"SARDIS: A CHURCH IN NEED OF REVIVAL"

Revelation 3:1-6
3-13-2022



INTRODUCTION: Verse 1

***We, like the church of Sardis, need a revival!**
Two points to seriously examine:

I. THE <u>ESSENTIALS</u> FOR REVIVAL (v. 2-3a)

A. God's people must <u>wake up</u> out of their spiritual slumber (v. 2a)

B. God's people must <u>become dissatisfied</u> with the way things are (v. 2b)

C. God's people must <u>remember</u> what God did for them (v. 3)

D. God's people must <u>retain</u> what God has given them (v. 3)

E. God's people must <u>repent</u> of sin (v. 3)

II. THE <u>INCENTIVES</u> FOR REVIVAL (v. 3b-5)

A. Incentive #1 - The Lord's <u>return</u> (v. 3b)

B. Incentive #2 - The Lord's <u>reward</u> (v. 4-5)

CONCLUSION: Verse 6

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Dr. Vance Havner has said that spiritual ministries often go through four stages:

> "A man (whom God uses), a movement, a machine, and then a monument" (Wiersbe, p. 576).

For many churches, the only thing living in them is the mice and cockroaches.

Today, we need a revival!

Def of revival: to give life back to that which had life but lost it.

V. 1

The phrase "the seven spirits of God" is a reference to the Holy Spirit in all His perfection (cp. Rev. 1:4, 5:6; Zech. 4:1-6, 10).

The seven spirits are referred to as the eyes of the Lamb of God in Rev. 5:6.

The "seven stars" are the messengers (whether angelic or human pastors) of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).

The points of Christ's description of Himself is that He has all power and authority to send revival.

There is hope for revival because Jesus--the Head of the church--is able to bring new life.

--His Spirit gives life (Tit. 3:5)

--His messengers can be used to give His people His Word (It gives life - Jn. 6:63).

"I know your works" - a phrase repeated to every church (Rev. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

The omniscient Lord Jesus knows everything we do.

The Sardis church had a name (or reputation) for being a living church, yet it was dead.

Men thought it was a great church, but Jesus, who knows all, gave the verdict that it was dead.
The church's reputation for "life" may have been due to the faithful Christ-honoring saints who had since gone home to be with the Lord.

She is sitting on her past laurels. She is resting on her heritage.

Today, how do some measure a church to determine if it is living or not?

Some would say a living church is a church that is:

1) Large or growing
(The R.C.C. is large, yet it is dead)

Is it growing because its members are getting right with God or is it growing because its pastor and program caters to the personal likes and dislikes of its members (an ear tickler)?

2) Exciting
(many programs, everyone is busy)

What is it excited about? There is a zeal that is not according to knowledge.

3) Spirit-filled

A true quality to look for, but how do they determine a Spirit-filled church? Tongues? (The Corinthians were rebuked for being carnal, yet they spoke in tongues)

Look for the fruits--not the gifts--of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

4) Doctrinally sound - Sound doctrine is a must!

But sound doctrine mixed with disobedient living is a shame to Christ (a church may have the name "fundamental, independent, soul-winning, sin-hating, devil-fighting, Baptist" and still be dead.

Every above mentioned description is essential to life in a church - but all are needed in the form in which God describes them.

***We, like the church of Sardis, need a revival!**

Two points to seriously examine:

I. THE ESSENTIALS FOR REVIVAL (v. 2-3a)

A. God's people must wake up out of their spiritual slumber (v. 2a)

"Be watchful" - continually have the attitude of spiritual alertness. Wake up and stay awake.

The church is like a sleeping giant. We need God to shake us up out of our slumber.

It's time to wake up!

SEE Romans 13:11-14

Ephes. 5:14 - "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

A person who is physically asleep is insensitive, incoherent (unaware of what is going on), and unresponsive. The same is true spiritually.

This church reminds me of the Hebrew believers described in Heb. 6:9-12), who started off so well, but became discouraged and spiritually sleepy (cp. 5:11).

To remain alive, a church must stay awake in 4 areas of our spiritual lives:

1) Be watchful in our prayer life:

Mt. 26:41 - "Watch and pray . . ."

I Pet. 4:7 - "Watch unto prayer"

Col. 4:2 - "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving"

Eph. 6:18 - "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"

2) Be watchful of our <u>personal lives</u>

I Cor. 16:13 - "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

II Tim. 4:5 - But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

I Tim. 4:16 - "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

3) Be watchful of <u>our adversary</u>

I Pet. 5:8 - "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"

"Vigilant" = watchful

4) Be watchful for <u>our Lord's return</u>

I Thes. 5:6-9 - "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mark 13:33-37 - Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

B. God's people must <u>become dissatisfied</u> with the way things are (v. 2b)

In order to strengthen our lives, we must be awake; and in order to stay awake, we must be strengthened.

"Strengthen" - the aorist tense of this imperative, points to the <u>urgent</u> need for strengthening.

The idea of the verb is that some things in their spiritual lives (like muscles) began to sag and droop down, but needed to be <u>firmed up</u>.

The saying "use it or lose it" is true physically and spiritually.

"The things which remain" - that which is <u>still left</u> (with life in it).

The picture I see is that of a battle, where the enemy has attacked, the war has been fought, the dust has settled, and bodies appearing to be dead lie helplessly all around the ground. However, every once in a while you see an arm move, a leg kick, someone sits up, another person speaks. Though everyone is badly wounded, there are still signs of some life. There are still useful body parts that need medical attention and care.

In your lives, no doubt a war has been going on. Your Adversary (because of your lack of spiritual vigilance) has succeeded in destroying some virtue in your life.

Maybe your sexual purity has been married - strengthen what remains!

Maybe your reputation has been ruined - strengthen what remains!

Maybe your tongue has burned much good in your home - strengthen what remains!

Maybe you have failed in reaching your loved ones with the Gospel and some have passed on - strengthen what remains!

"Ready to die" - imperfect tense = in the process of dying; beginning to die.

Immediate strengthening is needed!

NOTE: The responsibility is up to us. Christ desires to strengthen us (Phil. 4:13), but we must let Him. God wants to give us His strength (II Cor. 12:9), but we must accept it.

The Lord's reason for why the Sardis church needed to be watchful and strengthen what was left was because He looked and saw her works not complete in the sight of God.

"Perfect" = brought to fullness or completion.

The character and quality of our works must measure up to God's standard. God does not accept our work unless we offer Him a finished product.

"God wants us to finish the job; not quit; not get discouraged and fall asleep on the job.

In the opinion of men, what a church (or person) does in the name of Christ might be acceptable.

But all that matters is what God thinks.

Our works are in plain view before God ("All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

A dead church is a people that are passive not active. A people who are affect by the world but leave no effect on it.

Ask yourself, "Am I having an effect on this world, or am I being affected by it?"

C. God's people must <u>remember</u> what God did for them (v. 3)

Something dies in us spiritually when we forget what God did for us in saving us (ILLUS: Marriages, when the honeymoon ends).

--We forget God's wonderful mercy and grace.

--We forget the wretchedness of our lives when rescued.

--We forget the intimacy, the thrill, the sparkle in knowing God.

Heb. 10:32 - "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

"Thou hast received" - the perfect tense indicates that they received something that they <u>still possessed</u>.

They received Christ (Jn. 1:12), His life, His Word, His Spirit, His power (Acts 1:8).
"Heard" - Aorist tense, looks at the moment when faith came by hearing

--Do you remember how sweet the Gospel story was to your dry and thirsty soul?

--Do you remember when the "lights went on," your eyes were opened, and you finally realized the love of God for you?

NOTE: Receiving and hearing are tied together because what we have received spiritually has come to us via what we heard.

D. God's people must <u>retain</u> what God has given them (v. 3)

"Hold fast" - God is calling on the Sardis church to pay attention to what she has heard and guard it or keep tight hold of it.

A church dies when it fails to retain that which gives life.

We must retain the Word!

We must guard against being forgetful hearers. How? James 1:22-25

--Meditation, memorization, and mobilization (let the Word move you into obedience)

E. God's people must <u>repent</u> of sin (v. 3)

Old-fashioned repentance is needed before any reviving will take place.

(II Chron. 7:14 - "If my people, which are called by My Name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven,a nd will forgive their sin,a nd will heal their land."

Genuine sorrow for sin, a burning thirst for God and righteousness, a total dissatisfaction with the way things are in our lives, etc., are prerequisites for revival.

II. THE <u>INCENTIVES</u> FOR REVIVAL (v. 3b-5)

A. Incentive #1 - The Lord's <u>return</u> (v. 3b)

Those who are perpetually asleep spiritually reveal the sad condition of their soul. They are lost!

Upon these, Jesus arrives like a thief, but to those who are spiritually awake, He arrives as Bridegroom! (Mt. 25).

"Thou shalt <u>not</u> know" - a double negative = "by no means know, in no way know" - emphasizing the imminency of Christ's return.

A "thief" (robber) only surprises those who are not ready.

Christ exhorts us to watch (stay awake) so that we will not be caught off guard at His second coming.

(Cp. Mt. 25:5 - sleeping before Christ's coming)

B. Incentive #2 - The Lord's <u>reward</u> (v. 4-5)

V. 4

Most every Bible-believing church has a righteous remnant.

"Defiled" = soiled, dirtied, spotted with sin.

"Garments" - represents one's life (Jude 23 - "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.").

Cp. Rev. 16:15

V. 4 & 5

"White" = a symbol of inner purity (ILLUS: a white wedding dress).

Rev. 19:6-9 - Marriage of the Lamb

V. 5

NOTE: Our white clothing comes from the Lord, not ourselves.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Is. 1:18).

"Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7).

"Many shall be purified, and made white" (Dan. 12:10).

This phrase: "I will not blot out his name. . ." does <u>not</u> suggest that the

Lord has a practice of blotting names out of His book; it merely emphasizes the security of having your name remain in His book.

The emphasis is positive, not negative. Nowhere in Scripture is a name of a believer blotted out of the rolls (scrolls) of the Book of Life in Heaven.

The phrase is a figure of speech known as a "litotes." An obvious understatement. A way of making a positive affirmation by negating the opposite (EX: Heb. 6:10 - "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.")

"I will not" - lit. double negative = "I will in no way; I will by no means; I will absolutely, positively not blot out his name.

It's like me saying, "Those of you who are faithful to church can be assured that I will not stop praying for you." This statement does not mean that I will stop praying for those who are not faithful, but it emphasizes my prayer for the faithful.

Our names were written before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8, 17:8).

Jesus told His disciples to rejoice because their names were "written (perfect tense) in heaven" (Lk. 10:20).

It is not those whose names are blotted out that are cast into the Lake of fire, but those who never had their name written there to begin with (Rev. 20:15).

The greatest announcement that could ever be made about you is not that your name be announced over the air (EX: Family Radio children's hour "Just For Us Kids" with Mr. Ken) or that your name appears in the newspaper, etc., but that your name is confessed by Christ to the Father (cp. Mt. 10:32).

CONCLUSION: Verse 6

1. The essentials for revival -

--We must wake up out of our spiritual slumber

--We must become dissatisfied with the way things are

--We must remember what God did for us

--We must retain what God has given us

--We must repent of sin

2. The incentives for revival -

--The Lord's return

--The Lord's reward

Revival Comes when we repent of sin and seek God

