



OPENING COMMENT

Jesus has some harsh things to say to the church at Sardis. There is very little, if any, real commendation, but a healthy dose of condemnation for this particular church. In fact, the best way that Jesus can describe this church is that it is dead. Oh, it appears to have life outwardly, but Christ sees beyond the surface and can discern the thoughts and intentions of the church, and his assessment is crushing. We would do well to hear the warnings leveled against the church in Sardis and use it to shine a discerning light on our church and our personal lives to strive towards authentic faith and life.

READ THE TEXT: Revelation 3:1-6

3 “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. ²Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³Remember, 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. ⁴Yet 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. ⁵The 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. ⁶He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. How does Jesus identify himself to the church at Sardis? What questions does that bring to the surface?



2. What 3 ways does Jesus describe their failure throughout the passage?
3. What are the 5 commands Jesus gives to the church in Sardis?
4. What threat does Christ level against the church if they do not heed his warning and commands?
5. Is this a universal or representative indictment of the church? Why?
6. What is the commitment of Christ to the conqueror?

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. The passage speaks of an outward appearance (looking alive) and an inward reality (deadness). Where in our spiritual lives do we look outwardly vibrant, but actually inwardly dead?
2. Part of Jesus' call to the church is to strengthen what remains, implying that there were still areas that were not completely lost. What are these in your own spiritual walk and how might you begin to strengthen them?
3. Jesus calls the church to remember what they received as part of the antidote to their deadness. How often, and in which ways, do you take time to remind yourself of what you received and learned?
4. How does the thief imagery Jesus uses speak to the urgency in his commands and our subsequent response?
5. Jesus sees unrepentant sin as something to come against in such a way that it would have eternal consequences for the sinner. How does thinking about your sin in these terms change your view of it?
6. Whether you find yourself identifying more with the soiled garment portion of the church, or the unstained portion, the promises of Christ can still apply if we have ears to hear. Where do you need urgently change your thinking and actions?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Psalm 101:7 – the cost of deceit.
2. Isaiah 29:13-14 – God's response to hypocrisy.
3. Matthew 7:21-23 – Not everyone who says "Lord".
4. Matthew 23:27-28 – The theme of outward beauty but inward deadness.
5. Luke 20:46-47 – Outward adornment and evil intentions
6. Galatians 6:1-5 – Thinking incorrectly about yourself.
7. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – Marks of godlessness and having a form of godliness.
8. James 1:19-27 – hearing and doing the word of God.
9. 1 John 4:15-21 – claiming to love God.



CONCLUSION

Hypocrisy is a big deal. It is a big deal because it presents us as something other than what we truly are. At first it seems desirable because we keep the shameful and unauthentic parts of ourselves out of the spotlight, but the more we practice it the more we deceive ourselves into thinking that we are in fact what we project to the world. We start to convince ourselves that we are just fine the way we are, which perpetuates the cycle of hypocrisy. Jesus comes against hypocrisy hard because it paves the path to having our names blotted out of the book of life. His call is to be real, deal with the dirty clothing, clean up before he suddenly returns. His gracious call is based in an intimate understanding of how hypocritical we are and calls us to turn, to remember, to remind, and to strengthen and he will be faithful to carry us to the end. Take the hard, and narrow path of authenticity and Christ will be faithful to see you to the end.

SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three-fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

