

The Defiled Garments of Sardis

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the importance of confronting spiritual apathy and the need for repentance to maintain a genuine relationship with God.

Duration: 49:19

Scripture: Isaiah 61:9 - 62:1, Matthew 6:33, Luke 4:18-19

Topics: "Defilement"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of staying steadfast in one's faith and not allowing the truths of God to slip away. He warns against neglecting the great salvation that has been spoken by the Lord and confirmed by those who heard Him. The preacher encourages believers to enter into the rest of God and to rejoice in the salvation that He has provided. He also reminds them of God's promise to go before them and be their rearward, calling them to put on their garments of victory and believe in the victory that God has already won for them.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, P.O. Box 260, Lindell, Texas 75771, or calling 903-963-8626.

You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. I bring you greetings from Pastor David's sister Gwen in Florida on vacation.

And Pastor David has said that he's having one of the most wonderful times of prayer that he's had in quite a long time. The Lord's refreshing him, and I really look forward to what God's going to speak through him when he comes back to be here with us again. Remember all of our visitors, we have a time of fellowship prepared for you and the education annex after the service today.

Please avail yourself of that. And we welcome everyone from wherever you are from throughout the world that are visiting here with us today. God bless you and trust that you will be touched, your heart will be moved by the Holy Ghost, the kingdom of God will advance in your life.

Now, beloved, the Lord had a controversy in the Old Testament with many of his shepherds. The shepherds were those that were set apart, not because of any particular extraordinary ability, but simply because of the choice of God. They were set apart to represent God before the people, and subsequently the people were called to represent him also before the nations.

But the Lord had a controversy with many of his shepherds because they wouldn't go in areas that made them and the people uncomfortable. He said to the shepherds, you've not visited those that are sick. And this is not speaking about hospital visitation, folks.

There's a spiritual sickness that can sometimes get into a flock. And he said, you've not visited them, you've not gone there. You've not put ointment on those festering wounds, the places, the sores as it is that can, if they're not touched by healing, can infect the whole body of that particular person, for example, and absolutely bring them to a spiritual and sometimes even a physical death.

And he said to the shepherds, you've said to those who it is not well with them, you've said it's well. And that is really characteristically the mark of a false shepherd. Loving the admiration of the people will say whatever he has to say or she has to say to gain the people's advantage or their admiration.

And false shepherds really don't care about the people. They care about their ministry. They care about their success.

They're evident, at least in the eyes of men, their success. And they will not challenge issues of the heart that can send people to a spiritual death and even an eternity without God. Beloved, if we as shepherds here at Times Square Church truly love you, if we truly care about you, if we are truly called of God, then as shepherds we will go after those areas that are going to hurt you.

Even if it makes you uncomfortable and even if it's difficult for us, I had it on my heart all week to speak on a certain topic. I have had a happy week. It's been a wonderful week.

God touched me last Friday and healed me. And I've had a wonderful week. It's been a joyful week for me.

And I wanted that joy to come and just spill over this morning to everybody, but the Holy Spirit had another idea. And I sat down to try to prepare, and I remember I told my wife on Friday, I said, This is the first time in a long time that I really don't know what I'm speaking on Sunday morning. Normally, the Holy Spirit is spoken in my heart usually midweek, and I really had no idea, simply because I had an idea and God said, No, that's not my agenda.

I found out this morning Pastor Neil and I are speaking on identical topics today. You see, the Holy Spirit is going after something in some. I have prayed for many who are here, and I believe in God.

I want to see you in heaven. I want you in heaven. When I get to the throne of God, I want to see your face there.

I want you there. And I'm trusting the Holy Spirit because He knows your life. I don't know you apart from Sunday morning in many cases, or Sunday, or Tuesday, Friday, and if we chance to meet throughout the week.

But I don't know you apart from these encounters, but He knows you. The Holy Ghost knows you intimately. He knows all your thoughts.

He knows all your ways. He knows what part of your Christian expression is real and what part is not. What part is birthed in Christ and what part has no part in Him at all.

And the Holy Spirit will go after that. I'm asking you today to receive what God has given me to speak to you, and later today to Pastor Neil as well. What God has given us to speak to you in love.

If you don't hear it that way, it might be very hard for you to hear it. But the essence of what God gives a shepherd to speak is because He cares. When I was an actual physical shepherd, I actually at one time had a sheep farm, a very small sheep farm.

But I remember time and again I'd have to go in the barn and sharpen that knife. And sometimes do minor surgery as it is to get bugs out of the nose and things like that. That if they're not operated on, if they're not taken out, they will actually drive that particular animal insane.

Others had foot rot. If you don't deal with foot rot, it will eventually cripple the sheep. And then of course it can't graze.

If both feet will get it, it can't walk, it can't graze, and it will eventually starve to death. And so some of the things that to the natural eye may have looked very cruel. No chastening, the Scripture says, for the present time seems to be joyous, but grievous.

But afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. That means God's righteousness is born in those who have opened themselves to the discipline of God. I do pray that you will open your heart and receive the full counsel of God.

We preach grace like I've never heard it in my life. And you know that. If you attend this church, you know we preach grace.

Incredible grace in this church. We preach the New Testament covenant. The full salvation and the full power of God to be everything God has called us to be.

But we have to preach the full counsel as well. Father, I thank you today, God, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Now, Holy Spirit, this is your church.

This is your church. This doesn't belong to any one of us. It belongs to you.

These people are your people. They belong to you. This is your body, Jesus.

Your beloved bride that you have called and claimed to yourself that you're going to take home to live with you for all of eternity. Lord, you love everyone in this building. Everyone that can hear my voice today.

You love us all so much that you would become a man and die. And, Lord, that is the basis upon which we hear everything that you have to speak to us. I ask you, Holy Spirit, to quicken me.

Quicken the word of God. Multiply the little that I have, and God, feed everyone in this house. Go into every situation, every life.

Lord God, I can't even begin to relate to everyone here, but you know. Holy Spirit, you know, and you can go where I can't go. Holy Spirit, we are calling upon you today to go.

Into every corner. Behind every curtain. Into every closet.

Into every hidden thing. We're inviting you, Holy Spirit, to go. Those who love truth.

Those who know truth. Lord God, those who are truly born of the Spirit of God, there is a cry. There is a cry that says, Search me, God, and know my heart.

Try me, and see if there be anything wicked in me. And lead me in the way of life everlasting. God, that's the cry of my heart.

And that's the cry of this church. And I'm asking you, Jesus, to tear down that which you haven't built. And to root out that which you haven't planted.

And God, take away that which you haven't set your hand to. And replace it with that which is divine. Which is life.

Which bears your stamp. And the witness of your power upon it. And Father, I thank you for this.

Oh God, with all my heart. Oh Jesus, be glorified in your church. Be glorified in Times Square Church.

Be glorified, God, in the lives of Christians all over the world, Lord, who are searching for truth. Be glorified. Be glorified and honored.

Let your name be named among your people in truth and in righteousness. Father, I thank you for it from the depths of my heart. In Jesus' name.

Revelation. The last book in the New Testament. Chapter 3. I'm going to be speaking a message called The Defiled Garments of Sardis.

The Defiled Garments of Sardis. Now, you understand that these are first generation Christians. Virtually all of them.

John, the beloved apostle, is writing these words. He is still alive. This is the same John that leaned his head on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper.

John is an older man now. Jesus has come to him and he's telling him about the church. This is not a book about the unsaved.

This is about the church. These are people that have been won to Christ and are calling themselves by his name. They have been established by God to be a testimony of his power throughout the world.

Their known world at that time. Even today they're still testifying to us even though they're dead. Revelation 3.1. Hold fast and repent.

If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. But I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

I have no doubt there are many theories about the church of Sardis. Some are true and some are not. There is truth absolutely to the theory that the church of Sardis had once received the truth and had carelessly fallen asleep to the reality of what they had heard.

Now the writer to the church, to the Hebrews, in the book of Hebrews chapter 2, says again to these Christians, which were also first generation, chapter 2 verse 1, he says, Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. Now the connotation of the word slip, the writer of Hebrews is saying, we have heard some wonderful truths and we must be careful, lest through carelessness we allow these truths to simply just drift away from our lives. Now the context of the word in the original text is a ship coming into a harbor of safety, but forgetting to put down its anchor.

And it just casually, the tide begins to move it and it casually begins to drift out of the harbor and is not even aware that it is moving away from that place of safety. And the writer says we must be careful lest at any time that should come into our hearts, that we should hear wonderful, magnificent truths that can not only save us, but set us free and keep us, lest through carelessness or wrong associations, we should allow these truths to begin to just slip away from our lives until they are just a distant memory, but they are no longer a real and actual experience. They are no longer part of our actual profession as it is of being in Christ.

But they have drifted away from us. He says if the word, verse 2, which is spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how should we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by them that heard him? God, verse 4, also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will. The writer is saying how will we escape if even angels suffer a penalty because of their transgression? How will we escape if God has given us a knowledge of the completeness as it is, the fullness of our salvation, and also he has confirmed it to those who spoke it to us, who heard it from him.

He worked among them with great witness. There were signs and wonders and miracles and gifts given to them which could only come from the hand of God. And the Hebrew writer is saying we saw it.

We saw it with our own eyes. We saw the reality that God had made the choice to come and dwell among men. No longer was this gift to the Holy Spirit for a select few as it was in the foregone days before Christ.

No longer was it just the occasional David, the occasional Elijah, Elisha rising up. But now it was to everybody, all flesh, whosoever calls on the name of the Lord. God said I will now come and live in them.

Incredible. He said, tell me, if we neglect this salvation, what's our end going to be? If we take this for granted, if we let it slip out of our lives. God bore them witness.

And you see, God will always bear witness to those that are his. I can tell you that I am anything I want to tell you I am. But the proof is in the pudding as the expression goes.

The proof is in the presence of God in my life. Any preacher can stand and tell you he's anointed. And there are many that will do that today.

But the proof of the anointing is the freedom that comes into your life. The proof is the prison doors that open. The blinded eyes that see.

The wounded hearts that get healed. That's the proof of God's presence. It's not what I say I am or other people say about me.

It's what happens in your life. That's the proof. The same God.

He says in verse 10. Chapter 1. Thou, Lord, in the beginning, in Hebrews, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest.

And they shall all wax old as does a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up. And they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and the years fail not. The writer of Hebrews says we have this same God who has the power to fold the universe.

And he will do that one day. He will take the known universe, in all of its dynamics, as far beyond our understanding as it is. And this same God that created all things will fold it up as an old garment and put it away and recreate it.

Incredible when you think of it. And the author is saying this same God now lives in us. This same God who can change the universe can change us.

This same God who can fold up things that man can't even understand can fold up our old nature. Hallelujah. Fold up the old things.

That's why Paul says if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things are passed away. The old things are folded up by the hand of God within us.

It's an incredible thing. This is an exciting life to be a Christian. Did you know that? It is exciting.

I feel like the hymn writer that said, morning by morning, new mercies I see. Morning by morning, God, you fold up things that I don't understand. You fold them up and put them away just because I desire you.

You change me from image to image and glory to glory by your grace. Only because I desire you. He said this same God in verse 9. God has loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

This same God, Jesus, loves what truly represents Him and hates what does not represent Him. Paul said to the Corinthian church, the Corinthian church was in exasperation to the apostle Paul. They loved God on one hand, but they had a toleration for sin on the other.

I have no doubt the Corinthian church probably had explosive praise and worship. But they also had a man living in sin with his mother in their midst and did nothing about it. There was an acceptance of things that God clearly says are wrong.

And Paul said to the Corinthian church, he said, why? These are his words. I'm paraphrasing his words. He said to the Corinthians, why are you still willfully sinning when you have the knowledge of God's mercy and power that's available to you? It's so unexplainable sometimes why some who have the knowledge, who've sat under the gospel, still make the choices to live in dark places.

When in Christ is all the light, John said that we will ever need. In Him was life and this life was the light of men. But they make a choice.

They understand the power. And Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. I'm just going to read it to you from the Amplified Bible, because I think it explains it a little better.

And he said to them in 1st Corinthians 15:34. Now, listen, these are the words of a loving shepherd to a church that he cared about. And he said, awake from your drunken stupor and return to sober sense and to your right minds and sin no more.

For some of you have not the knowledge of God. He said, you are utterly and willfully and disgracefully ignorant and continue to be so, lacking the sense of God's presence and all true knowledge of Him. He said, I say this to your shame.

He said to the Corinthian church, I don't understand it. It must be a willful ignorance of the ways of God because you've sat under the gospel and yet you continue to live in a way that disgraces the name of the one you say you represent. The prophet Amos cried out to God's people of his generation.

They were not walking in right relationship with God, but they were publicly claiming that they longed for the day of the Lord's coming. They were going to, as it is the worship of their day. And if you were to ask anybody at Amos' day, he says, oh, we long for the Messiah.

We absolutely long. We live for the day of His coming. And really, that is the testimony of many here today.

I live for the day of His coming. I long. But Amos said to them, in chapter 5, verse 18, he said, woe to you that desire the day of the Lord.

To what end is it for you? He said, the day of the Lord is darkness and not light. He said, Amos said, you're putting away from you the very truth of God. And yet you make a public profession of saying, I want Him as my Savior.

I long for the day of His return. But Amos said, you don't understand that when He comes, He's coming for a people of truth. Are they perfect? No.

But they are a people of truth. They want truth. They live in truth.

They're progressing. They're moving forward in that truth. Prophet Malachi, turn with me, please.

It's the last book in the Old Testament that is written 400 years before the arrival of John the Baptist. Malachi is the last prophet that spoke to Israel that there was a 400-year period of silence until John the Baptist. And you're going to find that many of the messengers, the true shepherds of God, had the same word to their generation.

If I had time, I could take you through it continuously, both in the Old and the New Testament. But Malachi chapter 3, he says, Behold, I will send my messenger. You're going to see in here the pattern of God, how God deals with His people.

Now, this is speaking two-fold, obviously, about John the Baptist. But it's also speaking about the word that comes to the heart of every Christian who's making a profession of actively seeking Christ. God says, I will send my word, and then I will come to you for two purposes.

I will come to you to make you free. Or, you remember, He warned in the New Testament. He said, If the light in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.

Or, I will come to you as a witness against you, because you've heard the truth, and you've made the choice not to walk in it. He said, Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Malachi 3.1, And the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom you delight in.

Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide in the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and fuller's soap. Malachi is saying, Those who want the day of the Lord, want the presence of Christ, do you understand that when he comes, he comes to burn away those things that are unlike him.

He comes to cleanse those things that defile his presence in the lives of those who profess to be his. And he shall sit, verse 3, as a refiner and a purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi. Now, in those days, Levi was the chosen priesthood of God, and the descendants of Levi.

And he says, I will begin by purifying those who are called to represent me, or called by my name. You stand before the people as it is, and you speak for me. Now, today, keep in mind that we are all kings and priests unto the Lord.

What was a selective ministry has now been in effect. There are different offices in the church, but all who know Christ are now called to represent him before humankind. I will purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto me an offering of righteousness.

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. In verse 5, he says, I will come near to you to judgment, and I'll be a swift witness against the sorcerers. Now, sorcery, if you look it up in the original text, means the whispers, in a sense.

Those who claim to speak for God, and they don't. Those that say, the Lord has spoken to me, and he hasn't. It also refers to those that are rebellious to truth, and subsequently to everything that represents truth and order in the house of God.

They stand in opposition to God's divine order, yet still have that sense that they are somehow pleasing to God. And God says, no, I will come as a witness. I'll come as a witness to those who have the spirit of rebellion, which is as witchcraft.

I'll come as a witness against that, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers. False swearers, it's just simply people that say, I'm the Lord's, and you're not. I love Jesus, and you don't.

I love you with all my heart, and it's not true. I will follow you wherever you lead me, and you won't. And he said, I will come as a witness against those that swear falsely.

And those that oppress the hireling in his wages. That means those that deal dishonestly in financial matters. Those that cheat on their income tax.

Those that submit false expense accounts to their employers. Those that lie to their wives and husbands about how much money they take home, and how much is in the bank. I will come, and he said, I will deal with all dishonesty in my people.

And he said, the widow and the fatherless. He said, I will come as a witness against those who oppress the weak. And take advantage of those who have no strength, and no power.

And exploit them as it is for their own good. As God lives in heaven, I would tremble to stand before him, having been in the shoes of some that stand in pulpits today. What a day of tragedy that's going to be.

What an awful, awesome, fearful day that's going to be when they stand before God. And that turn aside the stranger from his right. Now, listen to me.

In the Old Testament, there was a law. He said, I'm going to give you a great harvest. I'm going to put things in your field, but you are not to glean the corners of your field.

In other words, you're not to grab everything you can get your hands on. You are to leave the corners of your field unharvested for the sake of the stranger that is passing through who is hungry. Beloved, really what that means for us today is that God says, I will plant wonderful things in your life.

And I will give you an abundance so far beyond anything you could have ever gotten with your own hands. I will put it there and give it to you, but you are not to consume it on yourself. I've given my presence into your life for a purpose.

There are strangers passing through the land that are starving to death. And I'm going to put within you the goods as it is they need. And don't, yes, take a portion for your needs.

There are entire church movements today that are living in total self-consumption. The whole gospel is for me, myself, and mine, and I. And Jesus said, I'm going to come as a witness against this. Because I've planted in your life something that I am destined to cause to overflow you as it is to feed the stranger.

To feed other people who don't know me. You see, Jesus works through his church. And he feeds people.

I'm talking physically and spiritually as well. And he said, I'm coming as a witness to those who don't fear me, said the Lord of hosts. To those who have no sense of awe.

There's no sense of awe at my presence. I'm just buddy up Jesus to them. I'm Sunday God.

And if they're really devoted, I'm Tuesday night God as well. But there's no sense of awe. There's no sense of understanding that I left heaven to live in them.

That I have planted my spirit as it is. I've given my Holy Spirit to my people for an express purpose that they may glorify me. That I might be glorified through them on this earth.

There's no sense of awe. Do you live in a sense of awe? I live in a sense of awe of God. Awe when you wake up in the morning that I am called by God.

Who am I, David said, that you should consider me worthy to touch. What is man that you are mindful of him? Mighty God for the things I did against you. You should have ruled me into a ball and thrown me into eternal darkness.

But instead you came down as a man and you died and took my place. And not only did you take my place, but you come and live in me. And you changed me and you said I'm going to make you a partaker of my plan of redemption.

Let's do all that call upon my name and I will change you. Every day I will change you. To live with God is to live in a sense of awe.

Awe. Oh God. The Bible says you dwell in unapproachable light and yet you have approached me.

The scripture clearly says that if I were to come into your presence in an unclean state, I would be instantly dissolved. I would die in your presence and yet I've seen your face and I live. Back in Revelation again chapter 3. He says to the angel of the church in Sardis.

I know your works. That thou hast the name that thou livest and art dead. Now this is really pivotal to understanding the whole passage, the whole five verses to Sardis.

Bear with me if I labor in this a little bit. In the Greek text the word for works means an attainment. Something you've achieved.

Something you've become which is not accomplished by a single act but rather by the whole performance. And so the Lord says I know your works. In other words, God says I'm not fooled by Sunday's church attendance.

You see because I don't stay just for one act. I go through the whole performance. Jesus said I walk out with you and I go into your home.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. He says I have stayed for the whole performance and I know that which you have become. I know your works.

And he said you have a name that thou livest. The word for name means a character described by that name. Really the name he's talking about is Christian.

You have a reputation. He said but and that reputation is that you live. Now the word for live in the Greek is zeal which means you are caused to live or you are vivified or quickened.

Now this word is only applied to God who possesses life independently from anyone and from whom all things derive their life and existence. It means that to live under the constant guidance and influence of God. He said now you have a name that you are God's.

And that God's spirit lives in you and that you live under his constant guidance and influence. You have that reputation. People look at you and say you are Christian.

You attend Times Square Church. If this is your home church or wherever it is that you attend that you have given your life to God. You may have boasted about the Holy Spirit being in your life.

Being close to God. He says you have a name. People look at you.

He said but you are dead. And the word is necros which means you are separated from the quickening grace of God. He said you have a name that the name that you have is that my power is the light that animates you.

But he said I've followed your whole performance. And it isn't true. Now listen very very carefully to me.

There are people that visit this church here and they may see you and I worshiping. And this is an explosive church when it comes to praise and worship. And it should always be that way.

And you might be among those that come into the church and you are leaping and dancing and glorifying God. And the stranger looks at you and says wow. God is with these people.

The reality is that God is with most of these people. Others are just simply moved by the music. They like the beat.

They could do the same thing because they are doing the same thing in a club on Wednesday night. Don't think for one second there is not people here that go to clubs. There are.

And they groove and dance there too as well. And then they come into God's house and do the same thing on Sunday. You see the Lord says I have followed the whole performance.

I walk where you walk. I know where you go. I know who you are.

And people walk in here and they might be fooled by your reputation. But God says I am not. I know who you are.

I see the checks you sign. I hear the words you speak at home. I know who you are.

Keep in mind he is speaking to his church. He is not speaking to the heathen. He is speaking to his church.

These are people who profess to love Jesus. Profess to know Jesus. And he said in verse 2, he said be watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die.

Now he said there are still some good things in you. But even that which you have is passing away. You are sliding out of the harbor and you are not even aware of it.

It is fading away. In verse 3 he said remember therefore how thou hast heard and how thou hast perceived and heard and hold fast and repent. Now he said I spoke to you one time and you heard it.

And you received it. And he said get back there. The word repent means regret but it is accompanied by a true change of heart towards God.

Remember when you first heard and you wanted to walk with me. Remember the days before you took my grace for granted and made it cheap. Remember the days when your desire was to live a holy life.

Remember the days when you wanted me to use you and change you. What happened? You slipped out of the harbor. And in many cases it happens in churches all over the nation.

They have great revival and then the grace that they have received becomes some cheap thing. That they can walk through their week and squander and then come back in and say I am saved. And then they have some preacher stand there and say things are well.

And they are not well. He says in verse 3 he says if you will not watch. Now the word for watch means wake up.

Literally that is what it means. If you will not wake up I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. As a thief.

That is an incredible thing. I mean there is obvious meanings to that. We know the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night.

He said in Malachi I will come suddenly when you do not expect me. In some cases people will just at that point become aware and the day of the Lord's return. It is at that point they become aware that they have been cut off from the grace of God.

But there is another meaning. And I want you to hear this very clearly. I believe the other meaning is simply this.

The messenger comes first. Remember Malachi. First the messenger then the Lord comes to the temple.

What happened to Israel? The messenger came and said prepare your hearts. The Messiah is coming. And then he came to his temple.

And they did not know him. He walked among them. They did not even know he was there.

They were offended at him. They were offended at his words. Offended at his claim upon their lives.

The legitimate claim. Offended at the expression of his love. They were offended at his healing.

They were absolutely offended at the Messiah that they said that they once loved. He came among them. But because of their sleep they were not even aware he was there.

And I believe that is exactly what he is saying to Sardis. I will have come near to you but you will not be aware of it. Except for the sense of loss.

The thief comes in the night. And you do not know he has been there. But when you get up in the morning there is a sense that something has been lost.

And he said except for the sense of loss you will not even know that I have been near you. Everyone is gaining and you are losing. Everyone is drawing near and you are fading.

You see there is a dividing line. Whether we like it or not. In the kingdom of God.

Luke 8.18 Jesus said it this way. He said take heed therefore how you hear. For whosoever hath the hymn shall be given.

And whosoever hath not. Even that which he seems to have. In the original text means he imagined he had.

Is taken away. He said in Revelation 3.4. You have a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy.

Now I want to look at the garments. Now we are going to go to these and finish with this. Go to Isaiah chapter 61.

Please with me. You have a few names. That have not defiled their garments.

Isaiah 61. The prophet Isaiah describes these garments that God has given to us. For the express purpose of honoring him.

Isaiah 61. Let's start in verse 10. He says I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.

My soul shall be joyful in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. First and foremost when you and I come to Christ.

He says I will cleanse you. The word for salvation is yeshah. In the Hebrew it means liberty, deliverance, help, salvation, freedom.

It's the Hebrew name of Jesus is derived from this word. When we came to Christ and acknowledged that we were sinners. God almighty himself received us because Jesus his son covered us.

He covered us with his own righteousness. He gave us a new robe. So that when God looks upon us he does not see our filthiness anymore.

He sees the beauty as it is of his son. He sees the obedience of his son. He sees the glory of his son when he looks at you and I. And I thank God for that knowledge.

That's what gives me the power to throw away the condemner. And all of his lies. Because I know in my heart I long for truth and walk in truth.

As God speaks to my heart and gives me the enablement I am able to walk in it. But I thank God for that garment of salvation. I thank God for that cleansing blood of Jesus Christ with all my heart.

Hallelujah. That is my glory. That's my joy.

He gave me a new garment. He took away that stinking robe of sin and all the past and gave me a brand new garment of salvation. Whether or not you can see it if you're a Christian, you are wearing it today.

It is upon you. When God the Father looks at us he only sees the glory of his son. Hallelujah.

That's why the writer of the New Testament says, I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That is not a vain boast. He says it's as if I had never sinned.

Because God has taken my sin and he has placed it upon his own son. He paid the price for my sin. And then he was raised again from the dead on the third day.

In absolute glory where he sits now at the right hand of all power. And he sent his garment abroad to whoever will call on his name. Hallelujah.

Beloved, you don't have to live in sin. You don't have to be filthy. You don't have to be under the power of sin.

Jesus Christ died. Paid the price for your sin and sent his own image as it is. Sent his own garment of righteousness.

And he covers in a moment those that place their trust in him. Those that say, Lord, I'm a sinner. I need to be saved.

And it's honest in your heart. He said, remember how you received soreness. He said, when you cried out to me in your need, I didn't find you when you were righteous.

He said, Israel, I found you in your own blood lying out in the field. But I took you to myself and I cleansed you and I clothed you. Hallelujah.

Thank God for that day. Hallelujah. Again in verse 10, he said, he's given me the garments of salvation and has covered me with a robe of righteousness.

As a bride groom decks himself with ornaments and a bride adorns herself with jewels. He's given me a robe of righteousness. That means a robe of right standing.

That means my iniquities are not imputed to me. Now, this is not for the religious game player, folks. None of these promises are for the hypocrite.

Don't be deceived, Paul said to the Corinthian church. Idolaters and fornicators and the effeminate and all these other things. He said, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

And he said, such were some of you to the Corinthians. But now you are washed. Now you are sanctified.

In other words, there are people among us who make the choice not to live a righteous life and will pay the eternal cost. But he has given me a robe of righteousness. That means the righteousness of God.

He has lifted me constantly into right standing with him. He has received me as his own son. That's where I stand now, before the throne of God.

My state might be a little bit different than my standing. My standing is completely accepted. But my state may be way down here.

But God sent the Holy Spirit into my life to continuously throughout my life lift my state in line with my standing. He's given me a robe of righteousness. He's given me the power to be a different man.

Hallelujah! There is no sin that can have dominion over me anymore. If any sin wants to have dominion over my life, it has to be there by invitation. Because it has no power.

It's been broken at the cross. Absolutely triumphed over when Christ was raised from the dead. And the fact that he was raised from the dead is living proof that my hope is not in vain.

Hallelujah! Now, next I believe is the garment, the neglect of which had begun the whole slide in Sardis to spiritual death. You find it in Isaiah 61, verse 1. Jesus said these words in Luke. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me.

Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted. To proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all that mourn. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion and to give to them beauty for ashes.

The oil of joy for mourning. And the garment of praise. For the spirit of heaviness.

God said I gave you a garment. I gave you salvation. I gave you an assurance that my righteousness is now given to you.

But my righteousness is also being daily worked into your lives by the power of the Holy Ghost. And I gave you a garment of praise. And I believe this garment of praise is inseparably linked to a belief in the faithfulness of God.

You cannot separate it from faith. The garment of praise is linked to faith. Like our salvation is linked to the blood of Jesus Christ.

You remember the children of Israel could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. The garment of praise is something that God himself gives to those that are his. And it comes to those who have received the word of God.

It comes to those who say, God, your promises to me are yea and amen. You cannot lie to me. You are a God of truth.

And in spite of what I see, in spite of what I hear, in spite of my circumstances, your word is truth. And I praise you God. I praise you for what you're going to do.

You see, Sardis had a reputation. But it was not linked to reality anymore. They were just singing songs, but there was no longer faith in the heart.

And that begun the whole process of spiritual death. But the true child of God who has heard his word and begins to understand his heart comes into the house of the Lord. And says, the devil can't have my sons.

The devil can't have my daughters. The devil can't have my grandchildren. The devil can't have my family.

The devil can't have my finances. The devil can't have the pathway of my feet. The devil can't keep me bound in sin anymore.

Hallelujah. Yes, you might be in the midst of the worst battle in your life. But God says, I've given you a garment of praise.

I've given you the ability by faith to lift your voice and begin to sing the songs of Zion. And glorify me. He says, when you choose to believe me, I will not fail you.

Hallelujah. I will not fail you. I stake my very name on your freedom.

I stake my very name on answering your prayers. And be the delight of your life and heart. Let me just read this to you.

David, the king, said in Psalm 18, I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. I will love you. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.

My buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. He said, I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. And so shall I be saved from my enemies.

I will call. He said, I used to call and God has answered my prayer. He wrote this just after he was delivered from the hand of Saul.

Throughout the psalm, you see that he says that sores of death were around me and I was afraid. But I called out to God. Remember, he said to Sardis, how you've received and heard.

Remember, God, says the days that I worked in miracle power in your life. And David said, I remember, God, how faithful you've been. And when I face trial and when I face difficulty and when sin threatens to overwhelm me and when the devil tries to tell me I'm not going to make it and when he comes with lies and difficulties and storms and adversities come into my life, I will call upon the Lord and I will praise you.

God, I will praise you. I will not sing my sorrow.

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