

Checkin' Out My Walk
#41- Sardis: Autopsy Of A Dying Christian

The Dead Church Rev.3:1-6 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, [my spiritual growth & maturity; faithful commitment] for I have not found your works perfect [complete, mature] before God. ³Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but 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."

There is NOTHING GOOD said about Sardis who represents nominal Christians who say they are alive, but Jesus says they are dead.

G.R. Beasley-Murray: "The appearance [of the Sardis church] is that of a beautifully adorned corpse in a funeral parlor, but the Lord is not deceived."

Denis Lyle: "Tragically, many churches are dead. Like the rotting carcass of Lazarus, these church bodies have the foul stench of death upon them. They have the appearance of life, but they are in actuality, dead. Their sanctuary is A Morgue with a Steeple.

They are congregations of corpses. They have undertakers for ushers; embalmers for elders; and morticians for ministers. Their pastor graduated from the Cemetery.

The choir master is the local coroner. They sing, "Embalmed in Gilead."

At the Rapture, they will be the first churches taken for "the dead in Christ shall rise first."

Paul had described such Christians by saying they seemed quite religious but denied God's power in their lives (II Timothy 3:5). From such people, turn away.

A.W. Tozer: The average Christian is NOT Christ-like and lives a sub-Christian life.

Average Christians are NOT willing to obey the call to spiritual growth and maturity. God will not compromise with anyone over the issue of disobedience to truth He has revealed to them. Any who knowingly refuses to obey will be brought to a distinct halt in their spiritual life.

People are sitting all around in the church, just as though the axle has broken, and not making any progress for years. They are stopped by their disobedience.

Like a dead man, the church and most of the members at Sardis were:
"Destitute of force or power. They were ineffective and inoperative."

1. There was activity, but it was not spiritual in nature.
2. There was busyness, but they were bringing nothing eternal to pass.
3. They were preaching, but lives were not being changed and sinners were not being saved.

4. They were busy, but they were operating in the energy of the flesh and not the energy of the Spirit of God. Works were not infused with the Holy Spirit.

Everyone looked at them and spoke of their life. Jesus examined the hearts and the works.

Jer. 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind,

Even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

Sanctify Myself-Religion

Holy Spirit Sanctify Me-Relationship

Goal	Please God by my own good deeds	Submit, yield -Holy Spirit work in me
Means	Practice, diligent service, discipline obedience	Confess, submit to control of The Holy Spirit-Christ's life lived in me
Power	Good, honest effort through self-determination	Holy Spirit in me is the power to transform me into image of Christ
Control	Self-motivation; self-control	Christ in me; I am in Christ
Results	Chronic guilt, apathy, depression, failure, constant desire for approval	Joy, thankfulness, love guidance, service, forgiveness

Question: How many years have you spent in "religion" instead of relationship? Spending years in "religion" or rebellion can yield the same lifestyle - NO real joy in life and you are disobedient. Do we not realize our spiritual life is a battlefield, a preparation for a greater life to come? At the moment of justification, all are entered in the race for the prize and are commanded to walk in the spirit. The "reformation" we need is to allow the Holy Spirit to complete the work that was started in us. Allow Him to mature us and "grow us up into the fullness of Jesus Christ."

Christ's Counsel:

Ps. 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

A. Rev. 3:2 Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect [complete, mature] before God.

Reminder: Jer. 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind,

Even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

Note: They must Overcome Their Deadness. They are spiritually immature and trying to perfect [sanctify] themselves with the works of the flesh. Need an infusion of the Holy Spirit! Religious activity that does not encourage and stimulate personal, relational growth with our Lord is a waste of time! Empty religion is like digging your own grave.

Possible Causes Of Spiritual Immaturity:

I. Starvation

I Peter 2:2 as newborn babes, desire [crave = long for, yearn] the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

Heb. 5:11-14 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. [sluggish, lazy] For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Many in the church were apparently satisfied with the "basic principles of the oracles (teachings) of God" and in comparing them to babies still drinking milk they were not growing up in "the word of righteousness." This was a type of laziness. This may have been due to the fact that they were not reading or studying the Scriptures on a regular basis. Anyone still drinking milk is not going to grow and will forever remain "unskilled in the word of righteousness." By remaining immature, they will not be able to "distinguish good from evil" or sound biblical doctrine from apostate or evil teachings of the many false teachers that were around in that day. Regular, consistent Bible study gives us spiritual discernment and the ability to distinguish true biblical teachings from those that are false.

God's Word is FOOD and NOURISHMENT for your SOUL.

Matt. 5:6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Ps. 81:9-10 Open your mouth! I will fill it!

II Spiritual Deafness - Dull of Hearing

Isa. 30:9-10 That this *is* a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the LORD; ¹⁰ Who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

II Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Problem: They had stopped listening. They are content to know only the fundamentals - what Jesus did for me. I've got my ticket to heaven. They refused to hear new truth from the Holy Spirit.

Remember: This church had claimed: The just shall live by faith, but they failed to go on in the truths of sanctification. They put themselves under rituals, traditions, disciplines, etc. to "mature themselves."

Consider: The Jews established their own traditions from the Law and MISSED the MESSIAH because refused to hear NEW TRUTH.

Truth: Listen! Your spiritual life depends on COMMUNICATION with the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual growth comes from a vital infusion of new truth received daily from the Holy Spirit and the living, active Word of God.

III Sclerosis of The Giver

II Cor. 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

Luke 12:19-20 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

IV Church Sickness

Heb. 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Autopsy Of A Dying Christian: Spiritual Immaturity

A. Skull Bone Is Too Big = Big Head

Prov. 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

I Cor. 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Prov. 21:24 A proud and haughty man— "Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride.

I Tim. 3:6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.

B. Nose Bone Shows Extreme Wear = Busybody

I Pet. 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

I Tim. 5:13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

C. Jawbone Shows Extreme Wear = Big Mouth

James 1:26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

James 3:6-8 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Prov. 10:19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

Prov. 17:28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace;

When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.

D. Neck Bone Is Stiff = Stiff-Necked

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!

You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

II Chron. 30:8 Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers *were*, *but* yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you.

Always Looking Back

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

E. Chest Bones Have Signs Of T. B. = Too Busy

Matt. 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Matt. 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matt. 10:37-39 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

F. Broken Arm Bone = Patting Himself On The Back

Luke 17:10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

Matt. 6:3-4 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

G. Finger Bones Show Extreme Wear = Finger Pointing

Matt. 7:3-5 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

II Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.

Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

H. Backbone Is Missing = NO Backbone

II Tim. 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

II Tim. 4:1-2 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

I. Hip Bone Is Out Of Joint = Straddling The Fence

James 3:9-12 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

I Kings 18:21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

J. Tail Bone Shows Extreme Wear = Sitting In The Pew

Prov. 22:13 The lazy *man* says, " *There is* a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!"

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works."

Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

K. Bones Are Rotten = Full Of Envy

Prov. 14:30 A sound heart *is* life to the body, but envy *is* rottenness to the bones.

Gal. 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Prov. 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,
But *be zealous* for the fear of the LORD all the day;

L. Knee Joints Are Stiff = Can't Bend The Knee

Eph. 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rom. 14:11 For it is written: " *As* I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."

M. Feet Bones Are Very Ugly = Won't Spread The Gospel

Rom. 10:14-15 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

Warning: Wake Up! Pay Attention!

A.W. Tozer: Do not grow comfortable with your present spiritual state. There is always more ground to gain. Submit to the Holy Spirit whose transforming power will complete the work in you.

Heb. 6:1-3 Therefore let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings *and* doctrine of Christ (the Messiah), advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belong to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance *and* abandonment of dead works (dead formalism) and of the faith [by which you turned] to God, ² With teachings about purifying, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment *and* punishment. [These are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long, long ago.] ³ If indeed God permits, we will [now] proceed [to advanced teaching].

Question: What is the "therefore" there for? Hebrews 5 was a warning against apostasy, a revolt or a leaving of the basic truths and principles of the Bible and biblical teachings about salvation. The way to spot apostasy is to "leave the elementary doctrine of Christ" and to "go on to maturity."

Move on from what we already know about the essential doctrines of grace and do not go backwards into man made rules and regulations such as those contained in the Mosaic Laws. Move on from that onto those things that will help them to identify apostate teachings when they encounter them.

The Choices of Maturity

Mature Choices

Versus

Immature Choices

Teaching Others	Rather Than...	Just Being Taught
Developing Depth Of Understanding		Struggling With The Basics
Self-Evaluation		Self-Criticism
Seeking Unity		Promoting Disunity
Desiring Spiritual Challenges		Desiring Entertainment
Careful Study & Observation		Opinions & Halfhearted Efforts
Active Faith		Cautious Apathy & Doubt
Confidence		Fear
Feelings & Experiences Evaluated In Light Of God's Word		Experiences Evaluated According To Feelings

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; (Promise> Reckon> Surrender>Thank Him)