

Strengthen the things which remain

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[0:00] Isaiah 44 verses 3-4 Isaiah 44 verses 3-4 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.

I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass as willows by the water courses. And then Revelation 3 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, and thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.

Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. For I have not found thy works perfect before God. 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. They 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.

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.

[1:29] The Lord delivers a message for a dead church. A message for a dead church. Can't you hear the rain?

Can't you just imagine? Can't you hear the rain pouring out on the dry ground? The life-giving water that God rains down upon us, as rain in the wilderness, creating life.

The Lord delivers a message for a dead church. God says to this church, the church at Sardis, I know thy works. The church at Sardis had a name.

It had a reputation. It was living. But it was dead. This is true of so many churches today, where they have a history, they have a legacy, they have a heritage, but they have no life.

No life is there. This is true for many churches today. Way back when, at some time in the past, there was a glorious beginning. Perhaps it had been called the first Baptist church of Sardis.

[2:39] Maybe it had some glorious beginning at one time in the distant past, but now it remains standing, something dead and dying. And over the door God has written a sign.

Ichabod, the glory is departed. Over the door it says, the glory has gone. God has left the building. We see this today in many churches in decline around our nation and the world.

Churches filled with liberal teachings. Churches that once had been real powerhouses of revival. We see churches today that at once upheld up the banner of His holiness, but now are darkened mosh pits for the headbangers.

Churches. No joke. It's real. We see this in the abandonment of the sound gospel preaching of the blessed bleeding lamb slain for man's dread sin, replaced with a poor substitute, a feel-good self-help message that does nothing to save a soul from sin, but rather sends Him eternally lost, condemned, despite the false hope of some decision made at an altar.

What a loss. What a shame. What a dread, dread thing. God says, write to this church. God says, write to this church.

[4:11] Dear pastor, I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead.

God writes to this church and says, you are dead. God's church is meant to be alive. Alive. The great physician comes by, as it were, with a stethoscope around his neck.

The great physician comes to the bedside of this one and he stops there and he checks the life signs. He reads the pulse, the blood pressure, the functions, he checks the vital signs.

And what does he find? What is his diagnosis? What is his prognosis? He sees death, death, death. And he issues a prescription to this church.

A strong rebuke. He says, verse 2, Be watchful. Be watchful. Pay attention. Wake up. Stop being careless.

[5:17] Wake up. Awake. And keep awake. We have need to be watchful. Hebrews 2 verse 1 tells us, therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them sweat.

Watch out, brother. Watch out, sister. Take heed to the word of God. Don't let these things slip. Take heed.

Lay aside the way. Watch. The word says much of watching. It speaks of watchmen. It speaks of a watchtower. Not the one we talked about before.

Of manning the watchtower. Of being on the ramparts. Of being on the lookout. Of the need to be watching. Watching. Many times we are urged.

People of God, we are urged to watch. For example, Matthew 26, 41. The Lord Jesus says, Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

[6:20] The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Watch and pray. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16, 13. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.

Quick you, or act like men. Be strong. 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 6. It says, Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch, and be sober.

1 Peter 4, 7. It says, But the end of all things is at hand. Be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer. We've already been urged to pray today.

Be sober. Watch unto prayer. Furthermore, the Lord says to this church at Sardis, He says, Strengthen the things which remain. There is a hope of strength even for this weak church.

Even the Corinthians, God said, there's brethren there, despite all the chaos of Corinth. There's hope for a dead church, a dying church, strengthen the things which remain.

[7:29] There is hope, still. Ephesians 6, verse 10, Paul says, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

We are called to be strong. To be strong in the Lord, to rely upon His strength, His power, on His ability, not our own.

And we turn to Him. Strengthen the things which remain. This is a message to you, brother. You, brother, who are weak. You, brother, who are flagging in your zeal.

You, sister, feeling discouraged, feeling weighed down. This is a message to you. Strengthen that which remains. The alternative is to let it die.

Just let it die. Now, I took a look at my lawn lately. And, some of you would know what a very keen gardener I am.

[8:31] And, this lawn looked nothing like the lawns in Brisbane at the moment. This lawn was looking rather frazzled. I'd just about given up on it. You know, you water it in there, you leave it for a few days and it just gets sunburned, doesn't it?

It gets frazzled. I'd just about given up on my lawn. And then I thought, if I don't give it some water, it will die. If I do nothing, it will die.

I had to take action to restore it to life before it died right off. what about your spiritual life?

What about your spiritual life? Is it getting frazzled? Take action. Water the plant. Tend it. Nourish it. Nurture it. My dry and dying lawn was really the inspiration for this sermon.

I was just looking at that lawn and I thought, I must strengthen the things which remain. I must water it while there's still a little bit of hope left.

[9:40] Can't you hear the water? Hear the water pouring down upon the dry ground. Hear the water pouring down on the dry ground. We used to live in Catherine. Torrential downpours of rain.

I'm sure people that have lived in the tropics can think of those downpours of the heavens open and he pours it out. Can't you hear the water pouring out upon the dry ground bringing freshness renewing the life.

God pours out the rain upon his people. Isaiah 43 verse 20 in part it says I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Let's not lose the freshness.

The freshness. The zeal. We can think back some of us I know I can think back to as a newly saved one how much zeal I had then and how easy it is for it to wane and grow dim.

Strengthen. Strengthen the things which remain. They may not look much now but God can restore and breathe new life into us again. I see that with people too. I see that with people and I know I was talking with a brother of late of how some churches just don't there's some that are the in group and some that are on the outer in some churches.

[11:01] If you're not part of the clique if you don't belong to a certain class or shape or look of people then you're kind of pushed aside and not cared about.

But God is interested in everybody in everybody in the guttermost in the furthest and wickedest in the most hopeless of cases God still sees a potential there.

Strengthen the things which remain. Thank God he's in the life creating business. He's in the breathing of life business. Take heart in the word of God this morning.

Renew your trust in him. strengthen the things which remain. Lean upon his power. Lean upon him for his fullness. For that hope of his promises. The church of God is meant to be truly alive.

Alive from the dead. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

[12:08] He still has that same call today. And pulsating through the pages of this book is God's life for us. It's the message of life that we as his people are communicators of.

Of life eternal. Life more abundant. Life from the dead. Once I was lost. Now I'm found. Once I was dead.

Now I'm alive. God's church is meant to be people made alive from the dead. Made to be a living organism. A powerful mechanism. An organism under his control.

Increasing by his power. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3, I have planted Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Paul pictures the church again as that picture of something that needs a nourishing to grow.

As being like a field, like a crop. And God has designed his church to flourish and blossom. And the Lord Jesus is the Lord of this church.

[13:12] The Lord of the harvest. The source of its life and growth. Growth is God's will for his church. Growth. He wants to bring an increase of his work.

And that's not necessarily in terms of numbers, but an increase in terms of spiritual life. what of this church today?

What of we? What of us? Let's take stock today. Take stock for ourselves today. Let's check those vital signs again.

Let's put the stethoscope in and measure the pulse today. Check the vital signs. What are the signs like today of spiritual life?

How do we measure up? Are we in growth or decline? What measures can we use? Are there some things in your life and mine, things that ought to be strengthened lest they die?

[14:14] It's important for all of us here today, younger Christians, older Christians, it's important for all of us to be honest with God today. What are the signs of life?

Life. Life creates fruit. fruit. In Isaiah 32, 15, it says, In part the Spirit poured upon us from on high, the wilderness shall be a fruitful field.

When the water pours upon the dry ground, life springs out of it. And the Lord Jesus says in John 15, Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.

one of the signs of life is that there will be a fruitfulness, a fruitfulness, an abiding in the vine, a growing stronger. As it says, the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

Daniel 11, 32. Now, I get some people talk to me, and often times I get calls and it's people discouraged. People discouraged.

[15:25] Now, we can all get discouraged. Have you ever felt discouraged? Have you ever come to that point where your energy just dwindles, when you're feeling weak, the energy is just sapped out and you're losing strength?

What do we do? Isaiah 40, 31 is a lovely one, isn't it? But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, strengthen the things which remain.

That's a good thing to do, is to wait upon the Lord, to wait in prayer, to wait upon his word. We grow stronger by exercise. I know some of my dear friends are trying an exercise program at the moment, and I've reminded to cut a kit that, how long are they going to keep that up, just like they did to me.

But there's some exercise that will do you good. As Paul told Timothy, 1 Timothy 4, 7, but he says, for all of the good that bodily exercise can do, he says, exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

[16:42] Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. Make it a habit. Be found faithful. Be faithful in the habits, in the heart, in the priorities that you choose.

Make it a priority to be in the assembly. Hebrews 10, 25, not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. As a matter of some is but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

Strengthen the things which remain. That will help you be strong when you fellowship. Resolve to be where your faith can be built up, and God can use you to minister to others.

Strengthen the things which remain. We talk about the analogy of water. What about another analogy is fire. Fire. We can think of the analogy of a fireplace where the embers grow dim, where the embers are dying down, yet there's still a spark there.

There's still something there. Strengthen the things which remain. Maybe there was a time when you were more fervent, more active, more ablaze, more on fire for your Lord.

[17:55] Strengthen the things which remain. Get those bellows out and blast that, fan it into flame, that fire that is growing dim.

As the word talks, as Paul urged Timothy, to fan into flame the gift that God had given to him.

Revelation 3.15, our Lord speaks to another church, the church at Laodicea.

He says, Dear Pastor, Dear Saints, I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot.

I word thou word cold or hot. He says that to you today. He says that to me, Saints, I word that thou word cold or hot. don't settle for lukewarm.

Don't settle for sitting on the fence. Strengthen the things which remain. Don't hold back. Don't go backwards. Go forwards. That spiritual life that he wants us to have comes from his Holy Spirit.

[18:59] His Holy Spirit. Psalm 63, verse 1, David in the wilderness, he says, O God, thou art my God. Early will I seek thee.

My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

Australia is a dry and thirsty land. I know Brother Brown's place, he's got a little billabong there that I don't think has got a drop of water in at the moment.

A dry and thirsty land. The land of Australia. And South Australia, I'm told, is the driest state of this driest continent in the world. It's a dry and thirsty land.

Well, we have a soul that thirsteth for the living God. Isaiah 35, 6 tells us of, In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.

[19:59] Now, that's a lovely scripture, isn't it? In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert. Isaiah 35, verse 6.

How do we need that life of God to be poured out upon us, within us, through us? And yet, many Christians are lacking strength today. It's as if they're emasculated, they're dried up.

There's a lack of spiritual fervour, of power, of the genuine power, of the indwelling spirit of God.

There's churches and places where there's much talk of the Holy Spirit, and yet, the reality is not there.

Some are like Samson, disempowered, as we read in chapter 16, verse 20, as we know that the story of Samson, as he was deceived to have his hair cut, the sign of his devotion to God, and he thought that he could just shake himself again when he was attacked by the Philistines.

And Judges 16, verse 20, as Delilah kind of stirred him, she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson.

[21:14] And he awoke out of his sleep, you know, he would have awoke like, I'd imagine, to use a carnal example of the incredible Hulk, you

know, just to come out of his sleep, ready to pound some flesh.

He said, as he awoke out of his sleep, he said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wished not that the Lord was departed from him. You know, he came out of that sleep thinking he could just overcome the Philistines like he'd done countless times before, but he did not know that the Lord was departed from him.

He was disempowered. He had lost the action of the Holy Spirit. He had lost the power of God on his life. Strengthen the things which remain.

The Holy Spirit is essential for the empowerment and purification of God's church. We read in Joel 2, I will pour out my Spirit in Isaiah 32 as rivers of water in a dry place.

God wants to pour out his person, the Holy Spirit, as that presence of the Almighty God, the power of the God.

[22:57] We need his empowerment and the Holy Spirit will not lead us contrary to the Word of God. I hear people say God told me this and God told me that.

Is it in the book? Is it in the book? Go by the book. If it's not in the book, question it. Friends, we need to be very careful about voices and impressions. We need to be led by the Spirit and the Spirit will not lead us contrary to the book.

It must be by the book. This is the authority. Psalm 107 35 it says he turneth the wilderness into a pool of standing water and dry ground into water springs.

God wants to bring life. He wants to have that rain of himself pour upon us. He wants to fill us with himself. Strengthen the things which remain. In prayer.

We heard about prayer this morning. be fervent in prayer. Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

[24:06] James 5 verse 16 is got the stethoscope in his ear. He is feeling a pulse today. He is checking out the vital signs.

Does he feel a pulse? Is it strong? Is it steady? Is it weak? And failing? How is the life science of this church today? Of you as a congregation as an assembly of people?

What are the signs that a church is dying? read so this is quoted and adapted signs that a church is dying. A dying church is one that gets comfortable and casual with where it is at.

Just coasting along. Enjoy the glory train ride. A dying church comfortable and casual with where it is at. A dying church is more concerned about formalities than about spirituality.

That's a danger isn't it? We can know all the formalities and all the program and all the structure just down pat and miss the point spirituality. Spiritual life.

[25:16] A dying church is more concerned about numbers than about conversions. It's not about people on seats. It's about souls saved. It's about people changed by the power of God.

A dying church is more concerned about the material. About having material growth or material things than it is about spiritual growth. A dying church is more concerned about pleasing man than about pleasing God.

God. A dying church cleans more tightly to its creeds than it does to the word of God. A dying church is one that loses its faithful stand for the conviction that the Bible is the word of God.

Signs of a dying church. God forbid that we should see such things. In contrast to the signs of a dying church, some of the signs of life in a!

a church that is alive will have spiritual growth. There will be people coming to the Bible studies. There will be people coming to the prayer meetings.

[26:24] There will be people coming Sunday nights. We wanted to put you on a guilt trip. Spiritual growth. Your hunger and death after righteousness that you be filled.

A church that is alive will have spiritual growth. You won't have the pastor having to call you and remind you to come. You can't wait to be there. A church that is alive will develop spiritually.

A church that is alive will have harmony. And where there's disharmony it will be dealt with.

Disharmony in the body is dangerous isn't it?

It's what you call cancer. Cancer is like this disharmony in the cells of the message to the world.

Strengthen the things which remain. Maybe there was a time when you had more fervor.
Strengthen the things which remain.

[27:52] Maybe you're looking like that dry dusty old grass of mine and just about a write-off just about give up on it. Give it a bit of water.

Give it a bit of water today. That spiritual life of yours. Verse 2 Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die for I have not found my works perfect before God.

The great physician checks the life signs. He checks the works. He checks the indicators and he knows when they're not right. Our works fall short. They don't measure up.

He says to this church verse 3 of Revelation 3 remember therefore now 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 that 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 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 there's some people's names going to be spoken out of the mouth of our saviour some names he's going to name before his father and before his angels won't that be glory won't that be glory friends the great physician checks for signs of life and he finds death he finds death in

Sardis he writes out this prescription he says watch hold fast repent thank god he can still use frail weak failing people just like you and me this is not to leave you this morning thinking wow he's really had a go at me this morning and I just as well pack my bags a bit like that grass you know there's not much hope for me a bit like that dry dusty old grass there can't you hear the rain can't you just imagine that rain as you stand out there with the hose or as god pours out the rain on your garden think of the pouring out of his holy spirit think of the pouring out that he wants to give to us and to make us his people he uses raw materials today isn't that good news it is good news raw materials just like you and me raw materials people frail inadequate let's face it unworthy let's face it unworthy people the raw materials that are you and you and you and me raw materials that he can use and he says of these people that he makes them the undefiled in verse four undefiled he makes them verse five overcomers he makes them verse four worthy to walk with him think of that that these raw materials this this church at Sardis there were still some who had that nature that was undefiled that overcoming power that worthiness to walk with him can't you hear the water pouring out on the dry and thirsty ground determine today to be a receptive receptacle determine today to be a receptive vessel for the pouring out that he wants to give to you today determine today strengthen the things which remain as he urged the church sardis our lord says be watchful pray be strong he says bear fruit be filled with the spirit and exercise thyself unto godliness ezekiel 34 verse 26 it says in part i will cause the shower to come down there shall be showers of blessing i will cause the shower to come down there shall be showers of blessing let us pray heavenly father we thank you that you come to the church at sardis and you come to this church this group of your people here today you come to this assembly of your own people and you say where we're at your lord you point your finger at those things that are weak and need strengthening help us lord to see the things that we need to strengthen those things which remain that spark that life that fervour that fervency that walk with you lord those spiritual devotions that we've neglected help us lord to see where we can lift our game and take us lord to that place of greater power take us lord to that place of greater fruitfulness take us to that place of greater spiritual life lord we want to heed your call to watch and to repent if there's people here today we know lord this is a message to really saved people today but if there's people here yet to trust you that they might also be receptive to the calling of your holy spirit they might be receptive to your voice as you say

[33:37] come unto me they might be receptive to that message that you died for our sins were buried and rose again and we can have life because of your death for us and for our sin we pray for those that are yet to trust you today they'll seek prayer before they leave this place we pray for each one that we might be edified and grow in spiritual growth with the increase that is from your hand we thank you lord in jesus name a