The attack against them [the true believers] *will be led by the liberal denominational churches.*
J. Vernon McGee

Revelation Chapter Three-Verses 1-6
THE SEVEN CHURCHES-PART FIVE
The Church of Sardis
The Church, which has a name of being alive but is dead!
Handout Seven
Prayer Study 406
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

SARDIS

Many Biblical scholars believe that, if Thyatira represents the Medieval Church, then Sardis prophetically represents the Reformation Church or denominational church, in large measure spiritually dead, but including a small, faithful Remnant Company. The Lord has always had a remnant, throughout the Old and New Testament. In Elijah's time, for example, 7000 had not bowed the knee to Baal. In Isaiah's time God did not destroy Israel because of the remnant that was there. During the Babylonian captivity, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were part of the small remnant who remained faithful in captivity. At the advent of the Messiah, John the Baptist, Anna, and Simeon were part of this company. During our day the Lord will use a remnant of His people in a powerful and remarkable way to witness to the world that *God is not dead*!

Sardis is one of two of the seventh churches that the Lord gives no commendation to. This church had failed because of their lack of watchfulness and diligence to do the things of God.

Sardis, one of the oldest cities of the world and now called Sart, produced the first coins in the world. They had a legendary king, King Midas, who in Mythology turned everything he touched into gold, and gold was actually found in a river in Sardis.

Sardis appeared to be an impregnable fortress and was on a mountaintop that was 1000 feet on three sides. The cliffs of Sardis, however, were made of clay and washed away, leaving cracks that enabled the enemy to climb up the mountain and sneak an attack on Sardis, which was only watching the one side of its city and was caught by surprise.

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 [[a] 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.

The *seven Spirits of God* are seven characteristics of the One Holy Spirit. Charles

Spurgeon (1834-1892), one of the world's greatest preachers ever, listed them as follows: loving (Romans 5:5), faithful (Romans 15:13), untiring (John 14:26), wise (1st Corinthians 2:10), safe (1st Corinthians 2:13), active (Romans 8:26-27), and ever-present (John 14:16). Some modern teachers list these seven attributes as titles: Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby.

This verse contains one of the sharpest rebukes of the risen Lord: He knows their record and actions and while they think they are alive, they 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.

This is one of the saddest commentaries on the Sardis Church, one of the main churches in Asia Minor at that time. The church, much like the Western World Church, including America, needs to wake-up but is dying. In the Lord's eyes the Sardis church has not done ANYTHING spiritual relevant to His Kingdom.

In the King James the first words of this verse are *"Be Watchful…."* Paul writes to the Corinthian church, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1st Corinthians 16:13). We are told in the Word to be watchful or vigilant of several things:

a. **The wiles- a wile is a trick or strategy intended to ensnare or deceive- of the devil:** 1st Peter 5:8- *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*
b. **Temptation:** Matthew 26:41- *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*
c. **His Coming:** Matthew 24:42 (see also Mark 13:37 & 1st Thessalonians 5:6) - *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."* Much of the Church in America today is not watching because so many false prophets have set a date for the coming of Jesus, and this date came and went without Jesus coming.
d. **False Teachers:** Acts 20:29-31- "For I know this, that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

If prophetically Sardis is the Reformation Church, then we are to strengthen what remains. What came out of the Reformation Church are the following, which we need to strengthen:

a. Justification by faith alone
b. Inerrancy of the scriptures in the original languages

c. **An acknowledgement of the depravity of man**, i.e. we all need to be washed with the Blood, we all need a Savior.

d. **Redemption by His Blood**. I remind you of a simple, yet profound teaching on the Blood by Derek Prince:

   a. **Through the blood of Jesus, I am redeemed out of the hand of the enemy** (*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy*-Psalms 107:2).

   b. **Through the blood of Jesus, all my sins are forgiven** (*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace-Ephesians 1:7).*

   c. **The blood of Jesus, God's Son, continually cleanses me from all sin** (*But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin*-1st John 1:7).

   d. **Through the blood of Jesus, I am justified, made righteous, just as if I had never sinned** (*Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we should be saved from wrath through Him*-Romans 5:9).

   e. **Through the blood of Jesus, I am sanctified, made holy or set apart to God and separated from the devil** (*Wherefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate*-Hebrews 13:12).

   f. **My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit-redeemed, cleansed, sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Therefore, Satan has no place in me, no power over me, through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus!** (*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*-1st Corinthians 6:19-20).

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.

This verse reminds us both of the parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25 and the verse in 2nd Peter 3:10: *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

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.

When Abraham was pleading with God not to destroy Sodom because his relative Lot lived there, he appeals to the Lord: *"For be it from you…to slay the righteous with the wicked"* (Genesis 18:25). And Isaiah writes in Isaiah 1:9, *Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.* This makes me wonder if our judgment has not been delayed until this generation because of the faithful remnant in America.

Praise God! Praise God! for the few, the remnant, that stand for Jesus no matter what! William Barclay writes, "God never abandons his search for the faithful few, and they are never lost to his sight in the mass of the wicked."

We are to be clothed with righteousness (Psalm 132:9). In the pagan world no one, with soiled clothes, could approach a temple of one of the gods. This was an outward, physical matter. In this verse the reference is to the cleanliness of the soul. Also, white garments to the early church symbolized the new believers who were adults and had been baptized. At these baptisms they took a personal pledge to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Most of them emerged from the baptismal waters with clean white robes, symbolizing the cleansing of their lives.

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.

To those who walk in spiritual victory and are faithful to the Lord, the Lord gives a series of promises. First, they will be clothed in white garments. In Rome all the people wore white to celebrate victory. In fact, the city was known as *urbs candida,* the city in white. White in almost every culture stands for purity, and in the early church white robes signified that the faithful would-be guests at the banquet of God or Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Secondly, Jesus also promises not to wipe out their names in the book of life. Some use this concept to argue against the doctrine of "*once saved, always saved",* saying that if people's names can be wiped out of the book of life, then they must be able to lose their salvation. The one who is not written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

In ancient cultures, a king kept the names of all his citizens in a register. When someone died or when someone committed a crime, the king erased the name from the register. To be in the book meant that one was a faithful citizen.

Finally, Jesus promises to confess their names before the Father and the angels. This reminds us of Luke 12:8-9: *"Also I say to you, Whosoever shall confess me before*

men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." (see also Matthew 10:32-33)

6 He who is able to hear, let him listen to and heed what the [Holy] Spirit says to the assemblies (churches).

Again, the Lord concludes His message to this church encouraging those, who have a spirit to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, to listen.

In Sardis, we see:

- **Name of Church:** Sardis means *red ones.*
- **Title of Jesus Christ:** Jesus gives His title as the One who has the seven Spirits of God.
- **Encouragement or Commendation:** Jesus finds nothing to commend Sardis for.
- **Correction:** Jesus admonishes the Sardinians to wake up and be watchful. He tells them to remember the spiritual and scriptural lessons they have received and obey these lessons.
- **Consequences for not repenting:** Jesus will come upon them quickly.
- **Rewards for repenting (overcoming):** Those who overcome will be clothed with white garments and will not be blotted out of the book of life. Jesus will confess those who overcome's names before the Father and His angels.
- **Conclusion:** Those who have an ear are to listen what the Spirit says to the churches.