

Going Deeper Study Guide

Revelation 3:1–6 — The Letter to Sardis

Title: Wake Up, Strengthen What Remains

Based on Patrick Bottoms' sermon from June 14, 2026

Sermon Summary

The church in Sardis had a strong reputation. People looked at them and thought they were thriving, vibrant, and spiritually healthy. Yet Jesus saw what others could not see. While they appeared alive on the outside, Christ declared that they were spiritually dead.

This letter reminds us that reputation and reality are not always the same thing. A church may look successful, busy, and respected while drifting away from Christ. The danger facing Sardis was not open persecution or false teaching from outside. It was complacency from within. They had fallen asleep spiritually.

Yet even in His rebuke, Christ speaks as a faithful friend. He does not simply condemn; He provides a remedy. Wake up. Strengthen what remains. Remember the gospel. Keep it. Repent. Return to dependence upon Christ, the true source of life.

The Lord also reminds His people that He always preserves a faithful remnant. Even in Sardis, there were those who had remained faithful. Christ promises that those who persevere will walk with Him in white garments, their names secure in the Book of Life, and openly confessed before the Father.

Key Truths from the Text

1. Christ Sees Beyond Reputation

"You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead." (Revelation 3:1)

The world judges by appearances. Christ judges by reality.

A church may be:

- Active but not faithful
- Busy but not fruitful
- Popular but not holy
- Admired by the world but distant from Christ

Jesus is not impressed by reputation. He examines the heart.

Reflection Questions

- Am I more concerned about what people think of me or what Christ knows about me?
- Are there areas where my outward appearance exceeds my inward devotion?
- What would Christ say about the true spiritual condition of my life?

2. Spiritual Drift Happens Gradually

The imagery of sleep appears throughout the letter. Sardis was not attacked suddenly. Like the city's watchmen in its history, they had simply fallen asleep.

Most spiritual decline is not dramatic rebellion.

It often begins with:

- Neglecting prayer
- Losing delight in Scripture
- Becoming comfortable with the world
- Trusting past faithfulness instead of present dependence on Christ

No one drifts toward holiness. We drift toward complacency.

Reflection Questions

- Where am I tempted to become spiritually comfortable?
- What spiritual disciplines have become neglected?
- What warning signs of spiritual sleep do I see in my own life?

3. The Remedy Is Not Innovation but Remembrance

Jesus gives Sardis five commands:

1. Wake up
2. Strengthen what remains
3. Remember
4. Keep
5. Repent

The solution was not a new program or strategy.

The solution was returning to the gospel they had first received and heard.

Spiritual renewal always begins by returning to Christ.

Reflection Questions

- What truths of the gospel have become familiar rather than precious?
- How does remembering Christ's work strengthen my faith?
- What specific area of repentance is the Lord calling me toward?

4. Faith Must Be Exercised

The sermon compared faith to a muscle. Unused muscles weaken. Unexercised faith becomes fragile.

Faith grows through:

- Hearing God's Word
- Meditating on Scripture
- Prayer
- Obedience
- Fellowship with God's people
- Remembering the gospel

A healthy Christian is not merely someone who believes facts about God but someone who actively trusts God.

Reflection Questions

- Is my faith currently growing, stagnant, or weakening?
- What habits help strengthen my trust in Christ?
- Am I believing God or merely believing information about God?

5. Christ Always Preserves a Faithful Remnant

Even in Sardis, Jesus says there were a few who had remained faithful.

This is one of Scripture's recurring themes:

- Noah in a corrupt world
- Elijah and the seven thousand
- The faithful remnant of Israel
- The faithful believers in Sardis

God never loses His people.

This should encourage believers who feel isolated or discouraged.

Reflection Questions

- Have there been seasons when I felt alone in my faith?
- How does God's faithfulness encourage perseverance?
- Who are faithful believers God has placed in my life for encouragement?

6. The Reward of Faithfulness Is Christ Himself

The promises given to the conquerors are glorious:

White Garments

A picture of purity, righteousness, and victory.

Name Secure in the Book of Life

Not a warning that believers may lose salvation, but a promise of security for those who belong to Christ.

Confessed Before the Father

The Lord Jesus will publicly acknowledge His people before the Father and the angels.

The greatest reward is not simply heaven.

The greatest reward is fellowship with Christ Himself.

Reflection Questions

- What motivates my faithfulness?
- Do I treasure Christ more than His gifts?
- How does the promise of eternity shape my priorities today?

Digging Deeper

Read the following passages and note how they connect to Revelation 3:1–6.

Passage	Connection
John 15:1–11	Christ is the Vine and believers receive life from Him
Isaiah 29:13	Empty religion and hearts far from God
Ephesians 2:1–10	From spiritual death to life by grace
Matthew 24:42–44	Staying awake and watchful
1 Peter 1:13–16	The call to holiness
Hebrews 12:1–3	Persevering in faith
Romans 13:11–14	Wake from spiritual sleep

Family Worship Guide

Read Together

Revelation 3:1–6

Talk Together

For Younger Children

- What did Jesus say about Sardis?
- Why is it important to tell the truth about ourselves?
- What does it mean to "wake up" spiritually?
- Who gives us spiritual life?

For Older Children

- Why can reputation be misleading?
- How can Christians become spiritually sleepy?
- Why does Jesus tell Sardis to remember the gospel?

- What promises does Jesus give to faithful believers?

Family Application

Ask each family member:

What is one way I can "wake up" spiritually this week?

Examples:

- Spend time reading Scripture daily
- Pray before starting the day
- Encourage another believer
- Confess a specific sin
- Memorize a verse

Family Prayer

"Lord Jesus, thank You for being the source of our life. Protect us from becoming spiritually sleepy and content with appearances. Help us remember the gospel, strengthen our faith, and walk faithfully with You. Give us ears to hear what Your Spirit says to the churches. Amen."

Memory Verse

"Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die."

Revelation 3:2a (ESV)

Or for older children and adults:

"Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent."

Revelation 3:3a (ESV)