

**“To the angel of the church in Sardis write:**

**These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup>Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup>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, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.**

**<sup>4</sup>Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup>He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. <sup>6</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** (NIV84)

Theme: Wake Up from Spiritual Slumber.

1. Strengthen your faith through the Word.
2. Walk with Christ in heaven.

In my 21 years of school, I’ve been through many classes in which I had no interest. Perhaps you’ve been in the same situation—or maybe it was a business meeting, or some show that your spouse forced you to watch. We’ve all been there—having to sit through something that doesn’t interest you at all. So what do you do? Most likely, you start to daydream. You start thinking about this or that and soon you become unaware of what is going on around you. But then, almost inevitably, someone asks you a question. Suddenly you snap to it and you are embarrassed because you have no idea what was being talked about and what question you were asked. You were oblivious to what was going on and you potentially missed something that was important. And if you don’t daydream, than you may even fall asleep. In the same way, spiritual apathy can lead to falling asleep spiritually. Your interest in God’s Word may wane and as a result, you may be present at Worship, you may be physically attending Bible Class or reading our Bible at home. But you are just going through the motions without your heart being in it.

Today, God calls upon you to wake up from your spiritual slumber. Strengthen your faith through the Word and to walk with Christ in heaven.

The book of Revelation was sent to seven churches throughout Asia Minor—which is essentially modern-day Turkey. A few verses of were written specifically to each congregation, but the whole letter was sent to all of them. Our text for today, the words to the congregation in Sardis, was the fifth such section. Although this book was written less than 60 years after Christ ascended into heaven, these congregations were not without their problems. They were, after all, congregations filled with sinners. Just like congregations today. The major problem with the congregation in Sardis was spiritual apathy—they didn’t care much about God’s Word. **I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead...I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.** The congregation in the church of Sardis had a good reputation. They did a good job of acting like Christians. One can assume they worshiped God on a regular basis. They behaved like Christians. They followed God’s Word. On the outside they appeared to be the perfect Christian congregation.

But God knew better. Their hearts weren’t in it. They did all the right things, but for the wrong reasons. They didn’t do them in the sight of God. They did it in the sight of others. They wanted to impress those around them. They wanted to look good. They didn’t really care about God’s Word. They weren’t obeying God out of love and thanks to him. They were doing it for themselves—to make themselves look good. Their deeds were good, but their hearts and minds weren’t in it. This is a result of spiritual apathy. Their indifference to God’s Word led them to go through the motions while serving or worshiping the Lord.

Your spiritual apathy may show it self in the same way. Or maybe your spiritual apathy plays out in worship and Bible Class attendance. You may not make worship a large priority in your life. You may not come all that often. You worship when you get the chance—only when it fits into your busy schedule. It may be only when you have nothing else to do. Bible Class? It may have never crossed your mind.

You're busy; you've got other things to do. Why would you take time out of your busy day to study God's Word? You just don't care enough to study or read his word. You're apathetic to the Lord and his Word.

Or maybe your spiritual apathy shows itself in how you respond to God's commands. You know what God's Word says. But you often don't follow it. You don't like that rule. So you simply ignore it. Or perhaps it shows itself in the way you respond to other's sins. Someone you know and love is living in sin. Or perhaps a family member believes or teaches a false doctrine. But instead of point out their sins to them you simply ignore them as if it's no big deal. Or you make excuses to cover over their sins.

Spiritual apathy is a condition that affects all Christians in different capacities. But there is a cure. The Word. As Jesus said through John, **Strengthen what remains and is about to die... Remember... what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.** The faith of those in Sardis was about to die. They cared less and less about God and his Word, so their wasn't much faith left. So Christ called on them to strengthen the little that remained. He told them to remember what they had received and heard—and to obey it. They had heard the Word. It is what brought them to faith and what keeps us in faith. As Paul says in Romans 10, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**

The Word is the message of Christ and his love. How he came down to this earth to live his life for us. How he lived a perfect life in our place because we could not. It is the message of his suffering and death on the cross. Upon which he took all our sins upon himself and gave up his perfect life. He suffered through the pain and agony of eternal punishment with the devil so that we wouldn't have to. Then he rose from the dead so that all believers would live with him in heaven forever. This is the message heard in the Word—and everyone who believes cannot hear it enough. This can be the only cure to spiritual apathy. In order to wake up from spiritual slumber, get in the Word.

But getting in the Word will not only wake you from your spiritual apathy, through the work of the Holy Spirit it will also lead you to walk with Christ forever.

A thief does not announce when he going to break into a house. He comes in secret—at a time when the owners aren't expecting. If he were to announce his arrival, he wouldn't be too successful. People would be ready for him and he would be arrested. No, instead owners take preventative measures to protect themselves against thieves. They lock the doors. Some get a guard dog. Others may pay for a security system. And still others may keep a gun by their bed. No one wants to be caught unprepared for when a thief comes. And yet, many do. They are caught unprepared. And they wake up, come home from work or get back from vacation and things are missing. They fell asleep on their prevention and got caught unprepared.

As he mentions in our gospel for today, Jesus will come in a similar way on the Last Day. He will come like a thief in the night. He will come in secret—when no one else is expecting him. Jesus himself says in our text for today that he will come like a thief. This reminds us of what he said in Matthew 24. **Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.** Don't be caught unprepared. Be ready for the coming of Christ.

Those who are not in the Word will not be prepared. They get caught up in the things of the world. They are concerned about finances, family, and fun. They have their minds set on unimportant things. They fail to prepare their hearts and minds. Too busy to worship, study his Word, or read it at home. They are asleep spiritually. They will be caught and punishment will be brought upon them. As Jesus said in verse 3, **if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.**

The punishment that he will bring is eternal punishment. Like the five foolish virgins who left to get oil, those who are caught unprepared will be left out of God's banquet. The doors to heaven will be closed. For those who are found as unbelievers when Christ returns will not receive the blessings he won for them. They will get what their sins deserve. Sent to eternal damnation. They will suffer in hell forever. They fell asleep spiritually. And they will die eternally.

Not so with those who are spiritually awake. There were only a few people in Sardis who could make this claim. There were only a few who had not soiled their garments by worshiping and bowing down to false gods. They remained believers. And Jesus promised, **They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.** Those who are awake and not sleeping spiritually will receive the blessings that Christ won. They have the forgiveness of sins. They will receive the free gift of eternal life in heaven. And there in heaven they will walk with Christ. They will live side-by-side with their Savior. And they will be dressed in white. Dressed, not in clothes stained red with sin. But their sins are forgiven—dressed in pure white, just like Christ. As John records in Revelation 7, **(believers) have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

Their names were written in the book of life before the world was ever created. And they won't be blotted out. But written in permanent ink that will never be erased. Christ will intercede for them. He pleads his case for us before those in heaven. He loudly proclaims their name for all to hear. For he has given them his perfect life.

So wake up—spiritually. Join that remnant in Sardis. Remain in what you have heard and received. Remain in the Word. Hear, read, and study the gospel. Wake up from your spiritual slumber. Focus not on the things of the world, but on things above. Don't let your mind wander and miss out on what is truly important. And when Christ comes, for you it won't be as a thief, but as your Savior. Amen.