

Sardis

Warm to the eyes, Cold to the touch.

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

A. Slide2 Summer Fellowship Night, next Wed/19th. We will be barbecuing hotdogs and having some outside games and waterslides on the field. Join us 6:00p-8:00p.

II. Slide3 **Intro: Sardis, Warm to the eyes Cold to the touch.**

A. I love cruise control. Climate control in my house. Smart landscape timer (the best). These are all great making our lives easier. **But** *who said it was a good idea for our Christianity?* [did Jesus tell us to *cruise, skate, or loaf?* or **WALK in the Spirit**]

B. Astronomers tell us that the light from **the Polar star** takes **33 yrs** to reach earth.

1. If that star plunged into darkness 30 yrs ago, its light would still be coming down to earth. It would still be *shining* as if nothing had happened.

2. It could be a **dead star**, **shining solely by the light of a brilliant past.**

a) **The church of Sardis was like that** - shining solely by the light of a brilliant past. Let's look at ourselves in another mirror that **Jesus** is holding up to us today **Sardis!**

C. **Prayer:** Lord, can I admit, *I don't want to look into this mirror.* (dead or alive. fruitful or fruitless. I don't like report cards.)

D. Slide4 **Read all! (1-6)**

III. Slide5 **DESTINATION (1a)**

A. **Sardis** - (Sart today) **Has been called:** The Fruitless Church. The church of spiritual Apathy. The Dead church. The Feeble church.

1. I'd call it, *The church with a Reputation but needing Resuscitation.*

2. In the 6th cent BC Sardis was one of the most powerful cities of the ancient world. **It was the capital of Lydia.** It was a center for **Trade** (wool, dyeing). **It was a Military Center.** It was characterized by a loose/luxurious

lifestyle.

IV. Slide6 DESCRIPTION (1b)

- A. He represents Himself as, *He who has the 7 Spirits of God* (or, 7-fold spirit of God).
1. [4 x's in Rev:1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6] Jesus is *The One* who gives the Holy Spirit.
 2. Read - Is.11:1,2.
- B. Don't miss this ... we're talking about a church. The church was born when the Spirit of God descended on the day of Pentecost. It takes the Holy Spirit to breathe life into a church.
1. When the Spirit is *grieved*, the church begins to lose life & power.
 2. But when God puts the 7-fold Spirit of God together with the 7 stars, or the 7 churches (or church leaders) then BAAM!
 3. John Stott said this, *We must pray in the spirit, preach in the spirit, worship in the spirit, live in the spirit, walk in the spirit. That's the solution! A stale church can be refreshed by Him. A sleepy church awakened. A weak church strengthened. And a dead church made alive.*

V. Slide7a CONDEMNATION (1c-2)

- A. Usually the Commendation goes here. (we'll see it in verse 4)
1. Sardis comes under the most severe **denunciation** of the 7.
 2. Just as the city of Sardis was now only a shadow of its former splendor, being alive in name only, so was the Sardis Church.
- B. The 1st Condemnation was for *its Lifeless Profession*:
1. There was no doctrinal correction, no persecution from w/o, no opposition from w/in. (no friction, no motion, no movement)
 2. They had grown Comfortable. They became *The 1st Church of the Slow-moving, Slothful, Sluggish Sardis.*
 3. They had grown Content. They were living on its *past Reputation.*

a) There was Reputation w/o **Reality**. Form w/o **Force**. (Wiersbe)

b) Like there city they gloried in *their past splendor*, but ignored *their present decay*. [like the Fig tree of Mt.21:19, *it had leaves but No fruit*]

c) It was a perfect model of *Inoffensive Christianity*.

4. The message to Sardis, and us, is to **not live on past glory**.

Weirsbe said, *You can guard your spiritual heritage, but don't embalm it.*

5. Vance Havner told us that ministries often go thru **4 stages: A Man. A Movement. A Machine. A Monument**. Sardis was in Monument stage. **But** there was still **Hope!** Hope, because Jesus was still the head of the church & He was able to bring *new life*.

a) Jesus is the great physician, and as a great physician, not only gives the accurate *x-ray* and *diagnosis* but he also provides *the healing & the solution*.

C. The 2nd Condemnation was for *its Incomplete Works*: (2)

D. The things that they did have, *were ready to die*. Why? Because they were falling asleep. He says, **Wake up!**

1. Rom.13:11 *Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to **wake from sleep**. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.*

E. **3 times** in its long history (2000 bc) the *citadel* had been captured because *the sentries failed their post*.

1. **1st** by *Cyprus*, king of the Medo-Persians, captured it by following a secret path (got 6 million in treasures, 548bc). **Later** by *Alexander the Great*. **Then** by *Antiochus* the Great in 214bc.

F. I know your works ... **but** *I have not found your works complete*. They're **Incomplete**.

G. The **completeness** of works can be conceived of in one of **2 ways**:

1. **(1) Quantity** - you don't have enough deeds to meet my expectations of you. **(2) Quality** - your deeds are not of the right character to meet my expectations of you.

a) Most likely it means the *quality* of works. No one can ever have enough works on his own to please God.

- H. Slide7b Looks can be deceiving. I've had friends at church, that struggle with fibromyalgia, and say *it's so hard because I look healthy on the outside and people can't tell that I'm sick on the inside*. Just like a church.
- I. There are some physical features where, often we *automatically assign vitality* to the church. But we must not. Looks can be deceiving.
- J. Some like think that certain kind of churches have *life* and other churches *do not have life*. But we have to be careful. [8, adapted from Tony Merida]
1. High Church Formalism - they can have liturgy, vestments, chanting, it can look very inspiring, *but* it doesn't mean the Lords on the move. *Or you can go the opposite direction and be ...*
 2. Low Church Informalism - come, as you are attitude. We have that, we're casual, *so that must be where the spirit is at work, right?*
 3. Bible Belt traditionalism - where everything can sound very *Christianly*, *but* could be *filled with Hypocrisy*.
 4. Vague Spiritualism - where the Bible is not taught, there is no absolutes, there is no certainty, everything is experience based. This group always emphasizes life is a journey, but has no destination. The Christian life is a *journey but it's a journey to somewhere*. It's cool today to **seek** *but* not necessarily to **find**. It's all experience-based *so that must be where the spirit at*.
 5. Happy-Clappy Emotionalism - *or Quiet Non-Emotionalism*. People that *love enthusiasm* automatically assign to a church, *if it's very energetic then it must have life and vitality*. Sometimes people assume if a church is **quiet** that they're **reverent**. *Maybe?* *Or* maybe they're bored.
 6. American Entertainmentism - where we think that if the production is slick enough, *and* the transitions are smooth enough, *that that's where it's at*.

7. **Social Activism** - sometimes we assume the churches that are alive are the ones *out there doing things in the public realm*. Older evangelicals emphasize, engaging in **politics**, where younger evangelicals today emphasize more social justice. Both are tempted to think that these alone are indicators of **life**.
8. **American BIG-ism**- many think that if the church is a certain size, that has to be where **life** is. Remember **Sardis** was a big church **and Philly** was a small church, **and yet Philly** gets the *commendation!*
 - a) Here's the point, it's easy to think more highly than we ought about a church, simply by observing **external features**.
 - b) A Church may be alive being formal or informal, enthusiastic or subdued, **big or small**. What we learn here is **Jesus knows**. Sardis had a reputation, and people were saying, *you got a check out the church in Sardis!* **But** the reality was Jesus said *you are dead*.
9. It's **internal not external** - in **your personal life**, and in your church, in **your pastor**, in your denomination. **It's always been like that.**

VI. Slide 8 EXHORTATION (3)

- A. Like Ephesus they were told to *Remember what they had received & heard* in the 1st days of their Christian experience.
 1. Heb. 10:32 *Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering.*
 2. If Sardis doesn't follow orders *He'll come as a thief*. I do not believe this is a reference to the 2nd Coming, **but** a statement that Christ's judgment would come on them when they were least expecting it.
 - a) Surely this is a **pun on Sardis' past invasion**. After seeing a soldier sneak down a secret path and retrieve his helmet. [*Cyprus*, king of the Medo-Persians]

VII. Slide 9a COMMENDATION (4)

A. A few saints were **commended**. God's faithful little Remnant of dedicated people who had not defiled their garments.

1. Sounds like that even if **we** are *of the minority* in a church, a group, a bible study, a christian club, who are following the Lord ... **we are to strengthen the things which remain.** (vs.2)

B. **Soiled clothes is also a pun.** Sardis claimed to be the 1st city to have discovered how to dye wool, "*turkey red.*" The garment trade was prosperous in Sardis.

1. **Those who wore soiled garments were removed from** the public list of citizens. **People with soiled garments were** not permitted to approach the (pagan) gods in their temple.
2. Soiled garments seem to be "*a symbol of mingling with pagan life and thus defiling the purity of one's relation to Christ.*" Many in the Church of Sardis seem to have been concerned mostly with outward purity - of appearance - but to have neglected the inner purity necessary to have a relationship with Christ.
3. **Slide9b** Gordon Fee says, "*Sardis was living an illusion.*"

VIII. **Slide10 PROMISE (5,6)**

A. Criminals were *blotted out from* the official registry list, of citizens in Sardis.

B. (5a) **Clothed in white garments** - a symbol of purity and righteousness.

1. **Read** - Zech.3:1-5. [cleansing, clothing, commission]

C. (5b) **I will never blot his name from the book of life** - A true believer losing Salvation, **No!** [*written in before the foundation of the world*, Rev.13:8, 17:8]

1. This statement does not teach the possible loss of salvation, but rather promises assurance that **no believer will ever lose it.**
2. **The Book of Life** assures that *God knows his true followers, keeps and protects them during their earthly journey, and brings them home to Him in heaven when they die.*

- D. (5c) The faithful one's will be *acknowledged publicly* before **the Father & His** angels.
- E. There was a little girl who being required to take her **birth certificate** to school had lost it on the way. The janitor saw her crying and asked her what was wrong. She said, *I've lost my excuse for being born!* ... **and** that was *Sardis*.
- F. Let's remember why we were born: *to Love Him, Serve Him, Worship Him, and Obey Him, w/a all our heart, mind, soul, & strength.* **And** not be *Warm to the eyes, Cold to the touch.*
- G. Keywords: Sardis, dead, purity.