

## Message to a Dying Church

### Revelation 3.1-6

July 21,2024

***“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.***

***“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup> Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup> Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. <sup>4</sup> Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. <sup>6</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’***

#### SARDIS

##### CITY:

- 30 mi. (50 km) south of Thyatira
- Commercially prosperous, thriving wool industry
- Once viewed as virtually impenetrable as surrounded by cliffs
- Twice defeated due to lack of vigilance

##### CHURCH:

- Little known
- Lived in apparent peace with community with no apparent threat of persecution
- Once had a good reputation

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

##### The seven spirits of God:

- reference to the Holy Spirit, the 7-fold Spirit as described in Isaiah:
  - *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.* Is.11.2
- Jesus sends the Spirit to the church to deliver His message:
  - *“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.* Jn.14.26

...and seven stars.

- These stars are the messengers/angels to the churches – Rev.1.20
- Jesus has authority over the church to bring blessing or judgment:
  - *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.* Col.1.18

“I know your works.

- Jesus knows us thoroughly, nothing can be hidden from Him
  - *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* Heb.4.13

You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

- No rebuke for false doctrine, fornication, idolatry, but no commendation
- Self-conception and reality oppose each other
- The past is past – DEATH describes this church
  - *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.* Matt.23.27

**Caution:** *“The incentive to do good works can shift from a desire to serve and please God to a simple desire to maintain the good public face...” Steve Gregg, Revelation; Four Views, p.107*

<sup>2</sup> Wake up,

- Twice in Sardis’s history the city was defeated due to its lack of vigilance in defence
- The church has become like dead due to its lack of vigilance
- Though declared dead, there remains hope.
  - *Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.* 1 Cor.15.33-34
  - *“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”* Eph.5.14

and strengthen what remains and is about to die,

- corrective measures demand action!
  - *Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.* Matt.3.8

for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

- God looks at the heart when we come before Him:
  - *“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* Matt.15.8-9
- We give to our Lord ALL He requires of us, not SOME...

- *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Matt.23.23*
- When we serve the Lord we give our best:
  - *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. Col.3.23-24*
  - *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Tim.2.15*

<sup>3</sup>Remember, then, what you received and heard.

- *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 Jn.1.1-3*
- *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Jn.20.30-31*

Keep it, and repent.

- *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Cor.6.19-20*

If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

- Referring not to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming but to judgment should this church not repent
  - i.e. punishment visited upon Annias and Saphira – Acts 5

<sup>4</sup>Yet you have still a few names in Sardis,

- God keeps for Himself a remnant:
  - *But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. Rom.11.4-5*

people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

- Those who have not bowed the knee, who have stayed true to the Lord, whose garments are not stained with sins that keep them from walking in fellowship with the Lord:
  - *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Col.1.9-12*
- they will walk with me in white
  - the highest blessing we have: to be in communion with Christ

<sup>5</sup> The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments,

- White garments symbolize righteousness, victory and the glory of God
  - ...it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. Rev.19.8

and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.

- Despite the dangers, hardships and rejection that come with following Christ, he who conquers has assurance for all eternity:
  - I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. Jn.10.28

I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

- Jesus will acknowledge the one who conquers to the Father:
  - *So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven...* Matt.10.32
  - *But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Jn.10.2-3*

<sup>6</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

How is our church health? Are we willing to examine ourselves to find out? Are we willing to repent and work toward making changes the Holy Spirit has called us to make?