

# Sardis - Don't Trust in Your Reputation

by Phil Beach Jr.

---

*The sermon warns against relying on reputation rather than a genuine relationship with Christ, emphasizing the need for spiritual vigilance and repentance.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 11:2

**Topics:** "Spiritual Revival", "True Repentance"

---

## Description

Phil Beach Jr. preaches about the church in Sardis, highlighting the discrepancy between their reputation of being alive and their actual spiritual deadness. Christ, as the source of spiritual life, calls them to look to Him for salvation and to be filled with His Spirit. Without His life, our works are rejected, and we risk losing our living union with the Lord. Christ counsels the church to be watchful, strengthen what remains, and repent, emphasizing the importance of deep repentance and turning back to Him for renewal.

---

## Transcript

...You are supposed to be alive (a reputation), but (in reality) you are dead..." Rev. 3: 1b. One's reputation may not be an accurate representation of the truth. When I first started my job, there were certain people who had a reputation of being very unkind and cruel. However, as I got to know these folks, I found that their reputations were not really based on the truth. Sometimes our name or reputation can be in direct contrast to the reality. As we look at the message that our Lord had for his church in Sardis, we will see that the name and reputation they had was not accurate.

Most likely, when folks mentioned the church in Sardis, it was, for the most part, spoken of very highly. Since they had a name of being alive it is likely that other believers perceived them as being filled with God's Spirit, living in obedience to their risen Lord and brightly shining in their community as a light to those in darkness. Sardis pictures a church that had a marvelous reputation but was spiritually dead and seriously lacking the life of the risen Lord in her midst.

Let's look more closely at this church and see exactly what our Lord had to say to them. As we prayerfully ponder our Lord's Word to this church, we should listen to His voice to our own hearts also. Perhaps He may say the same thing to us as He said to these folks, "You are supposed to be alive, (a reputation), but (in reality) you are dead." Christ, the Source of Spiritual Life From the very beginning of Christ's Words to His church in Sardis, He reveals the answer to this church's spiritual deadness.

Jesus reveals Himself as the one who has the seven spirits of God. Since Sardis had become a lifeless and dying church, Jesus shows them that only in looking back to Him can they be saved from this condition. Anytime we become guilty of having a reputation of being alive to the Lord but are in fact dying spiritually, the Lord calls us to look back to Him as the only source of life. Christ was telling His church and is telling us too that we do not have life or vibrant, living union with His Spirit unless we are looking to Him, moment by moment as our source.

Christ by the Holy Spirit is the Comforter who is given to the church so that we may be united to Him and live by His risen life. As God's Word says, the Holy Spirit makes the very life of Christ to live in our hearts, who is our hope of glory! He also is known as the Spirit of Truth. By this, the Spirit of God is able to open the eyes of our hearts to see the glory and majesty of our risen Lord and to make His character and eternal perfections to be a growing part of our very nature.

In Isaiah 11:12, we see the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit that God intends to make available to those who are obedient to Him. God, by His Spirit, wants to be our Lord, our wisdom, our understanding, our counsel, our might, our knowledge and godly fear! Yes, beloved, by these passages, we can see how vitally important it is to be under the control of God's Spirit. But these believers were not! Instead, they were dead, living in the power of their own nature, trusting in their own human wisdom, understanding and might.

By these things they were able to create a nice reputation for themselves as well as an appealing and beautiful to the sight church with nice programs and lively worship. But Christ rejected this religious life and called it dead and void of His life and presence. Without His Life, He Rejects our Works Without His presence and Holy Spirit in our lives, in our homes and in our gatherings with other believers, we are unable to know the works of divine grace. Some of the works of divine grace that are essential include the fruit of the Spirit along with the Spirit's quickening, convicting power.

Also, we need the Spirit of God in our lives so that we can learn to be led by Him in the choices that we must make each day. We see that the church in Sardis had lost its living union with the risen Lord and was suffering His rebuke. We too must be sure that the Holy Spirit of God is being given His proper place in our lives. Besides obeying the Spirit, God tell us that it is possible for the Spirit to be grieved. This means that we can make Him sorrowful by either rejecting His conviction or acting in a manner that is not pleasing to Him, against the law of love and moral purity.

We can also quench the Spirit of God. This means to put out or dry up. Whenever we substitute human wisdom for divine wisdom, human strength for divine power and leaning on our own understanding instead of trusting in God's Word and divine counsel, we are quenching the Spirit of God. Should we make it a practice to engage in any of these sins, we too can lose our living union with the Lord. Though we may retain a reputation with others as being alive spiritually, we will in fact be dying or even dead!

It's easy to quench or grieve the Spirit of God if we are not very careful. Watching the wrong kinds of programs on T.V. is a sure way of both grieving and quenching the Spirit of God. Speaking unhealthy and critical words can also result in our grieving and saddening the Spirit of God. Also, if we are driven by our own ambition, we may, instead of waiting on the Lord for guidance, forge ahead with our own plans and desires, and try to manipulate circumstances so that we can get what we want.

By doing this we are most definitely troubling the Holy Spirit. Christ's Counsel to a Dying Church After Jesus speaks the truth to His church, He then gives them sober advice and warns them of imminent

danger should they ignore his counsel. First He tells them to be watchful. This church had become lazy, filled with the comforts of this life, prosperous and spiritually asleep. They had become unguarded, careless in their spiritual lives and were no longer looking earnestly to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith.

Their hearts had become hard and fattened with the fullness of this world's wine and dining. Often, this word watch is connected with prayer. Jesus as well as Paul tells us to watch and pray. Most likely, these believers had not only become unguarded and stopped being watchful, but had also become prayerless. Perhaps they had retained a form of prayer and continued with their prayer meetings, but things had become dead and lifeless and their praying was not energized by the Spirit of God.

They were participating in a form of religion but had lost the power of His purifying presence. When this happens to us, we may remain faithful to meetings and activities, but our faithfulness is springing out of a need for religious security rather than the outworking of His life in and through us. Next, the Lord gives an amazing and sobering word to His church. After telling them to be watchful, to be alert and to be on guard, He tells them to strengthen what remains because He did not find a thing they had done as meeting the requirements of God!

Beloved, God does not require us to be without sin. This is not what Jesus is referring to. Remember, this church was believed by others to be alive but was dying spiritually. I'm sure these believers were filled with good works, but works springing out of their own righteousness, and not those birthed through obedience to the Spirit of God. Such works are always rejected by the Lord because they lack the essential element necessary to gain the Lord's approval. We can come up with good ideas of ways to serve the Lord and others, but unless the ideas are born of the Spirit, they are dead.

Jesus reminds them to "...call to mind the lessons you received and heard; continually lay them to heart and obey them, and repent. In case you will not rouse yourselves and keep awake and watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know or suspect at what hour I will come." Christ tells this church to remember that at the beginning, the message of Jesus was fresh and living, and they received it by the power of the Spirit. Their hearts were filled with awe and wonder as they walked in obedience to the Word of God.

Jesus calls these believers to remember the deep hunger and thirst for God they had experienced in their early days when their hearts were filled with alertness, love, devotion and earnest prayer. Then their service to the Lord and others was springing out of a vibrant walk with the Lord. Indeed, at the beginning, these believers were drinking of the living waters that Jesus promised to those who are thirsty and hungry to know Him and do His will. Is the Lord saying the same thing to us today?

Do we, like the believers in Sardis, need to remember how we received our Lord? Do we need to come back to that fresh, vital walk we once had with Him? A Final Word, Repent! Finally, the Lord Jesus tells His church to repent. How honest and clear our Lord is in His Word. After showing this church their true condition, Christ tells them to change their ways, turn from the snare they had fallen into and come back to Him, so that they could receive the Spirit of God afresh in their lives.

Any time we become lazy and unguarded and fall from our love for the Lord, we are in need of deep repentance. These believers had become lethargic and lost their fervor to know the Lord and bask in His presence and Word. Their hearts had become spiritually dead, and they and were in desperate need of confessing their sins to the Lord and each other. How willing the Lord is to heal us if we will only be honest

and admit to our guilt and not claim innocence. It is worth noting that Christ does say that He found a few in Sardis who did not defile their garments.

This does not mean that these were super saints among the Sardis church who were superior to the others. Whenever we admit to our true state, deeply repent and turn from our sins, the Lord will cover us in His garments of white and make us clean in His eyes. No doubt, these few whom the Lord mentions were those who were listening to the voice of the Spirit and received His word of correction and rebuke and exhibited godly repentance. They found grace and help at the feet of Jesus and were commended by their Lord!

Everyone in Sardis had this same opportunity to be clean, if they only would heed the Spirit's conviction and humble themselves before God and one another. Let us not think for a moment that these few were guiltless and blameless saints that were innocent of the charges the Lord brought to His church. There are no innocent ones in the Lord's church. We are all guilty of failure and are subject to the rebuke in this letter. Only those who admit to their guilt and find mercy and forgiveness through the grace of God and the blood of Jesus are declared guiltless before God.

Such were these few that Jesus mentions. In Conclusion Jesus warns these believers that if they do not watch and become alive with His Spirit, then He will come to them as a thief and they will not be ready. Clearly Jesus is warning us all that if we do not repent of being lifeless and without a living walk with the Lord and His Spirit, then we are in danger of missing His second coming. God's Word says that Christ is coming back for those who are earnestly looking for Him with great fervor and expectation.

It matters not that we may have a good reputation among others as being alive and vibrant. We may even think in our own eyes that we are doing quite well in our walk with the Lord and feel good about our service to God. But, God sees the truth about our hearts and knows exactly how much of His life and Spirit we are submitting to. It would do us well not to trust in what others may think of us or in what we may think of ourselves, but to go to the Lord and let His Word and Spirit search our hearts.

He alone can see clearly and is unable to make an error in His judgment of our true spiritual condition. This however is not true about us, as our assessments are often inaccurate. And as we have seen, others too are unable to make a correct estimation of our true spiritual state before the Lord. God promises His church in Sardis that those who overcome this sin and awaken out of spiritual death will be clothed in white raiment. This speaks of the righteousness of Christ that is both imputed as well as demonstrated in works being seen in the believer who is living by faith and in the power of the Spirit of God.

God promises to give the repentant, brokenhearted sinner in Sardis the beautiful garments of His Son's life and holiness! What a promise to lay hold of dear friend. May the Lord give us much grace to lay hold of His Word today and listen to His voice so that we can heed His warnings and be made to walk in garments of white, bringing glory to our Lord in all we may say and do. Amen

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/phil-beach-jr/sardis-dont-trust-in-your-reputation/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**