

THE VICTOR'S LIFE POWER

By Paris Reidhead*

Now we'll turn directly to the Word. The Victor's Life Power, the Church at Sardis, as this begins the third chapter of Revelation. We shall consider this evening, verses 1-6 in this third chapter. I shall read it, that we might all hear it and familiarize our self with it. Then we shall immediately consider how it applies to the Church today, as well as to the church to which it was written.

"And unto the angel of the church." And by the way when we use that word angel, we have reference to the messenger. The one who stands there before the Lord as carrying the message to the Church.

"Unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: these things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and 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."

Smyrna and Philadelphia were churches that received letters from our wonderful Lord, in which there was absolutely no blame. See the Lord, isn't always finding fault with the Church. He wrote to these two, and He said, "There's nothing to which I should chide you or condemn you." But Sardis and Laodicea received no praise from the Lord. He dealt with them exactly as they were.

Back in the first verse, we find that He says, "He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." The word seven in the scripture is the number of perfection. We would well read this, "He that hath the Spirit of God who is perfect, in all of his ministries complete." This number seven has reference to wholeness, fullness, perfection, and completeness.

Thus the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Church, and behalf of the Church is a complete ministry, and there is nothing that's going to be overlooked or omitted either for the good of the Church, or for the discipline of the Church, for the accomplishing of the full purpose of Christ for it.

The seven stars refer as we have seen – we've accepted this as the common typological association, to the messengers. These were those that stood before the people in these various churches. Local churches were viewing them, and ministered to them as teachers, or prophets or pastors, whatever the responsibility would have been.

They were there, held in the hand of the Lord to speak for Him. So He's saying I am the one that is speaking to you, that has the perfect ministry of the Holy Ghost from me, and I have these who serve me, who are conscious of what the Spirit of God is saying. Now, the Lord Jesus has spoken to John as "the one whose eyes are as a flame of fire," we've seen that.

He penetrates just as fire will go into the iron. And I suppose the best analogy we could use, there was no frame of reference for John, we would have to say X-ray. I am sure that if this was being written today, that the analogy would have been taken from fire to X-ray.

He would say, "He that hath eyes that see right through." For we know full well, that you put the metal into the iron into the fire. The next thing you know the fire goes into the metal, and there's this penetration so that what is in the heart of it is found out. Our Lord Jesus is the one who doesn't look on the outward appearance but who looks upon the heart, and therefore the first thing we see in this church is that Christ's knowledge is complete and inerrant.

Complete in that He knows everything, inerrant in that He knows it perfectly. We see so little perfectly. It's so very hard for us to judge, perhaps that's the reason why He has said, that when it comes to the matter of motives we are never to judge. Never to judge why people do what they do; what they do we must of course.

If something is untrue, it's untrue, but you don't know why, this is the point where the human wisdom has to stand outside the mysterious depths of the human spirit and say, "Well I can't go any further. I just don't know." The Lord has reserved this privilege to Himself, it's His. He's the one that in that day is going to judge the secrets of the heart. Now, "by their fruit you shall know them," and we shall see in a moment that it's not necessary to accept the profession of everyone that claims to be a Christian, but when it comes to the matter of judging motives (Mat. 7:20).

This Church at Sardis for instance, He says, "I know thy works." Apparently they were continuing in many activities, and ministries, outward expressions of their faith. And looking at the church from the outside, you would say "Here is a successful affluent church." Sardis was no mean city at this time; it was a city famous in history at the time that it was taken by one of the conquerors. They found over \$600 million worth of treasures, gold and silver and precious stones which were removed when the city was raised and sacked.

It still is a city of great importance, a cultural center, educational center, and entertainment center. In fact it is one of the most notorious of the cities in terms of profligacy, and iniquity and immorality. And apparently this church is standing there in such a way, that viewed from the outside, everyone would say, well look at what an active thriving busy church this is.

The Lord Jesus said, "I know thy works." He knows what's being done, and above all He knows why it is being done. He knows the profession on the one hand, and the true state of the heart on the other. We're dealing now with the church that might have a profession indeed, as He is writing to the church.

Then we come back to the fact that a church is not a building, nor an organization it's a company of people. When the Lord Jesus looks upon the heart, he goes down below the profession through heart attitude. We have discovered early that profession is no proof of life. I'm confident that Ananias and Sapphira knew the Apostles Creed or its equivalent for that day.

They could have given you a good reason for their being included in the number. God knew their heart, the Lord Jesus knew it. Have you ever been to the Africa Room at the Museum of Natural History? Every once in a while I suffer from great lonesomeness for Africa, once a missionary always a missionary.

There are times when I just put my hat and coat on and jump on the subway and get off at 82nd street and go back to Africa. It's an exciting thing, some of you have never been there, well they will see you there soon, I hope. Yes it is...it's interesting. I'll stand there, look at scenes, similar to those where I've been, where I've walked and hunted, and it all looks so lifelike.

The antelope stand there, not just with glassy eyes, but somehow in the art of the ones that have established these beautiful windows in life situations. They seem to have the fright that you would expect being startled by your walking down to the next window you know. It's a very lifelike situation. It hasn't fooled me, the profession that they have is these folks are alive in here, but I know better than that.

They look like everything outwardly; the grass is there, they brought that from Africa. The leaves from the trees have been brought, the weeds have been brought, the little bugs and ants that crawl in the ground in the slime of the water hole are all there just as they were. But they're not alive, they have a profession to be, but it doesn't take a great deal of insight to realize that there's a difference between that, and this great hartebeest out on the glebe, out on the field, bounding away with those mammoth strides that just eat up the field.

No they're not alive, and so it is, profession doesn't prove life. I suppose you could educate a parrot to repeat the plan of salvation, and it wouldn't prove anything except that you were a good teacher. Wouldn't prove that he had what he was talking about. It's no more proof of salvation for a person to recite the plan of salvation than it is to name a ship the Safeguard for instance, and thereby conclude that it will never be sunk.

It's good to have a name like that. I'd soon go on a ship with a builder that says Safeguard, or Good Speed or some other encouraging name. The fact that they so christened the ship and painted the name on the front of it does not mean it's going to make it to harbor. Because someone can recite the plan of salvation, and the Scriptures that prove it, does not prove that they have life.

Now we are not able always by any means, to ascertain this. Perhaps this is why the Lord said the chaff and the wheat will have to grow together, the tares and the wheat rather. That He would have to separate them in His own Day. I'm sure in Matthew 7 He sets that as a great surprise when people will come and knock on the door, and say: "Good Lord we preached in the streets, we cast out devils in your name, we did miracles in your name." He said, "I will say unto them from within away with you, I never knew you" (Mat. 7:21-23).

I think those are the saddest words in the New Testament, that they had ... they'd known the right things about Him, the right things to do, and the right places to go, and even the right things to say but they didn't have Him. They didn't have life, they didn't have Christ.

Two houses in that same Matthew 7, both outwardly the same appearance. You'd look just like some of these houses in the additions around the metropolitan area. Everyone is the same for blocks. The only difference said the Lord, outward appearance is the same, and window set the same, doors the same, everything about the same, same material in fact.

But if you go inside, you'll discover that one's just sitting on the sand. They didn't bother to dig a foundation, they didn't bother to excavate what was standing in the way, they didn't bother to anchor it, and put it in a foundation. Didn't go down the rock.

It's all right, no problem at all, until the flood comes, until the judgment comes. Then the one whose known all the time, which one was anchored to the rock, and which was just built on the sand, He will not be surprised but the occupants will. Because they thought perhaps since they could fool themselves and fool their fellows, they could fool the Lord.

The Lord says, "No, I know thy works." I know all about it. "I know that thou has the name, that thou livest, and are dead." Our Lord Jesus has spoken out, in no uncertain terms about hypocritical professors. We need remind our hearts about it because constantly we're meeting those around us on every side.

You see everybody has a plan of salvation, did you know that? If you've done much personal work around New York, you'll discover almost everybody has some kind of a plan of salvation. Some religion, some sect, or maybe they've gotten around the problem by saying there's no God. But you see their whole plan of salvation depends upon the fact that they prove to themselves there's no God.

Consequently this becomes their religion. They just destroyed the source of their trouble in their own thinking and thought by this means to escape. It's their plan of salvation. Our Lord spoke very very carefully, and we need to see it to remind our hearts. If you would turn to Matthew 23. We would let Him speak His mind here, the One who says in gentleness and love, for that's the way He speaks in this verse, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Here in Matthew 23:13 His word is just so different. “But woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against man, for neither go in yourselves, neither suffer them that are entering to go in.”

Again in verse 25 to 28. “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Christ’ knowledge therefore is complete and inerrant. He knew the Pharisees, He knew the Scribes, He needed no man should tell him. Now when He speaks to John, he says, “I know the Church at Sardis. I know their works, I know their name, and I know their hearts.” As He looks at us tonight here, He knows you, He knows your name, He knows your works, and He knows your heart. He knows me, He knows my profession, He knows my name, He knows my heart.

I probably will never know you, and you will probably never know me, but we know that we are both known fully and completely perfectly, by our wonderful Lord for His knowledge is complete and inerrant. Next thing we need to see in this portion of Scripture is that Christ’ warning is both appropriate and necessary. Notice now, in this second verse He begins, “Be watchful, don’t be deceived, don’t be careless, keep watching, lest you should be overtaken,” because He knows.

There’s a personal commandment in this, do you see it? It’s in the imperative mood; who’s the subject of such statement? Wouldn’t you make it personal, if you were to read it, wouldn’t you say, “You be watchful.” Of course. He’s talking to us, as well as to the church, to those to whom he wrote that time.

This is a matter that I must take to myself. What must I watch? First I must watch faith, and so must you. Because you see “faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). It’s so easy to let the truth of the Scripture become words in our memory rather than faith in our hearts.

This is why so many are going to miss Heaven; this is why they have a name to live and are dead. They have the plan of salvation in their intellects, in their memories, but not in their hearts. This is why we must be watchful. Lest we should make the sad mistake of confusing what our intellect sees and perceives with what our hearts experience.

It’s tremendously important therefore, that you should take constant inventory of your own experience and see to it that you are living what you believe. For instance, do you believe in Hell, do you believe that men and women that die without Jesus Christ they’re going to be forever in that dark place that is called Hell, where there’s “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?” (Mat. 25:30)

This church believes in Hell. The statement of our Society is that we believe in Hell. This pulpit has through all the decades since first there was a man to stand behind it and has preached, that there’s a Heaven to gain, and a Hell to shun. Is this just a phrase that you’ve racked somewhere in your memory or is this the truth which you believe?

I’ve told you in the past and repeat now that you could see the implications of it in the minds of the unsaved. The man sentenced to die for the crime of murder in England refused to see a chaplain. Man after man would come to speak with him at the request of the bailiff and the judge. He’d curse them all the way, until one man came and put a chair there, and said “I’m going to stay.”

At length, the condemned man was so exhausted and weary that the preacher could get in a word. And he began quietly not to ask questions or to make a statement, but to tell a story. It was the old, old story of God's grace, and of God's love in Jesus Christ. He told that as though he were telling it to a little boy sitting at his feet, and the culprit inside the bars couldn't help but listen.

After it was finished, the man came to the bars with tears in his eyes and said, "That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard." That was the first words he said, "The most wonderful thing I ever heard." And the preacher said, "I'm so glad." The man looked at him and said, "I only wish it were true."

"But it is true, I believe it." "Yes, perchance you think you do, but you don't believe it. You're here because you're the only man that's gotten to speak to the fellow that's cursed out all of the chaplains that had come to see me. They're going to write you up in the paper, they're going to talk about you, but you don't believe it. He said none of you believe it."

"I was reared here in East London under the shadow of some of these cathedrals. As a boy, I would come and the people coming out of church would ask me to hold their horses, and threaten to cuff me if I didn't do it right. Never once did anyone take me over in the shadow of the building and sit down and tell me this; that God loved me and Christ died for me."

"I'm notorious now, and you all want to get a chance to talk to me just because I'm notorious, but not because you care for me." He said, "You don't really believe what you're saying." "But I do." "No man, you don't." Then the culprit looked at him and put his hands though the bars and said, "Listen if I believed what you say you believe, that there's a Heaven for those who trust in Jesus Christ, and a Hell for those that don't receive Him or reject Him, why man I'd crawl if necessary on my hands and knees across every cinder path in Britain to warn men to flee from such an awful fate, and to receive such a gracious gift."

Do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is coming? Do you believe that He could cleave the sky at night and come? Do you believe? Oh you ought to look, be watchful of your faith, lest these ancient verities, these glorious truths, the very beams upon which our faith, our confidence rest become all dust covered and cobwebbed, and they're just left and not taken for granted. Do you really believe? Watch your faith, and then you're to examine and watch your hope. Hope lives in constant expectancy.

Despair is another form of unbelief. I have spoken to you in the past some years ago, and ought to repeat it annually about the five deadly "D"s. You know what they are. If you don't, you better write them down quickly, though I can't enlarge on them tonight.

The first deadly "D" is disappointment, and no Christian ever has a right to be disappointed about anything. The second deadly "D" is discouragement, because when you've once been disappointed the heart of your courage is gone, and there's no use trying again. Discouragement then moves into disillusionment and what seemed to be a bright shining city is nothing more than a mirage.

Disillusionment then moves into depression, and the clouds settle down upon the heart, and one can't throw them off or escape. And then this depression moves into defeat, disintegration of morale. And it all began back there with the sin of disappointment. Remember what happened to Pilgrim, why he was hindered in his journey? He fell into the Slough of Despond.

And Evangelist said, “I see by the mud dobs on you that you’ve been in the Slough of Despond. Didn’t you know that there was a path through?” “Yes, in my haste, I didn’t look for a path. I just plunged in.”¹ How many times it is in your experience perhaps, when hopes gives way to despond, despondency and despair, disappointment. It’s wrong, we will have to deal with it as a sin, the sin that it is. Confess it as a sin.

Because just as the opposite of faith is unbelief, which is a sin, the opposite of hope is despair and despondency. Oh no, look well, be watchful of your hope. The hope not just that of His coming, but we ought to wake in the morning saying today could be the day when He cleaves the sky and comes back again.

In terms of your total life, what are you hoping for? What are you looking for, what are your goals? There’s only one goal worthy of an intelligently taught and committed Christian. What is your goal in life? There’s only one goal, that’s the glory of God in Jesus Christ through your life.

Don’t you see? And you don’t know how to map out the way to that city. Only He can, and consequently there ought to be this constant rising of hope. Perhaps one of our great heartaches is we set goals that aren’t in the will of God. Then we’ve achieved them, but in so doing we’ve had to detour from His purpose for us. If you can commit yourself to the one goal, the one purpose the glory of God, you’ll live for it, you’ll die for it.

Can you bring yourself to say, “I want God to be glorified by whatever means He chooses; if I can glorify God more by being dead than alive, I choose to die.” Can you say that? Or is life so sweet that you’d rather live at the expense of the glory of God. Can you come to the place where you say, “If I can glorify God more by being unknown than known, I choose to remain anonymous and hidden and unknown.”

Can you say, “If I can glorify God more by being a failure than being a success, I want to be a failure?” Noah was you know. From every standpoint Noah was a failure. Jeremiah was, and Ezekiel was. Everything Ezekiel preached about, preached for, turned out absolutely contrary to what he wanted. All he asked was “Lord I want to glorify Him.” Can you come to the place where you sing it, in the hymn book, “Ready to go, ready to stay, ready Thy will to do. Ready for service, lowly or great, ready Thy will to do.”² This is where He brings us, and this is the hope. What is the hope that is to be primary in your life? What is this thing? That in everyday, in every circumstance, in every situation, God and His sovereign love is going to use my life, to bring glory to His Son.

You see the moment that you lose sight of that, then you begin to look at your feet, like Peter did at the waves, down you go. You’ve got to be watchful of your faith, and be watchful of your hope. And then of course the most important thing is to be watchful of your love.

Because just as faith appropriates and hope receives so love creates the climate for both to love God. Now how do you want to love Him, I’ve spoken of it. You love Him because you want to glorify Him, because He’s worthy to be worshiped, because He’s worthy to be served. I think of our Lord Jesus, as He loved the Father and did only those things that please the Father.

You should watch your heart, there’s a thermometer you know in your heart. You can tell whether your hearts’ affections and your hearts’ devotion and your hearts’ love are where it used to be. Watch, “be watchful” said the Lord, “and strengthen the things which will remain.” They haven’t been taken away yet. They aren’t gone yet,

¹ “The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come” – 1678 Christian allegory written by John Bunyan. It is regarded as one of the most significant works of theological fiction in English literature and a progenitor of the narrative aspect of Christian media.

² “Ready” Music by Charles Tillman 1903; Words by S.E.L. and A.C. Palmer (1845-1882)

strengthen them, watch over them. Because if you don't, you'll find that they wither and fade, and fall from the vine and they just pass away.

Thus our Lord has established for us that there's a responsibility for you that He is fixing. And He's telling you that it's a great blessing if you obey and a great loss if you don't. Remember, "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die." Here He looks at this church and they didn't know it.

They thought everything was going on beautifully, but they didn't realize the heart was out of it. The consequence of that was it was ready to die. He said, "Be watchful.' Do again your first works and see that the matter of the inside is what it ought to be. How can you know that you are in need, that you have been overtaken, that you have come to the place where difficulty is impending, for that's what He's saying?

"Remember therefore, how thou has received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come on thee as a thief in the night." How can you know that you are in a place where He's going to come on you as a thief in the night? The first thing I would suggest is this; that what sins over which you had victory at one time, began to assume ascendancy in your life again, then you know the watchfulness is gone, you've been overtaken.

This was the Church at Sardis, and you know full well that when things over which once you had victory are beginning to creep back in your life, you're in dangerous ground, the place where you'd gone to the Lord for help. I would be so bold as to say this, that in my experience and possibly in yours, my inner heart life and the temptations that come into assail and assault are linked together.

When your eyes focus on Him, and you're occupied with Him, and you're filled with faith and hope and love, these things aren't the problems they once were. When you get your eye off of Him, it's like Peter looking down from the face of the Lord to those waves, and they begin to mount up, and pull, and suck and draw and sink into them.

You know that you're in the place of the Church at Sardis, when besetting sins began to assume ascendancy in your heart and life again. I don't know what your besetting sin would be, to some it's probably immoral imaginations. To some other it may be reading, maybe a temptation to read things which are wrong. To some other a worldly pleasure, to somebody else it maybe just to exaggerate and to enlarge. To someone else it maybe to get things, and take things that don't belong to them.

I don't know what your besetting sin is. I know this, when that begins to rise in your life, its evidence that you ceased being watchful, you ceased to strengthen, you've come into the state of the Church at Sardis. Then, you'll know another evidence that the Lord is about to come as a thief in judgment, is when you find the natural hardness, and lovelessness of your heart returning.

Let's not deceive ourselves, by nature we weren't very nice people. We were the kind of people that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross, did you know that? It was just folks like us, as nice as we are, that did that terrible thing, hard hearted. We're the kind of people that came before Moses. We'd have been right there, probably with Korah and the gainsayers.

No, our hearts were naturally proud, and arrogant, and angry and selfish. When you begin to find the tenderness and the gentleness that always comes from the Spirit of God moving, and criticism coming in, and hardness coming in, and sharpness coming in. You know full well, that He is about to come as a thief in judgment.

The third thing that you'll be sure as evidence that the Lord is just standing on the threshold to come, and you're to be watchful and to remember, the third evidence is this; when you find you're unwilling to be reclaimed. When you're unwilling to do anything about it. There was a time when you were so sensitive that if you listened to something that wasn't right, you went to the Lord, and asked His forgiveness.

It just kind of crept up, and you're not as sensitive anymore, perhaps. Well it's what He said, listen to it, "Be watchful, strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou has received and heard and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shall not know what hour I will come upon thee."

You know this when you're unwilling to give it up, because first you feel averse to instruction. When something comes from anybody; loved ones, family, friends, that touch the point of issue you don't like it. Then you hate to be told of your faults. If this comes you know it's just on the threshold. I know it, there are times, and I'm not speaking down to you. I'm speaking to my own heart, I'm pointing at you, I don't want it to be impersonal.

I've got three fingers pointed at me, this is a very personal thing we're talking about tonight. He's talking to the Church, and I'm just sharing with you, don't mistake that. When we're unwilling to be reclaimed, it's ... When we're averse to instruction and we don't want to be told of our faults, and then we take offense at reproof and reprovers, those that come to us.

Then you know when love is doing its work, it's easy to be entreated, easy to be entreated. Then of course when we turn from the light to go to the unspiritual and worldly people for consolation. There's nothing that a person that the Lord is about to deal with likes any more than self-pity and justification. There's no place better to get it than from the unsaved.

If you want to really get the fur petted the way it lays, you go to some unsaved person and tell him how bad the church is, and they'll agree with you. Everything...They'll agree with every word you say. You see this is the evidence of it, when you discover that this is the Sardis state of heart, this is the thing the Lord has seen. Here are the people they have a name, they're active, they're busy, but deep within them there's no shame, there's no scandal. They haven't the sin of the Nicolaitans, they haven't the sin of Balaam. These are people whose reputations are intact and perfect, but only the Lord sees it. That's why I apply it to my own heart and to yours.

Now if anyone persists in this state, and continues in it, then it is evidence that they're unregenerate regardless of their profession. The works of the unregenerate are dead, and utterly deficient, those who are dead are utterly unresponsive to the truth of God. One thing that you'll have to recognize as standard equipment with a child of God is a hatred of sin.

Therefore, when the Spirit of God finds us in the state of the Church at Sardis, we're reclaimable; we want to do something about it. Anybody can fall into it. The loveliest lamb with the whitest wool can fall into the pond where the sow has been wallowing. But I'll tell you something about it; it isn't going to stay there because it has a new heart, a different heart. This is what we find; the person that stays there is given testimony by their rebellion that they do not know the Lord.

"Remember therefore," says our wonderful Lord, "How thou hast received and heard." Let the Word do its work in our lives, pray it in. I think of how Aline instructed the sinners of his day: "When you hear the Word go home and pray it in." Whenever God speaks to us, whether it's from our daily devotion or from the Scripture text on the

sidewalk or in the subway, or from a verse he flashes to our memory, we ought to pray it in. Lest we should let it slip and it should fail to do its work in our life.

When the Lord begins to put the knife in, don't draw back from it, run into it. Do you know the greatest curse that you could possibly have? It would be to have a conscience that wasn't stirred by the Spirit of God any longer. You say, "I wish I was in trouble." Don't say that, maybe the Lord would let you be in that state. I think it would be far more disastrous to you, to have your conscience not troubled by the Spirit of God. Your heart not stirred by Him, both with longing for Him and with concern for yourself. I say it would be a far greater horror to have that happen to your spirit than to lose your nerves, the sense of feeling. Can you imagine what would happen if there were no nerves in your hands? It would be bruised, and broken, and cut off, and burned away.

No, it can't be, let's rejoice that the Spirit of God has done it, and move in to meet Him and let Him fulfill His work. Hold fast and repent. Hold fast the night, if the Lord begins to bring it. Because He's dealing with things, He's dealing with carelessness, or indifference, or sleep and sloth, the forgetting and the neglecting of the truth, perhaps the failure to continue in repentance.

These are the things of which He is dealing. Then He says if you don't hold fast and you don't repent, then I'm going to come as a thief. There are two kinds of judgment, we need to understand this, there's the lion and the moth. Have you ever read that in the Old Testament, the lion and the moth? The lion comes with its claws out prancing, its mouth open, roaring, and it seizes its prey and drags him off. That's the way most people expect. You know some people have sin, and they really thought that lightning would come from Heaven if they did something. Nothing happened, the sky was without lightning bolts, and not a thing fell, and they thought well now, the Lord didn't mind that very much.

There are two kinds of judgment, there's the lion and the moth. You know what the moth does don't you. He gets into your winter suit in the summer and there's no noise. You don't hear him gnawing or chawing, no noise. Except when you go to take it up it's ruined. This is what he says, I'll come as a thief, the thief doesn't advertise his presence, he just comes in and takes what's of value to you, and when you go to get it, it's gone.

Sometimes, I suppose, the clumsy one might make a lot of mess and you say, "Well somebody rifled my drawers." The one that's really clever would probably go in and take what he wanted and unless you took an inventory, you wouldn't even know it was gone. The Lord says, "I'm going to come as a thief." I'm going to quietly steal it away, and you won't even know it's gone until you look for it.

How important it is, well what does He promise? We've seen His judgment so appropriate and necessary for our wellbeing as well for His glory. His promises are certain and encouraging. The undefiled ones, even if they're few, are never forgotten by the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou hast a few names (in verse 4) even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

He knew every one of them, our Lord searches them out. I'm sure that He knows tonight, those here that have not defiled their garments. He knows, now I don't know, you don't know me, I don't know you, but He knows, and he's looking them out, he's searching them out. For the one that has not defiled their garments, for the one that's clean, in the midst of that.

You see this proves that you can be right, even if nobody else is. I'm so glad that you don't have to be dragged down into the quicksand by anything around you. The evidence of character, and the evidence of God's working in your

life, is that you don't let yourself be influenced by untoward and evil associations. It's so easy to be a member of a crowd; all you have to do is go. It's so easy to be a chip going down stream.

All you have to do is be the live fish that's willing to jump the falls and go up to the place which its nature calls and the dead ones just can ride with it. Here were some in the city of Sardis that have life, divine life, and the evidence of that life was that in spite of the fact that they were defiled on every hand, the Lord says, "I have here a few that have not defiled their garments."

Oh that this might be true of you. And the Lord is looking for you, He's searching out, trying to find everyone, will find everyone whose garments are stainless. What do you mean stainless, they've never sinned? No. But that they have held fast, and strengthened and have been watchful, and have repented. When there has come into their life, that which grieved God they dealt with it, and confessed it and have forsaken it and known the cleansing of the Blood.

With such He shares his life. What did He say? They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. One of the great losses of sin in the life of the child of God is broken fellowship with God. One can walk where He walked, and speak what He has been told to speak and have not the Lord with him.

We ought to treasure more than anything else in all the world, the consciousness of the presence of God. He said, "I will walk only with those who have not defiled their garments. They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy." What means this, does it mean that somehow even by the firmest purpose of heart that you have not sinned, or if you have there's no possibility of your walking with him in light? No.

It doesn't mean that. Perhaps it means that the worst ones are the ones that are there closest to Him, because in the discovery of their need and their brokenness they've come for cleansing and they've stayed low before Him. And thus He says I'll share My life with those whose garments are white.

White through His blood, through His cleansing. How we need Thee, I never knew Thee. We entreat Thee, we beseech Thee tonight our Father by the Holy Ghost gracious ministry. Expose each of our hearts that we may know and be certain of the genuineness of Thy supernatural work of grace in saving us. Then our Father, those who would know of a certainty they're born again, yet are still subject to all of the sins that overtook the Church at Sardis; going through the motions, losing the keenness of their faith, and the joy of hope, and the thrill of their love for Thee. Father we've spoken to our own hearts tonight. Thou knowest each of us. We're here a company of people that have nothing to hide and everything to gain by being transparent with the living God.

Lord, let there come tonight that sweet sense that Thou art on our side. Thou art on the side of the weak one, and the erring one, and the fallen one, and the sinful one to forgive, to cleanse, to purge, yes to strengthen. Thou art asking us to be transparently honest with Thee, and face just what Thou would see. The weary one Lord, the one who may be discouraged, the one whose heart maybe heavy, the one who is filled with joy and satisfaction for every blessing Thou hast was given. Whatever our state, whatever our condition Lord, Thou art there willing to meet us in it and bring us to be all we ought to be.

Help us to see the Lord Jesus, as He sees this church, not to condemn it, to bruise it, to hurt it. But that by virtue of the door being opened and the heart being yielded, He could come to bless. We believe tonight, our Father that He wants to bless each of us. So gladly we take Thy Word, we clasp it to us, we hold it there, and we say Father, "Do not let it be taken from us." Help us to take our mind so frivolous and light, and so easily wafted away to the

inconsequential, and bind our minds in solid meditation and contemplation upon the truth, until it shall have done its work.

We ask Thee Father now to fit blessing to every heart, every life. With our eyes closed, our heads bowed, just this moment. Are there those who would say God has been speaking to my heart? I have seen myself, my need, and I want to testify tonight by raised hand, God is dealing and I'm responding and I want God's people to pray for me, I need prayer.

Would you put your hand up, anyone anywhere. God bless you I see it, yes, yes. Anyone else? For these three, our Father, whose hands so quickly, so readily raised we pray, we thank Thee our Father that the heart is known, the life is known, the provisions of Grace Thou has made for such.

By this testimony, oh Thou God of grace, will Thou work in all Thy delivering love, new ways to bring whatever victory and deliverance and strength and power is needed. We pray for these, and for others whose hands ought to have been raised, whose hearts Thou dost know in Jesus name. May I say this, anyone that would like to remain to pray, I'll be so glad to talk with you.

Let us stand for the benediction. "Now may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do His will. Working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord to whom be the glory now and forever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20,21).

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, January 15, 1961 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.