

Jesus' Seven Letters to the Churches

Part 5 Sardis: The Dead Church

- 1** AND TO the angel (messenger) of the assembly (church) in Sardis write: These are the words of Him Who has the seven Spirits of God [the sevenfold Holy Spirit] and the seven stars: I know your record and what you are doing; you are supposed to be alive, but [in reality] you are dead.
- 2** Rouse yourselves and keep awake, and strengthen and invigorate what remains and is on the point of dying; for I have not found a thing that you have done [any work of yours] meeting the requirements of My God or perfect in His sight.
- 3** So call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them, and repent. In case you will not rouse yourselves and keep awake and watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know or suspect at what hour I will come.
- 4** Yet you still have a few [persons'] names in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes, and they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy and deserving.
- 5** Thus shall he who conquers (is victorious) be clad in white garments, and I will not erase or blot out his name from the Book of Life; I will acknowledge him [as Mine] and I will confess his name openly before My Father and before His angels.
- 6** He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the [Holy] Spirit says to the assemblies (churches). [Revelation 3:1-6](#) (AMPC)

Portion for the Journey:

vs. 1 Address: "To the angel (messenger) of the church in Sardis write..."

The word 'Sardis' in the Greek means, 'those escaping.' In the historical interpretation, Sardis is believed to represent those churches raised up through the Protestant Reformation. They were once alive, but in them the Church, as Christ's bride, was incomplete. They began a reformation of a time of darkness and error in the Church but stopped short of achieving complete purity of doctrine and fulness of the Holy Spirit. The Protestant Reformation retained many of the relics of religious traditions and dogma.

The history of Sardis provides us with a picture of the character of the church in Sardis. When praying for one's city, it is often valuable to research the history of the city. It may offer insights into the specific spiritual forces of darkness that are affecting those who live in the city. In this case, it is clear that the darkness of the city had a tangible effect upon the Church. The Greek word 'Sardis' is of unknown derivation. One source said the word "Sardis" means literally "red ones" and is a reference to the man of the flesh. Esau, whose name means, 'red' is a type representing the man of the flesh. He was said to be a red man. Watchman Nee said Sardis means 'restoration.' [Gen. 25:25, 30](#)

Characteristics of Sardis:

Geographically, Sardis is thirty miles southeast of Thyatira. It is one of the oldest and most storied cities. It was the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Lydia. The greatest advantage of this city was that it was the knot at the center of 5 different roads.

Northwest ↔ Thyatira ↔ Pergamos
West ↔ Smyrna

East ↔ Phargia
Southeast ↔ Philadelphia
Southwest ↔ Ephesus

Twelve hundred years before Christ's birth Sardis was a great city in ancient Greece. It was considered one of the greatest of all cities in the world and capital of a powerful empire. But Sardis was also a name of contempt, even by non-Christians because the city was known for loose-living, pleasure seeking, and luxurious living. It became a byword for slack and effeminate living. It was also a robber's stronghold. The chief characteristic of Sardis was one of degeneration.

Sardis was a great commercial city. It was extremely wealthy. It was said that the Pactolus River that ran directly through Sardis was filled with gold dust. Prior to this time, bartering and exchange of goods were the means of trade. Sardis was the place where the concept of money was introduced. The first coins were minted in Sardis in the days of Croesus, the King of Lydia. Croesus lived in 560 BC. The saying 'As rich as Croesus' became known as the proverb for wealth. The concept of money originated in Sardis. It was through Croesus that Sardis reached its zenith and it was with him that the city plunged into disaster.

The religion of Sardis was one of devotion to the life cycles of nature. They denied the existence of death by focusing on the regeneration and renewal of life through the seasons of nature. They were very focused on the mysteries of reproduction resulting in repulsive legends and ceremonies. Their concept of "family" was reduced to the lowest physical form that was so far from God's beautiful plan for families. Their patron deity was "Cybele" a grotesque form that was only half human. She was believed to be the mother of their people, dwelling in nature and especially the sacred Lake Koloe from which it was believed life had originated. When people died, they were returned to the lake. This religion focused on healing power and in Sardis, especially upon the ability of their gods to restore life to the dead.

At the time the letter was written to the church in Sardis it was no longer a great city. One historian noted that in Sardis life was too easy, that it had grown flabby and sunk into an easy and voluptuous lifestyle. The more wealthy Sardis grew, the more it lost its claim to greatness. Greek historians list the following reasons for the downfall of Sardis:

- Over confidence in "self"
- Failure to guard against pride and arrogance
- Not aware of the slipperiness and deceitfulness of fortune
- Underestimating their enemy
- Complacency and apathy to danger
- Sleeping in time of war

Sardis sat on a plateau forming an almost impregnable fortress by natural means. Sardis was the seat of power for a warlike kingdom marked by frequent aggression and overcoming city after city. As city life grew more complex, the original city became too small so they built a lower city on the north and west sides of the mountain. The Greek historian, Herodotus, said Sardis was considered impenetrable. The citadel of Sardis was built on a ridge of rock that seemed to defy assault.

Sardis was captured by the Persian King Cyrus in a most memorable way. Croesus initiated a war with Cyrus, the King of Persia. He had been warned by Solon, considered the wisest of the Greeks, who upon seeing the magnificence and luxury of the people noted the blind confidence of the king and his people but also the seeds of softness and degeneration that were being sown. Croesus engaged in the battle with Cyrus and was routed. He still was not worried for he thought all he had to do was return to his impregnable citadel, recuperate and fight again. Cyrus besieged the city but the King of Sardis failed to see the danger.

Cyrus sent out a message that he would offer a special reward to any man who worked out a method to scale the unscalable cliff to take this city. In his army, a Mordian soldier, Hyeroeades, carefully watched the cliffs. He saw a Lydian soldier on the battlement and as he watched, he saw the Lydian accidentally drop his helmet over the cliff. Hyeroeades watched the soldier mount the battlement and pick his way down the cliffs. He recovered his helmet and climb back up. Hyeroeades memorized the way the soldier had taken. That night he led a handpicked band of soldiers up the cliffs by that way and when they reached the top, they found the battlements completely unguarded. The Sardians thought themselves too safe to need a guard, even in time of war! Their garrison never dreamed anyone would find their way up the cliff. So Hyeroeades and his comrades entered the city unopposed and Sardis was taken.

The king totally underestimated his opponent. He relied on the natural defenses of the terrain and believed the city was impenetrable from attack. He went to bed to rest and awoke to find his kingdom had been conquered while he slept. Their vulnerable point had always existed, a very small, narrow climb in a steep and almost perpendicular pathway up the rock. It could have easily been defended by a child throwing rocks on the head of the climber. But no one watched or protected the passageway. Cyrus and his men ascended into the city one by one until the entire army had entered the city. He literally entered the city, "like a thief in the night."

The Romans came three hundred and twenty years later, the city was again captured in exactly the same way while the watchmen slept and neglected their duty. They exhibited careless confidence and failure to guard the known approach left the city unguarded. The ESV Study Bible states this story of the city's twice capture twice by similar means became a cautionary tale against misguided complacency and lack of vigilance.

In AD 17, Sardis was devastated by an earthquake. Tiberius dedicated a vast sum of money to rebuilding the city. By 26 AD it was again described as a great city that had risen from the ruins.

When John wrote his letter to Sardis, it was still a wealthy city but very degenerate. The once great citadel was now only an ancient monument on the hilltop. There was no life or spirit there. The once great Sardians were soft and twice had lost their city because they were too lazy to watch.

Sardis today is a wilderness of ruins and thorns, pasture and wild flowers. The "rock" upon which the city was built turned out to be mud lightly packed which eroded through rain and time and eventually the crumbling plateau was leveled. The character of the foundation in which they trusted exemplified the character of the people, instability, untrustworthiness, inefficiency and deterioration. It is easy to see the contrast to our Rock, the everlasting foundation in which we can fully trust.

vs. 1 Author: *"The words of Him who has the seven spirits and the seven stars."* This description indicates His fulness of power and fulness of wisdom. The church which is marked for its lack of life, is full of unfulfilled works. [Prov. 8:1-12](#)

Seven Spirits of God: Reference is to the Holy Spirit in His fullness and completion. Seven is a number representing God's perfection. The seven spirits of the LORD are referred to in several places in the Word: [Isa. 11:1-5](#) outlines 1) The Spirit of the Lord; 2) Spirit of Wisdom; 3) Understanding; 4) Spirit of Counsel; 5) Strength; 6) Knowledge; 7) The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord. (Some would say The Spirit of the LORD is the heading and the seventh would be Righteous Judgment. See [Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6](#) The significance of this name as addressed to Sardis is that this was a church that had clearly lost the fullness of the Spirit in their midst, if they ever had it. [Prov. 8:12-16; James 3:17-28](#)

Seven Stars: [Rev. 1:20](#) tells us the seven stars are the seven messengers of the seven churches. The term angels may refer to spiritual beings, but it can also mean messengers or representatives. Most Bible scholars agree that the "messengers" are the pastors or bishops who lead each of the congregations Jesus is addressing. Stars shine light and give enlightenment. He holds the pastors accountable to teach the Word and lead the church to grow in His ways. [Rev. 1:16, 17, 20](#)

Commendation: *"...for I have not found a thing that you have done [any work of yours] meeting the requirements of My God or perfect in His sight."* Each of the letters to the Churches had previously started with a point of commendation for their positive qualities. This letter shows a marked change in the order of this letter. Sardis receives no commendation for the church as a whole but He notes there is a faithful remnant. In the other churches sin had not been the habit, but rather the exception. Here the case is reversed because the church was most characterized by their deadness.

v. 1 Criticism: *"I know your record and what you are doing; you are supposed to be alive, but [in reality] you are dead."*

Watchman Nee compared the church in Sardis to the denominational churches who became steeped in tradition, holding to a form of godliness but denying its power. They lost their sense of their desperate need of God and relied on their own strength. Sardis represents those who have fallen into degradation and deathly coma state. This church had lost the Spirit of God in their midst and were nearly dead.

"I know your works. You have the reputation for being alive, but you are dead." In previous letters, the "I know" was spoken in tenderness and compassion. Now, His knowledge of this church is penetrating and filled with the knowledge they have been judged and found wanting. Outwardly they were going through the motions of serving the Lord. The scaffolding and structure were there but the life at the heart of the church was gone. This church had become a whitewashed sepulcher. To those around them, they probably looked pretty good, but God knew their hearts and warned them they were desperately near death. He goes on to say that He has not found anything they have done (any work of theirs) that meet the requirements of God or are perfect in His sight. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites, actors wearing a mask to present a good outward appearance that did not reflect their hearts or relationship with the Lord. Their concern was in how they appeared to men with no concern for pleasing the LORD. Jesus said, "Woe to you when men speak well of you." [Luke 6:26; Matt. 23:27-28](#)

They had a reputation or name of being alive, but in the part no one else could see, they were dead. Only the LORD knows the motives of the heart from which our deeds arise. Their contemporaries saw

them as being an effective church. The word 'reputation' is also translated 'name.' The Greek uses the word 'onoma, which means reputation or that which is recalled or called to mind regarding this church. It is the memory or name that distinguishes them from another. When one hears this name, everything about the person is called to mind, one's rank, interests, pleasures, deeds or excellencies. This word is used 3x in this letter. v. 1 refers to the church as a whole, and v. 4-5 use this word in a personal way about individuals within the church.

This church was walking in dead works. The need to repentance from dead works is the first of the six foundational teachings of the church that Paul taught were necessary to apply in one's life in order to grow into maturity. His rebuke in Hebrews was that they should have been teachers themselves and mature and able to partake of the meat of the Word but they still had a need for milk because they had yet to apply these foundational teachings. He said because they were still drinking milk he could not teach them all that he wanted to in spiritual matters related to the priesthood. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their carnality and indicated it was due to the shallowness of their intake in the Word making it impossible to receive solid teaching. **2 Tim. 3:5; Heb. 5:11-14, 6:1; 1 Cor. 3:1-17**

- Repentance from dead works
- Faith toward God
- Doctrine of baptisms
- Laying on of hands
- Resurrection of the dead
- Eternal judgment

In **Hebrews 5:12**, Paul called these the very first principles of God's Word. Two phrases are used in Heb. 6:1 to describe these teachings: 1) "Elementary teachings" translated from the Greek word "arche" (G746) meaning "beginning or origin, the person or thing that commences a thing in a series, the leader. From the Greek root #756, meaning, "the first to do anything, the chief, leader, beginning, precedence, to commence in the order of time. 2) "foundation" (G2310) laid down a foundation (of a building, wall, city, metaphorically, the foundations, beginnings, principals of an institution or truth. Something put down, to lay a foundation. The first place, principality. The word confirms this principle of ordered teaching to progress from milk to meat in **Isa. 28:9-10** "To whom would He teach knowledge, And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? "For He says, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there.'"

It is essential that we lay a firm foundation in vital union with Jesus. He is the wise master builder who lays the foundation for life in Him. Apart from His Spirit, the Spirit of the Living God, we cannot grow into maturity and or fully align our lives with His Word. The Spirit-Filled Life Bible comments, "The demanding truth of this passage is that no amount of supposed spiritual insight or experience reflects genuine spiritual growth if it is separated from our basic growth in the knowledge of God's Word in the Bible. Without this rootedness in the Word, we may be deluded about our growth. Such "rootedness" is in truth and love, not merely in learning knowledge or accomplished study." **2 Cor. 3:1-5**

Those who have placed their faith in the finished work of Jesus will not be judged regarding eternal destination but their works will be judged. Dead Works (G3498, nekros; G2041, ergon are works devoid of that life which has its source in God. These are works which will fail of the approval of God and of all reward at the final judgment. **1 Cor. 3:10-15**

Dead works is defined as anything one does which is not initiated by God. The Amplified translation translated 'dead works' as 'dead formalism.' Dead works are of no positive effect, null and void of the Holy Spirit and empty of His life. This can include works of the Law and traditions of man. **Mark 7:13, Gal. 5:4.** Dead works cannot produce fruit that lasts. Dead works are unproductive and cannot bring forth life. Dead works are likened to wood, hay or stubble, that will be consumed in the fire and have no worth in God's Kingdom. God wants us to be filled with His Spirit and do whatever He tells us to do. **John 2:5; 5:19; 8:28; 15:5; Phil. 2:3; Prov. 14:12**

Dead works are always motivated by a source other than God, pride, self-sufficiency, our flesh, fear of man, need to please others, desire to please God or earn His favor. We are likely to move into dead works if we feel pressured to act rather than wait on the LORD and pray for His direction. We need to have discernment to recognize when we are being driven versus being led by the Holy Spirit. The adversary's scheme is often to push us to do something, even if it seems good, but not initiated by God. Note his tests of Jesus in the wilderness that were not God initiated and temptation was for spiritual power apart from God. **Ps. 19:12-14**

In the Old Testament, these dead works are referred to as empty works or vain things. In Psalm 101, David prayed that he would set no 'worthless' thing before his eyes. This word 'worthless' is the opposite of profitable. The Hebrew word is 'beliyaal' (H1100) which means, without profit, destruction, wicked, evil, good for nothing, vain. Beliyaal is described in the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament as the essence of that which will wear out, waste away and is of no eternal value—evil. It is used in connection with the word 'belial' which is a name for Satan, meaning worthless, lewd, profligate, wicked. It is used to refer to persons who have no regard for God or man. Belial is the prince of licentiousness and corruption.

To avoid dead works, it is important that we learn to wait on the Lord for His timing:

Examples:

- 1) **Abraham and Sarah** acted apart from God's leading when God did not immediately fulfill His promise to provide the promised offspring. When they took matters into their own hands Abraham sired Ishmael through his concubine. The consequences of this presumptuous sin are felt by Israel to this day.
- 2) **King Saul** chose the path of expediency rather than to obey the command to wait for Samuel and as a result lost his kingdom and God's favor departed from him.

When David prayed for God to keep him from 'presumptuous sins' he was probably referring to dead works. The word 'presumption' is also translated 'insolence' (G2087) It is defined as 'pride, arrogance, rebellion, to seethe, boil, or act in a proud manner. Self-importance. 1) presumption, pride that presume too much in one's favor, especially in the sense of authority. 2) rebellion or disobedience in asserting one's will over another, 3) element of willful decision. David asked to be cleansed from willful, deliberate sins, but to be protected from presumptuous sin. The sin of presumption is antithesis to the fear of the Lord. **Ps. 19: 13-14; Prov. 13:10**

A Kingdom Dynamics note (The Spirit-Filled Life Bible) states,

“Authentic faith founded on the promises of God in His Word; is not presumptuous. Presumptuous ideas about faith lead to attitudinal or behavioral sin that miss the mark of faith’s true meaning. ...Presumption desires the promise of God without living a life for God and is hypocritical in His sight.

To protect from presumptuous attitude:

- 1) Root your faith in what God in Christ has provided in His redemption, not on what you might gain through presumptuous “faith” exercises. [Gal. 2:20](#)
- 2) Develop your own personal faith and do not attempt to live off another’s faith (as for example, Sceva’s sons did—[Act 19:14-16](#))
- 3) Walk in faith, growing in an intimate relationship with the Author and Finisher of our faith, so that you are known as His, and found in Him. [Heb. 12:2](#); [John 10:27](#); [Phil. 3:9](#); [2 Chron. 6:24-31](#); [Prov. 16:23, 24](#)

While dead works are a work of the flesh, they fall into a different category from the sinful acts arising from our sin nature. (see list [Gal. 5:19-21](#)). Dead works are often the “good works” a Christian may do which can seem very spiritual and are done with the intention of serving God. Good works spring up from a corrupt source for nothing good dwells in our flesh. [Rom. 7:18](#); [14:23](#); [16:25](#); [Isa. 64:6](#); [Prov. 14:12](#); [Eph. 2:5](#); [Matt. 7:21-23](#)

God looks at the heart and motives and is not impressed by our outward actions. Dead works are often religious works and service that are based on traditions and are empty of His life. This would include any work that makes us feel justified apart from the work of Christ on the cross. “Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote...” Our best works can never make us approved or accepted by God. This can include attempting to be justified by the works of the law. [Isa. 29:13](#); [Rom 3:20-28 AMPC](#), [Gal 2:16, 3:11, 3:24, 5:4](#); [Phil. 1:9-10 \(AMPC\)](#)

How do we become free from dead works? “Remember what you have received and heard.” Dead works resulted in a dramatic plunge away from God. It led them to forsake what they have learned by forsaking the Living Word for man’s word. [Jer. 14:16 AMPC](#); [23:18-32](#)

1. Repentance starts it all! God must send His Spirit of light and truth to lead us to Himself. He is the One who grants us repentance. Repentance precedes faith and brings us into a new place where we can walk in our new life in Jesus. Biblically, repentance always precedes belief and leads to true faith. If we want to see NT level of conversions, we need to follow the same pattern. Confessions of faith without first demonstrating repentance will not produce true faith. [Rom. 2:4 AMPC](#); [Luke 24:46-47](#), [Acts 2:27-28](#); [37-38](#); [3:19-20 AMPC](#); [17:30-31](#); [20:21](#); [Luke 13:2-5](#); [Ps. 43:3](#)

[Hebrews 6:1](#) calls us to understand the need to repent (cease and turn away) from dead works. We are also called to “cleanse our conscience from dead works.” [Heb. 9:14](#); [Ezek. 18:31](#); [Mark 1:4, 14-15](#)

Repentance (G3341, metanoia) [Thayers Greek Lexicon] This is a military term that means “about face.” True repentance does not merely mean to turn away from our sins but to turn to the LORD!

- Repentance is a decision, not an emotion. Repentance is not to be confused with simply being sorry. It comes from Godly sorrow which leads to true repentance. Judas is an excellent

example of worldly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is filled with condemnation. Esau was remorseful and sorry for what he had done, but the consequences were without redemption **2 Cor. 7:9-10; Matt. 27:3-5; Heb. 12:17**

- A change of mind; especially of those who abhor (utterly detest, hate) their errors and misdeeds and have determined to enter into a better course of life.
- A changed mind leads to a changed life (changed mind ---> changed life).
- Recognition of sin, sorrow for it and a hearty amendment (i.e. change from the heart) for it.
- True repentance leads to life. **Acts 11:18**
- Truth leads to true repentance and true repentance allows us to fully receive the truth! **2 Tim. 2:24-26; Acts 26:17; 2 Cor. 4:1-6**

2. Repentance brings conviction that nothing we can do for ourselves will benefit us. When we repent, we submit to God just as we are without efforts to make ourselves acceptable to God. We need to realize our total and complete dependence upon Him, knowing that apart from Him we can do nothing. God is not interested in our good intentions or works no matter how good they look to us. He is interested in our willingness to obey Him. **John 15:5**

3. Seek the LORD with your whole heart, spending time meditating on His Word, seeking to learn His ways and to be quick to obey and apply what He is teaching you. **2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 2:5; 2 Cor. 11:3**

4. Loving the LORD and coming into a relationship with the LORD is our highest priority. We must not allow the desire to “do something” for the LORD to replace our desire to know Him, to love Him and worship Him. When we put Him first, all these other things will fall into place. Mary and Martha give an excellent example of this principle in action. Mary chose to sit at His feet and learn from Him, Martha was distracted with her much serving. Jesus commended Mary, saying she chose the best part which could not be taken from her.

5. “We work from a place of rest” (not striving in our own selves). Resting in Him comes from living in His presence and depending on Him for everything. We lay down our own efforts and allow Him to work in and through us. Our place is to trust and obey. **Heb 4:10**

6. Our works are a by-product of our abiding in Christ and are the fruit of our relationship with Him. Through repentance, He will give us a new heart, a servant heart, born being re-created in the image of Jesus. There is no striving, when we become conformed to the Word. **John 15:4-5, 9; Phil. 2:3-7, 2:14-16, 1: 9-11; Col. 1:24-29; John 17:22-23, 26;**

Campbell McAlpine shared an account of his church when the leadership repented from dead works. He stated, “Organization can be good servant, but when the organization begins to lead, it is a hard taskmaster.” The church knew some of their programs were of God, but they were convicted that not all of their programs were borne of God. They repented and seriously sought to end their “dead works” by tearing up their entire program and refusing to begin a program until the LORD showed them He was the author and initiator of the plan. They were on their faces in prayer for six months before God showed them any work. He said we never spoke together about the work of God more than we spoke to God about His work in prayer. They prayed and sought to get the mind of the Lord. They repented that they ever started programs without Him. When they began to hold services again, the power of the Holy Spirit in their midst brought forth an incredible revival and a wave of salvation. Campbell McAlpine

has an excellent teaching these six foundational doctrines, which he refers to as “Kindergarten Doctrine.” An audio recording of this teaching is available on the internet.

How do we discern between dead works and works of God in our lives?

Dead works do not bear fruit. We need to ask the LORD if there is anything we are doing in our life that is not working. If God is behind our work, we should see fruit. We need to ask God if there is an area of failure in our life. Failure is a sign post of death and the absence of Jesus. Everything God does works!

- The living works arising from His Spirit will match with His Word and His ways.
- God’s works arise from a renewed mind that is dedicated to obedience to God’s Word.
- There is a gap between our natural abilities and what we believe we can do by faith with God’s help. Living works depend on our faith in order to complete them.
- Anointed works of the Lord are borne out of our obedience to God’s Word. [Isa. 30:21; vs. 18 AMPC](#)

If we are making it a practice to seek God’s will, to know His ways and to pray for His leading and guidance, we can walk in freedom from fear of falling. [Prov. 3:5-6 \(Read in MSG, HCSB, and NIV\); Prov. 16:3; Ps. 37: 3-5, 23-24](#)

- Confess to the LORD that we can do nothing apart from Him.
- Seek His guidance and direction. Pray for wisdom.
- Trust the LORD by placing your desires under His authority.
- Ask the LORD to establish the works of your hands and protect you from presumptuous sins. [Ps. 90:10-17](#)
- Submit your will to Him.
- Analyze the decision in light of His Word. Is it scriptural?
- Own the decision and know that if you make a mistake, God is still able to work it for good and use it as a teachable moment in our lives.

Lysa Terkeurst concludes by saying, “If your heart and mind are aligned in the direction of God, you don’t have to agonize to the point of analysis paralysis over the decisions that are before you. ...So stare mightily at the LORD and His plan. And if you don’t know His plan, stare mightily at living out His Word in your life and His plan will unfold day by day. Decision by decision.” (p. 91)

The second rebuke against those at Sardis was their spiritual sleepiness. Dead works settle one into a slothful complacency and unawareness of their dead works. Referred to in the scripture as vanity. Jesus described this sleepiness as a deep coma and near death. Careless complacency led to failure to be alert and resulted in Sardis destruction by their enemies. Spiritual complacency can be equally devastating when one allow the enemy to come in by underestimating the danger. The parable of the ten virgins warns us that sleep will also allow us to be unprepared for His coming. In their sleepiness they lost the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. [Matt. 25:1-13; 1 Thes. 3:2; 5:4; Matt. 24:43; Rev. 16:15 Luke 9:32; Rom. 13:11; 1 Thes. 5:6,7; Eph. 5:14](#)

vs. 2-3 Instruction: *“Rouse yourselves and keep awake, and strengthen and invigorate what remains and is on the point of dying; for I have not found a thing that you have done [any work of yours] meeting*

the requirements of My God or perfect in His sight. So call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them, and repent."

- **Wake up! Rouse yourself.** [Isa. 52:1-5](#); [Ezra 1:1,5](#)
- **Be watchful. Be alert!** [1 Cor. 16:13](#); [Eph. 6:18](#); [Col. 4:2](#)
- **Strengthen and invigorate what remains and is on the point of dying;**
- **Remember and obey.** Call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them..., Go back and establish the things that remain. Apply foundational truths.
- **Repent** from dead works: Complete works in keeping with repentance.

3 Warning: *"In case you will not rouse yourselves and keep awake and watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know or suspect at what hour I will come."* [1 Thes. 5:2-10](#); [Eph. 5:7-17](#); [Rev. 16:15](#); [Matt. 24:43](#)

v. 4 Commendation: *"Yet you still have a few [persons'] names in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes, and they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy and deserving."* While the church as a whole had become like the city, there were a few who remained faithful. The Lord sees the faithful remnant. He knows each one by name! These were the individuals who had not soiled their garments with sin.

vs. 5 Promise to those who are faithful: *"Thus shall he who conquers (is victorious) be clad in white garments, and I will not erase or blot out his name from the Book of Life; I will acknowledge him [as Mine] and I will confess his name openly before My Father and before His angels."*

- **Book of life:** Ps. 139:16 tells us that in His book were written all the days ordained for us even before there was yet one of them. See [Rev. 20:10-15](#) This book of life is mentioned 6x in Revelations. [3:5](#); [13:8](#); [17:8](#); [20:12, 15](#); [21:27](#)
- **White Garments:** White garments are a symbol of salvation. Reference to robes of righteousness, the wedding garment of the redeemed. White is the traditional color representing innocence and purity. [Isa 52:1-3](#); [Rev. 7:14](#)
- **Name in the Book of Life (also referred to as 'the Lamb's book of Life')** The LORD promises life eternal in contrast with the death that permeated the church in Sardis. [Rev. 20:12](#)
- **I will confess his name before My Father and His angels.** This shows not only His full acceptance before the Father but also our position with Him in the heavenly places. [Zech. 3:1-10](#)

v. 6 *"He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the [Holy] Spirit says to the assemblies (churches)."* [Revelation 3:1-6 AMPC](#)

What is the Lord Speaking to me?

Responding to the Lord: