

Revelation Extra: The Church at Sardis

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Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] It says to the angel of the church now in Sardis, write, the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your works. You have a reputation of being alive, but you're dead. 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.

Remember then what you have 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.

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. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[1 : 07] Faith family, pray for me. Let's pray for one another now and ask God to speak to us. God, in your grace, you have given us these letters for our learning, for our edification, and you, these really are gifts, because it's easy to just kind of drift in our faith, and so this brings us back and reminds us of where life is and who you've called us to be.

And so, Holy Spirit, I ask that you would come and just speak to us powerfully through this letter, through this word this morning. And I ask it for the glory of one name only, and that is the name of Jesus.

I ask it in his name, and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Where I'm from, the term catfish is something you catch, fry, and eat a lot.

All right? But if you know anything about social media or online dating, you know that term catfish has become to mean something entirely different.

It was a word that became popular several years ago by a very famous documentary about a man named Nev Schulman. Nev was a 24-year-old at the time photographer living in New York City, and he is contacted by this 8-year-old girl from Michigan.

[2 : 43] This little girl just wants permission to be able to do some watercolor paintings of his photography, and Nev is flattered by the request, and he gladly agrees.

But over a series of social media events, Nev discovers that this little girl has a 19-year-old sister named Megan.

He is infatuated by her, and the two of them start this online relationship. They're sending text messages to one another. They're sending pictures to one another.

They are sharing very intimate things with one another about their life. Megan is even singing songs. She's this gifted singer, and so she would sing love songs and then send them to him.

And Nev said that he had never connected with anyone like this before, that he had never shared so many things about his life like he had with her. And this went on for about seven months.

- [3 : 44] And then one day, he is doing a photo shoot in Colorado, and Megan asked him if he would like another song.
- Did he have any requests? And she said, absolutely. And he requested Tennessee Stud by Johnny Cash. Great choice, by the way. And she sends him this song that she has sung for him.
- But he notices something. He discovers that the exact same song in the exact same voice had been posted on YouTube months before.
- Something, if you'll pardon the pun, was fishy. So Nev and his brother drive 1,300 miles to Michigan to confront Megan.
- And when they do, what they discover is she is not a 19-year-old college student. She is a middle-aged, married woman with children named Angela.
- [4 : 55] He is devastated. He is humiliated. He's frustrated. Why? Because he realized in that moment that he had shared so much of his life with someone who appeared to be something she was not.
- Have you ever had that feeling? Do you know what I'm talking about? And I'm not talking necessarily on social media or an online dating deal. I'm saying, have you ever had that feeling where you met somebody that you'd always wanted to meet?
- You got that job you always wanted to have. You purchased that thing off Craigslist or eBay or whatever it was. And you soon discovered that the perception you had was not reality.
- That what you thought was the case wasn't true. And that happens all the time in this culture, doesn't it? Because our culture is obsessed with the idea of putting forth an image that's not reality.
- You see it in cosmetic surgery. We want to give the appearance of being young. You see it in taxidermy. We want dead animals to look like they're alive. You see it with media outlets on both sides.
- [6 : 13] They will angle things a certain way. There's entire genres of movies that try to make you think that this is reality only to reveal at the end something else.
- My point, faith family, is all around us is this idea that we give off an appearance that isn't true. And that's one thing when it's happening socially, relationally.
- It's an entirely different thing when it's happening spiritually. Listen to Isaiah chapter 29 and verse 13. And the Lord said, This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips while their hearts are far from me.
- They give the appearance of worship. They had wonderful music. What an awesome band. What a great message. Got some warm fuzzies at church.
- It looked like they were worshipping. But it was only on the outside. Their heart was far away.
- [7 : 29] Or listen to Matthew chapter 23 verse 27. Same concept. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you're like whitewashed tombs. Watch. Outwardly you appear beautiful, but within you're full of dead people's bones.
- In other words, you follow the rules. You smile and shake hands. You say, hey brother, how you doing? And everything's fine. But inside, you're dead.
- It's the spiritual version of catfishing. Your spiritual online profile says you're alive, but there is no life to be found.
- That is exactly what Jesus says of the church in Sardis. Look at it in verse 1. 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.

Now, if you've been tracking with this series over the last few weeks, whether that's online or whatever, but you've been following now, we're in this fifth week. You know that at the beginning of every one of these letters, Jesus is introducing himself in a way that is specifically related to that church.

[8 : 47] That's why every week we've been asking two questions. Do you remember what they are? What does the phrase mean? What does the introduction mean? And how does it relate to Sardis or the city or the context?

So what's this seven stars and seven spirits? This is kind of the imagery in the book of Revelation that we're not always comfortable with. What do all these things mean? Well, we talked about on week one, seven stars refers to the churches.

Or some people argue the pastor of those churches because the word messenger or angel is used. But regardless of your view, it's clearly focused on the church in some way.

Why? Our purpose as a church is to reflect God. Somebody say amen, right? That's why we exist. We're to be salt and light, to reflect, to be stars of his light, his glory.

That's what the seven stars are. They're representative of the church. What are these seven spirits? Remember that the number seven is the number of completion, right? This means yes.

[9 : 46] These are not seven different spirits, but it's a number of completion talking about the fullness of the spirit that is the Holy Spirit.

Now, this would not be strange to you in chapter 3 if you remember what is said in chapter 1. So let's refresh our memory here. Revelation chapter 1 verse 4.

John to the seven churches in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and was and who is to come. There's the Father. From the seven spirits who are before his throne, there's the spirit.

And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, there's the Son. Do you see the Trinity there? Right? Y'all with me? Do you see the Trinity? So we've already seen that the seven spirits are simply a symbolic way of talking about the Holy Spirit back in chapter 1.

So you come to chapter 3 and you know seven stars, the church, seven spirits, the Holy Spirit. Are you with me? Stay with me. What's so important about the Holy Spirit?

[10 : 51] Except for like everything, all right? But that's a given. There's something specifically important about the Holy Spirit that's going to relate here. It's why Jesus introduces it this way.

There is a theme about the Holy Spirit that runs all throughout Scripture. If we had three hours, I would literally give you about 30 examples.

I don't have three hours. I wish they'd give me that time. But we don't have that. So let me give you just a few examples that I think will make obvious what the Spirit and what's significant about the Holy Spirit, or at least one of the things.

Genesis 2, verse 7. Let's start at the beginning. Then the Lord God formed a man of dust from the ground and breathed, that's the same Hebrew as spirit, breathed into his nostrils the breath, the ruah of life.

And man became a living creature. Job chapter 33, verse 4. Notice the parallelism. The Spirit of God has made me.

[11 : 52] The breath, there it is again, the breath of the Almighty gives me life. The Spirit of God made me. The breath of the Almighty gives me life. Ezekiel 36, verse 27.

I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk, that is, give life, in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. Jump to the New Testament. John chapter 3, verse 5.

Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he can't enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born, that is made alive, given life by the Spirit, is spirit.

Do not marvel that I say to you, you must be born again. Everybody right here, Lakeville Venue. You've got to have spiritual life if you're going to get in the kingdom. You have to be born again.

That is, you have to have life by the Spirit. That's what Jesus is saying. John chapter 6, verse 63. This is as simple as it gets. Why don't everybody say this with me? Lakeville Venue, let's all say it.

[12 : 51] It is the Spirit who gives life. Just for the sake of beating the dead horse, I'll give you two more. Romans 8, verse 6.

To set the mind on the flesh is? To set the mind on the Spirit is? Last one. 2 Corinthians 3, 6. For the letter? But the Spirit gives.

What is so important about the Holy Spirit, you ask? I'll tell you, there is no life apart from the Spirit of God. There is no life physically.

There is no life spiritually apart from God's breath, God's Spirit breathing in us to cause our dead bones to come alive.

The Spirit's kind of a big deal. Kind of important. Like, you're not alive without Him. Physically or spiritually, He is the breath, the Spirit of life.

[13 : 49] In fact, I was actually meditating this morning in our communion on Romans 8. And go back and read that. I should have included it. Where the Spirit is called the Spirit of life. The Spirit of life.

The Spirit of life. There is no life apart from the Spirit. Now, why would that relate to Sardis? I have the church. I have the Spirit.

What we know about the Spirit is the Spirit's the Spirit of life. Now, why would that matter to Sardis? Well, Sardis was a very distinguished city dating back even to the 1200 B.C.

I've tried to bring these into, like, modern day cities in our nation. And so, look here on this map first about Sardis. It's right there in the middle. Do you see that?

And there's not, like, in those days, all different roads that go to different places. Like, you know, if you want to go to Burnsville or Lakeville or Farmington or wherever, there's a lot of different ways to kind of get there.

[14 : 45] Well, in these days, you only had, like, five major roadways. And they all came together in Sardis. This made Sardis a gateway, if you will.

So, think of her like St. Louis, all right? The gateway city. Or how many of you fly a lot? Right? If you fly a lot, you have likely flown through Atlanta International Airport, which is, like, the busiest airport in the U.S.

And if you fly Delta, you're likely, if you have a layover, likely going to be in Atlanta. In other words, it's a place that has a lot of business, a lot of traffic, a lot of commerce, and it becomes a very, very successful trade city.

Now, there's something else you need to know about Sardis. Sardis has this big mountain range known as the Acropolis. In fact, here's a view from the top of the Acropolis.

I flew there this week. I took that picture and came back just for you, right? So, in other words, in the back of the city was this big mountain range, and so Sardis felt very protected and invincible, very prideful, like nobody can beat us, nobody can defeat us because we've got this protecting us in the back.

[16 : 00] And so, but what happened was twice historically, in the 500 B.C.s, 200 B.C.s, Sardis is going to experience a major, follow me, major military defeat.

And I say all the what I've just said to say this. Watch, watch, watch, watch. The city has started to fade. Her best days were yesterday.

She isn't the reputation she always had. She was known for being a city of power and glory, but defeat after defeat has caused that glory to fade.

She's lost some of what she was. In other words, Faith Family right here, Lakeville venue, what had happened in the city socially had happened in the church spiritually.

She's faded. She's faded. She's drifted. She doesn't have the vitality that she once had. Can I just tell you this this morning? Jesus is coming to this church, and he's coming to our church and saying, if you have faded, I am the one that can breathe life into you.

[17 : 18] Your best days don't have to be yesterday. Your best days can be now, because I am the one that has the church, and I am the one that has the spirit, and I can breathe life into your church.

What an introduction. What a beautiful truth for us today, isn't it? Have you faded? Are you not where you used to be?

There's good news. Jesus. He has the church, and he has the spirit. Now, that makes perfect sense in light of what Jesus is going to say next.

So that introduction is like, oh, yeah, because look at what he says in the evaluation. I know your works. You have a reputation of being alive. Do you see how historically that fit?

You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. You have faded. This, by the way, is the shortest evaluation of any of the letters. Quite honestly, there's not a lot to say about a dead church.

[18 : 27] You're dead. You're not operating out of the life source that you've been given. If you've zoned out, zone back in, because I really want you to hear this.

You do understand, Christian, that you can have the Holy Spirit and not be operating in the Holy Spirit? You can have the Holy Spirit. Well, you do have the Holy Spirit if you're a Christian, but you're not always filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's why, for instance, like in Ephesians chapter 5, Paul will write to Christians and say, don't be drunk with wine, but be, say it with me, be filled with the Holy Spirit. You need to walk according to the Spirit that you have.

You see, when we're not walking in the Spirit of God as a church or as a Christian, we are flat-lined spiritually.

And I don't know of a more devastating diagnosis than this. And here's why I think this diagnosis is so devastating, because I don't know if you've noticed this lately, but the world around us is spiritually dead.

[19 : 34] So the last thing the world needs is dead churches. How are they going to know about the living Christ if the church is dead?

Not operating out of the power source that we've been given. And so it would do us well. Oh, it would do us well. It would be a gift of God this morning to think about what makes a church dead.

What makes a Christian dead. Because we could look at this and say, okay, I get that it's dead. It's not operating out of the Spirit, the life source. But what does that mean? Like, practically, what does it look like?

I'm going to tell you what it looks like from Sardis, and then I'm going to prove it. Are you ready? Here it is. Churches or Christians die when they forget the mission and settle for religion.

Some of you are like, he's going to start preaching. Churches die. Christians die in the sense that they're not operating out of the life source of the Spirit when they forget the mission and just settle for religion.

[20 : 44] Now, I have the burden of proof to give you from the text. How do I know that Sardis forgot the mission? Four reasons. Two, historically. Two, biblically.

Number one, historically we know that Sardis had a heavy Jewish and Roman population. You say, well, why is that important? Well, do you remember back when we talked about Smyrna?

The Jews that were given the exemption from the Romans that they didn't have to worship the emperor? If you don't remember, just encourage me by saying, absolutely. I totally remember every bit of that, all right? And so the Jews, as a way of persecuting the Christians, would simply tell the Romans they're not Jewish, making them the target of persecution.

You say, what's your point? My point is the exact same context is in Sardis, and there's no mention at all of persecution. Number two, historically we know that Sardis had the temple of Artemis.

Diana, Wonder Woman, right? Take your pick. It's all the same. Just like Ephesus had, if you remember when we looked at that. And yet there is no mention at all of Sardis standing firm for the truth in the face of false teachers.

[22 : 03] It's absent, yet the same context. Now let me give you the two biblically. Look at verse two. Wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of God.

There are two things there. Number one, wake up. It's the idea of being alert. Do you realize, and I'd love to give you a lot of examples, but I'm just going to give you one, that being alert or awake in the Bible often means being on mission for Jesus while you're waiting for his return.

I'll give you one example that will make that obvious. How many of you remember the parable of the ten virgins? Do you remember when Jesus tells this parable? There are five that are asleep and five that are awake.

And then the bridegroom returns and those that are awake and alert enter in. What is Jesus' point? True disciples stay focused and alert on the mission while they wait for the bridegroom to come.

Here's the last reason why I think Sardis has forgotten the mission. The phrase, I have not found your works complete. That literally means you have not fulfilled your purpose.

[23 : 23] It doesn't mean you started something and didn't finish it. You know, how many of you like start a book and then you move on to another book? And you have like eight different books that you've started but not finished, right?

That's not what's happening here. He's saying you haven't fulfilled what you've been given to do. Everybody come in. If you've zoned out, zone back right here.

All the historical and biblical evidence points to this. Sardis had become a social club, not a missional church.

You want to know what dead churches look like? That's what dead churches look like. This morning is a social gathering, not a time to get fired up about the mission that Jesus has given us to do.

Some of you will remember this old story. I think it was from Chuck Swindoll, and it's worth repeating. On a dangerous seacoast, notorious for shipwrecks, there was a little life-saving station.

[24 : 27] It was merely a hut with one boat, but the few members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought of themselves, they would go out day and night, tirelessly searching for those in danger.

Some of those that were saved wanted to associate with the station. They were willing to give their time and their energy and their money to support the mission. New boats were purchased.

Crews were trained. The station, once virtually insignificant, began to grow. Some of its members were unhappy that the hut was poorly equipped, so the hut was torn down to make room for additional equipment and furniture.

By the time of its completion, the life-saving station had become a popular gathering place, and its mission began to shift. It was now used as a clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings, but saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful rarely occurred.

Few members were interested in braving the sea on life-saving missions, so they hired professional lifeboat crews to do the work for them. About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and crews brought in loads of dying people.

[25 : 38] The beautiful new club suddenly became messy. The next meeting, there were strong words and angry feelings, which resulted in division among the members. Most of the people wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities and involvement with shipwrecked victims, those that insisted on saving lives while they were told to start their own station down the coast, and they did.

But history repeated itself. And if you visit that coast today, you will find a large number of exclusive, impressive clubs along the shoreline operated by professionals who have lost all involvement in the saving of lives.

Shipwrecks still occur, but now most of the victims are not saved. Every day they drown at sea, and so few seem to care.

Berean, you hear me this morning? When we lose sight of our mission to see lives transformed by the power of the gospel, I don't care what's going on here, we're dead.

We are dead. A church that becomes a social club rather than a missional church is a dead one, no matter what its online profile says.

[26 : 56] You want to know how Sardis died? She died because she lost the focus on the mission. Her works were not complete. She had not fulfilled the mission she had been given.

But that's not all that happened. She didn't just lose sight of the mission. She settled for religion. You say, well, how do you know that? Why don't you prove that, oh, pastor?

Prove it. Okay, I'll prove it. Look at verse 1 again. I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Do you see it there? In other words, come here, Lakeville, venue, everybody. If you ask the people of Sardis in the community about this church, they'd say, oh, that's an awesome church. Did you see that they're adding a sanctuary?

Oh, that young, energetic pastor. Well, I don't know about young, all right? Oh, and they've got all kinds of programs. They will take care of your kids, and the music is fantastic.

[27 : 57] There is so much happening at that church. Jesus says a church can have the appearance of being alive, but actually being dead.

In other words, right here, you can have activity, but no vitality. And what do you call spiritual activity that doesn't have spiritual vitality?

You call it religion. Religion. Religion. That's what religion is. It's a whole lot of rituals and activities and things with no heart.

This church had not only lost sight of the mission, they had settled in religion. Religion. Because religion has a way of giving your church the appearance of life when it's actually dead.

You can go to church and give some money and be a good person and feel good about yourself, and I probably look better now in front of my friends, but there's no vitality at all.

[29 : 01] Do you, right here, do you want the autopsy of a dead church? Here's the autopsy of a dead church. She loses sight of her mission, and she just settles for religion. That, according to Jesus, is dead.

So what do we do? What do we need? Let's look at the application part of the letter. Verse 2 again. 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.

Remember then what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. What does this church need? What do we need? And by the way, even in preaching all this, I think there's a lot of awesome things happening here where there is life, but we're not going to settle.

I don't think I'm taking the foot off the pedal at all. I get in your grill every week. We're not going to settle and just assume.

What does Sardis need? What is Jesus talking about in that application section? This. Sardis needs a renewal, or if you want to use the Old Soul language, a revival of the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 13] Spirit. That's why Jesus introduces the letter the way he does. The church and the Spirit need to be brought back together where they are now operating in the fresh breath of God.

Oh, how I want. Do you want God to breathe afresh on our faith family? I do. I do. That's why I'm yelling. Right? I want God.

Oh, I want God to do afresh work. A revival. A renewal of God among the people of God. Oh, I want to see it.

Let it be true. Right here, right now. At every campus. This is what Sardis needs. She needs renewal. She needs life. She needs breath to be breathed in her.

And you say, well, what does this revival look like? What does this renewal of the Spirit look like? Listen, it's not mystical. It's practical.

[31 : 15] I'm going to tell you from the text three things that you're going to find when a renewal of the Holy Spirit is happening. Number one, but it will be number two on the list, is a refocus of the mission.

Jesus says here, strengthen what remains, because I have found your works to not be complete. That is what he's saying. Sardis, get back to your purpose. Sardis, remember you're a star.

You exist to reflect me. Remember what I've called you to do. Do you want a proof text that the Spirit and the mission go together?

I'll give you a proof text. The entire book of Acts. Because when the Spirit of God was at work, the church of God was on mission.

All throughout. We did a series on the book of Acts. Go back through that series. When the Spirit of God is at work, you know it. Why? Because you're on mission. And I'm on mission.

[32 : 18] And we do things like witness and serve and love and live in the awareness of what God has called us to do. It's not mystical. It's practical.

A renewal of the Spirit. A waking up is a waking up to our purpose and mission. But that's not all. Notice next is remembering the gospel.

You're like, I knew you were going to work that in there. But it's in the text. Look at it. Verse 3, remember then what you've received and heard. What's he talking about? He's talking about the gospel.

You heard it. And you received it. You believed it. Listen, nothing destroys religious living more than gospel preaching. That's a great place for...

Lakeville, amen. All right? I'm confident of that. Right? And then you too. Right? Listen, listen. And by gospel preaching, I'm not just talking about the guy up on stage yelling.

[33 : 15] I'm talking about what you do to your heart every day. Right? Remembering what you've heard, the gospel, and what you've received. And as you remember that and rehearse that to yourself over and over and over, the Spirit breathes life in you.

I preach this because it's in the text. Right? In fact, let me give you three questions that I think help us understand why the gospel would have solved the Sardis problem.

Why does gospel, right here, destroy religion? Why does remembering the gospel frequently keep you from deadness? You ready? Here's the three questions.

Number one. How can you forget the mission if you are constantly remembering his mission for you? You're going to think daily about the fact that Jesus left the glories of heaven to die on a cross and be raised from the dead so that you could have life with God and you won't walk across the street?

That doesn't make any sense. You're going to think about the mission that Jesus did for us and we're not going to take serious the mission we've been called to do for him?

[34 : 31] Do you see? There's no way you can lose sight of the mission if you're remembering the gospel. Here's the second question. Oh my goodness. I'm going to hold on because I may get fired up on this one.

Why would you settle for religion when you have his righteousness? That doesn't make any sense at all. I'm going to be religious so I can look good in front of other people.

You have the righteousness of Jesus. Why do you need to look good in front of people? You don't need goodness. You have righteousness.

That's insane that you would settle for religion when you have the very righteousness of Jesus. But you'll do that when you're not reminding yourself of the gospel every day. Do you see?

Sardis. You wouldn't need to settle for this if you would remember what you'd heard and received. Are you seeing that? Here's the third question. Oh, I'll get fired up.

[35 : 37] Why give a fake appearance when you already have acceptance? Sardis. Sardis. Why would you need this reputation of being alive when you're already accepted in Jesus Christ?

Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. Look right here. Why are you trying to be fake when you're already accepted? One of the things that disgust people about church is they don't feel like they can come to church and be real.

And if the gospel doesn't create a culture where you can be real, you're not in a gospel church, at least practically. I don't have anything to hide when I know I'm already accepted in God.

Do you see? And there just comes this freedom of we don't have to play church. We can just be the church. And I can have this relational freedom to say, I'm not okay.

I'm not okay. And I'm going to take down my spiritual online profile and reveal who I really am. That's what the gospel does.

[36 : 50] Do you see how the gospel solves so much of this? Here's the last one. I've got to hurry. What does this renewal of the Spirit look like? It's a refocus on the mission, remembering the gospel, but it's also repentance of sin.

If you've been following through these letters, what you've noticed in every single one of them except Smyrna, the church, the church is told to repent.

Why? Because repentance is life. Repentance is where life is found. Listen, Ephesus, the problem is not just that you don't have affection.

The problem, Pergamum, is not that you've been influenced by false teaching. The problem, Thyatira, is not just that you're worshiping idols. It's your refusal to repent of them.

Oh, that's so important. Please don't miss that. We are idol worshipers, but what makes us different than Jezebel is that we acknowledge it. Jezebel refused to.

[37 : 52] Think of it this way. Oh, oh, God, speak to us. In the ministry of Jesus, the difference between the prostitute and the Pharisee was not the sin.

It was the repentance. The prostitute was willing to say, I'm sick and I need a physician. The Pharisee said, I've already got my doctorate in religion.

I don't need a physician. Repentance. I'm pleading with us, faith family. We have got to see repentance as life.

Which means if there's not repentance happening in your life, there may not be any life. You say, what does the work of the Spirit look like?

What would revival look like? Is it some kind of mystical, like some cloud's going to appear in the sanctuary? No. It's going to look like this. We're going to get to the mission He's called us to.

[38 : 48] We're going to remember the gospel daily and we're going to repent of our sin and experience the transforming grace of God. That's what the Spirit does. That's what waking up looks like.

Well, Jesus ends the letter with some good news. Quickly, verse 4. You still have a few names in Sardis. People have not soiled their garments and they will walk with me in white for they are worthy.

I'm going to ask this question, what makes you worthy? What makes you worthy? Is it religion? Please don't answer that after everything else I've just said. What makes you worthy?

We'll jump a couple of chapters to Revelation chapter 7 verse 13. Here's the answer. One of the elders addressed me saying, who are these clothed in white robes?

That's the imagery from chapter 3. And from where have they come? And I said to him, sir, you know. And he said to me, there are the ones coming out of the great tribulation, that is life in a fallen world, and they have, watch this, this is the gospel, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[40 : 01] You want to be worthy? You want to be clean? You're clean in blood. That is a symbolic way of saying that what Jesus did on the cross washes us as white as snow.

And because of that, here are the two things I'm done, is you will be clothed forever. That is, in the righteousness and the victory of Jesus.

And you will be kept forever. He says, your name will not be blotted out. That is, you ain't going nowhere, brother. Sister, you're mine forever.

Because I am your advocate to the Father. And because of that, you are secure forever in Christ.

So here's the summary. This is the sermon could have been a lot shorter summary, right? You're getting used to these. Here's the letter to Sardis. Oh, it's so good. It's so good.

[41 : 07] Thank you, Lord. A church that loses sight of the mission and settles for religion is not a spirit-filled church.

They are dead. But the good news of Jesus is that renewal can be yours. It can be ours. If we refocus on the mission, remember the gospel, repent of our sin, and rest in the salvation that is ours in Christ forever.

That's the letter to Sardis. So, I end with this thought. Ron and Terry, a couple that was interviewed by the Associated Press, was the envy of the neighborhood.

Here they were in the middle of the summer in drought-like conditions, and everybody loved their lawn. In fact, it was said in the article, quote, that their lawn, their yard looked like a spring lawn after the rain, and all the neighbors were envious.

But what they did not know is that Ron and Terry had not spent hundreds of dollars on a new sprinkler system and lots of fertilizer and new sod.

[42 : 27] No, they spent \$125 to have someone come over and paint their grass green. What struck me about the article was this.

Here's what Ron and Terry said in the report. Quote, That's Sardis.

Is that you? Because you can paint dead grass whatever color you want. It's still dead. And you can paint a dead church, a dead Christian, and all the religious activity you want.

It's still dead. This morning, Jesus is the one who has the church and has the spirit. And he can breathe life into us.

And all God's people said, Amen.