

“Also to the angel of the ecclesia in Sardis write: These things saith he having the seven spirits of the deity and the seven stars: I have known thy works, that thou hast the name that thou livest, but thou art dead. Become thou vigilant, and strengthen the things remaining which are about to die: for I have not found the works perfected in the sight of the Deity. Be mindful therefore what thou hast received, and heard, and strictly keep it, and be changed. If then thou have been vigilant. I shall be come upon thee as a thief, and thou mayest not at all have known at what hour I shall be 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 robes, because they are worthy. The victor, he shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not at all obliterate his name from the scroll of the life, and I will openly confess his name in the presence of my Father, and in the presence of his angels. He that hath an ear let him hearken to what the Spirit saith to the Ecclesias.”

Translation by Dr Thomas from the Greek in Eureka.

Sections to read in Eureka, 1 Walk with me in white, 2 The are worthy, 3 The Book of Life, 4 The life of the Lamb, 5 Confess His Name, 6 His Name.

Brown p 351 – 372

This letter is sent to an Ecclesia which is struggling with transparency. The Bible extensively deals with the considerable problem of hypocrisy and this section of scripture is no different. The eldership at Sardis (the angel) had a name that they were living but were in fact dead, spiritually dead. This should remind the reader that it is very easy to fall into this pit from which it is difficult to escape. Job 15v34,35 *“For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery” They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit*. The solution is not to say that hypocrisy exists and therefore we can do nothing about it. The sin of Sardis must be repented of, and any sin once exposed cannot be left to continue uncritically. All sin needs to be resisted and actively countered once exposed.

Sadly, many confuse the command to strengthen the things that remain with the idea that things should be left to function as they already do. This is a deliberate hijacking of the language to suit an agenda that no action should be taken against errorists and troublemakers! This is very wrong and also very dangerous. Does the teachings found elsewhere in this section confirm this stance and understanding?

There is a call to repentance. From what is it all those who have sinned are to repent? In context, it was something they had received and heard, to which they needed to hold fast. Once it had been held fast then it was possible to repent. This is stated as the need to watch, something which the eldership at Sardis had not been doing. What was it that they needed to watch for? It was not the physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Book of Revelation goes on to explain this will not happen for many many years and requires the long period of gentile darkness to be experienced first before Christ returns to re-establish the Kingdom to Israel, another 2,000 years. They were not to focus either on watching for the destruction of the temple at the end of the Jewish commonwealth, as that had already happened when the Book of Revelation was given, as it was written

after 70 CE/AD. The watching which they had neglected would therefore be the prophesied decline of the early Ecclesia, something vital in the first and also every subsequent century as it defines this period as certainly as any other phenomenon.

The Apostle Paul himself as well as others, spoke plainly about this. Acts 20v29-31 *"For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore **watch**, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."* This was what the eldership at Sardis had failed to do. They had failed to watch for the necessary corruption of the Truth holders (the Truth itself cannot be corrupted only those who hold it). 2 Thessalonians 2v2-4 *"that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by all means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all"*. This was what they needed to repent from, their maintenance of the status quo and their failure to be rigorous in resisting the influences of the false system that was taking shape. This failure to understand the plain warnings in the rest of scripture and instead using the typical teachings of the Revelation to reverse what the apostles taught elsewhere is dangerous and part of the problem that true disciples were warned about. Those who refuse to take action against this corruption perpetuate the sin of Sardis.

We are told that there were a few in Sardis who had not defiled their garments. These names were worthy, they had proven themselves to be so. This means that the majority, the many, had defiled their garments! How had they done this? Like their elders they had not resisted the advancing corruption which they should have been watching out for. Yes no doubt there were many other possible sins but this is the one emphasised.

The scriptures speak elsewhere of these concerns. There is a repeated need to rewash the garments as we all fail so easily to our transgressions. Jude v23 has the concept of a garment spotted by the flesh, where sin physically resides. This failure to rewash was the problem not the aspect that some have never to be ever defiled. Only Christ can achieve an undefiled garment, however all have garments which are afflicted by the presence of sin in our flesh, even him. This failure to repeat the need take action against revealed sin, first in ourselves, then in the wider ecclesia, is at the heart of the problem. The complacent falsity that we are forgiven in Christ and can just do what soever we fancy because we are free from the consequences of sin is refuted by the subsequent defilement of the wayward majority after having first been covered by the blood of Jesus. If we were already forgiven from future sins, then we cannot become defiled again! This lazy simplistic deception drags multitudes down into the abyss of immorality once imbibed and not acted upon.

If this action was not taken and those transgressors did not repent, then Christ threatens to come on them as a thief at an unknown time. This must be understood correctly as many merely passing this off as the threat of the future judgement seat and that there is no need to worry, nor do anything about it now, just does not fit. Christ brings specific accusations against Sardis and warns the other Ecclesias about them also. He therefore expected them to take action at that time. The Lord Jesus Christ will come to all believers regardless of whether they have repented or held fast and regardless of whether they had watched, so why is this threat of action made

specifically because they did not watch? Jesus also threatens to blot the miscreants' names out of the Book of Life! There is no mistaking the seriousness of the language!

It is sad that people really believe that in the light of such dire warnings that the best thing to do is be worried only about yourself and whether you will be given mercy by God and to extend no effort to warn others of their predicament and the dangers of not obeying the commandments of Christ and thereby overcome the world through faith.

There is a need to have perfect works before God, verse 2. How can any have perfect works? All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, only Christ had perfect works himself as an individual. However, the Bible talks about imputation. That is something that we do not have ourselves but is given to us. There needs to be an imputation of perfect works, for the saints to be constituted perfect in Jesus. This is not the idea that once saved we are always saved because always forgiven, as already proved by the possible unremedied defilement spoken of by Jesus himself. Rather it is the process of overcoming the world through faith which infers perfection if we endure to the end. This involves the elements Jesus highlighted:

- 1 To watch for his return but also for the anticipated corruption
- 2 To resist that corruption by being ready for it and building up the use of the Word
- 3 To enhance the status of the undefiled by recognising them and exposing others
- 4 The need to face the consequences of past mistakes and repent

It should be remembered that Jesus was addressing the eldership at Sardis who were all in need of repentance. None were exempt from this criticism. No doubt the few names who were not yet defiled would not politely stay in the midst of revealed hypocrisy now exposed openly to them. This also applies to any who have an ear to hear, what the Holy Spirit said to all the Ecclesias not just Sardis, but about the specific problems of Sardis. They would also have to consider their response to what Jesus had said to the wayward at Sardis. There was no ecclesial autonomy regarding sin! Those few names who were worthy would have to take action against their own eldership if they did not repent. They had no other course open to them.

If this is not done, then even the undefiled will be sucked down wards into death – The warning of Jesus is clear *“that are ready to die”*! There is a dangerous laxity in avoiding taking action against the corrupting heretics once this is realised and out in the cold light of day, not hidden away by the deceitful who wish to conduct their work in the shadows! As I said before the Truth will not die, it cannot, but it is the truth holders who are subject to death and need to avoid it.

There is always a positive blessing in each epistle, and Sardis is no exception. Those who do not defile their garments are promised to have their names confessed by Jesus to the Father Himself! (And also, before His angels.) What a prospect, what an honour!