



Sardis: Incomplete Deeds
Rev 3:1-6 July 14, 2019

I. Introduction:

- A. Perspective is the frame of mind we have when we look at the same thing from a different angle.
 - 1. Image of Perspective
- B. This fifth church in Revelation, Sardis, had a major perspective problem.
 - 1. It was not a difference of perception between what one group of people thought and another group of people thought but between what they thought and what God thought!
 - 2. His perception, His viewpoint, His opinion, His evaluation of things in this church and those of the people were polar opposites!
- C. As I read the first few verses in this letter watch for the difference in perception between what people were saying about this church and what God's point of view was on this church!
 - 1. Read v1-2
 - 2. Note in v1 – “You have a name”, simply this church had a very good reputation, people, most likely Christians, were saying good things about this church.
 - a) You are alive!
 - b) You are a church that has a lot of life, a lot of energy, a lot of activity, probably even saying the Holy Spirit is really moving in this place.
 - 3. But note what Jesus says at the end of this verse.
 - a) Read v1d - Dead
 - b) This letter was written to genuine believers, the church – so when Jesus said you were dead He was not referring to spiritually dead as unsaved

but to the fact that the life, energy and activity they were experiencing was not that of the life of Jesus through the Spirit of God.

- c) Just like the body without the spirit is dead so our activity and service for God without the Spirit is dead!

4. Look at the end of verse 2

- a) Read 2c
- b) In the sight of God – note that the contrast here is between the reputation of man, even Christians, the way they view and what they say about what was going on in that church in opposition to how those same things are seen in the sight of God. From God’s viewpoint, God’s opinion of what was going on in that church, His judgment or evaluation of that churches ministry and deeds for Him.

D. So before we even go further in the text one valuable lesson we can learn is that there can be a big difference between our evaluation and our opinions about a church and the way that God evaluates it and His opinion of it!

- 1. In North America Christians have a tendency to consider a church alive and good if it is large, has a lot programs to meet people’s needs, does a lot of mercy ministries for the less fortunate here and around the world, has a super cool atmosphere, great and engaging music and a preacher that is dressed in skinny jeans and can speak well and relevantly! Most of these can be measured statistically somehow
- 2. We have been learning from the letters to the churches in Revelation what is important to Jesus in a church. And so far, we can say three things have been emphasized as three things of equal importance that must be held in equal tension. Truth, love and holiness of life. Things you do not measure statistically.
- 3. We also learn in Ephesians 4 what a growing church looks like. He lists four things in particular that cannot be measured by human standards
 - a) A unified understanding of the word of God
 - b) A daily personal walk with Jesus
 - c) Spiritual maturity in a way that they can stand firm in Christ and not be knocked out of the box by unbiblical teaching, satanic schemes or even man’s schemes!
 - d) Finally, they are more and more like and filled with Jesus!

4. Bottom line, we see throughout Scripture and we are reminded in this passage that even in a church things can look good to man and look good on the outside, but God who sees differently and looks for different things than North American Christians do, he can have a totally different viewpoint and evaluation of a church.
- E. I think that MVC has a halfway decent reputation among Christians as being a good church and alive, but my heart and the heart of this leadership is that is the viewpoint that God has of MVC as we seek to be pleasing in His sight!
- We can learn more of what it is like to be pleasing in His sight, as we understand the heart of the problem with this church. It was their ...

II. Deeds

- A. What Jesus is addressing in this church is their deeds, their activities, and their work for God.
1. The only thing that Jesus addresses in v 1 is their deeds. Reread 1c
 - a) Their reputation had to do with the activity and work for God
 2. Note at the end of v2 again Jesus is talking about their deeds, their activity and work for God and how God views them. Reread 2d
- B. Now the passage does not identify what these particular works for God were, the word “deeds” is plural (deeds), so He is talking about the general work, activities, programs and ministries of the church!
- C. But one thing we do know about the complete deeds is that they were incomplete. Point out in 2d. Not found in God’s eyes.
1. Complete here means - not complete in the sense that something was lacking in the works they were doing for Jesus. Something was missing! They were not the full or complete package but something was missing from it!
 2. While man was looking at what they were doing he thought “Wow, this is awesome”, on the other hand Jesus saw that something was missing, what He was looking for and valued in their ministry was not there.
- D. All I know for sure is this. The ministry they were carrying on in this church was not going to pass the test of fire at the future judgment of Jesus when He judges our works for Him!
1. Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15
 2. Evidently, in this church whatever they were doing was made of wood, hay and straw and not of gold, silver and precious stones.

- E. So let me try to prime the pump with what some of those kind of works could have been for them and for us! Read Colossians 3:23
1. Could it be that they were not doing things “whole heartedly” for the Lord.
 2. We all know what halfhearted effort looks like and yes, both people in the ministry and lay volunteers can do their ministry halfheartedly!
 3. People who do not take their service seriously and put full effort into it, not fully preparing either our places, hearts or minds, but just coasting and not constantly seeking to excel in the gifts or ministry the Lord has given us
- F. How about where form takes priority over function, program over people, and structure over Spirit!
1. Simply that is when secondary things about ministry, important but secondary, become more important, the focus, the trust and the priority of your ministry.
 2. That is when the forms we use, the programs we offer and the structures we set up become what we build our ministry around rather than the function Jesus called us to do in making disciples, the people we are to serve and the Holy Spirit we are to rely upon!
- G. Possibly not doing the ministry the Lord’s way but rather with your best wisdom, ideas or models. It is not just a matter of doing God’s work but it is a matter of doing God’s work, God’s way!
1. God does hold us accountable for the way we do his work. Remember Moses, God told him to speak to the rock and water would come out to meet the people’s needs, but instead Moses struck the rock. Water did come out and the people’s needs were met.
 - a) But in the end Moses was held accountable for not doing God’s work in God’s way but rather doing God’s work Moses’ way – striking rather than speaking
 - b) As a result God said it was this action that kept Moses from being able to enter into the promise land
 - c) Read Numbers 20:8,11-12
 2. So many people in the ministry whose hearts are good as they want to further God’s kingdom are tempted to think that they have come up with a better way to do things than God has directed in his word.
 3. Many chose the route of pragmatism over principle. Simply what works over what God calls us to do. The focus is more on results than faithfulness.

4. And so many see the success that a business model has brought businesses so they try to turn church ministry from being an organism into an organization we can manage with the skills we have learned from the business world!
- H. Let finish with one other possible way this passage could apply to both them and MVC. Doing works in the flesh rather than the Spirit
1. Simply that means what we do the Lord's work using the best efforts, wisdom and resources that man can come up with apart from the Lord.
 2. Doing the Lord's work by means of the Spirit means that while I am doing the Lord's work whole-heartedly. I am deeply depending upon the Holy Spirit to work in and through me, to strengthen me, to give me the wisdom and next steps I need, to do the things in people's lives that will turn them to Christ and make them more like Christ.
 - a) It is not a passive sit back and let the Spirit do it!
 - b) Rather it is an active dependence upon the Spirit as we act. I call it DD & DD. Deep dependence and due diligence.

III. Conclusion

- A. So this is what Jesus says to this church whose activities are incomplete!
1. Read v2a-b –
 - a) Simply wake up to what is going on and pay constant close attention to your works, that they are complete
 - b) And take what you are doing and make them firmer and stronger by making them works that are complete in God's sight
 2. Read v 3a – Remember what you heard and keep – Referring to the word of God. Get back to making God's word your guide and blueprint for ministry. Keep God's word
 3. Read v3b –
 - a) Repent – simply have a complete change of perspective about what you are doing for the Lord. Change your mind so deeply that what you do follows that by changing radically what you are doing.
 - b) Confess whatever is incomplete in God's eyes about your service to Him and get it in line with the things that He says will make them complete
- B. And if you do this look at the reward that will be yours. Read v5-6
- C. Pray for MVC