

The Victor's Robes

Revelation 3:1-6



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FOCAL Revelation 3:1-6^{KJV} 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, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. (2) Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. (3) 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. (4) Thou 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. (5) 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. (6) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

When I'm driving my car, two things are always apparent to me. First, I can always tell when I pass a dead skunk. As the comedian said, the *soul* has departed but the *scent* lingers on. Second, I can always tell when I get behind someone who is driving while talking on a cell phone. Just the other day I was trying to leave the Post Office and waiting for the person in front of me to move. Since I was turning left, I was in the left turn lane. I waited, and waited, and waited some more. The highway in front of us was completely clear, and it seemed like all of Lexington had left town. Why wasn't this person

moving? So I gently eased my car into the next lane, ready to render assistance. The problem? The person inside the vehicle was on the phone, totally oblivious to the traffic jam they were responsible for. In fact, the *passenger* next to the driver was on a cell phone. I wondered briefly if they were talking to one another on the phone before I went on my merry way.

What we're going to talk about today isn't dead skunks nor cell phones. We're going to talk about a local church in a Biblical place called "Sardis" that forgot what having church is all about. And that really does relate to my opening illustration. When I pass a dead skunk on the side of the road, I can tell the skunk is there because *it did its job, even unto death*. And when I *can't pass* someone talking on the phone in the Post Office parking lot, that person *isn't doing their job* which is *driving the car*. Sardis was a local church that was focused on something other than Jesus Christ.

1. The Church Belongs To Jesus

FOCAL Revelation 3:2-4 **Be watchful¹, and strengthen² the things which remain that are ready to die: for I have not found thy**

- 1 Present Active Participle of G1127, γρηγορεῖν, grēgoreuō, *gray-gor-yoo'-o*, From G1453; to *keep awake*, that is, *watch* (literally or figuratively): - be vigilant, wake, (be) watch (-ful). (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)
- 2 Aorist Active Imperative of G4741, στηριξέτω, stērizō, *stay-rid'-zo*, From a presumed derivative of G2476 (like G4731); to *set fast*, that is, (literally) to *turn resolutely* in a certain direction, or (figuratively) to *confirm*: - fix, (e-) stablish, stedfastly set, strengthen., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

works perfect³ before God. (3) Remember⁴ therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast⁵, 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. (4) Thou 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.

Jesus has many rebukes for His Church in Sardis. After calling the Church **dead⁶** in verse 1 - a word which should never be applied to a Christian nor to a Christian Church - Our Lord warns those at Sardis sternly. I rarely

- 3 Perfect Passive Participle of G4137, πληρόω, plēroō, *play-ro'-o*, From G4134; to *make replete*, that is, (literally) to *cram* (a net), *level up* (a hollow), or (figuratively) to *furnish* (or *imbue, diffuse, influence*), *satisfy, execute* (an office), *finish* (a period or task), *verify* (or *coincide* with a prediction), etc.: - accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)
- 4 Present Active Imperative of G3421, μνημονεύω, mnēmoneuō, *mnay-mon-yoo'-o*, From a derivative of G3420; to *exercise memory*, that is, *recollect*; by implication to *punish*; also to *rehearse*: - make mention, be mindful, remember., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)
- 5 Present Active Imperative of G5083, τηρέω, tēreō, *tay-reh'-o*, From τηρός teros (a *watch*; perhaps akin to G2334); to *guard* (from *loss* or *injury*, properly by keeping *the eye* upon; and thus differing from G5442, which is properly to *prevent* escaping; and from G2892, which implies a *fortress* or full military lines of apparatus), that is, to *note* (a prophecy; figuratively to *fulfil* a command); by implication to *detain* (in custody; figuratively to *maintain*); by extension to *withhold* (for personal ends; figuratively to *keep unmarried*): - hold fast, keep (-er), (ob-, pre-, re) serve, watch. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)
- 6 G3498, νεκρός, nekros, *nek-ros'*, From an apparently primary word νέκρυς nekus (a *corpse*); *dead* (literally or figuratively; also as noun): - dead. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

quote the Greek text in our studies, but in this case I feel it imperative to do so, otherwise you will not understand what Jesus means. The Lord told the Church first of all to **be watchful**, literally "**keep on staying awake or alert**". Next He says **strengthen**, literally **confirm or steadfastly establish once and for all** the things that are at death's door. Next our Lord says **I have not found thy works complete**, literally **up to par or up to the level**. So literally so far our Lord has said:

"Wake up, and keep on waking up and being alert! Confirm or establish the things that remain, lest they die. Call to mind what you have received (the preaching of the Word) from Me, keep your eye on the task at hand, and change your ways!"

In our world today there are entirely too many *professing* believers who do not *live for Jesus*. They say they know the Lord, yet they cannot, for those who are saved by Christ *love Christ*. The Church at Sardis was a *church in name only*. A "church" properly called is **a body of called out believers who come together to worship, glorify, and serve God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. As a matter of fact, the word "church" is a Greek word⁷ which literally means "**called out ones**". Jesus

⁷ G1577, ἐκκλησία, ekklēsia, *ek-klay-see'-ah*, From a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564; a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church., (Strong's Hebrew and Greek

Christ calls the members of His Church out of this world and into the Family of God.

Illustrate What can be said of a Church or of a Christian who does not walk with Christ? As I was prayer walking today I saw a tree laying on the ground. The tree was cut into pieces, and though it still had some green in its leaves, it was obviously dead. No sap could run in its center, no life would move through its body. Next to it lay a telephone pole, itself a tree in another life, now filled with creosote. Had the telephone pole been stood upright in a hole it could have been the means of holding up lines that would carry the sounds of life. On the ground, that pole had no use at all. Bathed in creosote it could never be burned. The tree, at least, could feed a fire. The telephone pole had one use, and it wasn't being used for that.

The Church is created by Jesus to serve and worship God, while leading others to Christ. A Church that doesn't fulfill that grand purpose is useless to the Lord, fit only to be judged. Jesus cries out to the assembly of Sardis, calling the *wheat to separate from the tares*, and to do so quickly. Souls are dying without knowing that Jesus Christ is **the Way, the Truth, and the Life**. He calls the dead and unsaved who have infiltrated the assembly to wake up, for He will judge.

FOCAL Revelation 3:4 **Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments⁸; and they shall walk with me in**

Dictionaries)

⁸ G2440, ἱμάτιον, himation, *him-at'-ee-on*, Neuter of a presumed

white: for they are worthy.

Yet even in Sardis there are **a few names which have not defiled their garments**. Most translations render this last word "**garments**", or "**clothes**", but the word is better rendered **robes**. There were some who kept their **robes undefiled**, and it is these believers who will **walk with Jesus in white**. Read further:

FOCAL Revelation 3:4-5 **Thou 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. (5) He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;**

Some people read this verse and begin to teach that it means a Christian can *lose his salvation*. No my friend, no! The Apostle John says in another place:

1 John 5:4-5 For [whosoever] is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (5) Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

derivative of **ἐννυμι** hennumi (to *put on*); a *dress* (inner or outer): - apparel, cloke, clothes, garment, raiment, robe, vesture. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

Believers - true believers - *will overcome* the world. As the Scripture says, **this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith**. We are not saved by our own hand, but God has:

1 Peter 1:3-5 ... begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

If you are saved by faith in Christ you *will* overcome the world. God is inside of you, and you are in God. The Lord warns those who *profess* salvation but *do not walk with Jesus* that they need to begin to live their faith - of they *might not be saved at all!* Jesus says **confirm, establish the things that remain. Remember what was preached to you, and change your ways!**

If you belong to Jesus Christ by faith, then you are a priest before God. You are a **kingdom of priests**, and Jesus Christ is your High Priest. The **Church is Christ's Priesthood**, as the Bible says:

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him

who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

You are a *called out priesthood*, and Jesus is your High Priest. Do you remember where the Old Testament priesthood originally started? Israel had just come through the Red Sea, had seen the entire Egyptian Army drowned under the mighty Hand of God, and now Israel was at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses, God's anointed leader, was sent up into the mountain to receive God's Law. Oh, how God in His Grace had prospered Israel! When they left Egypt they left slavery. As they walked from that great city, the Egyptians tossed gold and jewelry at the Israelites. God walked ahead of them as a pillar of fire at night, and a pillar of cloud during the day. Israel was on top of the world - literally - when Moses went up Mount Sinai. But Moses didn't come down as quickly as the people would like. Furthermore, the people - and notice this closely - when they left Egypt they did not walk with God - they *walked with Moses*. We read:

Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.

Here's the problem. Israel did not follow God out of Egypt, they followed *that man Moses*. Because their faith was on man and not on God they ordered that Aaron make a **golden calf**, so they would have a false god to worship. Here's a great truth: **spiritually dead people do spiritually dead things**. They are not following God, so they are not empowered by God.

2. The Church Belongs To Jesus So We Should Walk With Jesus

When Moses sees this, *he is furious*. What happens next?

Exodus 32:26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

This is where the Priesthood of Israel began. Moses cried out, **Who is on the Lord's side?**, and the tribe of Levi gathered around him. After that the Levites were God's *called out ones*, and the son of Aaron became the High Priest to Israel. The Levites wore robes that they had to keep clean, for they were *set apart to worship God*. That is how it is among Israel. Not so with the Church of Christ! In the Church Age **Jesus Christ is our High Priest**, and *every believer in Christ is a priest before God*. The Scripture says:

Hebrews 9:11-14 But Christ being come a

high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12)

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

When Jesus went to that Cross for you and for me He offered *not* the blood of animals, but **His own precious Blood**. That **Blood of Atonement** was offered to God the Father **through the Holy Spirit of God**. That Blood was without spot or blemish. When the **Eternal Spirit** took that Blood to the Father as a perfect Sacrifice the Father said "**It is sufficient - I am pleased!**".

The Church belongs to Jesus! Each believer in it is **Blood Bought and Spirit indwelt**. Each believer in the Church has not only received salvation, but we have also received *empowerment*. We work out of a heart of love for Jesus, and through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

In His earthly ministry Jesus Christ did everything *through the power of God the Holy Spirit*. When our

Lord was baptized, the Holy Spirit land on Him like a dove (**Matthew 3:16**). It was the Spirit Who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (**Matthew 4:1**). Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit of God (**Matthew 12:28**). Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee (**Luke 4:14**). While in Galilee Jesus preached out of Isaiah 49:8-9; 61:1, where He read:

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Jesus Christ promised that those who believed in Him *would receive the Holy Spirit*, who would not only give life to the believers, but enable them to pass on the words of life to others. Jesus said:

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (38) He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (39) (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

This Spirit of God indwells *every single believer*, enabling those who believe in Jesus to do the works of God. Jesus went on to tell us:

John 14:16-17 And **I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; (17) Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive,** because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but **ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.**

No Christian should *ever* be in the position where Jesus says to us:

FOCAL Revelation 3:1 ... **I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.**

The Christian and the Church belonging to Jesus should be a *living entity, a Spirit filled assembly, a body of called out priests*. This Church belongs to Jesus. He said

Matthew 16:18 ... **upon this rock I will build my church;** and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Jesus calls it "**My Church**". It is His and His alone. Jesus Christ *purchased* the Church with His own Blood:

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to **feed the church of God,**

which he hath purchased with his own blood.

It is His Church, God's Church - and it's works must be done from that fountain of life. God has

Ephesians 2:5-6 **quickened us together with Christ, by (grace ye are saved;) (6) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:** (7) **That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.**

Only a *living creature* can do a *living work*. Jesus warned Sardis to *remember the Word spoken and preached to them* so they could **make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10)**. Their work was just *not up to par* because they, like the Pharisees who so persecuted Jesus in His earthly ministry, were *not truly saved*.

The warning to Sardis is the same thread that is spun throughout the Bible. Unless you have called on Jesus Christ for salvation, you do not have life. If you have called on Jesus for salvation, then God has made you alive, and you have life. As Jesus told His disciples:

John 6:63 It is the **Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing:** the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

God is never worshiped by mere ritual. We must worship God in Spirit and in truth, in the power of God and through the Word of God.

John 4:23-24 KJVR But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. (24) God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

May God touch your hearts with these words. The word "Christian" only goes with words like **love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.** The word "Christian" does not go with words like **sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness or orgies.** Those who do the latter will one day stand before Jesus and give an account of themselves. As **Alexander Maclaren** said:

"... it remains true that only those who have kept their garments undefiled here shall 'walk in white.' It does not need absolute cleanness from all spot, God be thanked! But it does need, first, that we shall have 'washed our robes and made them white' in the 'blood of the Lamb.' And then that we shall keep them white, by continual recourse to the blood that cleanses from all sin, and by continual effort after purity like His own and received from Him."

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