coins.
 - B. Sardis was an acropolis-- *Acro* = High, *Polis* = City—A city on a “mountain”.
 - C. Because of its high cliffs, Sardis was thought to be invincible to invading armies.
 - 1. Sardis was invaded and conquered three times!
 - 2. Hegel— “*History teaches that man learns nothing from history*”.
 - 3. Cyrus invaded Sardis in a surprise attack at night—“*A thief in the night*”.
 - D. A most devastating earthquake in 17 AD destroyed Sardis, never to regain its prominence.
 - 1. Emperor Tiberius and Claudius rebuilt the city.
 - 2. Tiberius minted gold coins with his face on them—possibly the first gold coins.
 - E. The history of the city is mirrored by the church at Sardis: Once enjoyed being a thriving, significant church now a “dead” church.
- III. Jesus in the letter to Sardis (Verse 1).
 - A. Has the seven Spirits of God—The Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-5).
 - 1. The church at Sardis desperately needed the power of the Holy Spirit!
 - B. He holds the seven stars—The seven messengers to the church.
 - C. He knows their deeds—No commendation.
 - 1. They have a name = they are living on their reputation from the past.

D. Sardis is “dead”.

1. Spiritually dead is separation from God which can be revived.
 - a. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15).

IV. The remedy for spiritual deadness.

A. **Wake up!**

1. See what’s really going on! Be aware, don’t have your eyes closed.

B. **Strengthen the things that remain** (Which were about to die!)

1. Your good deeds—works.
2. The Christians good deeds (The Vine and the Branches: John 15)
 - a. To abide in Christ.
 - b. To “bear” fruit: Christ “produces” the fruit.
3. The church at Sardis was not abiding in Christ and bearing fruit.

C. **Remember what you have received and heard; and keep it** (V. 3).

1. The gospel of Jesus Christ, your salvation, your eternal life.

D. **Repent!**

1. To change your mind and direction.
 - a. Zacheus— Luke 19:1-10

E. *If I don’t do all these things what will happen?*

1. Jesus will come **like a thief**.
 - a. His second coming?
 - b. Judgement? Removal of the lampstand (Rev. 2:5)?

V. To the “overcomers”.

A. Clothed in white garments.

B. Will not be removed from the book of life.

1. The overcomer can be secure in their salvation
 - a. John 10:28-30

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I should be conscious in making sweeping statements... Instead of saying "all of us" I'll say "many of us"...even though I would not be surprised if it is all of us... have gone through periods of spiritual dryness...maybe just short periods... a day or two... even a week or three.

Maybe you've gone through some very tough times... God feels far away...or you have gotten sidetracked with distractions...and it's been that way for awhile and now you are just spiritually dried up...the joy you once had is nowhere to be found...

Maybe you started well in your Christian walk... you were excited in your new life as a Christian... the world has brought you down...and God at first seemed distant... but now almost not real...He doesn't even enter your mind often.

Not walking in the Spirit... not under the power of the Lord...we know Him... but He's so distant...

Perhaps you've gone through times you felt basically spiritually dead for a long period of time...a year... five years... twenty years... spiritual dryness maybe so severe that it is more spiritual deadness... You may be alive physically... but spiritually... you are dead.

Here's a real tragedy... to not know you are dead...spiritually dead...

We have arrived at the fifth of seven letters dictated by Jesus to John to deliver to seven choice and strategic churches in Asia Minor...Each church and each city is unique... presenting to us as a church and to us individually vital messages from Jesus Himself.

The church at Sardis is a church full of people like what I just described...spiritually dead... this morning my goal is to reveal from this passage in God's word... the remedy for spiritual deadness...

The city is important... so much I could say... fascinating history...I so wish I had the time...Out of all the seven cities... this is the most fascinating, most important, yet most tragic in many ways...last week we saw that Thyatira was the least significant city of the seven... Sardis is just the opposite... considered as one of the most important cities in the world at one time.

Sardis was the oldest of all the cities in Asia...founded about 1200 BC...it was a very wealthy city... there was a river that ran next to it full of gold...[Midas, Phrygia]

Fine textiles came from Sardis...there was a dye industry like Thyatira...known for the manufacturing of carpet...a very new industry.

Sardis early on was the center of the universe... power, wealth, might...the center of the Lydian Empire that ruled much of Asia...

The city was an acropolis...*acro* = High. *Polis* = city... an acropolis is literally a “high city”... This city built on a plateau some 1500 feet above the ground below it...this made it very defendable from invading armies... steep cliffs became a barrier making Sardis invincible...*they thought*.

Three times it was famously defeated by invading armies... classic armies in history... the rich, seemingly undefeatable Sardis fell three times... never learning from the previous defeats...

The philosopher Hegel brilliantly said *History teaches that man learns nothing from history*

Interesting...the ancient historian Herodotus gives much insight into the history of these invasions of Sardis...the most famous of the three invasions was that of Cyrus...Cyrus and his men arrived at the base of the acropolis at night and surrounded the acropolis, looking for a way up into the city...seemed impossible.

One of the guards of Sardis was looking over the cliff when his helmet fell off and tumbled down a crevice... the invading army was watching this... the guard makes his way down this crevice to get his helmet revealing to the invading army a way up the cliffs...

In the middle of the night...Cyrus invaded Sardis... took them by surprise... and Cyrus along with his army became known ***as a thief in the night***...sound familiar?...it became a proverb of Sardis.

[All three of these invasions came up the same crevice!... *we're invincible!...oops... we're invincible...oops!... we're invincible... oh no!*

Another sage from the past said the familiar quote *He that doesn't know his history is doomed to repeat it...*

Around 17 AD one of the most devastating earthquakes of all time leveled the city...

By the time this letter was delivered to the church... Emperor Tiberius and Claudius rebuilt the city... never back to its glorious past... Tiberius took advantage of the river of gold and made some of the first coins ever made...with his face on them.

What's fascinating and important...why I went into all of that... is that the history of this once thriving city, now struggling city is mirrored by the condition of the church in Sardis...Sardis, once a thriving, significant church... but now...it lived on it's reputation from the past...and by the time of this letter... a dead church.

So Jesus writes a letter through the pen of John... (1) **And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: This is what He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars says...**echoing what He said back in chapter 1:4.

It is significant that He begins describing Himself as the One who has the seven Spirits... if you were with us when we discussed the seven spirits in chapter 1... you would know I believe the seven spirits refers to the Holy Spirit...

One argument for that is that in Isaiah 11:2-5...Isaiah describes the Holy Spirit having seven attributes... seven of course is the number of completeness... so the **seven Spirits of God** is the complete Holy Spirit... which is exactly what this church in Sardis... (and all churches!) desperately need....they have the Holy Spirit in that they are believers in Christ... but they have suppressed Him.

The seven stars refers to the seven messengers...angels or pastors of the seven churches... Jesus is saying *I am the One who has the Holy Spirit and I hold your messengers in My hands....*but then... Jesus gets right into it... right to the point.

(2) **I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive...**let's stop here... Jesus says **I know your deeds...I know what you've been doing...**He said this to the church at Ephesus and to the church at Thyatira...

But that was an introduction to His **commendation** to those churches... *I know your deeds, your love, your service* (Pergamum)... *I know your deeds, your toil and perseverance*(Ephesus)

But no commendation after He says *I know your deeds* to this church at Sardis... this is not a commendation...

Remember that Jesus has **eyes like a flame of fire**...He sees everything... He sees through everything...He sees through their deeds... their works.... what Jesus meant by **you have a name that you are alive** is that this church has a **reputation** of being alive... a vibrant... active...vital... thriving church...that was long ago.... *that's your reputation...that's what others from other cities have heard about you...*

You were once an amazing church... years ago... Christ glorified!... but now... you are living on your past glories... not where and what you are doing now... we can put this close to home... this is especially a danger for us who have been Christians for a long time...

Perhaps years ago you were excited to be involved with anything that glorified Christ... you were thriving... you led Bible studies... you visited orphans and helped widows... you sang in the choir... you read your Bible more than you watched TV...you couldn't get enough or do enough!... but that all has slowly dissipated... and now... you are basically surviving on your reputation... *Boy... you should have seen what we did back in 1987...*

(2) **I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive...**when people hear the name "Church of Sardis"...*What a great church!!....BUT YOU ARE DEAD.*

Dead...was does the Bible mean when you are "dead"?...when I see something dead, I think it just needs to be buried...that's all you can do with dead things.

The Bible presents death as separation: There is a distinction between physical death and spiritual death...*physical death* is the separation of the soul from the body, and *spiritual death* is the separation of the soul from God.

Death is the result of sin... both physical death and spiritual death...

James 1:13 **Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully matured, it brings forth death.**

There are those who view all sinners as spiritually dead...**as dead as a corpse is dead**... unable to do anything...I mean anything...the only way for a corpse to regain life is if God does everything...all a corpse can do is be a corpse... but that is not what I see in the Bible.

I think of the parable of the prodigal son... In Luke 15...

Jesus tells the disciples and the listening crowds... "A man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. 13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there **he squandered (to waste something, money and time in a foolish and reckless manner)his estate living recklessly.** That was his choice... he had the free will to squander...a picture of sinning 14**Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country I wasn't expecting that! and he began to be impoverished.15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.16 And he was desiring to be fed with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.**

17 **But when he came to himself,** what am I doing? What have I been I thinking!...this isn't working!...He's got his **eyes open**... reasoning out that he is on the wrong path... **he said, 'How**

many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!... 18 I will rise up and go to my father, and will say to him, "**Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you.**" In humility... He realized he was wrong... he realized he needed to change course...and HE DID!

But remember... according to some... a dead corpse cannot come to that realization...dead is dead... but no...this is the work of REPENTENCE!.. a willful change of mind, change of direction...Repentance...hold that thought.

When the prodigal returns home to his father... his father says: 24 **for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'** And they began to **celebrate**. Celebrate what?... that this sinner realized he was on the wrong road...he had dishonored his father..."*give me my inheritance now!*"...then squandered it... and decided to get on the right road...and in humility he went back to his father...*forgive me!*....repent

And through his repentance...by His grace and mercy... **THE FATHER** restores him to life...repentance is the part of the sinner... restoration is the part of the Father.

32 **But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive, and was lost and has been found."**

So many more places... to be spiritually dead does not mean you're a corpse... it means you are separated from God and you need to repent and get right with God... **through the power of the Holy Spirit**... you will have life!

As long as you don't PHYSICALLY die... if you are spiritually dead... you can be brought back to spiritual life!

So I do not believe the church as some commentators say...that Sardis was dead like a corpse...they were not physically dead... Jesus is speaking to them!....they were spiritually dead...but Jesus is calling them back to a vibrant spiritual life...what does He tell them?...and us?...Jesus gives them (and us) five "commands"...five commands that restore spiritual deadness to life...

Read verses 2-3a

1. Wake up!

The city never learned that... they were so smug on their mountain... *we'll never fall...nobody can touch us*... they fell.... Once... twice...a third time?... WAKE UP!...something is wrong!... you fell once... ok... you could have done something after that, that could have prevented to other two sieges...

Wake up!... the first step for a spiritually dead person is to wake up!...having your eyes open are a sign of something living in there!...The Greek word is *Gregorio*...to be awake...to be

alive...the same word is found in Matthew 26:41 when Jesus was with His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane right before the cross...

He tells them...**Keep watching** stay awake... **and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**"

Here in Revelation Jesus is saying WAKE UP!... look where you have been and where you are headed!... when the prodigal "**came to himself**"... what he had done was HE WOKE UP! *Wake up and do what?* [24]

2. Strengthen the things that remain (Which were about to die!)

You're dead but there is still a little life in there... take what you still have and build them up first... don't let everything die!...Jesus helps them to see what's left ready to die:

I have not found your deeds complete (2b)

Complete means literally "full"...Ephesians 5:18 **and do not get drunk with wine for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit**...filled,.. same word...complete... Jesus is saying... that He wanted the church at Sardis to **complete** the works that he wanted them to complete... but they fall short...

"You've done a lot... but you stopped short"... it's like taking a hundred question test and finishing only 80 of them... INCOMPLETE!... *you did great on the 80!... but where's the other 20?...Sardis church...you didn't finish what God wanted you to finish!*

We as good evangelical Christians have hammered it over and over again... that we are not saved by good works... we are not "justified" by doing good things... we are not saved by doing good works... we are saved *unto* good works...good works are a result of our faith.

Years ago I heard this: *when God saved you...He didn't just have you in mind... He had in mind all the people your life could touch...He had in mind all the people your life could bless... the people in your path...*

We lose sight of that...[perhaps a big reason we get spiritually dry is we are consumed with ourselves...] we lose sight of our mission...to disciple and make disciples... and most certainly the church as Sardis did as well... Ephesians 2:10 **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...** we are not saved by good works...but God wants us to produce great works... HE wants us to work as to bear good fruit...

I think this is a worthwhile place to camp...to think this all out...let's look at what is to be under all our work as a Christian... When Jesus was in the upper room before He went to the cross... John 15:5 Jesus tells His disciples...familiar words...

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Jesus wants us to work to bear much fruit... bet here He says... without Me... you can't produce even a kumquat!... Now... as a man... still with most of my physical abilities... I can do a lot... I can fill up my days...fifteen hours doing church stuff... I can work work work work work!... for Jesus!

But how do **I produce fruit**... which is to be the product of my good works?... Read more books on *How to Grow the Church?*...*How to Baptize a hundred people in one year*...Initiate more programs... how do I produce the fruit of my work?....I don't produce anything.

Jesus in one word tells us where all this begins.... **ABIDE**...*abide...to stay...remain... connect to and don't leave...to continue to hold on without fading*... a branch of an apple tree does nothing to make apples... the branch doesn't chant *make apples, make apples, come on.... Come on apples*...apples come spontaneously onto that branch as long as that branch stays connect to the tree...abides in the tree...

This is hard for us to grasp... especially if you are a Type A personality... My instructions from Jesus Christ is NOT to produce fruit!!!..[Fruit is the result of our works!].what are we to do?.... WE ARE TO **BEAR** FRUIT...to bear means **to carry the weight**...

so here are my instructions... **to abide in Christ**...that's the work... and the fruit that He wants to bring forth in my life will happen... when it comes... I am to bear it... **to carry the weight** of all the fruit that comes to my branch!

How do we abide in Christ? 1 John 2:5-6 **but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.** That's abiding and that's our good works.

The fruit comes spontaneously!... fruit comes TO me...I'm to bear it... then goes to OTHERS... it isn't really MY fruit is it?...It's His fruit... MY WORK...MY DEEDS... IS TO ABIDE IN CHRIST... walk in the same way He walked...to remain in Him...not stray... not put Him on the shelf until Sunday...

15:8 **My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so to prove your salvation?...to prove you've worked overtime at the church?.... no.... that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples...**

A Christian is someone who has placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12). A Christian has been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3). A Christian "belongs to Christ" and is daily being transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

A Disciple completely adheres to the teaching of Jesus, makes Christ his number-one priority, and lives accordingly....he abides in Christ... He is actively involved in making other Christian disciples (Mat. 28)...

Discipleship...all Christians are called to be disciples... requires a totally committed life: “Any of you who does not give up everything he has, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

Sacrifice is expected: “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’”

A disciple is an Abider...our work is to abide... not a fruit grower but a fruit bearer... **Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of My God.**

Sardis is the church of incomplete deeds... *you're not abiding...hence no fruit!* Not making a check list of things to do... but abiding with Christ... the check list will take care of itself!...not through production but through bearing of fruit.

3. Remember what you have received and heard; and keep it...(3)

When you are spiritually dry...or dead... think back to when you actually realized the gospel of Jesus Christ... think back at that amazing gift of salvation you received but did not deserve... think back the day you saw Jesus on that cross having died for your sins.

Think back to when there was nothing else more important than your relationship with the Almighty God...[it might reveal to you the things which have entered into your life that has taken your eyes off Christ]...Remember!... fall in love again...remembering the eternal promises of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.... **Remember!.....WAKE UP AND REMEMBER!**

4. Repent! (Five of the seven churches!)

Change your mind..... change your mind.... Change your direction....

Zaccheus Luke 19:1-10

And He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. 3 And Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on before and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” 6 And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. 7 And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” 8 **But Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, [eyes opened?]**

Right there... when Zaccheus stopped... is his moment of repentance...it is when he changed his mind and changed his direction...it's all implied by what follows...Zacchaesus

“Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have extorted anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” 9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”...

Zacheus was not “saved” because he gave ½ his possessions to the poor... He was saved because he repented from his sins and placed his faith in Jesus Christ... **an inner change resulted in outer actions...** repentance isn’t just for the unsaved ... it is for the believer as well... **WAKE UP! REMEMBER! REPENT!**

If I don’t do all these things... what will happen?

If you don’t wake up... if you keep going in your current direction...if you don’t strengthen what little you have...if you don’t remember what Christ gave you...and you don’t repent... I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I come to you...

For the church at Sardis... that little phrase **I will come like a thief** would have conjured up all kinds of horrors of their past!....

Some believe Jesus is talking about His second coming... I think He’s talking about impending judgement if there is no repentance...if there is no changing of direction... remember Jesus’s warning to the church at Ephesus...

Revelation 2:5

Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first. But if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

They won’t lose their salvation.... They lose their influence as a church... as Christians... no longer will they be light to a lost world.... Remember... we were not just saved for ourselves... but to be that influence on the world around us.

Not everyone in the church was dead... there was a remnant... there always is a remnant in the Bible...

Read verses 4-5a

(5) those in white linen...overcomers

I’ll end with one more important point.

Verse five has disturbed Christians since it was written...are we secure in our salvation or can we lose it...

(5) He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments, **AND I WILL NEVER ERASE HIS NAME FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE**, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Some have concluded... *if Christ says He won't erase your name...that implies He could and has erased names... so when you get saved...you're placed in the book of life...but you better behave...because you can be removed.*

Another interesting idea... is that ALL people are placed in the book of life prior to their birth... this comforts those who have lost infants to death shortly after they are born...they are in the Book of life!... you will be in the Book of Life until you sin...once you sin... you are out!...until you come to Christ... then you're back in.... I don't know how you can biblically support that...

Interesting...this idea intrigues me... during the 1st century... there was a practice in the Jewish synagogue (Began before Christ) called *The Birkat haMinim* ("Blessing on the heretics") "The Curse of the Minnim"... is a curse on heretics which forms part of the Jewish rabbinical liturgy.

The Jewish rabbis declared Christians as heretics...Minnims... so in their liturgy they would say of these Christians *They are blotted out of the book of life*...that was the curse... so this theory goes... Jesus knew this and wanted to push back by telling the Christians *You won't be blotted out of the book of life by Me!*

That could be the context.. we can only conjecture... but I think Jesus is simply confirming that these "Overcomers" will always be in the book of life...

Question: "What is the Book of Life?"

Revelation 20:15 declares, "**If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**" The Book of Life, in this context, is the set of names of those who will live with God forever in heaven. It is the roll of those who are saved. This Book of Life is also mentioned in Revelation 3:5; 20:12; and Philippians 4:3. The same book is

called the Lamb's Book of Life because it contains the names of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus (Revelation 13:8; 21:27).

How can you be sure your name is written in the Book of Life?... Be sure you're saved. Repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5). Once your name is written in the Book of Life, it is never erased (Revelation 3:5; Romans 8:37-39). No true believer should doubt his eternal security in Christ (John 10:28-30).

The Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15 is a judgment for unbelievers. That passage makes it clear that no one at that judgment has his name in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12-14). The fate of the ungodly is sealed; their names are not in the Book of Life; their punishment is sure.

God keeps good records. He knows His own, and He has set the names of His children permanently in His book....are you in the Lamb's Book of Life?

Do you have ears to hear this message?

Read verse 6