



## Part 7: Hope to Overcome a Zombie Faith

Revelation 3:1-6

*We need to breathe in and out the life of Christ to avoid a faith that might look alive on the outside but is dead on the inside.*

Jesus speaks these striking words to the angel of the church in Sardis, “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up!” Sardis was alive on the outside but dead on the inside, the walking dead, or you could possibly say a “zombie church.”

### Zombies

- Zombies are the walking dead. They look alive on the outside but are dead on the inside.
- Jesus also spoke to another group of people in the New Testament that often acted like Zombies – Matthew 23:27, 28 *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! 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. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*
- We often look down upon Pharisees and say, “Ohh, those religious legalists!” But they were actually the religiously respected people of the day – they went to the synagogue, read the Torah, and said their prayers - they were actually a lot like us.

### Sardis

- Sardis was the largest church among the seven in one of the most gloriously wealthy cities in Asia. They had a beautiful facility, people, and programs. It was a life of comfort. One commentator said that considering it does not appear they were experiencing any persecution; they were “the perfect model of inoffensive Christianity - too innocuous to be worth persecuting.”
- **I WONDER** when Jesus looks at us, Greenwood Community Church, in our beautiful newly renovated facility with our people and programs; **WHAT**

DOES HE SEE? When He looks at our lives and says, "I know your deeds,"  
WHAT DOES HE SEE?

### American Church

- Unfortunately, churches around the world have too often taken the awesome brilliance of God and His radical love for us and made it boring.
- Phillip Yancey, "The glory of God is a person fully alive," said the second-century theologian Irenaeus. Sadly, that description does not reflect the image many people have of modern Christians. Rightly or wrongly, they see us rather as restrained, uptight, repressed-people less likely to celebrate vitality than to wag our fingers in disapproval. "What made you so negative against Christianity?" a friend once asked Friedrich Nietzsche. "I never saw a member of my father's church enjoying themselves."

### Zombie Faith

- In Sardis, Jesus sees a Zombie faith. He is not specific about how it is dead; He just says, v. 3, "for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of God." Commentators have suggested several things.
- As I have thought about it, life is distinguished by breath (breathing in and breathing out). Jesus said that He is the life (John 14:6), "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." And John said in 1 John 5:11-12, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." So, to be alive in Christ means to breathe in and out the life of Christ. I have heard it said before that the name of God, Yahweh, in many ways is the sound of our breathing. "YHWH." (Yod, he, vay, he)
- We hope to be breathing in and out the life of Christ here at Greenwood through our spiritual rhythms of Worship, Community, and Mission. These rhythms reflect the postures of UP, IN, and OUT.

### Breathing in and out the Life of Jesus (5 Imperatives/Commands)

- Jesus is trying to help Sardis breathe again. He gives them five commands: Wake up, Strengthen, Remember, Obey, and Repent.
- V. 2 - **Wake up**. The Message paraphrase says, "Up on your feet! Take a deep breath! Maybe there's life in you yet." It also is a call to watchfulness. The city of Sardis fell twice to invaders even though it was known as an impenetrable fortress on a hill. Twice soldiers climbed a cliff face while there was no one watching and opened the gates from within, and allowed the invaders in. The watchmen had grown lazy.
- **Strengthen** what remains – it appears that they have some structure and form to their faith but are missing the point. They need to strengthen it so that it leads to more of God's love.
- V. 3 - **Remember** what they have received and heard. They have received the Holy Spirit and have heard the hope of the gospel.
- **Obey** - this is all pointless if we know the truth but don't follow it.
- **Repent** - we need to turn from our empty ways towards God and His way.
- Our life in Christ is like a rollercoaster of sweet highs and depressing lows. We need to be vigilant in waking up our souls. For it is the gravity of life and of sin that sucks the breath out of us and turns us into the walking dead. **What does it like for you to breathe in and out the life of Christ in your family, in your neighborhood, at school, and at work?**

## Hope to Overcome (even in Sardis, there was hope)

- V. 4 - "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." To walk with God is to be near him. It is to breathe in and out the life of Christ. And to be dressed in white indicates the righteousness of a priest, or the purity of a wedding garment, or the triumphant, as in a Roman victory parade.
- V. 5 - "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." This seems to imply that we can lose our salvation and that those who don't overcome will be blotted out of the book of life. Knowing the fuller context of scripture, it is really saying that everyone who is written in the book of life will overcome, and that we all persevere and struggle as victors.
- John Piper, 'Can the regenerate be erased from the book of life?' <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/can-the-regenerate-be-erased-from-the-book-of-life>

*"The practical impact of this truth is not that we be cavalier about faith and love and holiness. There is a necessary vigilance ([Hebrews 3:12](#)) and striving ([Luke 13:24](#)), and pursuit ([Hebrews 12:14](#)) in the Christian life. Rather, the impact is that we rest in the assurance that we are not left to ourselves in this "fight of faith." The God who called you is faithful to "confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Corinthians 1:8](#))." "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring [your sanctification] to pass" ([1 Thessalonians 5:24](#)). He will complete the salvation he began ([Philippians 1:6](#)). We are kept by the power of God ([1 Peter 1:5](#)). Fight, we must, for only those who persevere will be saved ([Mark 13:13](#)). And fight we will, because God is at work in us to will and to do his good pleasure ([Hebrews 13:21](#))."*

## Jesus once talked to a Zombie, a pharisee named Nicodemus

- Nicodemus was considered "Israel's teacher." He knew the Torah, strictly followed all of the law and taught others the same. But he also saw something different in Jesus, he saw life. i.e. The Chosen – 7<sup>th</sup> episode – 'The Invitations'

## What Does Jesus See

- So, what does Jesus see when He looks at us and says, "I know your deeds"? I think He would see some Zombies in our midst ... actually there are some days I act like a Zombie. But I believe He also sees His beautiful beloved children breathing in and breathing out the life of Christ.