

Flatline Faith: Awake From Death

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the need for spiritual awakening and genuine faith in the church, warning against the dangers of being outwardly alive but inwardly dead.

Duration: 51:28

Scripture: Revelation 3:1

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "The Importance of Love in Faith"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the spiritual condition of the church in Sardis, emphasizing the danger of being outwardly active yet inwardly dead. He draws parallels between Sardis and modern churches, warning that a focus on truth can lead to a hard heart devoid of love and joy. Idleman encourages believers to awaken from spiritual lethargy, strengthen what remains, and return to their first love for Christ. He stresses the importance of genuine faith and repentance, urging the church to be the conscience of the nation rather than an irrelevant social club. The sermon serves as a call to spiritual resuscitation and a reminder of the urgency of being watchful and prepared for Christ's return.

Transcript

We have been in a series on the churches in the book of Revelation. There are seven churches represented. Really it represents seven conditions, in my opinion, that can happen in the church today as well.

So we've been doing a survey of these seven churches. If you haven't heard the last four messages or so, I would encourage you to go back and read those, or not read those, but look at those messages online. The first church we talked about many weeks ago was the church in Ephesus.

Now like the church we're going to look at today, which is called Sardis, it's in the area of Sardis, the town of Sardis, Ephesus, like this church, was dead. But Christ noted their service. He looked at their straightforward theology.

Ephesus was praised because they could point out error. But their heart had grown hard and cold and callous. And what was their recommendation, or actually their command, Jesus said, return to your first love.

Repent and return to your first love. But it's interesting, Ephesus was rebuked by Jesus, I know your works, but this church, he says the same thing, I know your works, but he doesn't list any works. He just says, I know your works, but you're dead.

No thanking them for their service, no thanking them and pointing out for error. So in my opinion, I actually maybe made the mistake, but I didn't look at a commentary this week. I'm just reading it and think that's good sometimes.

I don't let the commentaries dictate the sermon. I usually bring them in to see if hopefully I'm on track there, because if you've got John MacArthur, Matthew Henry, and Norman Geisler, and a lot of good theologians on the same page, then it's a good direction to go. But my thought is that Sardis, Ephesus was dead.

And this is my concern for this church, and many churches that are so adamant about the truth, is we can get so adamant about the truth that we lose the heart of love. We can be serving and serving and serving, ushering, children's ministry, sound and media, preaching on the worship team, and we can be serving but hard. We can be going to church but hard as a rock.

And you'll know it because you'll lose that joy. You'll lose that peace. You'll lose that fervency.

I remember, I went through a lot of transitions, but when I first came back to the Lord, 1999-2000, it was a rocky year, you know, the enemy was pulling me back. But I was just, you know, you're just on fire, you want to go to church, you're joy-filled, and you're putting in worship, and then you start to learn more, and they're like, oh, are you Calvinist or are you Arminian? Oh, you like that worship? What about the hymnals? Are you pre-trib, post-trib, or mid-tribulation? All this stuff and all this division and hard-heartedness, and you start to develop this rigidity, kind of, and this hard heart, because I've learned the more theology you learn, you better be able to humble yourself because knowledge puffs up. And it's interesting, you see a lot of new believers on fire for God, and then they see the old saints of God fighting and arguing about everything, and then they begin to be disgruntled.

Now, I'm not dismissing theology, you have to have it, you have to have a correct understanding of God. But that's my concern for this church, and for myself in general, for those who serve here, is we can serve, but we lose the joy. And then it becomes about policies and procedures and protocol, and not the people.

We've got the services down, we've got this going on, but you lose the joy, you lose the happiness, you become sin-sniffers. You become judgmental. It's really easy to detect.

I mean, is my heart soft towards people? Is it broken towards people? Or are we making an excuse why we shouldn't have the homeless here? Oh, that's quiet. But that's what happens in a hard heart sometimes. We're thinking all the reasons why they shouldn't come here.

Why this isn't going to work. Legality, liability. Better be careful.

Yeah, I understand all that. But where's the love? Where's the compassion? Now, fortunately, I haven't seen that yet here with this outreach. It's just, while it's on my mind, showing you how all of our hearts can grow cold and callous.

Mine included. I'm not up here pointing fingers, because we can just go through the motions. So that's the difference.

Ephesus, a few weeks ago, listen to that sermon. I think it was The Living Dead was the title. And this church in Sardis is just completely dead.

Jesus says, I know your works, ha ha ha, you say you're alive, but you're dead. So this can relate to a lot of people as well. And I came across a poem that I read, I think, I don't know if I've read it in the last year or so.

It's very brief, but it really brings us home about the church in Sardis. The church today. I was hearing some interesting statistics this week on how the core team of a church, the core people of a church 15, 20 years ago, they were here three weeks out of the month.

Now that's down to two weeks or one week out of the month. See, it's become now in our culture, if I can get to it, right? If it fits in my schedule, I'll get to church. But see, God used to be the priority.

And then everything else was centered and fit around God. So anyway, let me read that to you. Let me move this out a little bit, see if that helps with the popping.

I don't know what's going on with that. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine.

I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack.

I would like to buy just \$3 worth of God, please. If that doesn't hit home, folks, we can all run the risk of going in that direction. So let's look at Revelation 3.1 and see what's going on with this church.

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, these things say, he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I know your works, that you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. For I have not found your works perfect before God.

Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard. Hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life. But I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So, you ready to unpack that? The first part, and to the angel of the church in Sardis write these things, he who has the seven spirits of God. Now, I think I talked about that weeks prior, but seven often represents completion.

So, obviously, there's not seven Holy Spirits and different things. It represents completion, or it could represent seven angelic beings. Or, in cross-reference to Isaiah 11 too, where it says the Spirit of God will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.

So, it could be this completeness, this all aspects of God's Spirit. We don't want to worry about that too much, because the heart of the message is the next verse. I know your works, that you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead.

How can you be alive, but be dead? He's obviously talking about spiritually dead, physically alive. I know you exist, but you're dead. You have an ad on Facebook, but you're dead.

You have a sign in front of your church, but you're dead. You even started a school, you packed them in, but you are dead. Members show up when it's convenient, but you're dead.

You even serve here, but you're dead. You get the idea? You barely have a pulse, Jesus is saying, you need spiritual resuscitation. Just this morning, I was going over this, and I remember it's coming up in many years now.

January 6th, 1994. I got a call from a lady who comes here now and then. And she said, Shane, you need to get to the hospital, they're trying to resuscitate your dad.

And I knew what that meant. So, obviously get to the hospital in Lancaster. By then it was just obviously too late.

He's laying there with the tubes in his mouth and already gone. But that word has always stuck with me. They're trying to revive.

They're trying to bring back. He's gone, or he's going. Resuscitation.

And folks, hear me loud, hear me clear, this is needed in the church. Many people are dying spiritually. They need resuscitation.

They need that quickening, that breath of the Holy Spirit. Breathe into them that power of the Holy Spirit. You can be alive but dead.

I don't know how much I should share either, but let me just go for it a little bit. I do remember when I was looking at him there in the hospital and just began weeping, of course. And then realizing later now that he came to know the Lord a lot later.

And I learned so many good things. Work ethic, strong work ethic from the farms of Oklahoma. You know what that means, right? Digging ditches, working hard, blisters.

These kids that cry about work today, I just laugh. You have no idea what hard work is. Where you actually come home and you just fall asleep exhausted because of the work.

But I didn't learn anything about God from him. My mom, of course. So 24 years laying there, nothing about God.

And I wonder how many of us are alive but dead spiritually. We're not teaching anybody about God, let alone our children, our grandchildren, our spouse. The most important thing that we should be alive with.

We've dropped the ball. We are dead or we are dying. We need spiritual resuscitation.

Verse 2, be watchful and strengthen the things which remain. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. For I have not found your works perfect before God.

So Jesus, can you imagine Jesus saying to this? He says be watchful, be watchful and strengthen the things which remain. I have not found your works good, basically, before God. Remember, therefore, how you have received and heard.

Remember, you received and heard. Hold fast and repent. Do we have that word up there? Oh, you see it, huh? Hold fast in the middle.

Hold fast and repent. See, that's a word we don't like to talk about too often, do we? See, the church in Ephesus weeks ago wanted to tell everybody else to repent. They didn't see the need to repent.

And this church, Sardis, doesn't want to repent because they love the sin. They love the worldliness. They love the carnality.

So Jesus says, I see. I see what's going on. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain.

Be watchful. Do you know what watchful means? See, we miss it kind of because we think of watching TV when we hear that word watchful. You're watching TV, right? You're sitting on the couch.

That's not what this word means. This word watchful is to take note of and to call out. So, in other words, I'm watching.

I'm watchful. This is about ready to die in me. Have you felt that before, Shane? I used to draw near to God.

I used to know God. I used to have this passion. But something is dying in me.

Be watchful, he says. Be watchful. Note that.

Call it out. See, it's a wonderful thing to call it out because then repentance takes place. God, my prayer life is dying.

My worship time. I don't want to go to church anymore. I get there once a month.

I'm watching. I see this. I'm going to strengthen.

I have to strengthen this thing that's barely remaining in me. And for a believer, have you seen a huge fire in your living room get down to almost nothing? What do you have to do? Watch. Turn on the gas.

Get something going. Re-flicker. Is that even a word? I don't know if that's a word.

Reignite that little flicker of light. Get that going again. And strengthen what remains.

And often we think that God will do it, right? I was reading in Isaiah 52 this week, all week, and just planted my heart there for a season. In Isaiah 51, it's interesting because the people, they're in bondage. They're held captive, I believe, by the Babylonians.

And Isaiah says, oh, captive daughter of Jerusalem. So they're in captivity. And they prayed, God, would you awake? God, would you do something? And he says, no, you awake.

In Isaiah 52, he says, awake, oh, daughter of Jerusalem. Put on your strength. Get back up.

See, sometimes you've got to get back up and fight and persevere. He says, put on your strength. Put on your beautiful garments.

And then those who are uncircumcised and the defiled and the unclean will not come against you. Daughter of Zion, rise up. Get up.

Awake. And take off the dust of your clothes. Get back up and fight this fight.

Take off the bonds of wickedness and addiction that have robbed you. And rip those off of you. And come out of her, my people.

It's a call to us to awake. But they were, in the chapter previously, going, God, would you awake? Would you remove us from this? Would you help us? Sure, I'd love to help you. But you need to awake.

See, we're not puppets. Pull this string and awake. Get up, Shane.

No, it's God's pleading. God the Holy Spirit convicting. Preaching.

Worship. Awake. Awake.

Awake. Arise, children of God. Arise and get back up.

And strengthen that thing which is dying. Because you know, right? You know this can creep in. You know this can creep in.

The church in Ephesus, four weeks ago, the living dead was a big concern of mine. Because, here's why. He said, you have works.

You know the Bible. You can quote some scriptures. You can point out false teachers.

But you've left your first love. You've left your first love. And that's my concern for a church like this.

Bible-believing, truth-loving, Christ-exalting churches can drift from their first love. We begin to focus on work, right? We're here at church. We're working.

I'm going through these things. We get really good at working. But we drift from our first love.

How do you know? It's very simple. It's a very simple test. Has joy left? Has peace left? Gentleness? Do you have a critical spirit? Do you have a critical heart? That's the lack of the fruit of the spirit.

The critical heart will come into church and begin to pick this church apart. Oh, wow. Those songs aren't a hundred years old.

What happened to the hymns? They didn't do this. The critical heart, you've left your first love. You've left your first love.

And this church in Sardis concerns me as well because they think they are alive. Look, we've got a name out front. Facebook ads, right? We're drawing in the masses.

We're drawing in the masses. And Jesus says, yeah, but you're dead spiritually. You're dead spiritually.

You like to tickle the ears. Right? That's why Paul told Timothy, for the time will come when they will not endure. They will not put up with sound doctrine.

The time will come. They will not endure sound doctrine. But they'll look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear.

What does that mean? Oh, I'm so good. That's right. Tell me how good I am.

That's right. Oh, yes. I can stay in sin and God still just loves and winks.

Oh, tell me how good I am as I go party tonight. And I went to church and just checked it off. Tell me, tell me, tell me.

Looking for that teacher. See, sometimes, here's the interesting thing. Sometimes we get mad at the teacher.

Right? On TV or whoever. But if you ever stop to consider, it might also be the people who like the teaching. Oh, that false teacher on TV.

No, but the people like it. They're looking for that. A false teacher would have no audience if the audience didn't want what he was saying.

And that's his church in Sardis. This type of church is alive as far as a name out front. Or Facebook ads.

Or their parking lot might be full. But they are dying spiritually. They don't talk about repentance.

They don't talk about the judgment of God. They don't talk about holiness. They don't talk about drawing in closer to Christ.

They don't talk about being filled with the Spirit and turning from sin. All these important things, they just, no, no, no, no, no, no. We're not going to talk about that.

Then you're a social club. It was actually Martin Luther King Jr. who said, The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state. It's the conscience of the state.

And if she ever loses her prophetic zeal, she will become an irrelevant social club. Without moral or spiritual authority. That was powerful in the 60s.

That fits perfectly now. We're the conscience of the nation. We're the conscience of the people.

When people come in, the people not living right, their consciences should be convicted. Woe be to the church that just comforts and lulls them back to sleep. We're the conviction, the conscience of the nation.

And if we lose that, we become an irrelevant social club. Because people walk in, they don't change. They come in, nothing is challenged.

So Jesus, I see you, I see you singing the songs about me. Isn't that wonderful? And you clap your hands a little bit even. And you say, Amen brother, you got the lingo down.

But you're dead. You're dead spiritually. Can you imagine? Now, I would assume that some of these people even in this church are not saved.

And then that Matthew 7 just rings true. Where Jesus says, many will come to me in that day and say, Lord, Lord, we did all these things in your name. Cast out demons.

Did wonders. Did ministry. We did these things in your name.

And he'll say, depart from me. Depart from me. I don't even know you.

I don't know you. You practice lawlessness. Which means their heart hasn't been changed.

There's a practicing of sin. See, you can go to church and hear things and be, oh, that sounds, that's convicted. I'll think about God someday.

And never come to saving faith. And that was one of the issues with this church. That's why he said, be watchful, strengthen, and fight.

That's how you resurrect a dead prayer life. That's how you resurrect dead faith. That's how you resurrect dry worship.

As you turn back to God, what Jesus says, repent and come back to me. See, to repent means you turn, your mind changes, right? Which leads to change in action. So you're strengthening what remains, that glimmer of hope, that Holy Spirit within us that's been quenched and grieved.

We're strengthening that, and we're coming back to Christ. However, there are people, if you don't know Jesus, it has to start here. There are people that are coming to church, they were raised in a Christian home, they went to a Christian school, they were born in a Christian nation, they come to church when they can, but they don't truly know Him.

That's not flatline faith, that's dead faith. You don't need revival in that case, you need rebirth. See, I'm mainly talking to Christians who need revival, who need to be reignited, they need that passion again, but also, those who don't know Him, they need the rebirth in order to experience vibrant faith.

But isn't it, this is a scary thing, that our heart can drift. It can become cold and hard and calloused. I remember I shared the first service, I'm glad I remember, because it's not in my notes, but when I first came back to the Lord, talk about joy, you couldn't, man! And then I start going to church, and you go to Pentecostal church? Oh, I better go to a conservative church.

You go to a conservative church? They don't believe in the work of the Spirit. And then, are you pre-trib, post-trib, mid-tribulation, are you a Calvinist, are you a Minion, are you Eschatology, what's your church structure, do you believe in the plurality of elders, do you believe in the Mosaic church government, do you believe in congregational rule, what type of worship, the old hymns, do you have a choir, suit and tie, why don't you preach in a suit and tie? It's like, my joy just evaporated. Because you start to see all the little division in the church.

That will drive a new believer out of here as quick as they came in. Where's this Christ you talk about? Where's this Jesus you sing about? You're all here bickering and complaining about things that don't even matter. Now, I'm not saying theology doesn't matter, right? Every one of those points I have opinions on, I can take you to Scripture on it.

But that's the joy of the Holy Spirit, is where you can travel to a different country and hold hands with the persecuted church in China and sing with them. Not knowing anything about... Are you a Calvinist? Okay, I can't worship with you. What are these songs in Chinese? I can't even understand.

I can't worship with you. And we see that hard heart comes in, because the more knowledge you have, the more you puff up. See, the more of this I know, if I could keep putting books down here, and keep standing up higher and higher, the more knowledge... If I could stand on all my books, I would go through the ceiling.

Why is that? Because this puffs up. Knowledge puffs up. This would blow your mind if you thought about this for a while.

The church in America has more Bibles. How many Bibles do you have at home? King James, New King James, New American Standard, English Standard Version, NLT, ENIV. More apps.

More sermons. More worship. And there's places that can barely get a Bible.

And they're on fire for God. See, knowledge puffs up. The heart can drift.

Mine included. I can sit right there in that front row if Tony wasn't there. Right? I could just sit preaching to myself.

Because that's why he says strengthen. Strengthen what remains. Do an inventory of yourself.

Paul said examine myself. Is Christ in me? Examine yourself. Is Christ in you? Is the work of the Holy Spirit in me? Am I critical? Am I arrogant? Am I judgmental? Do I love to just gossip and pull things in? Or am I broken before the Lord and filled with joy and hope and gentleness and kindness and self-control? The fruit of the Spirit.

Take inventory. He said watch. Watch.

Strengthen. What remains? What remains? Nothing hardly. Yes.

Jesus says here's what remains. If you know me and you've quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit and you're in such a spot of desperation, cry out to me. That's what remains.

Christ in us. That remains. He said come back to me.

You could fix just about every problem on the planet. Let's even get more specific. Every problem in the Christian church.

Most problems in your life, if we just follow that directive, just return to me. Return to me. Shane, that's not true.

I have health issues. Seek Christ. Let him hold you.

Let him restore you. Let him be the great physician. We're going through tremendous marriage problems.

You don't know what I'm going through. Oh, but I do know wonderful counselor, prince of peace, everlasting father. See, he says seek me with all of your heart.

Just picture this. Seek me with all of your heart, with all of your strength, with all of your mind, with all of your soul. Pardon me, I could be wrong, but that sounds like warfare.

That sounds like it's not going to be easy. That's not going to be a little cakewalk. Now, I don't want to put this huge burden of Christianity on people like all these rules and regulations, but you better understand it's warfare.

As the enemy is taking people out with suicide and addiction and destroying marriages and pulling you away from Christ through the hardness of a heart, you better get up and recognize. Like he said, awake,

awake, oh captive people. Shake off the dust from your legs.

Get up and pull the bonds of yokes off of your neck. You've been under oppression too long. You arise.

You put on your strength. You come back to me, and then I will rebuild and restore and renew. It's always put back on us.

You don't need to clap this service. I'm already going. You can hear a pin drop because this is so important.

Therefore, if you will not watch, my goodness, if you will not watch, if you will not change, if you will not fight, if you will not contend, if you will not strengthen the things that remain, I will come upon you as a thief. What happened to Jesus the little lamb? What happened to that Jesus? See, they had that perception. Remember, that's why I always like to quote Tozer on this one.

I love him because he's my savior, but I fear him because he's my judge. I love the cuddly little lamb, but I'm afraid of this lion. He's not safe, is he? He's good, but he's not safe.

He said, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Let me just stop there for a minute because this is a time where it's a good reminder for all of us and maybe those listening later on radio or the Internet or even here right now is that you cannot prepare later. It's like preparing for the earthquake after the earthquake.

Oh, we should have prepared for the fire after the fire. You cannot prepare later. That's why the call, the gospel call is always now.

Now. Urgency. Urgency.

Now. Because I run into people often that say, friends of mine even, well, I'll talk to God when I see him in heaven. No.

You know what, when I see God, I've got some beefs with him. That's not going to work. I actually had somebody close to me.

I prayed for him many years ago. I hope it's changed. I didn't know what to say.

I was caught off guard, but he said, I hope when I'm standing in front of God, he sees that I'm a good person. No, he won't. He won't see that.

He won't go, you know what, Shane, you started that church I called you to do and you're phenomenal and you wrote books and he won't even care. It won't even come up because our goodness is but filthy rags in his sight. He's going to simply say, alright, do you know my son? Because Jesus says, this is so, that's why people, oh, the Bible is so narrow.

It is. It is. So is gravity.

Just drop off the building. I mean, two plus two is still, right? Truth is always narrow. It's exclusive.

Jesus said, well done thou good and faithful servant, or depart from me, I never even knew you. I never knew you. Watch, he said, watch, watch.

There's no time to prepare later. Now is the time. But here's the trick the enemy comes in with.

If you're not a believer, he'll tell you, oh, all the fun will be over. You can turn to God later. Later after you've sowed your wild oats, whatever that means.

I don't want to sow my wild oats. I want to sow healthy corn and wheat and barley, right? Good things. But then do it later.

And people say, but Shane, if I come to God, I have to give up my drinking. The drinking, where you don't even know how you got home? You don't even know who you slept with? Is this the Ray G version? No, it's not today. And you don't even know how you're depressed? You're on Xanax? You're on Vicodin? You're going to take your life? You're going to give up that fun? That's the fun you're talking about? Come on.

The devil is a liar. That's a lie from the pit of hell. The funnest spot you can ever be, the most joy-filled.

You get up in the morning saying, praise be to God. Is when he's full of his spirit. You've got purpose.

You've got peace. You want to fall down and worship him. You can't get enough of God.

And when it comes to dying, you say, take me now or take me later. Either way, I'm with Christ. People say, that's bizarre, Shane.

No, you're filled with the Spirit. A couple days ago, I heard a guy talking in my daughter's room at midnight. She's laughing, you know.

What is it? Push the door open? What is that? It's in her bed. And I grabbed this elephant. I grabbed this elephant.

And he's quoting like Psalm something, 58. The Lord is my majesty. He's high.

I'm like, I'm about ready to have revival. I'm like, oh, praise God. He's like, Lord, he's high and he's exalted.

He's ever to be praised. This elephant. And I'm grabbing him, holding him.

I don't know how to turn him off. So I went to the laundry room and I put him in the washer. And I'm walking down the hallway.

I'm highly exalted. Every knee will bow. God, I want that kind of elephant, too.

You know, I'm like, my daughter goes to bed with that elephant. And he's loud, too. But it was just something, just hearing the Word of God.

Don't you see? Just hearing the Word of God being quoted. And something inside of me, the Holy Spirit goes, Abba, Father. It jumps out and it wants more of Christ, more of God.

And if I'm drifting to the Ephesus state, to the hard heart. God, I'm becoming hard and callous and cold. I don't care for people anymore.

God, would you take that and rip it out of my heart this morning? Or if you're going this other direction. I don't even, I'm alive, but I'm dead. I don't pray.

I don't know you. I'm not concerned with prayer and holiness. I don't care about any of those things.

God, would you strengthen what remains? And he begins to do that refining fire in your heart. Oh, God, help us. See, I might look at this differently, but this is the most important thing we can ever talk about, is the Word of God.

Yes, you've got a madman in North Korea. Yes, you've got Russia and China. Yes, you've got ISIS.

But I know a God who blows and evaporates entire armies. He can go, and Kim Jong, whatever, has a heart attack and he's gone. He can go like that and the nuclear missile, as soon as it launches, explodes on their own territory.

That's the God we serve. Or it's the God like Daniel, like the three Hebrew boys that were thrown into the fiery furnace. They didn't bow down to the false God.

They said, our God will deliver us. That's who we serve. But even if he doesn't.

Now, see, that will set the name it, claim it, faith people. They'll start going, uh-oh, what do we do with that one? Because, no, you don't have enough faith. You don't have enough faith.

You don't have enough faith. Even if he doesn't deliver us, we'll not bow to you. That's a healthy view of God.

So you go into life. See, he's going to take away all the fun. I can't smoke anymore.

People told me I can't smoke anymore. I can't drink anymore if I do that. I'm talking to you because you have a thousand problems in your life because of these things.

Yet you don't want to give up these things because God will take away all the fun, the fun you're not having. Well, I'm confused because it's a lie of the enemy. Or what he comes in and tells believers, especially conservative believers, right? Oh, you don't want to get full of the Holy Spirit like that guy.

You'll turn into Benny Hinn. And you'll, I promise I wasn't going to name names today, but let me just, you'll, you'll, okay, let's edit that out. You'll turn into these guys, just craziness, right? Oh, you don't want to get crazy like Shane.

I'm sure he's not like that at home. He's probably a jerk at home, right? Fanatical. And you don't want to get like those crazy Christians, right? The ones on Facebook, everything's nice on Facebook and pure and holy.

That's just weird. You know, I don't want to get like that. No, the problem is the enemy is coming in and planting thoughts of doubt into your mind because it's not weirdness, it's boldness.

The word, the word, the power of the Holy Spirit actually is where we get our word dynamite from. It comes from dunamis in the Greek. Dunamis, dunamite, dynamite, the power of the Holy Spirit.

So where you can speak boldly but still love your spouse. See, it's not, that's this big thing people think, the Holy Spirit, you're like too weird and drunk, you know, and acting weird off all the Holy Spirit. No, it's

boldness where you can go in front of a culture and say no more, not on our watch.

You can confront the pedophiles in Hollywood, in love, of course, but challenge that lifestyle. You can challenge the Supreme Court decision on what they're gonna make with gay men. You can say no in love and in boldness because the Holy Spirit is residing within you.

How do you, I wanna know how people get through life without the Holy Spirit or Christ at the center. How in the world do you function? That's what Sardis was. I know your name.

Bill, Chris, Mike, Steve, John. Let me throw in some women. Mary, Martha.

Alexis, Susan, you know, whatever. I know your name. I know you're going to, here's a good one.

I know you're going to church, but you're dead. There are some people going here, maybe not Second Service, First Service. I would just, God, would you give me that open door? I'd love, yeah, you go to Westside, but you're dead.

I know how you treat others. I know you have no prayer life. I know you come and play church, but you're dead.

And why do you tell somebody they're dead? Not to upset, but to convict. That's, I mean, sometimes I just weep about how God's character, because he'll slam you with a sledgehammer, right? Oh, God, and then he says, you know what, just repent. I'm not gonna hold any of that against you, just repent and return.

Actually, the church in Ephesus, just return to your first love. Sardis, just repent. Last church, just remove Jezebel, just remove that seductive spirit, remove the fall teachers, and come back to me.

And then verse five, he who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot him out, or out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. This is a perfect example of Jesus as our high priest. Jesus confesses you before the Father.

That's why in another passage in the Gospel, you'll remember where Jesus says, if you don't confess me before men, I won't confess you before my Father. So Jesus is also called an advocate. He's an advocate.

He goes before the Father. He confesses us. Who would you want representing you? He's not going to say, Father, you make a good point.

He's an advocate. Shane is good. Whoever is good.

I can stand before God because of what Christ did. He's the advocate. But if you do not overcome... It's funny, interesting thing about white garments.

Most people are baptized in white robes. Remember those days? Down to the river... There's an old country song, right? White robes and people are there. And then wedding in white.

The heroes in white. So we have this imagery of white garments and being clothed in Christ's righteousness. But He said if not, if you don't overcome, I will blot you out of the book of life.

So can you lose your salvation? Or are you eternally secure? I better do this side because that's where I did the first service. Are you eternally secure? Or can you lose your salvation? Well, here's how I often answer. We should never turn from what we know to be right.

Jesus encouraged His followers to be watchful, to be prepared, and to be ready for His return. Are you watchful? Are you prepared? Are you ready? Remember in Luke it is. He says do not be taken away by the carousing and the drunkenness and the things of this life lest that day come upon you unexpectedly.

So the book of life, I mean we could probably spend a whole sermon on this one. And that's why there's different views. One view, you know, eternal security would be Calvinism.

And they say that God does the saving, God does the drawing, God does the electing, God saves only certain people, election, predestination, irresistible grace. His grace is irresistible. So if God saves, there's no way you're getting out of that one.

Right? I mean, it's His work. And then this side believes that whosoever believes, whosoever calls on the name of Christ shall be saved. I wish that everyone is saved.

I don't wish that any are perished, but all come to eternal salvation to me. I wish that all. So is man accepting or rejecting God's offer of salvation? And then if he accepts God's offer of salvation, can he then undo it and walk away and lose that salvation? So you see why there's two schools of theology on this is because there's two different views on salvation.

One view is election. It's called Calvinism. This view is Arminianism by Jacob Arminius.

Arminius, I believe his name is. And he taught, they both actually came against the Roman Catholicism which taught works-based salvation. So that's why on this issue of the Book of Life, when people ask me, I say, well, you don't want to find out.

Can you be erased? You don't want to find out. Because I see both sides of this debate personally. Personally, just looking at Scripture, and Scripture, and Scripture, and Scripture, like they all say, right? Ah, looking at Scripture.

Everybody says the same thing. But I see that man is held responsible for his decisions. So if a man cannot accept or reject God, how can he be held accountable for a decision he couldn't even make? However, I see God's sovereignty and drawing in the power of the Holy Spirit and convicting.

And there are people with different views on this, but I believe, as a believer, a person repents and believes they are saved, they are sealed by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee. Paul said, nothing can ever separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Neither height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any created thing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

So I believe, once a person is saved, that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and then that cannot be undone because it's a new birth. That's my personal opinion. So I don't believe that a person can lose, like they're saved this week, and the next month they're not saved.

And then they get saved again next year, and then they lose it again. I personally don't see that because I see once a person believes and repents, they are a child of God, the new birth takes place, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit, that is a bond that cannot be broken. Now, there's verses that warn, right? Abide into the vine.

Warn a sinner from the error of his way. Do not turn from what you know to be right. So I see all these warnings as well.

So I hold on to my theological position with loose set of hands because not everybody, this is gonna be a shocker, better just throw it out there now, your favorite Bible teacher is not 100% correct. Nobody has 100% accurate theology to the T because you got this group, you guys like John MacArthur, right? Oh, he's right on money with all these things, but then you have this group says, no, they believe the gifts of Holy Spirit haven't ceased, they're still active today. Well, who's right? John MacArthur doesn't believe in infant baptism.

R.C. Sproul does. More Reformed believe you should baptize infants. Well, who's right? This group believes in a plurality of elders leading the church.

This group believes in one man leading with others in submission, it's called the Mosaic form of church government with Moses type of model. Who's right? This group believes in the rapture, this group believes, not in the rapture, who's right? This group believes in pre-tribulation that we'll be out of here before, pre, before the tribulation. This group believes we'll be out of here pre-wrath, after God's wrath.

Who's right? So you better hold things rather loosely that aren't essential because you can get cocky and arrogant. Myself included. Right? I mean, there's people, they want to debate the rapture all day long like, well, are you ready? Are you ready? I mean, yeah, we're going, we're going to meet Him.

But is it post-trib, mid-trib, after-trib, no-trib, no-rapture? Antichrist, 666, one world government, mark of the beast, the whore of Babylon. I mean, very interesting things. And I don't know anybody who can read the Bible and go, oh yeah, for sure, absolutely, this is how it's all going to play out.

But we do know He's coming. He's coming again. Are you ready? And my concern is we get caught up in all these things that, I don't want to say don't matter, but they're peripheral, they're on the side, and we love to argue, debate, create blogs, put each other down, and then people are dying.

And they see how we treat each other and they don't want anything to do with the church. Jesus said, you will know, you will know, people will know that you are my disciples by how well you understand the Greek language. They'll know you are my disciples because you're in harmony with correct doctrine, sound doctrine.

You guys are all about doctrine. That's how they're going to know. Come on, you know I'm fooling.

Jesus said, for those of you who don't know, He said, they will know, the world will know that you are my disciples because of your love for one another. Yeah, thank you. And here's why, now I haven't perfected this area, I haven't, so please hear my heart, but that's why I sometimes cringe when believers are gossiping and backbiting and slandering and putting down.

And we're arguing over everything. A friend of mine, he was an atheist, I guess he's agnostic now, we talk a little bit, but it's like, why can't you guys, you're always bickering and fighting and complaining. Now, how do you hold for strong doctrine? How do you point out error? And still, you know, because Jesus isn't talking about just being a doormat.

But here's how you do it, it's so simple, it's almost pathetic. When a person is mightily filled with the Holy Spirit, their words are seasoned with grace. They don't have to get the last word in.

They don't have to raise their voice. They don't have to be right. They can... I mean, I get in theological conversations often, and I'm like, okay, I see why you believe that.

Let's move on. And you can see, though, that's why this church is as much a sardis, but the other churches, in Ephesus, this is a problem area. So with that said, let me read the next verse here.

Oh, I like what A.W. Tozer said, when people find that after being in church for years, they're not making much progress, they ought to examine themselves and wonder whether they have ever been truly converted. See, there should be progress. The Bible talks about being clothed in humility, covered in prayer, putting on garments of praise.

Think about that. Are you clothed in humility, or is arrogance popping out? Do you have garments of praise, or is it being just a critical spirit? He says, put on these things. Awake.

Reflect the light. Reflect Christ. I know many people at this point often say, but Shane, I've defiled my garments.

Filth has polluted my mind. Because I understand that not everybody is at a spot of spiritual victory. They say, Shane, I love that, I want that, but I'm polluted.

My mind's polluted. My garments are polluted. Not physically, but spiritually.

I've drifted from God. I want everything you're talking about, but I'll never measure up. God won't take me now.

I feel He's got it against me. Let me tell you, all that is a lie from the enemy. The only thing God asks is that you would repent.

Repent and turn back to God. Turn back. Look at what He's done.

The good news, right? We just sang it. Noel, Noel. Noel, Noel.

Look at what God has done. Noel, Noel. Good news, good news.

Look at what God has done. Look at what He's brought you through. Look at what He's done.

What He's created. Turn back to Him. Awake, awake, arise, and strengthen what remains.

So that's really the key right now. Is to strengthen what remains. What areas in your life? What areas in your life are weakening? How is your prayer life? Oh, let's take a survey on that one, right? How's our worship? How's our heart? Where's our joy and our compassion, our love? Strengthen those things which remain.

Pull them up by the bootstraps. Grab them. Strengthen them.

You say, Lord, these areas are failing, but I see the little glimmer of hope that You've given me, that little spark that You lit in the fire of my heart. I'm strengthening that. Strengthening what remains.

I'm strengthening that.

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