

Being Away From God

by Rex Humbard

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and revival in the church, highlighting the dangers of complacency and self-satisfaction leading to spiritual death. It calls for a renewal of dedication to God, a return to true worship, and a revival of faith and commitment. The message stresses the need for repentance, rededication, and a sincere desire for spiritual growth and closeness to God.

Scripture: Revelation 3:1, Luke 6:26, Luke 15:24, Acts 3:19, 2 Chronicles 7:14, James 4:8, Psalm 51:10, 2 Peter 3:9, Hebrews 10:25, Matthew 3:8

Topics: "Repentance", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

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Transcript

You and I know that we can live near to the heart of God, or away from the heart of God. Near to the will of God, or away from the will of God. And man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

As a man thinketh, so is that man. And sometimes it's like the scribes and the Pharisees, that Jesus looked and said, you've washed the outside of the cup, you've whitewashed it, but inside it's full of dead men's bones. Rotten to the core, not what it ought to be.

And God wants us to stir up our pure minds in way of remembrance. Now when we talk about being away from God, this does not mean that we're totally away, but we've gone away and we need to come back. Some have gone so far, they may never get back.

But it's easy for us to be backslidden. What do you mean backslidden? I mean if you're not as close to God now as you were a year ago, five years ago, ten years ago, then you've gone back, haven't you? But we ought to go forward and we ought to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord. How many of you believe it's possible to have an experience that we are closer to God today than we ever have been? Let's see your hands.

Now I'm not going to ask you how many of you have that experience and you are that close, but I want to read some of the word of God, Revelations chapter 3, and I think it has a message for you and me today, particularly the world in which we live. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I know thy works. Now the preacher may not know, the next door neighbor may not know, your husband or your wife or your son or your daughter may not know, the man where you work may not know, but God knows everything.

And he said, I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest. I know what your reputation is. I know what your appearance is.

And the last part says, I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Now he didn't mean that they'd quit breathing. He didn't mean that that church in Sardis had closed its doors.

He didn't mean that all the members had left, but you're dead. You're dead spiritually, not physically and mentally, but spiritually you're not where you belong. You're dead.

Jesus referred to the woman that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. That didn't mean she wasn't breathing and eating and about in society and moving about. She was alive physically, alive mentally, but because of her transgression and her sin, Jesus said she's dead spiritually.

And this is what the Lord is talking about at the church of Sardis as he wrote. And then he said, be watchful and strengthen the things which remain. Now there's some in the church of Sardis that still have the old fashioned faith and the son that still believe in the old fashioned gospel and the son that still believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

And he said, come on, let's strengthen that crowd. Let's hold on to those good things. And then he goes on and says that are ready to die.

If they keep going the same direction they're going, trouble's ahead of them too. They're going to die with them like a barrel of apples with one rotten apple in the barrel. Look out, it's going to affect the others that are in the barrel also.

For I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore, how thou hast received and heard and hold fast and repent. Now this little word, R-E-P-E-N-T, is almost lost out of the church, lost out of the people that name the name of God.

Today, repent is a bitter pill even for the sinner who sinned and failed to repent. But he's writing to a church and he said repent. When God says repent, God means exactly what he says, repent.

If therefore thou hast not watched, shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Now this scripture's up to date as if it was written today. The Lord's coming and he's coming soon and he's saying for us to watch and prepare for that hour.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy. He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father and before his angel. And he that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches.

Sardis is a city, one of the churches that's referred to in Revelation that is built upon a sheer cliff of rocks. The city of Sardis had three sides that was absolutely upon solid rock and each side went all the way down, but one side gradually came up and came in and it was the easiest city of all the city of all the churches and all the places of that day to defend because they only had to defend one side. But because of Sardis upon that sheer rock, being able to defend with one-fourth the strength of any other city, it did not become a blessing but it become a curse.

And Sardis because it was so easy to defend became careless, became indifferent to its defense and many times was overrun with war because of that. And the same thing seemed to prevail in the church. What was the reputation of this church according to the word of God here? Well, the church should be known and certainly this church was known.

Everybody knew where the church at Sardis was because as you approach the city, the tallest building in all the city was the steeple and the spire of that great temple of the first church in Sardis. I believe that we ought to let people know about our activities, that the church ought to be on main street and I believe I can worship God in the shade of a tree or any place that we may have to worship. But let me tell you something else.

In comparison to our way of life, if we live in a nice home and drive a nice car and then want God to have a back alley, something's wrong with our dedication. If we don't have it, we can worship in a store building or under the shade of a tree or any place else. But if we want to have luxury ourselves and nice things ourselves, nice clothes, nice homes, nice jobs, nice money in the bank and other things, and then we want God to take the least and the worst, there's something wrong with our dedication.

So you don't have to have a pretty church, not to have a big temple to worship God, but in comparison you ought to compare God in his house with what man has. I don't know how you feel about that, but I wish you'd think about it. You always said, well, God don't deserve the best.

God's house don't deserve the best and you want the best for yourself. Then there's something wrong with your dedication. Anyway, the church ought to use all the tools and instruments it can.

I believe God's program ought to be on television. I believe God's program ought to be on radio. I believe God's program ought to be on the printing presses.

I believe God's program ought to be in ambassadors or missionaries that we send out around the world. God deserves just as good as the devil. And I think a church ought to be known in the gospel, ought to have power to not be defeated and let Satan take over, but God should be known and his work should be known, but there's something more than just being known.

And this church had a name. This church was known. This church had been known for it said, thou has a name that thou livest.

There was a time when the church in Sardis had an old-fashioned Holy Ghost, God send a soul-saving, devil-hating, sin-killing revival. People were saved. People came to the Lord.

Devils were cast out. People were healed. That's what established the church in Sardis.

And it built a name and a reputation upon the fact that it was a soul-winning, devil-hating, sin-killing church, where the power of God was prevalent, where Jesus Christ was exalted, where lives were

changed where testimonies would ring out through the ears of the people. It is saying you have trusted God. You have had revivals.

You have had souls won. You have had good done. You have helped in the community.

You've fed the poor. You've had activities that could be commended. You have a name that you are alive.

And you would recommend this church. But what was wrong with the church? Well, that church was living upon its past reputation, not upon its present life. It got big.

It's like the church of the Lord Jesus Christ today. I'll tell you there's power in the name of Jesus, and I believe you believe that today. But all too often people come with sin and go away with sin, come with habits and go away with habits, come with doubts and go away with doubts.

We need changed lives in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And some churches had had to pay a real price to hold on. They'd been persecuted.

They'd had hypocrites come in. They'd had loud people come in. They'd had people that exalted gifts farther than Christ, and they'd had to be brought back.

And many writings in the New Testament that Paul gave was to correct things in the body. But they didn't have any radicals. They didn't have any loud mouth.

They wasn't persecuted for anything. Everything's just going nice. They wasn't full of false teachers.

They just sat there on their blessed assurances and backslips. One time it was on fire, but now the fire's gone out. They didn't put any more wood on the fire.

And the reason why the church is not persecuted is because it was dead. They didn't have any external problems. They didn't have any internal problems, nothing to worry about.

You don't persecute dead people, do you? The reputation was that they were still alive. But he said, you're dead, according to the word of God here. And Jesus said, woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did they the fathers to the false prophets in Luke chapter 6, verse 26.

The troubles and the ills, external, internal, usually cause a church to come alive, because they pray and they work with their problem, but not this church. The devil wasn't after them. He already had them.

The devil's not after anyone that he's already got. They just died. They just quit what they believed in years ago.

Now, how did this church come to die? Let's kind of look it over and take an autopsy of this church and see what made it die. It didn't die from outside persecution. It just died from the inside of no longer having a vision, no longer feeling a need.

The early church in Jerusalem had persecution set in, and when it did, it scattered them throughout the world. And everywhere they went, they were preaching the gospel. The Roman Empire said, we're going to destroy the church and the Christians, and they nailed them to the crosses and to the stakes and burned them alive and fed them to animals.

But it wasn't long till that persecuted got life and strength and grew in great numbers because of their faith and their determination. And it was Christianity that took the red seal of Rome down and put up the cross of Christianity in that day and Rome fell. Persecution caused the church to exalt itself and to grow and become strong.

The church at Sardis died with its own members. Oh, they didn't call a meeting and say God's dead. They didn't call a meeting and say we no longer believe.

They didn't die because of any moral desert or spiritual life was not possible or the surroundings were so bad that they got mixed and mingled in them and they lost it. But death came because of their self-satisfaction and self-complacency. I'm happy.

Don't bother me. I've got no time for the world that's going to hell. I've got no time for prayer meeting.

I'm getting along all right. Preacher gets up and gives a little essay and pats him on the back and soothes him over and tells him how nice we are, all about sun, moon, stars and about heaven, all the blessings of heaven, never tells him to repent. And as a result, they died.

A ball team one time won 29 games in a row and they played a team that they'd beat for 10 years. They were so confident they went in and said, no problem here. Before they knew what happened, they'd got beat.

Their overconfidence, they didn't put out. Samson was overconfident. He never dreamed that he could lose his strength and lose his power.

But when he broke his vow and sinned against God, it said Samson went out and shook himself as before and knew not that the Spirit of God departed from him. He looked just like he used to. The outward man would look upon him and say he's the same man that Samson.

But Samson had sinned and the power of God had been withdrawn from him and he was weak and helpless and went out and shook himself as before and knew not that the Spirit of God had departed from him. Why, the mother of Jesus and all her relatives had gone down to Jerusalem to a great religious gathering and they started back home and they went a few miles up the road and stopped and she was sure that Jesus was with the other relatives and they went back and found him in the temple as he confounded the mighty and the educated with the questions and answers that he was giving there in the temple. They were so confident that he was there.

I wonder if you and I don't try to journey life's pathway sometime without really checking up. Be sure that things are all right and Jesus is with us and we find out maybe we've left him. Left him because of our sins and our habits and our failures and our doubts and our unbelief.

What's the message that Jesus gave the church? Just one little simple message, one little word. He said repent. That's the message of the hour.

That's the message today. Few pastors have had the opportunity that the Cathedral of Tomorrows had. Few congregations has had the opportunity the Cathedral of Tomorrows had.

I say to you unless we repent of our complacency and our indifference, we're no better than anybody else. And neither are those of you who one time went to church and said I love the Lord and walked with the

Lord. The Lord may be looking at you now saying you have a profession but you're dead as far as spiritual things are concerned.

What does Jesus do with the dead? Well, he raises the dead. Jairus' daughter was dead. But he said fear not, only believe and went on down to the house and drove all the scoffers and mockers out, went in and raised Jairus' daughter that was dead.

Jesus raises the dead. And Jesus is equally hopeful of the dead church or the dead member in that church. The need must be brought to the supply or to the answer.

Whatever your need is must be brought into the presence of Jesus Christ. How can we come into his presence? Not with our sin, not with our neglect, not with our failure, but repenting of our sin, repenting of our neglect, and repenting of our failure. Jesus did not say to this church give up your worship.

No, sir, go right ahead and worship but put some spirit in your worship. And the only way the Holy Spirit's going to be present is when we have repented of our sins and we're endued with power from on high. So he wasn't saying to this dead church give it up but he was saying to it repent, not by giving up your activities but by putting the spirit of God in your activities.

I don't know about you today. You may feel that you're sprouting wings and about ready to go home to glory. But I believe that most of us that are in this room could stand coming into the presence of the Lord and say, forgive me, where I failed to read my Bible, where I failed to pray, where I failed to do Christian service, where I failed to pay my tithe, where I failed to be what I ought to be as a witness to others.

I think every one of us need to come back into his presence and renew our vow, renew our covenant, rededicate ourselves to the kingdom of God and see revival in our own life, revival in our church, revival in our city, our state, our nation and our world. Wouldn't you like to see revival? Let's see your hand, how many would? Let us all stand and everybody that can, you come right down here to the front and we're going to pray together. Come on right now.

We don't need to sing, the choir can, but just step into the aisle and come down here and pray. We're going to say, Lord, forgive us where we've fallen short and where we've failed. I don't believe there's a Christian or a sinner that doesn't need to have a little talk with Jesus.

I believe we need to rededicate ourselves to God and to his kingdom. I want every person to come. This is the way we're going to close this service in a closing prayer together as a family.

Come right on here, either kneel or stand, just come as close as you can so others can join us. Come on today. Come quickly and move right in closely.

Let's talk to the Lord. Now let's look to the Lord. Precious Lord, we want to thank you for the opportunity of prayer.

We thank you for this host of people that stand here and kneel here at these altars or stand here this day saying, Lord, give me spiritual life. There's some that have walked this Christian way for many, many years. There's some that only started a short time ago.

But Lord, we're not satisfied. We're not content. We believe you have more for us than what we have in our lives.

More for us to do, more for us to know, more for us to learn. And Lord, we've been careless because life has its problems. It has its burdens.

It has its activities. And so often, Lord Jesus, those activities have kept us from living near to the heart of God, near to the cross where we belong. And so we come here this day to rededicate ourself, to reconsecrate ourself to the kingdom of God, to be what you'd have us be.

Now forgive us of our shortcomings. Forgive us of our neglect and our failure and our sins in the name of the Lord.

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