

Living as an Overcomer – Tony Evans

Walking in the Spirit's Power - Chapter 6

1. Read Revelation 3:1 - 6. Evans describes Sardis as a major garment producer. Guzik says that it was well known “for its softness and luxury”. Softness and luxury can make you self-reliant.
2. Jesus identifies Himself to this church as “*the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*” Isaiah 11, God describes the Messiah. In verse 2, He lists the seven spirits of God and they are:
 - a. *The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him (the Messiah),*
 - b. *The spirit of wisdom and understanding,*
 - c. *The spirit of counsel and strength,*
 - d. *The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*
3. Jesus told us that the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30). In 2Corinthians 3:17, Paul completes the Trinity. He says that the Father and the Holy Spirit are one. Guzik says, “Jesus has the fullness of the Holy Spirit in Himself, and He has the Holy Spirit in fullness to give to the Church.”
4. Here in Chapter 3, Jesus tells us that He is the one who holds that seven stars and in Revelation 1:20 He tells us that “*the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.*”
5. In case you missed it, He has started His letters to the church by telling John to write the letters to the “*angel of the church*”. Prior to Jesus’ time on earth, angels were God’s messengers. So Jesus is sending these letters via God’s messengers to make sure the churches get them.
6. And what have they done wrong? Jesus says “*I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*” They are just going through the motions. They are doing things but really aren’t doing them for the glory of God. The spirit is not alive in them.
7. At Owens Corning, management would have said that they are not engaged. Or as one of my coworkers said about his work ethic, “Nine to 5, it all pays the same. I can work hard or just sit at my desk.” They are dead on the inside. Evans points out that “success tends to build complacency.”

“Not only were the Christians in Sardis feeling self-sufficient, but so were their pastors and spiritual leaders. We know this because Jesus also introduces Himself as the One who has the seven stars. Stars are a reference to the spiritual leaders. This reveals that there was a void of

quality leadership in the church. The leadership that should have been setting the pace for the congregation to follow in terms of grabbing onto and pursuing the work of the Spirit had been setting the wrong pace of independence and ease.” (Evans)

8. They received salvation when they accepted Christ just like the other churches but they were not living it. Worship had become something that they did once a week and they were only in attendance but not present. Church was just someplace they went once a week out of habit.
9. In verse 2 and 3, He gives them three actions that they needed to do. He said, “*Wake up! Strengthen what remains . . . and repent.*” Jesus says that they are headed the wrong direction, their church was dying.
10. Similar to what He told the church at Ephesus, they lost their first love. He doesn’t say it that way but it was something very similar. He tells them to “*Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent.*” He wants them to get back on the right road. Don’t do what you are doing just because it is what you have always done.
11. Jesus tells them to take your foundational learning and hold to it and dump the rest. If need be, when you meet together, pray for the entire time and make it meaningful with regards to building your relationship with Jesus. Just keep what is true worship.
12. If they don’t change their direction then He will come and straighten them out. He says that He will come like a thief in the night. They won’t know when so they won’t have time to get right with God unless they do it NOW!
13. This is the same way that He says that He will rapture believers. He is warning them not to wait, fix it now. Jesus used a parable to teach about His return which is recorded in Matthew 25. It is a warning to be prepared for the bridegroom (Jesus) is coming. If we are not prepared He will leave without us.
14. Those working at the church of Sardis have hidden agendas that serve their own interests. Worship in Sardis has become all about the individual and not about worshiping God. Proper worship is about a unified body praising God together and not a bunch of individuals going through the motions.
15. One of the most divisive parts of worship can be music. Some say, “I like contemporary music.” Others say, “I like the old hymns.” God says, “I don’t care what music you bring, just bring it with love for Me in your hearts.” Make sure that in your heart you are praising the Lord.

16. The church at Sardis was busy but their attitudes and motives were wrong. Based on Revelation 3:2b, they weren't getting their jobs done or not done right. Jesus told them "*I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.*" Another possibility is that they jumped into a task and lost interest and didn't finish to God's expectations. They merely said, "That's good enough."
17. Colossians 3:23-24 says, "*23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*" This applies to everything we do but especially when we ARE serving God.
18. In verse 4, Jesus says that not all of the members of this church have this problem. There are some that do not have soiled garments. Their garments are clean and they are close to sin-free. Their hearts are in the right place. God is their number one priority.
19. They will have a personal relationship with Jesus like no other. They will walk with Him and talk with Him in a personal way and not in a group. They will be wearing white and everyone will know of their purity. Not only does Jesus say, "*Well done, my good and faithful servant.*" He will say, "Walk with me my dear friend."
20. In verse 5, Jesus says that they won't be the only ones to wear white. He says that the "*one who is victorious*" or the overcomer will also wear white. The overcomers will wear white because through everything that they experienced on earth, they overcame. They remained steadfast in faith to Jesus.
21. Jesus says to the overcomer, "*I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.*" Revelation 20:15 explains what happens if your name is blotted out of the book of life. It says, "*Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*" If you overcome and stay true to Jesus, then you will not end up in the lake of fire.
22. As true believers we should not doubt our eternal security in Christ Jesus. John 10:27-30 says, "*27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.*" Jesus has promised to hold on to His sheep and His sheep will have eternal life. It doesn't say "might".

23. The first reference to the book of life is in Exodus 32:32 where Moses was willing to give up His eternity with God for the forgiveness of the sin of the Hebrew nation. He said, *“please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”* God does forgive them but He does promise, *“Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.”* This will never happen to the true believer, the overcomer.
24. In these few verses, Jesus warns that if the members of the Sardis church do not repent then He will come like a *“thief in the night”* but to some that are the overcomers, He guarantees their passage to heaven.
25. In Matthew 10:32, Jesus said, *“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.”* Here in Revelation 3, Jesus repeats it. He says, I *“will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.”* One can see that hiding your light of Jesus under a bushel, will not make you an overcomer. We are to let our light shine.

Evans gives us “three ways this remnant in Sardis shows what living a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life is like.”

1. Committing Ourselves to Christ’s Ways, Not Culture’s Ways

- a. When we let the world influence our church, then we are not staying true to Jesus. Consider the “Welcoming and Affirming Churches”. They are throwing the Word of God out the window in the name of diversity or the world’s culture.
- b. People say that the Bible is just an old book but it is applicable for our lives today. Letting any part of the world in to our church is compromising on God.
- c. Pastor Brian posted a meme that illustrates the negative effects of compromise in a church. It said, “It’s not unloving to say, “Jesus is the only way to Heaven.” It’s unloving to pretend there are other ways.” We can never compromise on the route to salvation.

2. Striving for Godliness, Not Worldliness

- a. “Worldliness is anything you take part in that leaves God out as the primary determining worldview for how the things of this world should be experienced. “Soiling your garments” is done anytime you place another viewpoint or perspective higher than God’s.” (Evans)

- b. Often we forget about the obedience part of accepting Christ. When we give our lives to Jesus, we give our lives to Him. As the hymns says, “Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me. Not for the years of time alone, But for eternity.”

3. Keeping Our Reputation, Not Losing It

- a. As Baptists, we believe that “Once saved, always saved.” We can’t lose our salvation or have our name blotted from the book of life. In question #22, we read John 10:27-30 where Jesus says, “*no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.*”
- b. Is your reputation grounded in the saving knowledge of Jesus? Do others recognize you as a believer? Do they ask you to pray for them? It is critical for a Christian to be recognized as a one. Earlier we read (#25) Matthew 10:32, Jesus said, “*Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.*”
- c. “Being an overcomer means overcoming subtle sins like complacency, ease, a desire for cultural popularity, and spiritual distance from the Holy Spirit. And you can overcome these when you stick close to Jesus and make His will and desire your own.” (Evans)