

**Rev. 3:1** And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

**Rev. 3:2** Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

**Rev. 3:3** Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

**Rev. 3:4** Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

**Rev. 3:5** He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

**Rev. 3:6** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Jesus identifies Himself to the church at Sardis as “he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” I think this is significant since the Spirit is the source of life, power and security for the believer, and this church is really a dead church.

Again, Jesus states that He is aware of their works/ deeds/ actions/ behavior. These actions imply to others that they are vibrant and alive; but God knows that they are spiritually dead. This reminds me of a verse in Samuel.

***1Samuel 16:7** But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

Works without faith may provide some personal satisfaction to our sense of self-pride, but they have no eternal benefit. They may provide some temporary relief to others through the provision of physical needs, but they do nothing to provide for their spiritual needs or their eternal future if not done in conjunction with sharing the gospel and the love of Jesus. In the end what others think about us is not what is important; it's what God knows about us that impacts our eternity. The same truth is declared in Matthew.

***Matthew 7:21–23** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

***Matthew 23:27** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

Those in the church at Sardis are warned to be watchful/ vigilant/ alert. Quote from Dixie re being watchful, “It is opposite to sleeping, but is more than just

being awake. It involves being alert to the situation, the enemy, the signs of the time.”

***1Thessalonians 5:6*** *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

They are also to work to strengthen (set fast, turn resolutely in specific direction) the “things which remain” (the few purely motivated things they were doing in service to God). Even those were in jeopardy of dying. Their works before the Lord are lacking, they are not being performed to completion or fulfillment of His purpose for them.

He reminds them to remember “how” or in what manner they had received and heard the truth that resulted in their faith—remember, and hold onto that memory. I think He is referring here to the purity of heart of a new believer in his/her desire to serve the Lord. As they remembered, they would recognize their need to repent. Obviously, if they did not see the need to repent, they never possessed the truth to begin with. They had come to the point that they needed to do a 180 with their hearts. They are serving in a way to impress others and serve their own pride rather than serving the Lord with a humble, obedient, loving and thankful heart.

Then comes the warning—If they aren’t vigilant/keeping watch, He will come upon them as a thief—they won’t even recognize the signs of the times to know that He is about to return. It also causes one to pause and think of what we would be doing if He came at a time when our focus was not on Him. Would we be ashamed?

In reading through this section again I was again reminded of Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians.

***1 Thessalonians 5:2–4*** *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

Paul is clear in declaring that believers are not in darkness and should not be caught unprepared for the Lord’s return.

Jesus recognizes the fact that there are still a few true believers in Sardis which are clothed in the garments of righteousness; they will walk with the Lord in white (represents holiness and purity) because they have been found worthy due to their faith in the Savior.

***1John 5:4*** *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

All those who overcome will be clothed in white raiment. Neither will He have his name blotted out of the book of life. This indicates to me that all names are

written in the book of life until they have chosen once and for all to reject Jesus. (See topical study re “Book of Life.”) There are so many verses that speak to God’s desire that ALL should be saved.

***2Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance.*

***Ezekiel 18:23** Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

***1Timothy 2:3-4** For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have **all** men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

Those who overcome will find their name in the book of life and be identified as part of the family by the Son to the Father and His angels.

Again, the believers are warned to listen to and heed the message to the churches.

Interesting note: “Being dead, the church in Sardis presented no significant threat to Satan’s domain, so it wasn’t worth attacking.” D. Guzik

Continuing from my thoughts at the end of the previous chapter, it is interesting to note that again the implication is that this church is very active doing “Christian” things that make them appear to be spiritually alive, but that is a false impression. Their works are not “perfect” before God; they are evidently following their own will—not God’s. They are self-motivated, not God-motivated. They cannot, however, claim ignorance as an excuse for their choices. They are encouraged to “remember” the truth they had “received and heard” and repent.

It truly is amazing that most people seem to prefer investing time in their own works rather than investing time in fellowship with and worship of God and resting in the work of His Son. Our works should be an outworking of our fellowship with and worship of the Lord. It is through fellowship and worship that we are attuned to the leading of the Spirit to serve others according to God’s will and not our own. That leading assures us God’s empowerment and provision through the Holy Spirit and will always glorify the Savior—not the servant.

**Rev. 3:7** And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;  
**Rev. 3:8** I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

**Rev. 3:9** Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

**Rev. 3:10** Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

**Rev. 3:11** Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

**Rev. 3:12** Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God:* and *I will write upon him my new name.*

**Rev. 3:13** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Jesus identifies Himself to the church at Philadelphia as “He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” This is a quote from Isaiah.

*Isaiah 22:22--And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*

This is a statement of His righteousness, truth, power and authority.

Again, Jesus knows their works/ deeds/ actions/ behavior. The next statement seems to be in direct connection to His knowledge of their works. He has set before them an open door—a door that no man can shut. Jesus identified Himself as the door.

*John 10:9* I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Jesus acknowledges this church to be weak in strength but declares that it is strong in faith. I think He is assuring this church that there is no power that can deprive them of the protection and provision of their Savior.

*2Corinthians 12:9* And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Those who are weak in faith due to the prevalence of evil around them need assurance of the truth of God’s word. Sometimes it seems like Satan is winning, but God is assuring His people that they can count on Him.

There are many false teachers today who teach that God wants everyone to be wealthy, healthy and strong. Throughout scripture we learn that great men and women of faith often face great trials and suffering. It is a very powerful witness to the lost world around us when our actions show tenacity of faith and exhibit

peace of spirit due to the grace and faithfulness of Almighty God through the ministry of His Holy Spirit during the bad times.

Evidently, these believers had also been persecuted by those pretending to be followers of God, but were really followers of Satan. (See notes on Smyrna, 2:8-11.) Jesus promises that these unbelievers will be made to come and worship "before thy feet." I think this is making reference to the fact that the believer will be at the feet of Jesus for eternity, and that "*at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow*" (**Romans 14:11**) and "*unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear*" (**Isaiah 45:23**). The believer will get to witness the humbling of those that have persecuted them. They will be presented as loved by the Father before these unbelievers.

Thought from Dixie—"Love should not be hidden, **John 13:35** *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* It is an undeniable testimony of our relationship to Jesus. God's principle is to love and to speak it. Let us go and do likewise."

Because the believers in Philadelphia have held fast to and guarded the truth of the words of Jesus with steadfastness and cheerful endurance, Jesus will keep them from ("ek"—out of) the hour of temptation (putting to proof) which shall (future tense from John's perspective) come upon ALL the world, to try (put to the test) them that dwell on earth. Obviously, this time of testing will be appointed for a specific time, of specific duration, to a specific generation.

Many refuse to accept that this affirms the teaching of the rapture on the grounds that there is no reason this generation of believers should escape the coming hard times any more than any other generation. Henry Morris made a good point. "The fact is, however, that Christians in every other generation have escaped the great tribulation, so there is no reason why the last should be singled out for participation in it."

When Jesus returns, it will be quickly (suddenly). He is encouraging the believers to hold on to their faith and not let any man deprive them of their reward/crown. This is not a reference to losing your salvation—just your reward. (cf 2:10—"*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*") Those who overcome will be "a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." I think this is indicative of the position of security the believer has for eternity in the presence of God.

The overcomer will also be publicly identified as belonging to God by being stamped/ marked with "the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem." He will also be proudly identified with a stamp of the new name of Jesus—probably a name that we will only be able to appreciate in our glorified state.

This church, along with Smyrna, was given no words of rebuke. Again, if they had been deserving of such, they would have been rebuked.

Again, the believers are encouraged to listen to and heed the message to the churches.

**Rev. 3:14** And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

**Rev. 3:15** I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

**Rev. 3:16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

**Rev. 3:17** Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

**Rev. 3:18** I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

**Rev. 3:19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

**Rev. 3:20** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**Rev. 3:21** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

**Rev. 3:22** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Jesus identifies Himself to the church at Laodicea as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” This church needs to recognize that God’s word is just as sure now as it was when He first created the world. In fact, they needed to realize that they were being spoken to by “the Creator.”

Again, Jesus is aware of their works/deeds/actions/behavior. They serve, but not with zeal; they just seem to be going through the motions. This comparison was perfect for the people of this church since their town was furnished water through a system that caused it to arrive for their use “lukewarm.” It was neither cold and refreshing or hot and beneficial for healing, etc. God is comparing this church to lukewarm water—not really making an impact in any way. Lukewarm water doesn’t taste good. A lukewarm church does not put a good taste in the Lord’s mouth; He’d rather spit it out. In fact, the word for “spue” is “emeo,” which means to vomit; it’s where we get our word emetic.

David Guzik uses a quote from Donald Barnhouse that gives a little different perspective: “So the Lord is saying, ‘If instead of being lukewarm, you were so cold that you should feel that coldness, then the very feeling of your need might drive you to the true warmth, but now in your lukewarmness, you have just enough to protect yourselves against a feeling of need.’”

This church considered itself to be blessed because it was rich in material wealth; they really didn't have need of anything that they could identify. Jesus, on the other hand, sees them as wretched (distressed, miserable), miserable (pitiable), poor (spiritual paupers), blind (mentally—they don't recognize their condition) and naked (without clothing—the garments of salvation). This was a church in name only. I liken this church to the wealthy churches today that provide social functions for the community and humanitarian aid for those in need, but they are really serving self and not God in the process.

**2 Corinthians 10:18** is applicable here--*For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.*

Good thought from Dixie—"I counsel thee.' Why does He bother? Because He loves them (v19)."

Jesus advises the church to buy from Him "gold tried in the fire" (**1Peter 1:7**) and submit to His will and testing to earn treasures in heaven; spiritual riches are the true riches of eternity. I think He is using the language of money to get the attention of this materially oriented church.

**1Peter 1:7** *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

Another good quote from Dixie: "Good things can come out of fiery trials if we desire the outcome of purity and refinement more than we dislike the circumstances of the trials."

The white raiment represents the garment of salvation, which only Jesus can provide to those who come to Him in faith believing on His finished work on the cross. Jesus covers the shame caused by our sin. He advises them to anoint themselves with eyesalve so that they can see; that seems to be referring to accepting Jesus as the Savior and appropriating the power and teaching of the Spirit to open their spiritual eyes. Laodicea was known for its medical school and its production of a special eye salve called collyrium that was used to treat eye diseases.

It would seem that those in this church see themselves as spiritually healthy. The Lord reminds them that He rebukes and chastens those He loves. If you are not feeling His rebuke and chastening in your life, it's a danger sign.

**Hebrews 12:6** *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

So take this message as a love letter. Recognize the truth about yourself; turn your apathy into energy and desire—repent (change your heart/mind/direction).

God is so merciful!! This time He pictures Himself standing at the door wanting fellowship with them; He is even calling out to them. He is not going to force His way in though. It is a sad day when God is left standing and knocking at the door seeking fellowship with those in this church. He wants to see them respond to Him with repentance and faith. He wants them to see with spiritual eyes and hear with spiritual ears.

Those who overcome are promised a seat with Him in His throne (the throne of David), just as the Father gave Him/Jesus a seat in His throne for overcoming.

***Luke 1:32** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:*

He is always assuring His children that He will be just as good a Father as God is to Him.

Again, the believers are encouraged to listen to and heed the message to the churches.

“he that hath an ear, let him hear” – Another good quote by Joseph Seiss: “Let us see to it, then, that we hear as the text commands, and learn to view the church’s errors, corruptions, mistakes, and sins as Christ views them; to love what He loves, to hate what He hates, and to hope only as He has given us authority to hope.”