



World Ministries International

4PL1/03

I AM GRIEVED

~ *Sardis* ~

Part 5 of a 7 part series



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I now turn my attention to the next church in this series titled "I AM GRIEVED" and that is the church located in the city of Sardis.

Revelation 3:1-6 reads, "And 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."

Verse 2, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God."

Verse 3, "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."

Verse 4, "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."

Verse 5, "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."

Verse 6, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Once again the Apostle John is recording what Jesus Christ is telling him to say to the Pastor of the church at Sardis. Jesus identifies himself as "he that hath the seven Spirits of God". Just as seven is the number for completeness, perfection and fullness, so also does the Holy Spirit rest fully and powerfully with Jesus. Jesus uses similar language in Rev. 2:1 speaking of the seven stars (pastors). Jesus tells the pastor of Sardis that he (Jesus) has full authority and power over the seven pastors who also represent the entire church at large. He goes on to inform the pastor at Sardis that he has been watching the church at Sardis and even though it had a good name, it was failing miserably. Dear Saints, it matters little

what good works have been done in the past. Our past reputation will not justify our current condition. Many people try to ease their conscience by reminding people what they did "for the Lord" in the past. But, the real question is, what are you doing now for God? Jesus is not only the God of the past, He is also the God of the present and the future.

In Ezekiel 3:17-21, God makes it clear what he expects: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."

Many people and churches start off serving the Lord with zeal, but as "the cares of the world" (Matthew 13:22) accumulate they become lazy and slothful and then begin to die spiritually.

1 Peter 5:8 warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

Humanism is simply serving oneself over God. In our society, humanism is taught in the schools, on television, etc. Humanism was first present in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve

exercised their free will and independently chose to willfully disobey God. Humanism is choosing to do what "self" wants instead of what God the Father's will is for that life, etc.

Galatians 5:20 reads, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

As a Christian, we are supposed to be a servant of Jesus Christ. It is no longer our will that matters. It is God's will that we are supposed to be concerned with and obey. Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane prayed, "...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, as thou wilt." Jesus Christ who came to earth as both "the Son of God" and "the Son of man" did not want to die the way he did. Jesus, the son of man, made in the flesh, in human form, wanted to preserve himself. His human will did not want to suffer and die the way God the Father had planned. Consequently, Jesus was in great travail and distress in the garden. He was emotionally troubled and depressed, and asked God if there was any other way to accomplish his task. When God told him no, then Jesus resigned himself to obey the perfect will of God and he submissively went to trial, torture, humiliation and death on the cross. Please read Matthew 26:38-45.

This world serves itself. Me, myself and I are the gods of most people. Humanism and self-actualization is what people live for. As that humanistic song states, "I did it my way". Psychologists, etc., are all exhorting people to live for, to build up, and to please oneself. Self-ego has become a major stumbling block for the humanist trying to live a Christian life. The humanists' goal is personal happiness. The Christians' goal is supposed to be to please Jesus Christ.

In his syllabus and study guide for the Bible College course, "PT341: "Crucified Life," Dr.

Sam Drye states, "We live in a generation made soft from materialism and greed. Much of the world's mind-set has spilled into the church. . . In our generation we have seen a watered down gospel emerge which has pulled the church into what some have colorfully described as "greasy grace and sloppy agape...many teachers and preachers have taught a gospel of humanism, which says that the ultimate reality is the actualization of self. This doctrine is the antithesis of Scripture, according to Matthew 16:24-26. Humanism clothed in religious garb espouses that the end of all being is for the happiness of man. The truth is that the end of all being is for the glory of God. Through our ignorance and deception much of the church preaches a utilitarian gospel, proclaiming that we may use God as a means to an end." (p 3,4,7)

Dear saint, I believe we are living in a generation described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4, 10-12, "Let no man deceive you by any 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 that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We are living in a generation that has fallen away from fundamental truth. Basic truth that used to be taken for granted in society is no longer elementary. Homosexuality and abortion prior to 1973 was recognized as both a sin and a crime, but today it is being taught as an acceptable lifestyle, both in the community and in most churches. Lying and perjury were regarded as sins and crimes demanding some form of punishment. Yet today, we give excuses for people who lie and get caught trying to cover up some form of immoral behavior (adultery, etc.). We say that it is their personal affair. It does not seem to matter to a nation if their president is a liar and an adulterer. What was once considered truth is no longer truth in society or the church. Corruption, heresy and apostasy is influencing, developing and driving the culture. Another gospel, which encourages the self in people to grow instead of die, is being preached in our churches. Instead of becoming servants of Jesus Christ, we try to make Jesus our servant; our puppet to please our fleshly desires and gluttonous fancies.

I am the chancellor for the Bible College, World Theological Center For Evangelism and Missions. At the school, the students just finished a course taught via video. The textbook used for the class

was "Crucified Life," written by the course instructor Dr. Sam Drye. On page 102-103 he writes, "The world's way is actualization of self ("me-ism"). God's way is denial of self, inherent in the life of Jesus, and summed up in one word: love. Either the God of humanism will operate in our lives, or we'll die to self and be alive to Christ. Modern psychology has taught that self-actualization is the ultimate reality, so people are constantly seeking to elevate themselves and find out who they are. Much of that psychology has spilled over into church counseling. There's nothing wrong with counseling in itself, but when we adopt so much of the psychology of the world and the humanistic tendencies of teachings and bring them into the church, then we're actually supporting the modern belief of trying to minister to the self rather than getting a person to deny himself."

Dr. Drye, on page 39 of Christian Life School of Theology Syllabus and Study Guide PT-341: "Crucified Life," writes: "During the fifties a great fear of communism began to permeate the West- especially the United States. Out of this era arose psychology for raising children that would supposedly bring out in them the character that would most vigorously resist tyranny. This philosophy glorified self-will and self-assertion. Psychologists, contrary to the wisdom of the scriptures, encouraged the restraint of parental discipline. They believed that discipline would hinder the free expression and independent development of the child's character. This generation that was projected to be uncompromising in their ideals actually became the student rebels, communists, and anarchists of the late sixties! They became the very enemies their parents were trying to bring them up to resist! The parents of this generation reaped only hatred and contempt. Why? Again the law of flesh and spirit explains: 'If you feed the flesh you can only reap flesh and corruption.' (Gal 6:8) Only by sowing to the Spirit can that which is Spirit be reaped. To feed self-will is to feed self-centeredness, and the self-centered are not capable of noble thought or deed. These will actually be the most easily subverted by tyranny. Having the guidelines of authority eroded within themselves, they will seek security in that which is the most authoritarian. Any authority that appears weak or indecisive will be despised and attacked. All the tyrant has to do is promise security and the gratification of their flesh and he has won their allegiance."

I hope all of you can see how easy it is becoming in the world for the anti-Christ (son of perdition-Beast) to some day in the near future lead the world. America has many enemies who hate her as September 11, 2001 loudly announced. As the nation continues to reject the God of the Bible and His laws, she continues to make herself prey to her foes. Our stock market has really crashed.

In reality, America is bankrupt. Thousands have already died in an attack and the Lord has said "that millions more will follow". Iraq, Russia, China, etc., all hate The United States of America and are plotting and conniving disaster and death for America. War and more war are on the horizon for America and the world. The seals of God in the book of Revelation are about to be opened. Crisis, catastrophes, suffering and death are about to be unleashed on the nations. The world will hail the anti-Christ to lead them out of what has become total anarchy into security and peace. We cannot continue to tolerate alternate lifestyles, homosexuality, abortion, co-habitation etc., to be encouraged and legal without suffering the consequences called, "The Science of Judgment". We as a nation are guilty of idolatry, sorcery and witchcraft. We are guilty of forming unholy alliances and plotting to divide the land of Israel.

Romans 1:22-32 warns us, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Leviticus 18:17-30 warns, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness [incest]. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her lifetime. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her

uncleanness [menstruation]. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her [adultery]. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, [sacrificing their children to false gods for their own prosperity as people do today for convenience-abortion] neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination [homosexuality]. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion [bestiality and zoophilia]. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you; And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled; That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I am the Lord your God."

Please read Leviticus chapter 20; 2 Kings 21:2-3,6,9,16; Ezekiel 20:26 and 36:18; Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 6:16-17; Jude 7; Genesis 12:3; Zechariah 12:2-3,9; Joel 3:1-2; Isaiah 28:15,17; Galatians 5:19-24, etc.

Many churches and Christians are like Samson. They think they are all right before God, not realizing the spirit of God has already departed.

2 Timothy 2:15 tells us, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Do you study the Scriptures? Do you love truth as exhorted in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12?

The people in the church at Sardis were strongly warned to "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die". If a person is truly a lover of the total truth of the Scriptures and diligently studies them, the Holy Spirit will certainly convict one of their sins. The person can now repent of their sins, consequently renewing and strengthening their relationship with Jesus Christ. If they daily go to the Lord in prayer asking Him to show them their sins and help them to live a crucified life, then Jesus will do just that.

In both the church at Sardis and today's church,

we find that the majority of Christians are guilty of apathy, resulting in sin which could end in deception and death.

Dr Drye writes on page 20, "Walk with the crowd of Christians and you will walk in failure. With them you will feel comfortable because you're at the same level, but you will be uncomfortable around totally sold out Christians."

Dr. Ronald E. Cottle; "The Risen Lord Speaks to His Church", writes: "Six hundred years before John wrote this letter, Sardis had been the richest city in Asia...the city stood 1500 feet up on a hill-top plateau...it was believed to be impregnable...A certain soldier named Hyeroades was studying the hill which was not composed of solid rock but of a very hard clay which would wear down over the years. He saw a Sardinian soldier accidentally drop his helmet. The soldier took off his armor, carefully picked his way down the cliff-like mountain, and retrieved his helmet. Then he climbed back up and redressed. Hyeroades carefully memorized that path. That night, with a band of volunteers, he climbed the mountain and found the city unguarded. They captured the city within a few hours and opened the gate to Cyrus and the Persian army. Two hundred years later, that same thing happened with Antiochus Epiphanes and his army. Again, Sardis fell because she did not 'watch.' Instead, she was careless, flabby and soft! As Barclay said: 'the tragedy of Sardis is that life was too easy for her.'" (p50-51)

I believe that this is also the problem with most churches today in the United States. Life is too easy for most Christians. Like the soldier of Sardis, many Christians are not alert and vigilant and through their laziness and apathy fall prey to their own lusts. The enemy is watching to take advantage of any weakness. The Persian soldier was watching the Sardinian soldier climb down the mountain fortress and the Sardinian soldier was totally unaware that he was being watched by the enemy. How many times are Christians totally unaware of people watching them only to attack some obvious weakness in our spiritual character? If a Christian is not aware of his own character flaws (selfishness), then that Christian will fall to his own lusts (self-will humanistic ego).

The Scriptures in Rev. 3:1-6 also warn the Sardinian Christians that they needed to obey explicitly the teachings of the Apostles and Prophets recorded through the Scriptures, and to develop their walk with the Lord with all earnestness. Jesus emphatically warns that some Christians there were in good relationship with him, but many were in danger of losing their relationship with Him!

Dr. Cottle writes: "In the ancient world, a king kept a register of his citizens. If a man committed

a crime against the kingdom, or if he died, his name was erased from the Book of Citizens. To be written in the Book of Life was to be a member of God's kingdom. Moses knew about this book when he said: 'Blot me out of thy book if it will help save my people.' The Psalmist sang about it: 'The wicked being blotted out of the Book of the Living.' John himself in Revelation 20:15 says: 'Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the Lake of Fire.' So, our Lord's promise is that there is no danger of being erased or separated from eternal life for the man who keeps on trusting God." (Ibid. p56-57)

In the Scriptures, the color white stands for victory. Jesus promises the overcomer that He will give victory to the Christian that walks in obedience, for there is no salvation apart from identifying with Jesus and picking up our cross in submission and following His commandments. The Christian will have victory in his life; victory over his selfishness and the lusts that hold him in bondage if he has crucified himself with Christ. That Christian will walk in anointing, power and authority, and be transformed into the image of the Father. That overcomer will have eternal life and Jesus promises that He 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." (Revelation 3:5)

Jesus closes out verse six with another warning, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Jesus not only warns the church at Sardis, nor does He merely warn the church throughout history, but He warns the church today, you and I. Die to your will! Follow My will! And live forever with Me!

Galatians 5:24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Rom 6:12-14, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

Phil 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"

May God richly bless you, Jonathan Hansen

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