

KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Revelation 3:1-6**
“Hypocrisy”

The world has plenty of talented hypocrites; people who are completely different than what they seem at first. We need to guard our own hearts and avoid hypocrisy in various areas of our lives. Interestingly, entire churches can be hypocritical, such as the one we are looking at today; it may very well have had the best reputation of the seven while actually being in the worst spiritual shape. Here are a few tips I believe we can learn from the church of Sardis to avoid hypocrisy.

1: Stop quenching the Spirit of God (v1a). I think it is important that the warning to Sardis specifically references **the seven Spirits of God**. Do we quench these Spirits of God in our churches? Are all seven welcome? Or do we treat God like a buffet, where we pick and choose what we like in the Bible or about God, while intentionally distorting what we don't like? Today, many people focus on love to the exclusion of any talk about judgment or sin. Sadly, many ignore the spirit of holiness. Do we allow all seven Spirits of God to have free reign in our hearts and in our church? Or do we "quench" His Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:17), the way a blacksmith quenches a piece of red-hot metal by putting it into the water?

How do people quench God's Spirit? I think there are many ways, such as making fun of someone else who is starting to get on fire for God. If one person in a group is starting to think more seriously about Jesus and the Bible and says, "Maybe it's not best to watch this movie," or, "Maybe I won't come along to the bar this time," often the more worldly people in the group will try to make fun of that attitude. Satan targets budding revival harshly because that is when it is most vulnerable. Other times, people can quench God's Spirit by living in sin. You may appear pious to others, but if you have hidden sin in your life, then God's Spirit will certainly not bless that. And another way we

unintentionally quench God's Spirit, I think, is to simply ignore His leading. Do we pray as often as we ought to? Are we always trying to see which way the wind of God's Spirit is blowing, not which way the wind of the world is blowing?

2: Defend the good things (v1b-2). Jesus Christ has **the seven stars**, and He is the CEO of all the churches in one sense. We must present our "health report" to Him (Hebrews 13:17). When Jesus says that **He knows their works**, that is usually a consolation; but in *this* context, it appears to actually be negative (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Does Jesus' omniscience comfort you, or does it terrify you since your works are evil?

To **have a name that you live, and be dead** is a serious form of hypocrisy (Matthew 23:27). Maybe you try to pretend to be a Christian in front of others, yet you know deep down that you have not had a spiritual rebirth. Sometimes, people use drugs and alcohol to give others the impression that they are spiritually alive, but it is only a facade, like a painted face of a clown that looks happy while actually being miserable underneath. Don't let Satan trap you into hypocrisy.

How can entire churches fall into this trap? I believe that some of the biggest mega-churches of our day are like this; they work up a high level of nominal energy by using loud rock music and dimmed lights and immoral singers. They strive to be seeker-sensitive, yet I'm afraid they're anything but sensitive to the desires of Jesus Christ. These churches may have a reputation around town for being alive and thriving, yet underneath, they are dead.

(v2) We must **Be watchful** as a shepherd watches for wolves; but we must also **strengthen the things which remain**. Do you encourage other godly people to keep it up (Ezekiel 3:21)? Do you promote those changes to the church that tend to purity and holiness, or toward changes that bring the church spiritually down? Even the good aspects of this church **were ready to die**; perhaps the only remaining godly people were thinking of leaving, or maybe the church was going to cut the budget for the only programs that still had a fiery excitement of God burning in them.

When Jesus says that **He has not found their works perfect before God**, strangely

lacking is an explanation of what exactly he means. It's almost as though this church looks really good from a distance, but when you get close, you are shocked to realize that it's dead and are suddenly repulsed. Perhaps the problem is eerie, difficult to describe in words; but that's what hypocrisy is like. We need to get back to trying to please **God**, not man, with our church decisions.

3: Get back to the basics (v3).

Unfortunately, God can't even command them to **remember** from whence they have fallen, as He could with Ephesus (perhaps they were never very godly in the first place); so He simply tells them to remember **how they had received and heard**. They are like a person hanging off the edge of a cliff with a halfhearted grip, about to fall. They need to be hanging on firmly, and climbing back up and **repenting**. Perhaps this church was **not watching**; instead of blowing the trumpet to signal the approaching enemy, they were like a watchman playing soothing music, lulling the people into a dangerous sleep. Too many churches try to preach to please crowds of people instead of speaking the truth.

How will Jesus come **as a thief** to those who aren't ready? A thief causes fear; when you hear that glass window break, then hear footsteps on broken glass, your heart races. When Jesus comes back, it will be terrifying for the unsaved. They will hide in the rocks and caves, just as those in a house might hide in a back closet from a thief. We may think, "If only I had a dog!" Or, "If only I had locked all the doors!" Similarly, those who are not ready for Jesus will feel painful remorse (I John 2:28). A thief causes loss, just as the return of Jesus will to those who build their lives with corruptible things (I Corinthians 3:15). I think most in this particular church weren't even saved (I Thessalonians 5:4).

When a thief comes, you **will not know** when he will strike. He never calls you up and says, "At 2:23am, I'm breaking in the back window!" For the Christian who is serving Jesus Christ, His return is a pleasant surprise (though anticipated). For those who are not ready, it will be an unpleasant terror.

4: Stop ignoring holiness (v4-6). In a sense, as Jesus looks over the church role, He points out **a few names** which were good,

even in Sardis. Though difficult, a flower can bloom even in the crevice of a thirsty rock. What demonstrated the difference between the good and bad names on this church role? Something which is despised today—holiness. They **had not defiled their garments**; they had kept them clean (James 1:27), even when others had jumped into the mudhole of sin face first, so to speak. Has Jesus really converted your heart (II Corinthians 5:17), or do you still enjoy wallowing in sin just as before (II Peter 2:22)? When **we shall walk with Jesus in white**, I picture this to be like a formal "parade", a glorious procession. How can **we be worthy**? Only through the blood of Jesus Christ, which makes us entirely legally worthy, even though we'd never be so on our own.

(v5) If we are saved, we will receive **white clothing** and a **name** that are both without **blot**. Interestingly, the wording seems to imply that everyone's name is written in the book of life at first (cf. Exodus 32:32-33), meaning that they have a personal provision for salvation (Jonah 2:8); but it is blotted out when they refuse it for the last time (Hebrews 10:29). Imagine the excitement as Jesus **confesses the overcomer's name before His Father**, probably quietly as He leans over and tells His Father that He knows the saint; and then, as He declares it **before his angels**, loudly and publicly. Everything we do for Jesus will be fully worth it just in that moment alone.

(v6) Jesus Christ just said all of these words, yet in this verse they are attributed to **the Spirit** of God. This is another support for the Trinity; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three in one.

Too many people treat church like a game, where they try to act on the outside like a Christian without ever truly being saved. And even after salvation, we need to beware of hypocrisy; do we have a bit of a falsehood when meeting at church on Sunday, acting somewhat differently than we do throughout the week? Do we try to get glory for what we do for God, like hypocrites do (Matthew 6:5)? Let's strive to have a genuine fervency for God, inside and out.