

PLEASE FORWARD THIS ARTICLE TO YOUR PASTOR AND CHRISTIAN FRIENDS.

Excerpts from a sermon called "**A Solemn Warning for All Churches**" By **C.H. Spurgeon**. The sermon was delivered on **February 24, 1856, At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, England.**

"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."—Revelation 3:4

The first charge of general defilement he brings against the church in Sardis was that they had *a vast deal of open profession*, and but little of sincere religion.

That is the crying sin of the present age.

In going up and down this land, I am obliged to come to this conclusion, that throughout the churches there are multitudes who have "a name to live, and are dead."

You can scarcely meet with a man who does not call himself a Christian, and yet it is equally hard to meet with one who is in the very marrow of his bones thoroughly sanctified to the good work of the kingdom of heaven.

The whole nation appears to have been Christianized in an hour. But is this real? Is this sincere? Ah! we fear not. How is it that there is so little distinction between the church and the world?

How is it that men who make high professions can live in worldly conformity, indulge in the same pleasures, live in the same style, act from the same motives, deal in the same manner as other do? Are not these days when the sons of God have made affinity with the sons of men?

Take our churches at large—there is no lack of names, but there is a lack of life. Else, how is it that our prayer-meetings are so badly attended? Where is the zeal or the energy shown by the apostles? Where is the Spirit of the living God? Is he not departed? Might not "Ichabod" be written on the walls of many a sanctuary? They have a name to live, , but are dead. They have their piety? Where is sincere religion? Where is practical godliness?

Ah! we have abundance of cold, calculating Christians, multitudes of professors; but where are the zealous ones? where are the leaders of the children of God? where are your heroes who stand in the day of battle? where are your men who "count not their lives dear unto them," that they might win Christ, and be found in him? where are those who have an impassioned love for souls? How many of our pulpits are filled by earnest, enthusiastic preachers? Alas! look, at the church. She has builded herself fine palaces, imitating popery; she hath girded herself

with vestments; she has gone astray from her simplicity; but she has lost the fire and the life which she once had. We go into our chapels now, and we see everything in good taste: we hear the organ play; the psalmody is in keeping with the most correct ear; the gown and the noble vestments are there, and everything is grand and goodly, and we think that God is honored.

What is the use of garnishing the shell when you have lost the kernel. Go and whitewash, for the life is gone. Garnish the outside of your cups and platters; **but ye have lost the pure word of God.** Ye have it not for a piece of bread; **they flinch to speak the whole truth**, or if they seem to speak it, it is with cold, meaningless, passionless words, as if it were nothing whether souls were damned or saved, whether heaven were filled or heaven depopulated, or whether Christ should see of the travail of his world and be satisfied. Do I speak fierce things? I can say as Irving once did, I might deserve to be broken on the wheel if I did not believe what I say to be the truth.

WE do believe that the church has lost her zeal and her energy. But what do men say of us? "Oh! you are too excited." Good God! excited! when men are being damned; *Excited!* When we have the mission of heaven to preach to dying souls. *EXCITED! preaching too much!* when souls are lost.

Can I bear to see the laziness, the slothfulness, the indifference of ministers, and of churches, without speaking. No! there must be a protest entered, and we enter it now. Oh! Church of God, thou has a name to live, and art dead; thou art not watchful. Awake! awake! arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

And what does the church do now? Do the shepherds go after those that are wounded and sick, and those that are weary? Do they carry the lambs in their bosom, and gently lead those that are with young? Do they see to poor distressed consciences, and speak to those who feel their deadness in trespasses and sins?

In how much contempt are the truly new-born children of God held in these times! They are called peculiar men, scouted as Antinomians, hissed at as being oddities, high doctrine men who have departed from the usual mode of pulling down God's word to men's fancies; they are called bigots, narrow-minded souls, and their creed is set down as dry, hard, rough, severe Calvinism.

God's gospel called hard, rough, and severe! The things for which our fathers died are not called infamous things! Mark whether, if ye stand out prominently in the truth, you will not be abhorred and scouted.

Men who love the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and will have it, and are therefore called a nasty set of Antinomians.

O Sardis! Sardis! I see thee now. Thou hast defiled thy garments. Thank God, there are a few who have not followed the multitude to do evil, and who shall "walk in white, for they are worthy."

"If I am wrong upon other points, I am positive that the sin of this age is impurity of doctrine, and laxity of faith.

And what do the congregations say? "Well, he is a wise man, and ought to know."

A new age this, when falsehood and truth can kiss each other! New times these when fire and water can become friendly! Glorious times these when there is an alliance between hell and heaven, though God knows, we are of vastly different families. Ah! now, who cares for truth except a few narrow-minded bigots as they are called. Election—*horrible!* Predestination—*awful!* Final perseverance—*desperate!* Yet, turn to the pages of the Puritans, and you will see that these truths were preached every day. Turn to the Fathers; read Augustine, and you will see that these were the truths for which he would have bled and died. Read the Scriptures, and if every page is not full of them I have not read them aright, or any child of God either. Ay, laxity of doctrine is the great fault now.

You may fancy that I am raising an outcry about nothing at all. Ah! no; my anxious spirit sees the next generation—what will that be. *This* generation—Arminianism. What next? Pelagianism. And what next? Popery. And what next? I leave you to guess.

The path of error is always downward. We have taken one step in the wrong direction; God knows where we shall stop.

Oh, church of the living God, awake! awake! Once more write truth upon thy banner; stamp truth upon thy sword; and for God and for his word, charge home. Ye knights of truth, and truth alone, shall sit king over the whole world!

But now I have lifted up the whip, I must have another lash. Look on any section of the church you like to mention, not excepting that to which I belong; and let me ask you whether they have not defiled their garments. Look at the church of England. Her articles are pure and right in most respects; yet see how her garments are defiled. She hath made the Queen her Head instead of God. she bows before the state, and worships the golden calf that is set up before her. Look at her abominations.

Look into what denomination you please, Independent, or Baptist, or any other—have they not all defiled their garments in some way or other?

Look at our own denomination: see how it has deserted the leading truths of the gospel. For a proof hereof, I refer you to hundreds of our pulpits. Oh church of

God! I am but a voice crying in the wilderness, but I must cry still, "How art thou fallen from heaven, thou son of the morning! how art thou fallen!" "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." If thou dost not watch, thy Master will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know in what hour he will come unto thee.

We stand this morning like old Elijah, when he stood before God and said, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life." But God whispers, "I have yet reserved unto myself seventy thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal." Take heart, Christian, there are a few in Sardis—do not forget that—who have not defiled their garments. Take heart. It is not all rotten yet; there is a soundness in the core after all; there is "a remnant according to the election of grace;"

Take heart then; and whenever you go to your chamber and mourn over the sad condition of the church, think you hear that good old woman in her closet groaning and crying; think you hear that minister faithfully dispensing the word; think you see that valiant deacon standing up for God's truth; think you see that young man strong in the midst of temptation; think of these few in Sardis, and they will cheer you. Do not be quite downcast. Some heroes have not turned their backs in the day of battle; some mighty men still fight for the truth. Be encouraged; there are a few in Sardis.

Put up your earnest cries to God that he would multiply the faithful, that he would increase the number of chosen ones who stand fast, that he would purify the church with fire in a furnace seven times heated, so that he might bring out her third part through the fire; cry unto God that the day may come when the much fine gold shall be no longer dim, when the glory shall again return unto Zion. Beg of God to remove the cloud, to take away "the darkness that may be felt." Be doubly prayerful, for there are but a few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments.

O ministers, search yourselves. O ye, who make a profession of religion now, put your hands within your hearts, and search your souls. You live in the sight of a rein-trying God. Oh! try your own reins, and search your own hearts. It is not a matter of half-importance for which I plead, but a matter of double importance. I beseech you, examine and cross-examine your own souls, and see whether ye be in the path, for it will go ill with you if ye shall find at last that ye were in the church, but not of it, that ye make a profession of religion, but it was only a cloak for your hypocrisy—if ye should have entered into his courts below, and be shut out of the courts above. Remember, the higher the pinnacle of profession the direr your fall of destruction.

There are but a few names in Sardis who shall walk in white. Be ye of that few. May God give you grace that ye be not reprobates, but may be accepted of the Lord in that day! May he give you mercy, that when he severs the chaff from the wheat, you may abide as the good corn, and may not be swept away into

unquenchable fire! The Lord in mercy bless this warning, and hear our supplication, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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