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AWAKENING DEAD MEMBERS IN A DYING CHURCH

Revelation 3:1-6

The Lord found it necessary to speak to the whole Church from His heart. He had already spoken to the churches in Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira and Smyrna. Now, He brings His message to us through the church in Sardis. **“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. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God”.**

Christ’s conclusion of the message to the church in Sardis does not apply only to them but also to the whole Church. He says, **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”** – of that first century, the churches of every generation and the churches at the time of His coming. He will come again, suddenly, unexpectedly and assuredly, to make those who died in Christ to rise up and to catch away those of us who are still alive in the rapture to heaven. Thus, at a time like this, when we await the coming of the Lord, which can happen any moment from now, He wants us to have the appropriate attitude to the word of God.

1. RECOGNISING AND AWAKENING SPIRITUALLY DEAD SOULS

Revelation 3:1; Romans 8:6-8; 7:9-11; James 2:17, 20, 26; Titus 1:16; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12; 1 John 5:11,12; Jude 1:12,13,15,16; Hebrews 2:14,15; Luke 1:79; Ephesians 5:14; Revelation 2:11

Despite the unity, fellowship and togetherness of the church in Smyrna, the Lord collectively addressed them as one spiritually **“dead”** congregation of souls. The **“angel of the church”** represents the minister, leader, pastor or shepherd of the church. The **“seven Spirits of God”** refers to the seven aspects or descriptions of the Spirit of God. It also refers to the fullness, perfection and completeness of the Spirit. The **“seven stars”** stand for the ministers and angels of the churches. There are three things to note:

First, *the deception in spiritual deadness* (Revelation 3:1; Romans 8:6-8; 7:9-11; James 2:17, 20, 26; Titus 1:16; 1 John 3:13-15). The absence of the Spirit of God or the life of Christ in an individual shows the person is spiritually dead. **“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate”.** There are people who compare spirituality with religiosity. Because they are religious, they deceive themselves and think they are alive, whereas they are spiritually dead. People who profess to have faith and the life of God but do not have the action, character, comportment and lifestyle of a believer are spiritually dead.

Second, *the description of the spiritually dead* (Revelation 3:1; Ephesians 2:1-3,12; 1 John 5:11,12; Luke 15:13,24; Proverbs 21:16; Jude 1:12-16). People who are dead have their consciences, heart, spirit and inner man deadened. Even though they commit sin and trespasses, they do not feel any guilt. The Spirit of God does not penetrate to make them feel the sensation of their transgressions. They are **“dead in trespasses and sins”**. Because they walk, think, act and conduct their lives like everyone else **“according to the course of this world”**, they think they are alright. They are dead spiritually but do not know. The devil controls and makes them to do the evil they ought not to do. He muzzles the mouth of their conscience that it cannot say anything about what they do. This is **“the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”**. Those who come to the church to fellowship but do not have the life of Christ in them are ungodly and spiritually dead.

Third, *the Deliverer from the second death* (Hebrews 2:14, 15; Matthew 4:16,17; Luke 1:74-79; Ephesians 5:14; Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14,15). Christ is presented as the Deliverer from all kinds of death. He delivers us from spiritual death, second death and eternal death (total separation from God). He is our Deliverer because He has died for us and has tasted death for every man. Therefore, He calls us to repentance and gives eternal life to those who hold on to, believe, abide and remain in Him.

2. REMEMBERING AND APPLYING THE SAVIOUR'S DIVINE SPECIFIC

Revelation 3:2,3; 1 Peter 4:7; 5:8,9; Revelation 3:2; Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 40:31; John 15:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:5; 2 Timothy 1:13,14; Hebrews 3:12-14; Revelation 2:5; 3:19; 16:15; 22:12

“...Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent...”

Christ wants us to remember, apply, keep and hold on to His words until He comes. He gives the medicine that would awaken the spiritually dead. One, *be watchful* (1 Peter 4:7; 5:8,9). This is about personal, prioritised and perpetual watchfulness. The watchfulness of yesterday is not enough for today; and the one of today is not enough for tomorrow. You must watch over your salvation, life of Christ and the witness in you. Do not watch over something negligible and dispensable and ignore your readiness for the coming of the Lord. The devil is not on vacation and does not sleep. Therefore, we must be watchful every time. Two, *strengthen the things that remain* (Psalm 27:14; Isaiah 40:31). There are times you find yourself weak, at the brink of life, still alive but almost dying. To strengthen the things that remain in your personal life, family and ministry, you need to withdraw from the public, **“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart”**. If you find that you are not fully ready for the coming of the Lord, wait on Him.

Three, *perfect your works* (Revelation 3:2; Genesis 17:1; Romans 12:1, 2). This is not something anyone can do for you. Christ wants us to walk before Him and be perfect like Abraham, such that whatever is imperfect or impure in our lives, we correct. Four, *remember* (Revelation 3:3; John 15:20a; 2 Thessalonians 2:5). **“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard...”** There are messages of the present-day that are not like the ones we have heard and received. They are messages of the dead, dying church; messages of positive thinking, which do not tell the real truth because recipients are dull of hearing. Therefore, they heap unto them men having itching ears. We must leave the superfluous things and go back to the origin. Bring to mind the Word you received on repentance, conviction of sin and abandoning the way that is evil, the witness of the Spirit in the heart, following peace with all men and holiness, etc.

Five, *hold fast* (Revelation 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:13,14; Hebrews 3:12-14). The same way we hold on to our good name, property, spouse and anything precious to us, we must hold fast to our assurance of getting to heaven, which is more precious. A heavenly-minded heart would not depart from the Lord. More courage, maturity or intelligence does not make one hardened but **“the deceitfulness of sin”**. Six, *repent, return and renew* your consecration and commitment to the Lord (Revelation 2:5; 3:19-21). Seven, *be ready for His coming* (Revelation 3:3; 16:15; 22:12 1 Thessalonians 5:2). When the Lord comes, great will be the joy of those who have made themselves ready, willing and watchful candidates of the rapture.

3. REFINING AND ABIDING WITH SANCTIFIED, DILIGENT SAINTS

Revelation 3:4-6; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 3:5; Luke 10:20; Exodus 32:32,33; 2 Peter 3:13,14; Jude 1:23,24,21,25

Christ wants us to be refined and abide with the **“few”** who **“have not defiled their garments”**. That the church is cold, dead, superficial, not serious or watchful does not excuse our coldness, lukewarmness, deadness and superficiality. In spite of the attitude, lukewarmness and spiritual deadness of others, we must endeavour to be among the few who Christ would commend. There are three things to note:

One, *the purity of sanctified, undefiled saints* (Revelation 3:4; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 7:25,26; 1 Peter 1:3-5,14-16). The Lord wants us to **“cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”**. Like the faithful few who were purged, cleansed and remained steadfast, the word of God on purging and purification

should spur us to go to the Lord on our knees to pray for the experience. We must strive to keep our salvation by having personal, prioritised and perpetual watchfulness. We must allow the word of God to act as a washing agent in our lives. We must allow His blood to cleanse, wash and keep us perpetually holy, righteous and undefiled.

Two, *the pledge to steadfast, unpretending saints* (Revelation 3:5; Luke 10:20; Exodus 32:32, 33; Malachi 3:16, 17; Matthew 10:32,33). When we are born again, our names are written in the book of life in heaven. As long as we keep to our conversion, consecration and abide with the Lord all the time, our names will remain in the book of life; we will remain conquerors and overcomers. Because of the sins of the Israelites, Moses wanted His name to be blotted out from the book of life. But God did not grant his request because He has a principle. He knows what He does and how He does it. Only those who have backslidden and gone completely into sin would have their names blotted out from the book of life. Those who repent and forsake their sins, and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Saviour will have their names written there.

Three, *the promise for spotless, unwavering saints* (Revelation 3:5,6; Hebrews 10:23,35-39; 2 Peter 3:13,14; Jude 1:23,24,21,25; Revelation 2:7,11,17; 19:6-9). Christ wants us to be overcomers; He wants us to remain spotless and unwavering. He also wants us to continue consistently in our consecration and service to Him. As we witness to others, we must “**keep** [ourselves]” from every form of defilement. When we do our part, the Lord will “**keep** [us] **from falling, and... present** [us] **faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy**”.

GHS 17, 174 & 182