

Summary

Wake Up and Strengthen What Remains

Scripture References

Primary text

- Revelation 3

Other references

- Ezekiel 37
- Proverbs 27
- 2 Chronicles 20
- Ephesians 2
- John 15
- John 6
- John 3:16-21
- James 3
- Isaiah 29
- 2 Corinthians 6
- Matthew 7
- Matthew 16
- John 17
- Matthew 17

Overview

Jesus' letter to the church in Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6) exposes a terrifying gap between reputation and reality: the city says the church is alive, but the risen Christ says it is dead. Through three commands—wake up, strengthen what remains, and remember the gospel—He calls His people to repent, cling to Him as the true source of life, and conquer by faith. The reward for the faithful is fellowship with Christ, white garments of righteousness, and a name that will never be erased from the Book of Life.

Main Points

Reputation vs. Reality (3:1)

- Sardis was famous for its elevated, “impregnable” walls and a culture of religious syncretism.
- The church had a glowing community reputation yet Christ, who “has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars,” declares it dead.
- Worldly approval is no measure of spiritual life; only union with the vine—Christ—sustains genuine vitality (John 15).

The Remedy for a Dying Church (3:2-3)

- “Wake up” – shake off spiritual lethargy; recognize complacency that trusts walls, programs, or image.
- “Strengthen what remains” – exercise faith like a muscle before it atrophies; return to the gospel that first saved (Ephesians 2).
- “Remember … keep … repent” – rehearse the word heard at first; belief must move from mere acknowledgment of God to trusting God.
- Warning: if the church refuses, Christ will come like a thief—unexpected and against them.

Illustration: Twice in history Sardis' mighty fortress fell because watchmen slept. A proud past could not stop disaster—nor can a proud reputation save a church that slumbers.

The Reward for Faithfulness (3:4-6)

- Christ keeps a remnant who have not “soiled their garments.”
- Conquerors will:
 - Walk with Jesus in white—declared righteous.
 - Never have their names blotted from the Book of Life—eternal security (John 17).
 - Be confessed by Jesus before the Father—personally introduced into the throne room.
- Faithfulness is pictured as standing firm while God wins the battle (2 Chronicles 20: 17).

Key Truths

- Christ alone possesses the church's leaders (seven stars) and its very life (seven Spirits).
- A church can look vibrant to outsiders yet be spiritually dead before God.
- Spiritual lethargy is cured only by remembering, believing, and obeying the gospel we first received.

- Worldly comfort with the church often signals compromise rather than faithfulness.
- Jesus rewards conquerors with intimate, eternal fellowship and unerasable identity in Him.

Response

- Examine your heart: does your confidence rest on reputation or on Christ?
- Repent of any comfort with sin or world-pleasing compromise.
- Rehearse the gospel daily—read, pray, sing, and speak it to one another.
- Strengthen faith through active obedience; serve, witness, and practice spiritual disciplines.
- Stand firm in hostile settings, trusting the Lord, not human approval.

Closing

The letter to Sardis is a gracious gut-check from our faithful Friend. Jesus wounds only to heal, shaking His church awake so it will live. Reputation cannot save; relationship with Christ can.

“Wake up and strengthen what remains.”

May we be found alert, clothed in white, and joyfully introduced by Jesus before the Father.

Prayer

The pastor thanked God for His persistent grace, asked that the congregation truly hear the Shepherd's voice, repent where needed, be conformed to Christ's image, and live each moment “before the face of God” for His glory.

Resources

- TableTalk Magazine (daily devotionals that end with the reminder *Coram Deo*—“before the face of God”).