

Revelation: Following Our Victorious King

[Revelation 3:1-6](#)

"A Letter From Jesus on Dead Faith" – February 25, 2024



Introduction

Thousands of church buildings may have a historical record of the church's name on the cornerstone. It's a church building, but it is a nominal church building - a church in name only. In the same way, a person or a congregation can be a nominal Christian or a nominal Christian congregation. They bear the name, but that's it. When asked, they may check the box that they are a Christian or that they are enrolled as a member somewhere.

Jesus warns in Matthew 7, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'"

[\(Matthew 7:21-23\)](#)

These are sobering, heavy, painful words. Words that we should heed and take into consideration this morning. How can a nominal, lifeless church or a nominal Christian be turned into a vibrant living church or a vibrant living Christian?

Sermon Outline

1. Be honest about the problem. Vs. 1
2. Rely on Christ. Vs. 2-3
3. Exchange the counterfeit for the truth. Vs. 4-6

Read & Discuss

1. Read vs. 1

In the first four letters to the churches, Jesus begins with a commendation. Here, Jesus has no commendation for Sardis. This highlights the seriousness of the problem. They had a good name or reputation based on performance or achievement. However, Jesus had a different and honest assessment of them.

On the one hand, the reputation of being alive may coincide with religious activity and accomplishments. The praise and applause received for good works turned into pressure to keep up the reputation. Have you ever experienced the pressure to perform religious activities to uphold your reputation? Do you take on more and do things to impress others? You may look good on the outside, but Jesus looks at the heart. [\(Matthew 23\)](#) On the other hand, this reputation may leave you spiritually idle. You may come to church occasionally, but Christianity has just become a ticket to heaven. Does your life reflect either of these two examples? What is important to you?

These are two opposite ends of the spectrum, but in some sense, they are exactly the same. Self, reputation, and a good name are at the center, not a true love for Jesus. Both have the reputation of being alive, but both may be spiritually dead. Are you pretending? Are you tired? Jesus can give the life-changing, life-giving power of the Spirit to those who trust in Him. If you avoid the painful conversation, you will miss the hope and life-giving cure to those who are honest about the problem. Jesus is the answer! To those who are tired and weary of holding up the facade of being alive when they are really dead, Jesus tells them to come.

2. Read vs. 2-3

Jesus tells them to wake up! He offers a life-giving remedy - Himself! Jesus' remedy is summarized in five commands:

Wake up - this means to be watchful. You must be on the lookout for the enemy. No one is invincible to the schemes of Satan. If you are preoccupied with how people see you, you are susceptible to falling into sin. Are we being watchful for the enemy's attacks? Or are you more concerned about how people see you?

Strengthen - Do you ever get tired or weary? How are we strengthened? By God's word. [\(Ps. 119:28\)](#) God's

word re-directs our thoughts to His promises and who He is. His words are alive, powerful, active, and authoritative.

Remember what you received and heard. They heard God's word. They received the Holy Spirit. ([John 20:22](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [19:2](#)) You have to have both. When we receive the Holy Spirit, God opens our eyes to truth and gives us life. This means to rely on the Holy Spirit. ([John 15](#))

Keep - this means to hold on to - moment by moment in your life, in your day. His Spirit gives life.

Repent - turn around - obey God's word. Don't grieve the Spirit, do what the Spirit says in His word.

This is urgent because when Jesus comes a second time, He will come when you don't expect it. As we wait on God, we might get tired, make compromises, act like sinning doesn't matter, and/or wonder if Jesus is really coming back. When He comes, He will sit on this throne and judge. Are you toying with sin? Are you tempted to make compromises? Heed Jesus' loving warning.

How can we know if we are pretending to be alive or we actually are alive? ([John 15:8](#)) We prove that we are His disciples by bearing the fruit of His Spirit. If we have God's Spirit, connected to Jesus - the vine - we will bear fruit. You may feel like you are on life support sometimes, but as long as there is life, Jesus is a tender and proficient gardener. ([Matthew 12:20](#)) If you come to Him, He receives you with open arms. He will breathe life into you.

It's easy to be religious and do religious things, but you may still be dead in your sins. Sin separates us from God. When you look in the mirror of God's word, what do you see? It is only God's Spirit that gives life. God sent Jesus to redeem us, taking the punishment for our sin and God's wrath and giving us life. God's Spirit gives life to all who humble themselves, turn from their sin and come to Him. You must be born again.

3. Read vs. 4-6

There was a group of true, alive believers in Sardis. Their worthiness is a gift from Jesus. To those who are weary and exhausted from pretending, Jesus says, "you don't have to pretend anymore, you can rest in Me." Those who believe in the gospel can rest in the gift of grace from Jesus.

The white robe symbolizes God's acceptance and approval based on grace through faith. ([Rev. 7:14](#)) They are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. God adopts us as His sons and daughters based on the merit of Jesus. God, in His grace, sees you as His. That gives you dignity, value, and significance. Are you clamoring to find dignity, value and significance on your own and in other things? Our enemy knows that. He offers us shortcuts - cheap counterfeits which will fail to deliver on its promise. When Jesus gives a gift, it is not a cheap counterfeit. He gives His name. It is a better, eternal name and reputation. ([John 10:28](#)) A genuine Christian may stumble, but by God's grace, they will persevere. For those who persevere, Jesus will not be ashamed to call us His brother or sister. Jesus delivers what He promises. He bestows His name on us.

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to confess? From what do I need to repent?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at [fbcum.org](#)

Next week's sermon text: we turn to Philippians 1:12-18 "Strange Ways the Gospel Advances"

Family Guide for week of February 25th

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.



Suggestions on getting started:

- Decide on a time & place (breakfast, dinner, before bed, etc...)
- Start simple and short (ten minutes or less). Start with three things: 1) Read God's word, 2) Pray together and 3) Sing together. Scripture memory and catechism questions are *optional* if you have the time. Better to start small than bite off more than you can chew and give up.
- Be flexible. It doesn't need to look cookie-cutter similar for every family. Know yourself and know your kids: their personality, age, maturity, etc. [For younger kids consider starting with a good children's Bible like [The Big Picture Story Bible](#).]
- If you don't know the answer to a question someone has, don't act like you do! Say something like, "Great question, let me look into that." Study, ask a pastor or Christian friend and get back to them.
- Embrace the chaos. Kids are kids – don't expect it to be a perfect roundtable discussion with quiet, attentive children every time. Be patient and persistent. Patterns and habits help to set expectations over time.
- To learn more about family worship check out Donald Whitney's book (available at our church bookstall): [Family Worship: In the Bible, In History, and In Your Home](#).

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Bible Intake (*Listening to God*)

Day 1 – John 21:1-14
Day 2 – John 21:15-19
Day 3 – John 21:20-25
Day 4 – Psalm 1
Day 5 – Psalm 2

**Read Philippians 1:12-18 in preparation for church on Sunday, March 3, 2024*

Prayer (*Talking to God*)

Pray about one thing you read in Scripture together.
Pray for a few church members on pg. 32 of our church directory.
Pray for any specific needs of you and your family.

Sing together

"Rock of Ages" – use the bulletin from Sunday

Memory verses for the month

Psalm 86:7 *"In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me."*

Proverbs 18:10 *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."*

Catechism question for the week¹

Question 33

Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?

Answer: No, everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ.

¹ *New City Catechism* (<http://newcitycatechism.com/>)