

Are You Faithful?

By Caleb J. Rutherford

A used car dealer said to a potential customer: "This one has very low mileage. The former owner drove it only when he could get it started." The church of Christ at First Century Sardis had some members who were like that. All cleaned up and looking good on the outside, but hard to get started. Saying all the right things at church. Showing up on Sunday and singing the songs and praying the prayers and eating the bread and drinking from the cup. Looking alive and well.

And not only that, but the congregation as a whole had a widespread and good reputation. Jesus referred to this in Revelation 3:1 where He said of the saints at Sardis: *"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."* This group of Christians had all the appearances of being a vigorous, flourishing church.

Brethren in other places had talked about how sound and faithful they were. Perhaps her elders and preachers were invited from time to time to speak at workshops or lectureships to tell about all the wonderful things that were going on. But it's hard to fake Jesus out. After all, He is the One with eyes like a flame of fire that see right through all the shallow pretenses and superficial put-on's and spiritual games people play (Revelation 1:14b; 2:18b).

Did you catch Jesus' divine diagnosis of this congregation: Actually, it is not a diagnosis but an announcement of death - YOU ARE DEAD. A dead church.. Still going through the motions -but they were already dead. Like the old preacher who said of the man whose funeral he was performing: "The deceased has been a member of this church for thirty-five years." In Revelation 3:2-6, Jesus seeks to perform a spiritual "CPR" on this congregation as He calls them to watch, hold fast, and repent. But wait a minute. Unlike some human critics of the church, Jesus is not content simply to condemn and see the negative. Revelation 3:4 reveals there were some unnamed and unsung heroes in the church at Sardis: *"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy."*

All my life as a Christian, I have listened to preachers and members of the church talk about "the faithful few." Some preachers and members of the church insist that 90% of the Lord's work is done and financed by 10% of the members while the other 10% is done and financed by the remaining 90%. I don't know about all that. But I know Someone who does. Whether there are many or few where you worship. Jesus is looking for the faithful, and He knows who they are; and He commends them. Whether there are many or few, are you one of the faithful?

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