

Dead or Alive? ***Revelation 3:1-3***

Thought for the Day: We need to carefully examine ourselves and our church for signs of spiritual death. And where we see indications of spiritual decay, we need to repent and earnestly seek the Lord for the restoration of spiritual life and vitality.

"We are still listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to the churches, for these messages from Christ belong to our day as well as to the first century. Churches are people, and human nature has not changed. So, as we continue our study, we must not look on these letters as ancient relics. On the contrary, they are mirrors in which we see ourselves!" (*Warren Wiersbe, Be Victorious, p. 47*)

The message to the church in Sardis is short but may be hard for us to swallow! Charles Swindoll entitled a study on this letter, *A Morgue with a Steeple*. Is First Baptist Church a church filled with spiritual life or a funeral home filled with spiritual death?

"This church had an illustrious past. It was located in a city where money was plentiful, and gold and silver coins were minted. Life around Sardis was comfortable, self-indulgent, and decadent. The people of the assembly themselves adopted the surrounding life-style. They had become 'dead,' spiritually lifeless." (*Charles Swindoll, Letters to Churches, p.17*)

There was no significant difference between the people in the church and the people in the community! (Remedy: Romans 12:1-2)

I. The Greeting (3:1a)

1 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:

- Sardis was a very important city located 35 miles south of Thyatira.
 - Capital of the Roman province of Lydia.
 - One of the oldest cities in the region; at one time, a very wealthy city.
 - It lay at the junction of five main roads; a trading center for wool and woolen garments and was characterized by a loose and luxurious lifestyle.
 - Sadly, the city was only a shadow of its former glory; it was a dying city and unfortunately, the church, like the city, was dying, as well.
 - Was also a military center, located on an almost inaccessible plateau surrounded on three sides by almost sheer cliffs; the city was thought to be impregnable.
 - On two separate occasions, the city was captured by enemies because those who were guarding the city fell asleep at their posts. There was a secret path leading up to the top of the plateau that was left unguarded.
 - The danger of becoming comfortable and complacent. What is the "secret path," the vulnerable weakness in your life that you are not paying attention to?

The words of him who has the seven spirits of God...

- Refers to the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. (Revelation 1:4)
 - The number seven probably refers to the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit as described in Isaiah 11:2.

- Jesus lived and ministered in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- When He was preparing His disciples for His death and departure from planet earth, Jesus promised them that He would send the Holy Spirit to them who would be with them and in them to empower them to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
- In this description of the Lord, there is a subtle reminder to us that, if we are to successfully live the Christian life, if we are going to successfully defend against the weak areas of our lives, the secret paths that Satan tries to use to destroy us, we must do so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

...and the seven stars.

- Refers back to Revelation 1:16, 20 – the pastors, the leadership of the church, are held in the Lord’s hand.
- In a spiritually healthy church, Jesus is in complete control of the leadership of the church. Pray for the pastor and spiritual leaders of our church!

II. The Condemnation (3:1b)

I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

- Though it outwardly appeared to be alive, the all-knowing Lord discerned the true condition of the church—it was spiritually dead.
- Our true spiritual condition is defined, not by what we *say*, but by what we *do*!

III. The Exhortation (3:2-3a)

- The church was not fulfilling its God-given mission: To Glorify God and Advance His Kingdom by making disciples of Jesus Christ (through evangelism & discipleship).
- Jesus gave five clear commands in order to correct their situation.

2 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. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.

- Ironically, “The main religion in the city was the worship of Artemis, one of the ‘nature cults’ that built on the idea of...” reincarnation. (*Wiersbe, p. 47*)
- This church, being dead, needed to come back to life!
 - 1) Wake up
 - 2) Strengthen
 - 3) Remember
 - 4) Keep
 - 5) Repent

IV. The Warning (3:3b)

V. The Promise (3:4-6)