

Tale of Two Cities

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 3:1-6

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1. The Setting

- City of Great Wealth
- Positioned for Strength & Prosperity
- Fallen twice to attack
- temple of Atremis
 - 160 feet by 300 feet
 - 78 columns 58 feet in height
- good place to live

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2. Condemnation

a) Reputation & Reality

- think you are alive – but you are dead
- thoughts on the dead church

i) lack of compassion

- Matthew 25:31-46, James 2:15-17
- no feelings, no heart after God's heart
- no concern for the physical & spiritual needs

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ii) No Warmth

- cold, uncaring, unfeeling

iii) No Movement

- nothing happening, no motivation or moving
- not attempting to live out any conviction

b) Revive

- wake up – be watchful
- get aware and get moving – breath in & live
- strengthen what remains – build on what is there
- persevere – finish what has been started in you

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c) Refocus

- remember – get things in right perspective
- repent – acknowledge, accept, turn, live differently
- renew the mission & passion – received & heard
- obey it – live differently, be obedient to God's word

d) Reminder

- bridegroom is returning – don't know the timing
- be dressed & ready – pure & waiting
- God will reward your faithfulness

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"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

Rev. 3:7-13

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3. Setting

- 80 kms southeast of Sardis
- Center for Culture
- Devastated by Earthquakes several times

4. Commendation

a) Faithfulness

- what they have done is noticed & opportunity given
- kept God's word
- not denied who they serve or belong to

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b) Perseverance

- had problems with Jews & temple worship
- endured patiently – suggests not fighting
- little strength – suggests not full of resources
- indicates perhaps reliance solely on God

c) Promise

- open doors for them
 - here in service & impact
 - kingdom to come

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- protection – keep them from ‘hour of trial’
- recognition
 - in front of those who have mistreated them
 - in the coming Kingdom of God

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So What

1. Reputations may not Reflect Current Reality

- historical drift – loss of mission & focus
- finances, buildings and attendance not sole indicators
- cannot live in the glory days – must be faithful in our time

2. Are we Alive or On Life Support

- do our hearts reflect God's
- would we be found alive – compassionate, warm, moving?

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3. Revival Will Need to Include

- fresh breath of the Holy Spirit
- waking up on our part

4. Need to Intentionally Refocus

- remember, repent, renew & obey

5. Desire to Be Found:

Faithful & Persevering – what does that look like

6. Recall often the Promise

God sees and rewards – here and there