



Sermon Series Notes

“What You See Is Not What You Get” (Rev.3:1-6)

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Read the text; Ancient Sardis was at the junction of five main roads and as a result became a center for trade. It was also a military center, located on an almost inaccessible plateau 1500 feet above the main roads.

v.1a Isa.11: 2 The Spirit of the LORD (Jehovah = The Existing One)

will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

v.1b They had a reputation of being alive but were in reality spiritually dead.

Matthew 23:25-28...you clean the outside of the cup and dish, but **inside** they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the **inside** of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean...You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the **inside** are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean...on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the **inside** you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Judas Iscariot was a devil from the beginning, yet nobody but Jesus knew it.

A HEART PROBLEM

Prov.4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Acts 5:3...how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...?

Gen.6:5...every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Deut.6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart...

Psalms 26:2 Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God...

Matt.5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matt.15:17-20

Heb.4:12 For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

A DEED PROBLEM

I was challenged in this fresh study of the letter to the church of Sardis with what makes it different from the message to the church of Laodicea. The church of Laodicea had become comfortable, complacent, lukewarm. That sounds similar to the problem at Sardis, because Jesus had not found their deeds "complete." In other words, they were not completely committed, completely obedient, which could be said to be lukewarm. But the key difference in them and Laodicea I believe is found in 3:4, "you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes." These people were not simply lukewarm, they had "soiled their clothes." See II Cor.6:16-7:1.

A person's heart determines their actions. If someone's heart is not right before the Lord, their deeds will show it. They will be half-hearted, double minded. But the people of Sardis kept up an outward front, so the truth about their lives was not what you saw at the church meeting, nor what their reputation said about them. Please understand, they were not totally disobedient, because that would be obvious to everyone. It was obedience mixed with disobedience. And the disobedience was kept hidden in order to keep their reputation intact.

The people Jesus addresses here were coming to the church services faithfully, hearing the Word of God regularly, but their obedience to what they were hearing was lessening week after week. They were being pulled down, drawn away, but nobody knew it. And because they were able to keep sin hidden and yet keep up a reputation of being alive, they became complacent.

COMPLACENCY

Complacent: Self-satisfied and unaware of actual dangers.

Sardis was built on a small, elevated plateau, and on all sides but one the rock walls were smooth & steep. The only access was on the southern side, and even it was a very steep and difficult path. On only two occasions in history was Sardis ever invaded and overcome, though over the years it was attacked often. Once in 549 B.C. by the Medes under Cyrus, and again in 218 B.C. by Antiochus the Great. Each time it was "like a thief." No one expected it; no one saw it coming. You might say they were "caught sleeping."

COUNSEL

What does Jesus say to this church? **WAKE UP!** (read v.3b) Thought: When you are asleep you don't know you're asleep.

The consequences of unrepentance seem to be twofold. One is that Jesus would come like a thief. We are not told exactly what he would do when he comes. But at the very least he was going to expose their sin, then deal with as he saw fit. The second consequence appears to be having their names blotted out of the book of life. In ancient times, a person's name was kept in a registry, and at death, it was removed (erased). They were dead "forever."

Refer to Luke 10:20; Phil.4:3; Heb.12:23; Rev.20:15; 21:27. This begs the question of whether the ones being warned were saved or not, and of course whether or not someone can lose their salvation. There are many verses on both sides of this issue, that's why two groups emerged regarding this question, Calvinists and Armenianists. I love what Paul says in I Cor.15:1-2, and in II Cor.13:5. See also Matt.7:21-23.

Someone genuinely saved may seem to get away with sin for a while, but in God's time he will bring discipline for their sin (See Heb.12:8).

Someone unsaved may seem to get away with sin their entire life, but in the end they will meet the Lord face to face, and of course face the judgment.

Num.32:23...be sure your sin will find you out.

Remember what you have received. They had received the gospel, Jesus Christ.

I Cor.6:19-20...you are not your own, you were bought at a price.

See All In, pp.15, 16, 19-21.

Remember what you have heard; What they had heard was the Word of God.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Repent

- Confess the sin publicly (James 5:16)
- Renounce the sin openly (Acts 19:17-20)

v.4 There was a minority in the church who had not “soiled their cloths.” What a tremendous promise to the few who remained faithful when so many were going astray. But there is also a tremendous promise for those who will hear Jesus’ rebuke, repent of their sin, and purify their lives (v.5a). I John 1:9.

There is an OT example that I believe illustrates for us the situation in the church at Sardis. I do not apologize for using this illustration, even though I have used it many times before. It is still the Word of God, and it very much applies regarding the message to this church. Turn with me to Judges 14. Samson had a unique calling upon his life, he was to be a Nazarite from birth. This meant that he could never eat grapes, raisins, drink grape juice or wine, or have anything from the grapevine. He was not allowed to cut his hair, go near a dead body, including the body of a family member or friend.

Judges 14 begins with Samson entering into a romantic relationship with a woman that was not God’s will for his life. So it’s not surprising to read what happens as he is on his way for a date with this girl. Read Judges 14:5. This is the place of temptation, the vineyards of Timnah. Samson should not have been here, and would not have been here, had it not been for this relationship out of the will of God. Read Judges 14:6-7. The lion of course represents Satan.

I Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

What was it Jesus said to the church of Sardis? WAKE UP!

Read Judges 14:8-9. Honey was not forbidden for Samson in his calling, but honey in lion’s carcass is a different story. Samson has “soiled his clothes” (Rev.3:4). But Samson keeps his sin hidden, and his reputation as a man of God remains intact. But this is not the case, his heart is not right, and his secret sin reflects the condition of his heart.

The last part of Judges 14 is Samson’s bachelor party if you will. At this party he makes a bet that he is confident he will win. Read Judges 14:12-14. The men who made the bet with Samson threaten his bride

to be in order to find out the answer to the riddle. She coax's Samson into telling her the answer, she tells the men, they win the bet, and Samson is furious. He goes off, strikes down thirty Philistines, strips them of their cloths, and returns to pay off the bet. He then goes back to his parents, and for an undisclosed period of time, sulks (refusal to talk or associate with others as a show of resentment; bad tempered silence). Sometime later he went back get his bride and begin the honeymoon. But his future bride's father thought by Samson's attitude and actions that he no longer wanted to marry his daughter, so he gave her to Samson's "best man." Samson now goes off in anger and ties 300 foxes tail to tail, sets their tails on fire, and sends them into the grain fields of the Philistines. Samson ends up in a cave, and as a result of all the trouble he's causing, his own people come to hand him over to the Philistines. He lets them tie him up, but when the Philistines come to take him, he breaks the ropes off his hands, grabs the fresh jawbone of a donkey, and struck down a thousand men. This act epitomizes where Samson is spiritually. Grabbing the fresh jawbone of a donkey was an impetuous, careless mistake. It was unclean, and further defiled Samson. But his clothes are not as soiled as they would become. Unless he "wakes up" and repents, these mistakes would one day catch up with him.

Unfortunately Samson did not wake up. The first part of Judges 16 records Samson sleeping with a prostitute. But right afterward, he pulls up the posts and gates of the city of Gaza and carries them 40 miles uphill to Hebron. By all outward appearances, Samson's reputation as a man of God on whom the power of God rests is still intact.

Read Judges 16:4. The rulers of the Philistines offer Delilah a large sum of money to lure Samson into telling her the secret of his great strength. Samson proudly toys with her and lies again and again. But after days of her nagging him, he finally tells her the truth. With Samson asleep and the Philistines hidden in the room, Delilah calls out to him, and the record should send chills down our spiritual spines. Read Judges 16:20-21.

Note Judges 15:20; 16:31. In the message to the church of Thyatira, Jesus had given Jezebel time to repent, and then he judged her as a result of her unwillingness to repent. How long did she have to repent? We are not told. It is the same with the message to the church of Sardis. If they did not wake up and repent, Jesus would come and deal with them, and they would not know at what time this would happen.

How long has there been secret sin in your life?

As a teenager I once had 13 bottles of Visine stored in my bedroom. I became a kleptomaniac for Visine. Just before coming home at night, as well as before going to school in the morning (after getting high in the school parking lot), I would douse my eyes with Visine (gets the red out) in order to hide the truth about my condition.

I hid my pot in my bedroom, between the shell of the bass drum and foam in the shell that I put there for acoustic purposes. Each evening I would go in the bathroom next to my bedroom, roll a few joints for the next day, then hide the pot back in the bass drum. But one night I got careless and left the bag of pot on the back of the toilet. My mother came in, picked it up, brought it to me and said, "What's this?" I was caught. I was exposed. And I never saw it coming!

Pete (CC Old Bridge), 12 year adulterous relationship; Jimmy Swaggart; Jim Baker, other examples?

It is possible for someone to sin willfully, habitually, even over what we would consider a long period of time, and still keep their reputation intact. But God cannot be mocked. Be assured that the day will come when God will come "like a thief" and deal with their sin!

Much better to come clean than be caught

CONCLUSION

Prov.28:13 He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Rom.13:11-14