

“<sup>1</sup> ¶ And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. <sup>2</sup> Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. <sup>3</sup> Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. <sup>4</sup> Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. <sup>6</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Re 3:1-6 AV)

Deadness exists only where Christ is not loved, believed, and obeyed. There is never any other reason for it. We are filled with the fullness of God when we are strengthened by might in the inner man to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and we are enabled to fulfill the work that God has given us to do.

Obedying God is very different than talking about obeying Him. Loving Christ is not the same as loving Him. Believing the Gospel is not the same as saying that you believe Him. The profession is good, as we saw earlier in this series, but it must be filled with the wine of performance, for our love must not be in word only, but in deed and in truth.

Sardis was a major city in ancient times, the capital of the great Kingdom of Lydia that occupied all the western end of what is now Turkey. In the sixth century before Christ, they were rich and powerful. The name Lydia perhaps derives from Lud or Ludim and were either descendants of Ham or Shem, depending on which ancestor you choose. Lydia was very wealthy and are considered to be the first men to use coins in commerce. One of the names of their kings has come down to us in a proverb. To be as rich as Croesus was to very rich indeed. But the glory of man fades away and so did Sardis which is a very minor city near to the remains of Ephesus and Smyrna.

By way of introduction the letter to Sardis describes Jesus the Lord as the One who has the Seven Spirits of God and the Seven Stars. In Christ is the perfection of the Life of the Spirit and the perfection of prophecy: the churches and the ministers of the churches receive life only from Him. We will return to this.

Again, we will look at the I. Good Things; II. The Bad Things; III The Promises to the Church in Sardis

## I. The Good Things.

- A. They had a good name, a good reputation. Good works had given them a good name.
1. Solomon says that a good name is greatly to be desired. They appeared to be a living, blessed church.
  2. It is foolish to live without regard for reputation; Illustration: employment; credit; business; courtship; rearing children, etc.
  3. We are to walk circumspectly, but just as other treasures sometimes must be sacrificed for doing the will of God, sometime also reputation. But a good reputation is of great value and not to be despised. Thus we have the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, which for-

bids cheapening a man’s reputation by slander and back biting. Why should you do it to yourself?

- B. They had good works that Christ new about. They would not have had a good name if they had not had good works.
- C. Some life remained. It is better to be almost dead than completely dead. Ecc 9:4 “For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.” Almost dead might be coaxed back to life; the dead will stink and must be buried. Jesus would not break a bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Do not go around pouring cold water on the smoking flax or plucking up the bruised reed. They might grow again.
- D. They had received and heard. They had not stiffened their necks and hardened their hearts.
- E. There was a godly remnant who had white garments. They had not polluted themselves with crimes and wickedness.

## II. The Bad Things

- A. Though having a name for life, they were more dead than alive. Ye are dead; not absolutely dead, for they are called to Wake Up, to Watch. Not all was dead, but death was settling in on the whole body.
  - 1. Awake. Watch. This same injunction is given in Ephesians 5: 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13 But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. 14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
  - 2. The church of Ephesus had lost its first love. “Awake thou that sleepest” is not found in the Old Testament in those words with that meaning.
  - 3. The words are found in Psalm 44 “Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.” But it not God who is asleep; He just seems to be asleep because we are asleep. He nether slumbers no sleeps, but we do, and it is like we are dead.
- B. The danger to Sardis is described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. They were lovers of themselves and that was the root of all the problem, for it left them as Hollow Men, or worse, filled with dead men’s bones.
  - 1. This is not dead orthodoxy; that term was invented by anti-Calvinist revivalists and enthusiasts, who thought that activity and noise was life.
  - 2. The first and basic heresy is to be lovers of yourselves.
  - 3. This was not orthodoxy but practical theological heresy; a denial of the last section of the catechism; refusing to live in thankfulness and praise to God.
  - 4. The good that was left was about to die, being swallowed up in self-love. He that loveth his life shall lose it: in seeking self-preservation, we lose what we have.

**III. The Promise:**

- A. The Promise comes from Him who has all life, the Seven Spirit of God, and the perfection of prophecy, holding all the shepherds of the churches in His hands.
- B. Life is eternal life and those alive will remain so; those that seem to be alive but are really dead will remain dead. Those who have their names in the book of life will continue to have their names in the book of life; those who don't won't.
- C. Those who confess Him before men, will be confessed before the Father and the angels; but confession is more than words; it is also in deeds and truth. 1Jo 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. Also Ro 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Application: The same message closes each of these letters to the churches: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”

- 1. These messages are to all of us, in whatever modern church we be.
- 2. Ear to hear: a disposition to obey, that comes only by the Spirit. Not those who have ears and cannot hear, whose hearts are hard and necks are stiff, but those softened; good clay in the Master's hands.
- 3. This is a heart matter; but manifested in what we do. We love God in our hearts, and therefore we serve one another in the love of Christ.

May God bless you.