

Dear Church: Letters from Jesus (Revelation 3:1-6, Sardis)

10/19/2025 - Andy Deane

Sardis was once a powerful and wealthy city, perched high on a mountain and thought to be unconquerable. But comfort bred carelessness, and twice in its history, the city was defeated because no one was watching the walls. Known for its luxury, softness, and decay, Sardis became a symbol of complacency. So when Jesus spoke to the church there, His warning carried weight—the city that once fell asleep physically now risked doing the same spiritually.

What Does the Church at Sardis Teach Us?

Reputation: When appearance hides reality

Revelation 3:1, *To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

- A good name means nothing if it's not backed by a real life.
 - **Isaiah 29:13**, *The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.*
 - **Ezekiel 36:26**, *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*
 - **John 7:37-39**, *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

Revival: When God's people finally wake up

Revelation 3:2-3a, *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent...*

- We can't live for God while spiritually asleep.
 - *"The greatest tragedy in life is not death, but a life without purpose."* — **Rick Warren**
 - **Romans 13:11-14**, *And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing & drunkenness, not in sexual immorality & debauchery, not in dissension & jealousy.*
 - *"Revival is the church falling in love with Jesus all over again."* — **Vance Havner**
- We must nourish ourselves with God's Word.
 - **Matthew 4:4**, *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*
 - **Jeremiah 15:16**, *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight...*
 - *"What we are in secret, in the presence of God, that we are, and no more."* — **John Owen**
 - *"Nothing disciplines the inordinate desires of the flesh like service, and nothing transforms the desires of the flesh like serving in hiddenness. The flesh whines against service but screams against hidden service. It strains and pulls for honour and recognition. It will devise subtle, religiously acceptable means to call attention to the service rendered. If we stoutly refuse to give in to this lust of the flesh, we crucify it."* — **Richard J. Foster**

Readiness: When urgency replaces apathy

Revelation 3:b, *But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, & you will not know at what time I will come to you.*

- Life can shift in a moment—so change in this one.
- If you knew the thief was coming, you'd stay awake.
 - **Ephesians 5:14-16**, *"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

Role Models: When faithfulness inspires faithfulness

Revelation 3:4, *Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.*

- Faith grows best when we walk with those already walking.
- Live in such a way that others follow Jesus by following you.

Reward: When spiritual life becomes eternal life

Revelation 3:5-6, *The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

- When you live like heaven is real, others start to see it too.
 - **1 John 5:12**, *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*
- If we walk with Christ now, we have assurance of salvation.
 - **Matthew 7:20-23**, *Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

SO WHAT’S A DEAD, OR A COLD, HEART TO DO?

- Some of us need a **transplant** — we’re **dead in sin**.
- Some of our hearts need a **defibrillator** — we’ve **lost passion**.
- Some of us need a **pacemaker** — we’re **out of sync with the Spirit**.