

Christ addresses the church at Sardis as a dead church, despite it having the reputation of being alive. There was activity in the church but little of it was empowered by the Spirit of God. Instead, they were using human ability and ingenuity to try to accomplish what only the Holy Spirit could do working through them.

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<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.

**“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write”** - This message is directed to the pastor of the church at Sardis, a city whose best days were in the past and was now starting to decline. The city had once been the home of Croesus, a king once renowned for his wealth until the city was conquered by Cyrus the Persian.

**“These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God”** - As in the messages to the other churches, Christ describes Himself as the originator of the message. Additionally He describes Himself as having the “seven Spirits of God.” In the Bible, the number seven denotes “completion” or “fullness.” He seems to be saying that He has the fullness of the Holy Spirit with Him. **John 3:34** (Jesus speaking of Himself) *“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”* The Greek word for Spirit is “pneuma” which refers to “wind” or “breath.” The presence of the spirit indicates life because if you’re not breathing, then you must be dead. Since He is about to point out that they are dead, Christ seems to be indicating that He has something they need: the life of the Spirit in all its fullness.

**“and the seven stars”** - We saw in Rev. 1:20 that the seven stars are the angels (“messengers”/pastors) of the seven churches. Christ is reminding them of His sovereignty, authority and ownership of these pastors.

**“I know thy works”** - As He does in each message to these seven churches, Christ assures them that He knows what they have been doing for Him, whether great or small, many or few.

**“that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead”** - Their works may have been many, for He immediately follows the comment on their works with the statement that they have a reputation for being alive. Apparently Sardis had a reputation for being a church full of activity for the Lord, but Christ saw through the activity to see the hearts of these busy people. Their works were being done in the power of the flesh rather than in the power of the Spirit, something that is unfortunately true in many of our churches today.

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<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.

**“Be watchful [attentive], and strengthen [stabilize; make firm] the things which remain, that are ready to die”** - This church was on spiritual life-support. Christ is warning them that they needed to pay attention to what little spiritual life they still had because it was about to disappear as well. They were depending on their human strengths, abilities and ingenuity to work for Christ rather than depending on the Holy Spirit to empower and guide their efforts.

**“for I have not found thy works perfect [full; complete] before God”** - Their works were coming up short in the eyes of God, despite their external appearance to the contrary. We will be guilty of the same thing if we depend on our education or human ability when working for the Lord. If we try to convince people to follow Christ by making intellectual or emotional arguments then we are presenting a dead gospel. However, if we present the gospel from the scripture and depend on the Holy Spirit to use the word of God to convict hearts then we will see people genuinely come to Christ. We have too many people in our churches whose decision to follow Christ is intellectual only and not from the heart. These people have not been genuinely saved and they will eventually leave the faith. They are like the people who initially believed during Christ’s earthly ministry but He did not commit Himself to them because He knew they would eventually abandon Him because their faith was not a result of the Spirit of God doing a work in their heart. **John 2:23-25**

<sup>23</sup> *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.*

<sup>24</sup> *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,* <sup>25</sup> *And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”* The Greek word translated “commit” in v. 24 is the same word translated “believed” in v. 23. Jesus did not trust or believe in these people because He knew their faith was intellectual only and would only last until they “saw” something that superseded the miracles that they saw.

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<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.

**“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard”** - Christ calls on them to remember, not “what” they received and heard, but “how.” How did they receive and hear? By faith in Christ, totally dependent on Him to meet their need of salvation. **Col. 2:6** *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:”* How did the Colossians receive Christ? Through faith, recognizing their total helplessness to save themselves and therefore totally dependent on Christ. Paul instructs the Colossians to walk in the Lord the same way: through faith, recognizing their total helplessness to live for God in their flesh and therefore totally dependent on Christ. Christ wants the Christians at Sardis to depend on Him in their walk with Him rather than depending on their own human abilities.

**“and hold fast, and repent”** - After reminding them how they obtained salvation, Christ tells them to hold on to that in their walk with Him. He commands them to repent of their self-sufficiency and hold on to Him for the strength and ability to work for Him.

**“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”** - Christ warns that if they do not pay attention to the things that remain that have not yet died (v. 2 “Be watchful...”) then He will come to them when they least expect to chastise them for their sin.

<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.

**“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled [polluted; stained; contaminated] their garments”** - There were certain individuals in the church at Sardis who had remained faithful to Christ and had not tainted their lives with the ways of the world. They had not allowed the worldly sins to creep into their lives.

**“and they shall walk with me in white [light; brilliant]: for they are worthy”** - Jesus promises a place of privilege to these who do not defile their garments, for He says that they will “walk with me in white.” We saw back in Rev. 1:14 that Christ appeared to John with white hair and that the Greek word for “white” indicates a bright and brilliant white because of Christ’s glory. Not only will these with undefiled garments be allowed to walk with Christ, but they will be clothed in His glory. He says the reason He will do this for them is because “they are worthy.” Why were they worthy? Because they remained faithful to Him and shunned the sinful influences of the world. How did they remain faithful? Through dependence on Christ for their daily walk, for it is humanly impossible for us to be worthy any other way.

<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.

**“He that overcometh”** - The definition of an “overcomer” bears repeating, because it does not depend on our performance but on Christ. John defines the overcomer in **1 John 5:4-5** *“<sup>4</sup> For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* The following promises are for all those who have believed in Christ for salvation.

**“the same shall be clothed in white raiment”** - The overcomer is clothed in the righteousness given to him by Christ. **Rev. 19:7-8** *“<sup>7</sup> Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. <sup>8</sup> And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”* We will no longer have to worry about sin because we will be clothed with the Christ’s righteousness.

**“and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life”** - The “book of life” is God’s book that lists the names of all who belong to Him and to whom He has given eternal life. Christ promises that none of these names will ever be erased or scratched off the list.

**“but I will confess [to proclaim openly; to honor] his name before my Father, and before his angels”** - Christ is not ashamed of those that are His, for He will proudly proclaim their names before the Father and the heavenly angels as belonging to Him.

<sup>6</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Christ includes this statement in His message to each of the seven churches because He’s stressing the importance that we pay attention to what is being said. The messages contain commendations for what the churches are doing that pleases Him as well as rebukes for that which displeases Him in the churches. There are also promises to His people from which we can draw encouragement while facing the temptations and persecutions of the world.

The statement is addressed to “he that hath an ear.” In a natural sense, anyone with the ability to hear (“that hath an ear”) is commanded to listen. However, they are to hear “what the Spirit saith.” Unsaved people are unable to hear the Holy Spirit unless He is dealing with them for salvation. Thus, the “he that hath an ear” is apparently limited to those who have been born-again and therefore can “hear what the Spirit saith.” All born-again believers are to “hear” (listen, understand and heed) what the Spirit is saying to each of these churches because it is important that we listen and learn from what these messages contain.