

# Sermon: When Reputation Isn't Reality

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Text: Revelation 3:1–6

Cross Reference: Matthew 7:21–23

## Introduction

Some things look alive on the outside but are dead on the inside. A beautifully decorated tomb looks impressive, but inside it's only filled with bones.

That's what Jesus says to the church in Sardis: "You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead" (Revelation 3:1).

Matthew 7:21–23 gives the same warning: Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," truly belongs to Christ.

Key Truth: It is possible to look alive to people, but be spiritually dead before God.

## 1. Reputation Is Not Enough

- Sardis had a name that impressed people. Programs, activity, outward busyness—but Jesus saw the truth.
- Matthew 7 warns: saying the right words, even doing religious works, does not equal salvation.
- Cross Reference: 2 Timothy 3:5 — "Having a form of godliness but denying its power."
- Application: Do we care more about what people think of us than what Jesus knows about us?
- Illustration: Think of a cell phone with 100% battery icon showing on the screen, but the inside battery is dead. It looks fine until you try to use it.

## 2. The Call to Wake Up

- Jesus commands: "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die."
- Wake up = be alert, stop drifting, pay attention to your spiritual condition.
- Cross Reference: Romans 13:11 — "The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber."
- Application: Revival starts with honest recognition. If you're coasting spiritually, Jesus calls you to repentance and renewal.

- Practical Step: Go back to the basics—prayer, Scripture, obedience. Remember what you have received and hold it fast.
- Illustration: A fire that's nearly burned out. If you stir the embers and add fuel, it can burn again. If you ignore it, it dies completely.

### 3. The Reward for the Faithful

- Not everyone in Sardis was dead—some had kept their garments pure. They will walk with Christ in white (purity and victory).
- Jesus promises: those who overcome will not be blotted from the Book of Life, but their names will be confessed before the Father.
- Cross Reference: Luke 10:20 — “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”
- Application: What matters most is not that your name is famous here, but that it is known in heaven.
- Illustration: At a graduation, the highlight is when your name is called. One day, before the throne of God, Jesus will call the names of those who are truly His. That's the moment to live for.

### Conclusion

Sardis warns us: a good reputation isn't enough; only a living relationship with Christ saves. Matthew 7 warns us: words and works without true surrender end in rejection. Jesus calls us to wake up, repent, and walk with Him.

### Reflection Questions

1. Do I only appear alive spiritually, or am I truly alive in Christ?
2. What needs to be strengthened in my walk with God right now?
3. Is my name written in heaven—or only on a church roll here on earth?

### Final Appeal

Let's not be a people who hear, “I never knew you,” but rather those who hear Jesus confess our name before the Father.

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