



Seven: Letters of Revelation
Sardis: The Story Behind the Statistics
Revelation 3:1-6
06/09/2019

MAIN POINT

Jesus desires that we consistently fix our minds and hearts on the gospel, renewing our love and passion for Him as we do.

INTRODUCTION

In your own words, what does it mean to be indifferent?

What is something in your life that you act indifferent towards?

Is there anything in your life that you take serious, but others act indifferent towards it? How does it feel when there is something you are passionate about and others are not?

In your spiritual journey with Jesus, what are some things that you find yourself being indifferent towards? How has it impacted your life?

In the sermon the statistic is given: 6000-10,000 churches die in the US each year (100-200 every week). If we don't pay attention, church and church activities can become just another part of our week that gets lost in the daily grind and before long we become indifferent. The same is true for the church in Sardis, they transitioned from being concerned and passionate to being indifferent and apathetic. But Jesus expects more of His followers. He expects us and our families to live on mission for Him, and this means that how we live should be displayed for all to see. Today we are going to learn about the power of indifference that can happen individually as well as collectively to a body of believers.

UNDERSTANDING

In the sermon the following points are made as to why a church may put seem like they are alive but in all reality they are dead on the inside:

The church at Sardis:

- Chose an alternative power
- Had more professors than possessors
- Was living off past glory
- Fell asleep at the when
- Forgot the reward.

Questions for reflection:

- Do you agree with all of these? Do you disagree with any of these?
- Which one of these points challenged you the most?
- Which one of these points taught you something about the church you didn't know before?
- From a personal perspective, are there any of these that you have experienced individually?

Let's walk through the passages and go into more details with each one of these:

- Have a volunteer read Revelation 3:1.

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, ^[a]but you are dead.

What did the works of the church at Sardis reveal about their spiritual condition?

This letter is intended by the Lord as an urgent spiritual wake-up call. If the church at Sardis did not strengthen what remained spiritually, they would die because they had not followed through on the works that honored God. The reputation these believers had was one of holiness and spiritual life, but apparently, that was just a facade. On the inside, in their hearts and attitudes, they did not shine for Christ.

Has there been a time when you ever have had to confront or been confronted about your attitude? How did you respond? How did it change you? Why is it important to have this type of relationship and accountability within the church body?

Transition: It's important to see that the purpose of this letter is not to put down the church, rather to help them see that they were on a wrong course and this was a time for correction.

- Have a volunteer read Revelation 3:2-3.

² Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. ³ So remember ^[b]what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. 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.

If you had to explain the condition of the church in Sardis in your own words, what kinds of things might you say to characterize this church that has the reputation of being alive, but is actually dead?

Why is this such a scary possibility?

There is no praise here for the church at Sardis. In fact, Jesus' criticism is particularly frightening, because it seems that Jesus is the only One who knows the church's true condition. Others might have looked at the church at Sardis and seen life, but Jesus knows the truth—spiritually they were as good as dead. Unfortunately, this is an attitude that is way too easy for us to slip into, which is especially scary considering the consequences Jesus described in verse 3.

From the sermon what are some of the negative things that can impact a church's power:

- Choosing programs over power
- Rejecting the Spirit's work in our lives
- Rejecting the Church as the Bride of Christ

How might good works hide a spiritually dead church? In what way are works incomplete (v. 2)?

What, then, did Jesus tell this church to do (v. 3)?

Why should the church in Sardis be an example to churches today?

In this spiritually dead place, Jesus' commands are simple. They should remember God's blessing and repent of their spiritual deadness. In other words, they needed to recover the spiritual life and vigor they once had.

How can remembering the blessings of God serve to awaken a church that is spiritually dead?

What, then, in your own words, was the action point for this church that needed correction?

This letter was meant to be an urgent wake-up call. At some point, Jesus would be returning, and if He found the church in its current state, they would be truly dead. But if they woke up to the present reality of Jesus and remembered the great blessing of the gospel, their good works would be complete, and they would be ready for Jesus to come back.

In the sermon, these were the desires that mark a church that seeks to not be indifferent:

- They share a:
 - o Desire for the Word
 - o Desire for obedience
 - o Desire for the lost
 - o Desire to serve

Ask yourself, do you have those desires? Do you share in those desires? Are you ready to move from a consumer to a contributor? How would your life look different in your made that move and shared the same desires?

- Have a volunteer read Revelation 3:4-6.

4 But you have a few [c]people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

What do these verses reveal about some of the Christians in Sardis?

Christ does not ask these faithful few to leave the nominal majority, but to maintain their presence as witnesses. They may have a difficult time doing so, but Christ commends them as worthy of special praise. They will appear dressed in white one day, revealed as truly righteous. Their righteousness was not the appearance, but the reality.

Who is someone that you can encourage this week to not give into the world but to keep following the Lord?

Why is the church to be a movement and not an institution?

What are some areas in your life that you have been living in fear over faith?

How can the church help you to develop your faith and experience spiritual growth? When is the last time that you developed a growth plan for your life spiritually?

One of the struggles of Sardis was how the people in the city thought the city was guarded and yet it took just a small number of soldiers to help overcome the city by finding a small way in.

How does this represent sin in our walk with Christ?

What does it mean to “Be alert and sober minded” in 1 Peter 5:8?

Why is suffering a part of the Christian life? How does it help us even when it hurts us?

APPLICATION

What lesson is there for you to learn from the story of Sardis?

Think about your home. What do you and your family “appear to be” to those watching from the outside? How does that compare with what you are actually living like?

Why is merely going through the motions of spiritual life or church life so easy to do? How have you seen this tendency creep into your life or your family’s life? What is one step you could take toward counteracting this tendency?

How can we be a group that helps its members remain aware of who they are in God?