**Revelation**

*Lesson 10 – Revelation 3:1-6*

1. The addresses to the 7 churches all follow the same basic pattern:
   1. Address – “to the angel of the church….write”
   2. Christ’s Self-designation – “the words of…..”
   3. Christ’s Commendation – “I know….” something positive about the church
   4. Christ’s Condemnation – “But I have this…..against you…..” something negative about the church
   5. Christ’s Promise or Threat – “I will….” or “remember….or else”
   6. Christ’s Exhortation – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”
   7. Christ’s Promise – “to the one who conquers…..” something good Christ promises

**The Church in Sardis (3:1-6)**

1. Sardis was situated on a nearly inaccessible hill overlooking the Hermus Valley. This made the city virtually impregnable. Before the Roman Empire, Sardis was the capital of this region called Lydia. Her heyday was in the 6th century. She thought she was unassailable but 2 times she was conquered and both by surprise – Cyrus in 546 BC and Antiochus III in 214 BC. Both times it was due to a lack of vigilance that led to her defeat.
2. It had been partly destroyed by earthquake in AD 17 but new buildings were constructed with generous contributions from 2 different Roman emperors. As the hill was too small to handle the rebuilding of the city, the ancient city was abandoned except for its acropolis and a new city arose in its shadow. Like the other cities we have already discussed, Roman gods and the Roman emperor were worshipped in Sardis. The city had 3 temples dedicated to emperor worship. Cities competed to have these temples award to them and it became a major source of pride.

*Address (v 1a)*

1. I’ve already discussed the possible options about this being a real guardian angel over the church or the minister of the church. Regardless, Jesus is still in the midst of the lampstands and He is still tending to His Church.

*Christ’s Self-designation (v1b)*

1. Christ designates Himself as having the “7 spirits of God” which we saw in Rev 1:4. This refers to the Holy Spirit.
2. Christ also designates Himself as the one holding “7 stars” which we saw in Rev 1:16. This refers to the Church universal. The Church is in the hand of God.

*Christ’s Condemnation (vv1c-2)*

1. Vern Poythress says that the churches in Sardis and Laodicea receive the most severe rebukes.
2. Christ says the true reality of the church at Sardis is that they are dead. So when Christ says that He has the Holy Spirit, Christ is saying that only He can make a dead church come to life again.
3. Sardis had a reputation of being alive, which means that not only what others thought of them, but also what they thought of themselves! The members of the church at Sardis thought they were alive, but Christ’s evaluation of them is that they are really dead.
4. This is a hidden death. There’s no mention of false teaching going on in the church. There’s no mention of the sexual immorality of the Jezebel in the church. Outwardly, things looks fine; but inwardly, things are dead.
5. They are deluded about their true condition. They are thinking of their works as one way but Christ is seeing them for what they truly are. Their spiritual health has flat lined. They have grown lethargic and complacent.
6. The church is a reflection of its city. Sardis had a past reputation of fame, but that was fading and the city was resting on its past laurels. So this same attitude and thinking has infected the church. They are resting on past laurels.
7. Notice also that there’s no mention of persecution in Sardis. Could it be that the church was not witnessing and testifying to Jesus Christ, so Satan didn’t need to waste his efforts on such a church. The church wasn’t troubling the world with the message of the gospel so the world wasn’t troubling the church. William Hendriksen calls such “peace” the “peace of a cemetery.”
8. But there is still a chance for life to return in verse 2. Christ commands the church to wake up.
9. “The imperative to ‘become one who is watchful’ shows that the readers have become lethargic about the radical demands of their faith in the midst of a pagan culture.” –Greg Beale
10. “The lamp on the stand is beginning to burn more and more dimly. Soon the tiny flame will have been completely extinguished.” –William Hendriksen
11. So wake up and strengthen what remains because if you don’t, even the tiny bit that remains will soon die.
12. Why? Because Christ as not found the works of the church complete in the sight of God. Literally in the Greek it says, “Nothing you do pleases me.” Christ has not found the works of the church at Sardis fulfilling or satisfying. There’s no fruit.
13. “We might have a name with other people, but it means nothing when the Lord is not satisfied with us. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart. He can see if our professions about what we believe and the values by which we live have substance.” –Joel Beeke
14. Ephesians 5:13-14 – “But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, **14**for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,   
    ‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’”

*Christ’s Promise/Threat (v3)*

1. First, the church is called to remembrance. Remember the gospel that was preached and proclaimed to you with all of its demands. At one point you had life and vibrant zeal for Christ and the gospel. You are living a life of faithful obedience, but now that is all but gone. So the church needs to wake up and remember what they had received and go back to keeping it. The good news of salvation in Christ by faith alone calls us to pursue Christ Himself who is Holy and to proclaim Him to others. Christ’s call includes a life of obedience. And accompanying that keeping a life of faithful obedience is repentance. Repent that you have fallen lethargic and complacent.
2. Next, Christ’s threat comes. If you don’t wake up, I will come against you when you least expect it.
3. One of the times the city of Sardis fell was when a solider of Cyrus climbed up a rock face that was so sheer and about 1500 feet high that Sardis did not feel it was necessary to guard it. They thought it impossible to climb. Jesus calls the church at Sardis to be on guard and be vigilant.
4. They are in danger of slipping into unbelief or dangerous temptation because they are not watchful and alive. They are not on guard.

*Christ’s Commendation (v4)*

1. But there are a few sparks of light here and there in the church. These sparks are people who “have not soiled their garments.”
2. The avoidance of witnessing in order to have “peace” with the world leads to further compromise which leads to great temptations such as idolatry and sexual immorality.
3. This word “stain” is used in various contexts to refer to idolatry and sexual immorality. The danger with becoming complacent and backsliding is that these temptations increase. If you start compromising with the world by not calling the world to repentance, you’re going to start looking more and more like the world. It begins small but it leads further and further away from Christ.
4. These faithful few in Sardis are to be a motivator and encouragement for the church at large to wake up from her spiritual lethargy.
5. And their reward is that they will walk with Christ in white. Just as they identified with Christ while on earth, they will walk with him in white garments which represent purity and holiness.
6. Keeping yourself unstained from this world leads to pure garments in the next world.

*Christ’s Promise (v5)*

1. And to the spiritually dead or almost-dead in Sardis, these same white garments can be yours if you repent and wake up.
2. Not only that, but your name will be eternally kept in God’s book of life. Does this mean we can possibly lose our salvation if we don’t persevere?
3. Finally, Christ will confess you before God the Father and the angels. This perhaps signifies that Christ is reading the names in the book of life out loud in the hearing of God the Father and all the angels. If you confess Christ on earth, He will confess you in heaven. If you deny Him on earth and you can deny Him by an active lifestyle of sin or by a passive lifestyle of not proclaiming Christ and pursuing holiness, if you deny Him He will deny you.

*Christ’s Exhortation (v6)*

1. Again this message goes beyond Pergamum to all churches, even today. But only the Spirit can give us the ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. And we especially need the Spirit of God to help us awaken if we are on the verge of or already at spiritual apathy and lethargy.

**Message for Us**

1. “Groups can bear the name of church, and have a certain reputation, when it is doubtful that they are truly churches at all. The essence of a church is not its programs, buildings, past achievements, reputation, institutional greatness, or formal doctrinal correctness, but its spiritual life. This life comes only through fellowship with the living Christ, and is demonstrated through the seriousness of repentance and obedience.” --Vern Poythress
2. “There is something unspeakably tragic about a dying church that professes to serve a living Savior.” –Joel Beeke This is a call for you and me to have a spiritual health check. Are we resting on past laurels? Are we coasting into the finish line? Have we decided to “retire” from Christian living and exerting ourselves? Have we grown cold in our hearts to the things of God? This is the definition of “backsliding.”
3. Why are we here? Why do we have a church here? Why do we do the things we do? Are we just going through all of these motions? Or, do we do these things enlivened by the Spirit of God for the glory of God?
4. Sardis is a church in need of revival by the Holy Spirit who is sent by Christ.
5. Revelation 16:15 – “Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”