

# "A Dead Church"

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 29 October 2023

Preacher: Tyler Dueño

[ 0 : 01 ] Well, good morning, church. One of the practices here at Trinity is we have expositional preaching, which means the main point of the text is the main point of the sermon as we walk chapter by chapter through the Bible.

Well, today, we're going to jump ahead one chapter as we talk about the church at Sardis, and Lord willing, we'll rewind and talk about the church at Thyatira and Pergamon.

So, let's go to the Lord in prayer together, family. O Father, be Thou our vision.

As the psalmist prayed, revive us again, that we may rejoice in You, show us Your steadfast love, and grant us Your salvation. By the Spirit's power, would we fix our eyes upon You.

Would the light of Your Word shine into our hearts and minds? Gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim the honor and glory of Christ's great name.

[ 1 : 04 ] In His name we pray. Amen. What is the greatest lie that a church can believe? What is the most dangerous lie this church can believe?

Well, depending on who you ask, you might get different answers. Some might say the lie of the prosperity gospel. Others, the lie of pragmatism, leading churches to brush sin under the rug.

Or the danger of churches being captive by secular worldviews. These are all dangers, but there is an even greater one, a more dangerous one, a sinister one. And the lie is this.

When an entire church falsely believes they are going to heaven, but in reality, they are hellbound. A church full of goats who sincerely believe they are sheep, living in a delusion.

How do you wake up a dead church from this delusion? Well, in the text before us, like an air raid siren, Christ trumpets a wake-up call to a dead church.

[ 2 : 11 ] Our text this morning is Revelation chapter 3, verses 1 to 6. And while you are turning there, we will look at this text in three points.

Point number one is the rebuke that Jesus delivers to a dead church. Point number two, the revival that is needed for a dead church. And point number three, the reward for the faithful remnant.

So the rebuke, the revival, and the reward. Let's read God's word together. And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up and strengthen what remains as about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

Remember then what you received and heard, keep it and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief. And you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

[ 3 : 23 ] Yet. 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. This is God's word. Picture the scene in Sardis.

The anticipation and excitement has been building. Word has spread that a letter will be delivered to your church. And this letter is no ordinary letter. This letter is written by the apostle John himself with the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus. And this letter has been delivered along a postal route in a circle, as it were. And now the church at Sardis is next. And you can feel the electricity. You wonder to yourself, I wonder what Jesus thinks about my church.

[ 4 : 27 ] The church has been growing, busy as usual. Things are going pretty well. And you enter into the bustling gathering. There are some opening prayers. You've sung some hymns.

And now the moment you've been waiting for. But what you get is unexpected. Like a wrecking ball, Jesus deals a scathing rebuke. Instead of giving them a trophy, Jesus takes out a sledgehammer. Jesus says to them at the end of verse 1, I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive. But you are dead. What a devastating rebuke.

A dead church. What a grim word. Dead. Is there a worse description Jesus can give a church? What a sad, sobering thought. In these seven letters, Jesus would begin with a commendation before getting into his concerns.

Here, there is none of that. For most of them, there is nothing worth commending. Whereas other churches were experiencing hardships for their faith, there is none of that here. No mention of the thunderstorm of persecution.

[ 5 : 35 ] No mention of an opposition to false teachers. No mention of suffering. This church is dead. Jesus, the sovereign Lord, says, I know your works.

Jesus sees them and says, you are a church with a high reputation. Literally, it had a high name. But the reputation did not match the reality. They are Christians in name only.

You can profess Christ, but never truly possess Christ. It has been said that Sardis was a city of past glories. In many ways, Sardis was a city on the decline, and so was this church.

Likewise, the church was living on past glories with no present reality. Maybe what Jesus is telling this church describes you this morning. You attend church.

You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. Your reputation does not match the reality. You know, it's easy to start off vibrantly, gain a reputation, and then fall away as time goes on.

[ 6 : 41 ] To have memories of past faithfulness, but no present reality. Consider, you and I can likewise be deceived. Deceiving to think you have everything, but have nothing.

To think you're running the race, but you're not even in the race. Appearances may deceive others, but God is not fooled by appearances. Others see a living church, Christ sees a graveyard.

Like whitewashed tombs, outwardly beautiful, inwardly dead. In Matthew 23, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in the same way. You who look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

Oh, this church looked beautiful on the outside. I mean, they had a high reputation, commended and praised by others. Other Christians may have asked, what church do you attend? Oh, wow, you go to the church in Sardis?

That's a great church. I mean, this is the kind of church you recommend to others. This is the kind of church where the singing is loud. Relevant Bible teaching. A great fellowship hour. A growing membership list.

[ 7 : 48 ] A ballooning budget. Humming with activity. But there is no life. This is a picture of nominal Christianity.

They are walking in a presumption of salvation. This church had no discernment like Ephesus. No perseverance through persecution like Smyrna.

No faithful witnesses like Pergamum. No endurance like Thyatira. There was no trusting in God's faithfulness. No sweet communion with God. No genuine humility.

No deadness to the world. No contrite heart. No true repentance. And no love for God. Sardis had none of these things. Friends, you and I look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

He searches you out. He knows you. There is no hiding. Now, one of the ways that we tend to be deceived about our spiritual condition is we think our works are a good indicator about our relationship with God.

[ 8 : 51 ] Someone could say, look here. I give money. I serve the poor. Others have even said I've helped them in their walk with God. Others may have said, I've prophesied in your name.

I've done mighty works in your name. I've cast out demons in your name. Don't these things prove that I am a Christian? Well, this appears to be the situation in Sardis. On the one hand, a heart of faith and repentance will produce good works.

Jesus said a good tree will bear good fruit. But on the other hand, friend, there is a category called dead works in the New Testament. Notice what Jesus says to the church at Sardis in verse 2.

Jesus tells them, I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Now, is this like bringing home your report card? You get all A's, but there is only one C.

And your parents just begin to berate you. You can never measure up. Is God like that when he says, your works are not complete in the sight of my God? Well, maybe you grew up with parents like that.

[ 9 : 56 ] But understand, you are wrong if you think God is like that. But understand, God will never be satisfied with those who merely go through the motions, who mouth the words, but whose hearts are far from him.

He is saying some religious deeds may gain approval from others, but not in the sight of my father. Their deeds were an empty shell. Nothing inside of it. This is just external religion, but no heart transformation.

These are dead works. Know that God does not want your deeds or your words. He wants your heart. Christ has given me all of you.

No half measures. No half-hearted obedience. Christ will not tolerate no fly zones in your hearts. He wants all of it. He doesn't want to reorder the furniture in your living room.

He has come to knock the whole house down and to renovate something entirely new. All of your desires, all of your dreams, all of your hopes must be in his hands. You must give him all.

[ 10 : 57 ] You know, the Bible doesn't present salvation as you make a decision for Jesus, and he acts as kind of an insurance policy in your back pocket. You never know bad things might happen to you after you die. No, rather the true grace that saves is a grace that changes us.

True Christians are changed from the inside out. Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The moment a person comes to know Christ, the Spirit takes out the heart of stone and puts in a new heart of flesh.

Before your conversion, the darkness reigned in your life, and we walked in darkness. But after your conversion, the Spirit gives life, and we now walk in the light.

True Christianity is about our hearts being flooded with the supernatural love of God. True Christianity is about obedience to God and love for others, about fruits of the Holy Spirit, of true heart and repentance.

Christianity is about life, of being truly alive. Whoever has the Son has life, John would say. I wonder if you are alive today. Church, let there be no illusion that this can never happen to us.

[ 12 : 11 ] You know, our hearts are prone to wonder, aren't they? You know, in the book of Judges, the mighty Samson's hair was cut off, and it says he did not know that the Lord had left him.

Likewise, churches never realize that the Lord has left the congregation. Sadly, outwardly, you can run a church without God. Let me ask you a question.

If the Lord left this church tomorrow, would anything change? Would we sense anything has gone missing in our worship, in our life together?

Would we know that the Lord has left us? You know, consider the nature of sin in this passage. You know, sin is a spiritual disease that deadens your heart, like frostbite, eating away and numbing your soul, and you never realize your soul is dead.

These are nominal Christians in the first century in a church founded by the apostles. And now these apostles were being executed. In John's lifetime, this is a church filled with nominal Christians.

[ 13 : 16 ] How much more do we need this warning? By way of application, let me speak to you who are leaders in the church, especially those of you who teach God's word or serve publicly, where you might gain a reputation for being alive.

You know, teaching can be a great way to force you to meditate on God's word. But friend, don't mistake exercising your gifts to mean that you are personally experiencing God's grace.

Don't make that mistake. It's very easy to make that mistake. To go on astray on this point is how you end up dead when others think you are alive. To think performing deeds for the Lord, effectively counseling others, to mean that you are truly alive.

That is not so. You might think you are exercising God's gifts, and you never have God himself. You can teach others what the house looks like and never enter and go on yourself.

Consider, does teaching others make you want to pray with God, to be with him, to praise him, to glorify him?

[ 14 : 28 ] Does it give you a poverty of spirit before the omnipotent God, to go deeper into his word? Do you marvel at his mercies toward you? Do you weep with joy at God's mercies in your life as you held out this same mercy to others?

Or are you tempted to merely go through the motions? How sad to be able to talk about the love of God and never experience it yourself. To have correct doctrine, you don't have Jesus.

You know, you can teach on the importance of forgiveness and never actually forgive other Christians. Don't be content with dead Christianity. To have a reputation but not have the reality. Notice there's one other thing ailing this church in Sardis that Jesus rebukes. You know, in this world, a church is not meant to have home court advantage. But our text hints that this church is right at home in the world.

And this is implied in verse 4, where it says the faithful few had not soiled their garments. Most of this church had in fact soiled themselves. Now, not outwardly, inwardly.

[ 15 : 40 ] The idea of soiling something is what it sounds like. It's foul. It's a picture of contamination from sin. In this case, it seems this sin comes in the form of compromising.

Whereas Jesus, remember, commended the church in Smyrna for confessing his name in a hostile culture, in this case, it seemed they wanted to keep a low profile. Rather than conforming to Christ, they wanted to conform more to the world.

This is a church full of chameleons who camouflage themselves. You know, wouldn't it be a sad thing for someone to say at your funeral, you know, I never knew he or she was a Christian.

I suspect many could say that of this church. Jesus warned that a love for this world and a true love for God cannot coexist. A love for the world will choke the seeds that are planted.

Because of that, this church was dead. What's a dead church supposed to do? This leads to point number two, the call to spiritual revival. Jesus doesn't wipe his hands clean, but dead church had soiled his garments.

[ 16 : 46 ] I'm done with you. He doesn't do that. Instead, Jesus calls a dead church to spiritual revival. Now, when I say revival, I am not talking about an evangelism strategy.

You know, engineering it through our own efforts. You can't put a revival on the calendar. No, rather, revival is a supernatural, God-initiated work. Now, where am I getting that from?

Now, remember, in each of these letters, John points to an aspect of Christ's character the church needs to recall. The revival to this lifeless church comes at the beginning of verse one.

And to the angel of the church in Sardis writes, the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. This is a declaration of the sovereignty and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus over the church.

In the one hand, he has the seven spirits. He has the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In his other hand, he has the seven stars. Remember, we saw those seven stars in chapter one.

[ 17 : 45 ] These are messengers. Angelic or human messengers. Either way, Jesus has authority over them. In the one hand, Jesus has the Holy Spirit. In his other hand, he has the church. And according to this vision, this revival, this spiritual awakening to the church must come from Jesus himself, by the Holy Spirit.

Christ alone has the infinite power to save a church from a hollow profession. In verse two, before giving his prescriptions to this dead church, we see the urgency of the situation in the church.

In verse two, he says, wake up and strengthen what remains and is about to die. Jesus says you must do these things and you must do them now. But when he says you are about to die, maybe there's some spark of life in the congregation.

I take it to mean that Jesus is highlighting the urgency of this call. This is a patient that slams into the ER and their vitals are about to flatline. That's how dire this is.

They are about to die. It has to be fixed and it must be fixed now. Today, not tomorrow. And Jesus gives three remedies to a church that is about to die.

[ 18 : 53 ] The first is to wake up at the beginning of verse two. You can translate it as be alert, to be watchful. John shifts the metaphor from a dead church and now it's a sleepy church.

They need the spirit to give an awakening, to wake them up out of their spiritual slumber. But these words would have been a thunderbolt right into the heart of the church at Sardis.

Because you see, the city of Sardis had been invaded and destroyed because they fell asleep. Not once, but twice. The city was built on a plateau 1,500 feet high.

And it was said that a single soldier could have kept an army from coming up. But in both cases, the guards and the city fell asleep. And twice the city fell.

Jesus is saying, if you don't wake up, devastation will come on you just like it came on Sardis. You are more vulnerable than you can ever realize. Verse three goes on and says, therefore, if you do

not wake up, I will come like a thief and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.  
[ 20 : 07 ] You know, thieves don't give notice. See it to your place at 2 a.m. Meet me there. No, they come in an hour you do not expect. Suddenly and unexpectedly, judgment will come like a thief in the night.

And this is referring to a judgment on this specific congregation, but also the final judgment, the second death. In 1 Thessalonians 5, that Anna read, Paul writes, for you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Judgment will come when you least expect it. So today you must wake up and not tomorrow. Tomorrow may be too late. If you don't turn for your sin, Jesus will say, enough is enough. And he will unexpectedly sweep in and destroy you. Your house is built on sand and the storm of judgment will come for you. That's what the church, that's what he's saying to the church at Sardis. And he's telling us today. And God is not coming to take a city again. He is coming for your soul. So, the first command is to wake up. The second command is to strengthen what remains.

[ 21 : 20 ] So much has gone wrong. But underneath all the rottenness and decay, there is something that must be strengthened. Something that must be preserved. Now, what are they to strengthen?

Well, later in the text, we see a remnant. Maybe it's strengthening the remnant. But I would suggest that seeing this as strengthening the things of the remnant treasures. Strengthening the things that refresh the remnant.

This church had been churning out toxic waste. And John is saying, strengthen the life-giving things that will nourish the saints. Strengthen things like the means of grace, like preaching, Bible study, and prayer, and fellowship, and the ordinances.

This is the water that will nourish the saints. Saturate yourself with these things, John is saying. Paul and Romans would say, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Strengthen the hearing of the word. And we see the sufficiency of God's word for the life of the church here. The word melts the frozen heart, breaks apart the rocky soil, and steals the spine.

[ 22 : 27 ] Strengthen those things. By way of application, not only should we be doing this in the church, but are we nourishing ourselves in our homes? Fathers, let me address you for a second.

Are you instructing your family in God's word to strengthen them, to encourage them, to refresh them? If you failed in this, begin today. Family worship to strengthen your family can be as simple as reading a verse, praying, and singing together as a family.

Strengthen your family. Refresh them. Encourage them. But not only are they to wake up and strengthen what remains. Third, to remember what you received and heard, keep it and repent. To be restored as a church, they have to remember what they first received. We see here true supernatural revival is done through the normal gospel ministry.

John isn't calling them to something new. No new evangelistic methods, no new ministry strategy, no new techniques. John is saying, go back to the very beginning.

[ 23 : 35 ] Remember the apostolic teaching that was delivered to you. Not only the scriptures, but the gospel itself. The church had abandoned the priority of the gospel. And it's the gospel that the Spirit uses to give life to a church.

You're dead because you have abandoned the fountain of living water. You know, likewise, in 2 Timothy, Paul would tell Timothy to endure in his ministry by depending on what he already has. After telling Timothy that the crowd does what the crowd always does, he says in chapter 3, verse 14, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.

Church, we must never lose the centrality of the gospel. Remember it. Remember that there is only one God who is holy and righteous.

He created you and me to bear his image, to resemble him by loving others and to love him above everything. But you and I have sinned against this good God.

[ 24 : 40 ] God is good and righteous and he cannot just brush our sin under the rug. He will punish sin. And because of our sin, there is a collision course with divine wrath and judgments.

Think about it. If there was a judge on the bench and he never pronounced condemnation against lawbreakers who commit crimes of bloodshed, of sexual violence, such a judge is not good. Know that God will not only punish sin, he must. The judge of the earth will always do what is right. And the bad news is this, that apart from Christ, you will not find God to be your friends, but your

enemy.

Not because he is harsh, but because he is good and we are not. He sees the stains in our garments. You know, I wonder what stains are in your garments this morning.

Not the stuff on the outside, but on the inside of you. Untold, buried secrets. If people knew what you had done, what you said, what you thought in your mind, that if others truly knew, you're afraid they would reject you.

[ 25 : 55 ] You've tried to wash out these stains in your own efforts, but it's never enough. You live in the shame of what you've done. Your own conscience continually points the finger and accuses you.

How do we wash our garments and make them clean? Revelation 7, verse 14 tells us, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Friends, this is the good news, is it not?

In his great sovereign love, the Father sent his Son, Jesus, to rescue us. Fully God and fully man. The Creator stepped into the world, one who is truly alive.

Christ's works were complete in the sight of his Father. By his perfect obedience, his garments were completely clean. But despite never sinning, he goes to a cross.

The one who is truly alive was put to death, not for his crimes, but for the crimes and for all who had returned from their sin and put their trust in him alone. At the cross, the Father pours out his wrath on his own Son as our sin-bearing substitutes.

[ 27 : 09 ] The one whose garments were never stained bore your stains on the cross. On the third day, Christ rose again and is now seated at the right hand of the Father with the seven stars and the seven spirits in his hands.

The Lamb came, the Lamb was slain, but praise God, the Lamb was raised to new life. And if you turn from your sin and look to him by faith, you can be truly alive today. If you are not a Christian, wake up.

Wake up from the insanity of sin. Make a U-turn. Today, the garments of your soul can be white as snow. Why would you die? Come to this fountain so rich and sweet and cast yourself at the Savior's feet.

It is there you can be made clean. Throw yourself at the mercy of the cross and exchange your filthy garments for white garments that Christ freely offers you.

He's not only holding out his nail-scarred hands, he promises to take you into his arms. He will never turn you away. You must turn from your sin. You must repent.

[ 28 : 15 ] And to repent is to die to yourself, to submit yourself to the lordship of Christ. God, his command of repentance implies that he will receive you if you just turn to him. If you are a Christian, remember this good news.

Keep it and repent. Remember when you were a brand new Christian. Do you remember those days when you were given a new name in Christ? Remember when you first believed and mercy was great and grace was free?

Remember when you were given new garments. And keep the gospel family. Keep on guarding it. Keep on reminding each other of it. Keep on obeying it.

You know, some treat repentance as some gross cold medicine that you take only when you need it. But the Christian life is one of constant repentance. We are constantly relying on the grace of God.

You must constantly be going back to that well of mercy each day and admitting your need of him. Unceasingly relying upon his forgiveness. Sardis stopped repenting and so they stopped marveling at the mercies of God.

[ 29 : 24 ] But senior saints, let me encourage you that your walk now matters. You can thank God for his past faithfulness to you, but you cannot live on manna you ate 20 years ago.

These last days matter. Make them count. Continue to wage war against sin. Stay in the race. I know many of you experienced many sorrows in the Christian life.

Chronic fatigue and you were tired. But you must finish the race. By way of example, in 1992 400 meter Olympics, the favorite to win the gold medal was Derek Redmond.

near the end of his sprint, he ruptured his hamstring, causing him to fall in the track in agony. While other athletes raced by him, he laid on the ground in tears.

Finally, he rose to his feet and with pain, he dogged every step. But suddenly, a middle-aged man wearing a T-shirt and cap, fought through security and jumped from the stand.

[ 30 : 30 ] Arm in arm and shoulder in shoulder, the person carried the sprinter to the finish line. As they took the last step, the crowd exploded with tears of triumph. It was the sprinter's father who helped him to the finish line.

Senior saint, let that be your story. As you finish the race, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and his angels that you must finish the race. There is a prize at the finish line.

You must keep going. And this is the last point, the prize for those who continue to walk with Christ. Point number three is the reward for the remnant in verses four to six.

In verse four, Christ includes a commendation, not for many, but only a few, a remnant. Verse four, you still have a few names in Sardis.

People who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in whites, for they are worthy. These few are salt that have not lost their saltiness in a decaying world.

[ 31 : 34 ] God always keeps a remnant, does he not? God told Elijah during mass apostasy in Israel that he had a remnant of seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. A faithful remnant.

It's always been like that. Whereas most of them had soiled their garments, a few people had not. They had not compromised. And these few Christians were out of step with their culture.

But they were so near to God's heart. Christ commends them for their faithfulness. Heaven was on their mind, Christ in their heart, and the world at their back.

Their hearts were set on the things where Christ is seated. And how discouraged these Christians must have been. One thing that struck me is that you will find the godliest Christians in some of the worst churches.

I can't explain to you why. I don't know. But you will find the best Christians in some of the most nominal churches. They see the state of the world and the state of their own church and they are discouraged.

[ 32 : 34 ] Maybe you felt that way. Discouraged at the church in the state of the world. These discouraged saints needed to hear that Christ treasures them.

You are not lost in the crowd. Your heavenly father sees you. These few faithful ones, the tenderness he shows to them. He says, these few Christians will walk with me in white for they are worthy.

Because of their refusal to defile their garments under pressure, Christ says, you are worthy. Now this worthiness is not their own. This worthiness means there is no gap between their profession and their walk.

As Paul would say, they are walking in a manner worthy of the gospel. Their righteousness is not their own but one that depends on God from faith. Now some of you are discouraged because you spend too much time watching the news or scrolling social media.

Turn it off. Christ wants the church to look up. Christ is making promises to you to encourage you. You will walk with Christ in white. You will be in heaven and see him face to face.

[ 33 : 49 ] You will be dressed in glorious white garments. You may have garments now decked with diamonds and precious stones. That would be filthy rags in comparison to these white garments that Christ is offering us.

These are more glorious. And white is a prominent color in Revelation. White robes, white horses, white clouds, white stones, a great white throne.

White not only stands for conquering, not only stands for being pure and forgiven before God, white also stands for conquering. These few are called conquerors.

In Rome, all the citizens would dress in white as they celebrate a great victory. And the church here is triumphant. The church is dressed in white as the lamb ultimately triumphs over his enemies, like a Roman general returning from a victory.

And these trials will give way to glory. These in white garments are called conquerors. They have overcome. Those who have victory after their earthly struggle.

[ 35 : 01 ] Church, hold fast as conquerors. Even in this war against sin, keep repenting, keep obeying, keep remembering. That's how you conquer.

Even though you go now in rags, then you will have white robes in triumph. Though you bear the cross now, then you will be given a crown. Will the world put a crown on your head?

Christ gives you a better one. After finishing the race, there is laid for you a crown of righteousness laid up for you in heaven. The most glorious thing you've ever experienced now will be but a dim candle before the brightness of that sun.

This is Christ in all his glory coming to take you home. And this hope of glory is meant to produce joy in the saints today. And no one can take this joy from you.

Christ is calling you to faith. Church, don't settle for cheap fast food when Christ offers you a rich banquet in his presence. It's been written, thy saints in all this glorious war shall conquer though they die.

[ 36 : 14 ] They see the triumph from afar and seize it with their eye. Christians, seize this triumph by faith. Though the world thought little of these precious few saints, they had a high reputation in heaven.

Christian, no one might know your name in this life, but the King of kings and the Lord of lords delights to honor those who honor him. He knows your name. But amazingly, Jesus gives a second promise.

He will never blot out your name from the book of life. As Tom preached last week, if you confess Christ, many synagogues would blot out your name from the membership rolls.

and you would be killed. Jesus is saying, I will never, no never, blot you out of my book. If you confess his name, your name is written in heaven.

And Jesus gives a third promise. It's a climax to this whole passage. Jesus says, I will confess his name before my father and before his angels. Those who are faithful until the end, Christ will confess you before his father.

[ 37 : 27 ] You want the Lord to confess your name. The problem the Bible presents isn't whether we are ashamed to confess Christ. No, it's not that. It's how God can not be ashamed to confess you and me.

That is our greatest need. Who will confess us before that great white throne? Weak, vile, helpless, soiling our garments, contaminated by sin and a righteous God.

Who will confess our names when we approach that final throne on that final day? We need Jesus to confess our name.

The spotless lamb of God to confess your name and my name before the father. Those who confess Christ now, those who live for his name, Jesus will confess before his father.

Church, this is what the text is saying to us this morning. You can settle for a name in New Haven or you can settle for a name in heaven. You must make the choice.

[ 38 : 31 ] Jesus says, what would it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Friend, what would it profit you to have your name written on a membership list at a church but excluded in this book of life?

What would it profit you to have your name and acknowledge and applaud by others but Jesus does not confess your name before his father? What would it profit you to be clothed in rich clothes and have nice cars but you stand naked and exposed before God on that final day of judgment where you are not given a garment of white but you will wear eternal black garments of judgment? Friend, run to the mercy of the cross. Run today today and not tomorrow for tomorrow may be too late. And we see the fruit of this rebuke in church history.

The church at Sardis eventually did make a U-turn and became known for a bastion of bold witness for the gospel where it remained for another thousand years.

And to close, there is a story of a young woman from a wealthy family who came to faith during a revival. She was scolded by her father and ridiculed by her mother for confessing Jesus.

[ 39 : 52 ] Eventually told she must renounce her fanaticism or her name would be blotted out forfeiting her inheritance. She was given several days to think it over. On that final day she was told to give her answer.

She replied by sitting down at a piano where she played a verse of a well-known hymn. Jesus, I my cross have taken all to leave and follow thee.

Destitute, despised, forsaken, thou from hence my all shalt be. Perish every fond ambition, all I've sought or hoped or known.

Yet how rich is my condition. God and heaven are still my own. She chose a name in heaven rather than a name in this world. And you know what? Jesus will confess her name before his father.

Will he confess yours? Let's pray. Oh, Father in heaven, help us to wake up, to wake up today and not tomorrow.

[ 41 : 03 ] Give us life as a church. Help us not be content with the form and not the reality. Oh God, we pray your spirit would bring a revival to our church where we feel like brand new Christians again.

Father, would you do this for your honor and praise for your renown? In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.