

The Church That Fell Asleep (Part 5)

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the need for spiritual awakening and the importance of maintaining a genuine faith amidst complacency in the church.

Duration: 21:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Revelation 3:1-6

Topics: "Church Asleep"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the letter written by Jesus to the church in Sardis, as recorded in the Book of Revelation. The speaker emphasizes the importance of living a genuine and active faith, rather than just having a reputation of being alive. Jesus urges the church to wake up, strengthen what remains, and repent. The speaker highlights the symbolism of the seven spirits of God, representing the complete ministry of the Holy Spirit, and encourages the congregation to seek a real and dedicated walk with God.

Transcript

Right now, I just want you to read this fifth letter that Jesus wrote to a church in a place called Sardis. S-A-R-D-I-S. Everybody say Sardis.

Now, these are seven letters to seven actual churches. They're recorded in the book of Revelation. There's imagery and symbolism.

And let's just get to one point in the letter, just one truth. To the angel, that is the leader, most likely the pastor, the leadership of the church. To the angel of the church in Sardis, write, these are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God.

That's symbolism for the seven-fold spirit, the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one who gives the Holy Spirit, and seven is the number of completeness. The Holy Spirit in his ministry is absolutely complete in giving comfort, in convicting of sin, in strengthening us.

These are the words of the one who holds, of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. We know from earlier in the book, the stars are the messengers to the seven churches, probably the pastors. I know your deeds.

You have a reputation of being alive, but you're dead. Wake up. Strengthen what remains and is about to die.

For I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Notice Jesus there is talking about his God, the Father. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard.

Obey it and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief. Not talking about a second coming, probably talking about a coming in judgment.

And you will not know at what time I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis, in the church there, who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me dressed in white, for they are worthy.

He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white, the white garments that we receive in heaven, which speaks of our reward. I will never blot out his or her name from the book of life. That verse is a zinger.

That verse makes your theology stand up, and you really got to ponder that. To the one who overcomes, who won't let his garments get dirty, I will not blot his name out of the book of life. And it seems like the intimation there is that a name can be blotted out of the book of life.

For those who don't keep their garments clean, and who get involved in trashy things instead of serving the Lord. But will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angel. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the church.

This is the church that every pastor or someone like me, this is the ultimate nightmare. That you have a reputation, but the reality is something totally different. You know, that can happen to a minister, that can happen to a church.

So this is the ultimate nightmare. That you have a reputation, that you're alive, and that God is working, and things are happening. But God says, hey, your rep, your reputation is one thing, but see, God sees different.

Never go by reputation, because people can think you're great, and God can say something different. And people can call you every name in the book, and God can say, you're my child, I love you. So, what people say doesn't matter, it's what God says.

How many say amen? So, but here, this is a very staggering word, because what God says, what Christ says is, Church, in Sardis, you have a reputation that you're alive, but you're dead. You have the form of godliness, but there's no power, there's no heartfelt faith, you're shallow, you're just surface. So, this is a portion of Scripture, we can't cherry pick our verses.

When you go through these letters, you have to read every one of them, and say, now God, what does this mean to me? That would be my ultimate nightmare. People visit here, and say, oh, the Brooklyn Tabernacle, it has a reputation of such and such, and God says, you ain't nothing, it's dead. No, no, God, we want to be alive.

How many want to have life, and more abundantly, and the moving of the Holy Spirit, and prayer, and love, and evangelism, and baptizing people? So, he says to the church, now, I'm going to tell you what you should do, you've got to wake up. And that might be for a believer, see, a believer can have a reputation

that they're something, or a minister can have a reputation that they're something. And behind the collar, or behind the suit, and the name, reverend this, pastor this, God can see through it, and say, people think you're somebody, but I know you're dead.

I don't see the way people see. So, if you're here today, that's a searching word that we all have to take to heart. God, I don't want a reputation with others, I want reality with you.

I want reality, I want a real faith, I want a real dedication, I want a real walk with you. So, he says, here's the word, wake up. Come on, get up.

You know, that's the word to some people, it's a prophetic word. You need courage, and you need to know where to say it, and how to say it. But, to some congregations, the word of the preacher is not about follow your destiny, or do this, and all of that, and I know the plans I have for you to bless you and prosper you.

That's not the message that God has for certain churches. The message is this, you're dead, now wake up, get going, come on. I died, I gave myself for you, you're my children, but you're living below your privileges, get up now, come on, wake up, get going.

That's what the Bible says, it is to some churches, some people, wake up now. Strengthen what remains, there's just a little bit left that you have going for you, don't let those graces go out, but stir it up, because I will help you. Just reach out to me, and I will bless you, and help you, and you'll be what I purposed you to be.

And then, I have not found your deeds complete, I have more for you to do. You know, a lot of times when we get older in the Lord, and this happens to senior citizens, and people who have served the Lord for a long time, they get to go to sleep, and they become dead, they've lost their first love, they've lost their fire, they're dead. They have a name that they're alive, they know Bible verses, but God says, come on, wake up, there's more to do.

I have plans for you that you haven't fulfilled yet, your deeds are not complete. So there's a lot of that, you go home and read Revelation chapter 3 verses 1-6 tonight before you go to bed, and then you meditate and see what God gives you, this is not the place for me to do extensive teaching, but here's what I want to share with you. But some of you people are not dead, there's a few of them in Sardis who have kept their garments clean.

They haven't kept their garments filthy. What garment is he talking about? Well, he's talking about our lives. Garments are sometimes used as our lives, our character, the way we behave.

He says, now there's a few of you, this is Jesus who died on the cross, risen from the dead. He's saying, now there's some of you, you've fallen asleep, you're dead, you don't care about anything anymore, you're sloppy in your Christianity. But there's a few of you, oh, you have overcome because you have kept your garments clean.

And because you've done that, you've cooperated with my work in your life, I will dress you in white on that day that I bring you into my presence. This is a searching word, you can tell by the reaction of this to the audience, because we're living a lot of times on fluff in Christian circles. Everything is just go for it, go girl, go boy, and all of that.

And there's times to just praise God, there's times for everything, but there's also a time to check yourself. Check yourself out, starting with the speaker. Do you have a reputation you're alive and really dead, or are you really alive? Bring it into God's presence.

If you need to wake up, then wake up today. God is rousing you. Fulfill his calling in your life, but above all things, the Bible says, those few people in Sardis, they have kept their garments clean.

You know, James says, here's what pure religion is, and undefiled, is to visit the widows and the orphans in their distress, and to keep unspotted from the world. See, Jesus died for us, and his blood cleanses us from all our sins. And now, as we've been cleansed, what if Sylvia, after Jesus did that great work in her life, what if she would go back and say, well, you know, I'll fool around with a little of this, I know it's wrong, I'll fool around with a little of that.

She'd get her garments dirty, and that would be terrible, because here Christ shed his blood to cleanse us, and now we're going back and fooling around with a little of this, a little of that. And I read an interesting thing, you know, a little crankcase oil, or a little gook in a garage, just a little, you just get a little in your hands, and you'll find it all over yourself. See, just a little goes a long way of that stuff.

So, Jesus is now making a promise and making an invitation to the one who overcomes. They'll walk with me in white, and their names will never be taken out of the book of life. Who are those overcomers? The ones who have made sure that their garments are clean.

Pastor Simba, are you saying that Sylvia Glover has never sinned or made a mistake since she's a Christian? No, I'm not saying that. It's not talking about perfection. I'm talking about Jesus is saying to the one who wants to stay in the light and be pleasing to me, and not get soiled by the world, and by sin, and by junk, and filth.

To that one who walks carefully and humbly in my sight, and who appropriates my strength, and my word, and my spirit. To that one who fights against every contamination. To that one, they will be rewarded, they will walk in white robes.

Because you can be saved, obviously, and get sloppy with your salvation. Well, that's obvious. Someone said, I don't believe that.

It's obvious. They were a church that had a name that they were alive, but they were dead. And they had soiled their garments, some of them.

But there were a few that had said, no, I'm going to walk in the light. Satan, you will not overcome me. Through Jesus Christ, I'm going to walk in the light.

And the minute I get convicted about something, I'm going to give it to Jesus so I can be cleansed and stay clean. How many want to stay clean and keep clean? Now, Jesus said, if you don't do this, if you don't wake up, if you're not careful, I'll come when you don't know. And he's speaking not of his second coming, but he's speaking of a coming in judgment.

You know, God removes churches that fool around too much. There's no church where Sardis stood. Sardis had its heyday about 300, 400 BC.

It's the first place where they ever minted silver and gold coins. And it had its heyday, and then it went down. And oddly enough, in its history, it was twice conquered, even though it was high and impregnable was seeming because of its strategic position, because the guards fell asleep.

And the enemy got in because the guards were asleep. Isn't that interesting? As some people have pointed out, that this was the problem of the church. They had gotten sloppy, the church, a lot of them, and they had let their garments get soiled.

Now, how do you get soiled? What garments are you talking about? Well, the Bible says, and I close, May God sanctify you, body, soul, and spirit, fully. That was a prayer of Paul. May God sanctify you completely.

What does sanctify? Get rid of all the impurities. What kind of impurities? Well, first of all, that God would keep our bodies clean. If you get involved in dirty things, you dirty your body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

If you get involved in fornication, if you get involved in things that abuse this body, that's bad. You know, you take drugs and you do bad things with your body. You hurt someone with your body.

You are now defiling your body. Your body should be sanctified. You need your body clean.

How many want a clean, holy body? Just lift up both your hands like this. Just lift up both your hands like that. A clean body.

Every day of my life, God, keep me clean. And the moment I feel myself walking toward the uncleanness, spiritually speaking, oh God, just keep me clean. Okay.

So God has to clean our bodies. Now, you can have an unclean mind. You can be soiled in your mind.

Some people soil their bodies. You can soil your mind. What do you think pornography is about? It's letting your mind roll around in the mud and the filth.

God is not only God of your body. He's God of your mind. How many want your mind to belong to Jesus Christ? Say amen.

So we give God our minds tonight and we say, God, keep my mind clean. I want my garments to be kept clean. I don't want to walk around after what you did on the cross and all you went through on the cross.

I'm going to walk around sloppy and just take in all this junk in my eye gate, my ear gate. I don't want to have my eyes soiled, my ears soiled. I don't want my brain soiled.

God, preserve my mind. I don't want to think dirty thoughts, filthy thoughts, hateful thoughts, prejudice thoughts. It's all kinds of junk that can get in your mind.

But the Bible says not only body and soul, which includes mind and all that, but even that God would cleanse our spirits. What would that mean? Probably might refer to sins of the heart, attitudes that soil us. You know, some people you meet, you come in their presence, whether male or female, and they're sensual.

They've given themselves over to certain lifestyles and they reek from the uncleanness of how they live. Let's say sexually, immorally, whether straight, heterosexual, homosexual. It's wrong.

Homosexuality is wrong. Hello? Do I get an amen here? To be a lesbian, listen, to be a lesbian, to be a homosexual, to be heterosexual but be involved with anybody outside of your husband or your wife, that's wrong. That's sin.

That soils your garments. Remember what Jesus said? There's a few of you, you've overcome, you've kept your garments clean. Is it a battle? Yes, but Jesus will give you the victory.

Will Jesus give us the victory? Right? By trusting him, will he not, is he not able to keep our bodies clean and our minds clean? And lastly, but of the spirit too, and that speaks of attitudinal uncleanness because where some people look prim and proper and chaste on the outside, they have uncleanness in their spirit. They're vicious. The Pharisees didn't walk around with sensuality but they killed the king of glory.

Hatred, bias, prejudice, anger, unforgiveness, that soils you worse than smoking two packs of cigarettes because cigarettes are easy to break but to get that other pollution out of you, oh my goodness, it takes the power of God, the blood of Jesus, but he will do it. All he's asking for us is, don't be sloppy, wake up. I didn't die for your sins so that you would fool around with sin.

Here's how you can always tell a true born again Christian. The minute I met Sylvia and began to talk with her, I knew God had really changed her. Why? She didn't want to go back.

Do we sometimes slip back? Do we make mistakes? How many, I'll close my eyes, I don't want to lose respect for you. How many have sinned at least once since you've been a Christian? Lord, have mercy on us all, right? But it's another thing to slip but it's another thing to stay down. But a real Christian says, no, I can't live that way.

I can't live that way. Come on, how many have had that happen in your life? I can't go back that way. I can't live that way.

I cannot, come on, let's just clap our hands. We cannot live that way. Close your eyes with me.

I just felt burdened that I shared that little thought with you. Keep your garments clean. Oh, God will help you but notice where the responsibility is put.

Who have kept, they have kept their garments clean. They've been careful about how they live. Some people think you just don't do anything, you just sit and then God has to do everything.

No, you do your part, God will do His part. You come in the light tonight. You say, God, help me.

God, my garments are getting soiled. Maybe in your mind, maybe in your attitudes, deep in your heart. Like notice what happened with Sylvia.

She just let it out there. She hated her family. See, now she doesn't want to go back to that hate.

The enemy will try to make her remember stuff that they did to her. But see, that will soil her spirit. Then that will disqualify her from being a blessing to somebody else because how are you going to bless someone else when there's poison in your own heart? And I'm going to dismiss you all in a second, but is there anyone up who the Lord was talking to you while I was reading that passage? And while I've been speaking, the Lord talked to you and you said, Pastor Cymbala, lay your hands on my head tonight because I am asking God to sanctify me, to cleanse me, to wash my garments clean and that He would give me the desire to walk carefully before Him.

Not cursing one minute, then praising Him the other. Then saying hallelujah, then lying with the same tongue. No, that's not the way Jesus wants us to live.

Anybody here who says, I'm struggling, but I want to walk in the light. I want to stay in the light. I know that's humbling.

Listen, no one thinks anything bad about you. Pray for me that God will keep my garments clean. The enemy's trying to just throw mud on it, but I want to walk clean.

I want to stay pure, holy. The happiest days of your life are the holy days where Jesus keeps you and you keep trusting Him. The worst days of your life are when we get sloppy and our garments get dirty.

Am I right, Christians? When do you lose your joy and your peace? When the muck and the mire starts going on your garments. Somebody here today just, you got to give God your mouth. No more cursing.

Listen, no more cursing. If you're going to curse, then just admit you don't want to serve Jesus. But if you're going to serve Jesus, then say, God, take that profanity out of my mouth.

Because I don't want to be a hypocrite. I don't want to have a name that I'm alive, but I'm really dead. I'm praising you with my hands up and then I'm using four-letter words.

I get angry and I use profanity. No, God, you're going to cleanse my mouth. God will cleanse your mouth.

Oh, Pastor Simple, you don't know what I've been through. Look, doesn't matter what you've been through. Jesus is greater than what you've been through.

God is greater than what I've been through. A lot of us here, Lord, need to just wait in your presence. Because as we wait in your presence and as we open ourselves to your Spirit, the Spirit's name is Holy Spirit.

Because as we yield to Him, He sanctifies us. He cuts away the junk. He gets rid of the garbage that accumulates.

He helps us get our garments cleaned and straight. We ask you to do that today.

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