

We return to our series this morning on, “The Call to Faithfulness in our Day!” I would like to again consider the subject: **“KEEPING OUR GARMENTS CLEAN,”** or **“Coming a Day Short of Salvation.”** We began our series by setting 4 things from our text - Rev.3:1-6:

- I. **THE REPROOF** (vss 1 & 2)
- II. **THE REPENTANCE** (vs 3)
- III. **THE REMNANT** (vs 4)
- IV. **THE RECOMPENSE** (vs 5)

- V. **THE RESPONSE** (vs 6)

I am speaking on the 11th sermon in our series, “The Call to Faithfulness in Our Day.” We have dealt with the 'Reproof' and with the 'Repentance' we are currently contemplating our third point: The Remnant in verse 4 to which we have added four subtitles:

A. A Few People: *“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis...”*

B. A Firm Purity: *“...which have not defiled their garments...”*

C. A Faithful Perseverance: *“...and they shall walk with me in white ...”*

D. A Fixed Preservation: *“...for they are worthy.”*

To those faithful few in the compromising church of Sardis, these were words of great encouragement. Again as a reminder, not all was lost, because God had His remnant in that Church, yea He had His faithful little flock. After Christ reproved them and commanded them to repent, He now encourages the faithful few to continue serving Him. We said that we would look at the two middle sub-points first, that is, A Firm Purity and A Faithfulness, because they have to do with our duty and or responsibility. Then, we shall consider A Few People and A Fixed Preservation which has to do with God's Sovereignty.

We opened the text *“...which have not defiled their garments...”* that is, A FIRM PURITY. We said that our Lord Jesus Christ knew exactly who was faithful and true in Sardis and He makes it known. He did not need for anyone to testify regarding these faithful few, for He knew what was in Sardis, He saw both the wheat and the tares, that is, the faithful persevering few with zeal with a godly integrity who had great and holy

conviction and would not defile their garments, but He also saw the compromisers, the complacent, the lazy, the sleepy and the dead professors of Sardis.

This little flock, the faithful few of Sardis sought to keep a blessed testimony in maintaining a firm purity by not defiling their garments. There is no doubt that, many of the mere professors of the Church of Sardis look down upon these faithful few, by mocking, scoffing and condescending towards them, but it didn't matter what they said or did, this faithful little flock maintained their glorious testimony.

We also spoke of the glorious work of imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ which is give to all those whom He saves as Isaiah says in 61:10, "*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness...*"

As a reminder, when God saved us He gave us a new heart, a new standing before Him with an imputed righteousness. God has transformed us from death to life, from condemnation to justification. In regeneration He changes our nature and in justification He changes our standing before Him. In regeneration He makes us righteous and in justification He declares us righteous. What glorious GOOD NEWS, our God can transform us from filthy rags to a glorious righteousness. 2 Cor.5:21, "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.***" We have stated and asserted:

- Positionally, we are as holy as we will ever be. Numbers 23:21, gives us perhaps the best definition for justification: "*He hath **not beheld iniquity** in Jacob, **neither hath he seen** perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him...*" What a standing before our God.
- Practically, God is conforming us to the image of His Son. Hebrews 12: 10 & 11, "*For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless **afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them** which are exercised thereby.*"

We also said that there is within us a positional holiness and a progressive or practical holiness, or if you wish a positional sanctification and a progressive or practical sanctification. Listen to the past messages or get my written sermons on pdf form from sermonaudio.com/hdgb, for more on this subject. By progressive sanctification or progressive holiness all I mean is that we grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look 2 Corinthians 7:1, "*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" 2 Timothy 2:19-21, says, "*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every*

good work.” Again, we are not talking about perfection, but about living a holy lifestyle, that is, being set apart to God. The true essence of holiness is a conforming to the will of God. This is exactly what these dear saints, these faithful few of Sardis were doing, they were living lives that kept their garments clean and undefiled. This little flock, were vessels of honor to the God of their salvation. This is what we must be dear brethren, vessels of honor unto our God.

We also considered the passage of Hebrews 12:1-17 and in particular Hebrews 12:14, *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* The teaching of the whole text is vital and important because of the teaching regarding those who are mere professors and those who are true possessors of Christ. We outlined the first 17 verses of chapter 12 for you:

- I. **A COMPELLING SPRINT (VS 1)**
- II. **A CROWNING SAVIOR (VSS 2-4)**
- III. **A COMFORTING STANDING (VSS 5-8)**
- IV. **A CHASTENING SUBJECTION (VS 9)**
- V. **A COMMON SAKE (VS 10)**
- VI. **A CAPABLE SANCTIFICATION (VSS 11-14)**
- VII. **A COMING SHORT (VS 15)**
- VIII. **A CAREFUL SEEKING (VSS 16-17)**

- **A Compelling Sprint** (1) verse 1 speaks of running our race with patience as we are compassed about a great cloud of witnesses.
- **A Crowning Savior** (2) verses 2 – 4 speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith and who endured the shame of the cross to save His people from their sins and now sits on His throne.
- **A Comforting Standing** (3) verses 5 – 8 speaks of our adoption into God's family. Get the verses from the first 3 messages.
- **A Chastening Subjection** (4) verse 9 speaks of the purpose of God chastening us. *“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”* God chastens us to bring us into subjection to Him, that we might be partakers of His Holiness. It teaches us to have patience and to endure Divine chastening.

- **A Common Sake** (5) verse 10 speaks of the profit received in our chastening. *“For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”* The purpose of our chastening by God is for our profit, for our good, for our own sake. Therefore, a common sake to all His children so that we might be partakers of His holiness. It is for our profit in order to produce holiness in our lives. 1 Peter 1:15 & 16, *“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”* May God grace us to be holy that it might be said of us, that we are partakers of His holiness.
- **A Capable Sanctification** (6) verses 11-14. This text reminds us of the importance of holiness or righteousness in our lives. In verse 14 the writer of Hebrews makes a very challenging statement in saying, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. I think this is applied to our practical holiness not our positional holiness. If it has to do with positional holiness, why does our God chastise us? This can only be applied practically because the purpose of God's chastisement is four-fold:
 1. In verse 9, to bring us into subjection. (Read)
 2. In verse 10, for our profit. (Read) To conform us into the image of Christ, that is, that we might be partakers of His holiness, that is, to share in His holiness.
 3. In verse 11, so that afterwards it would yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. For the present time or moment, it is not joyful but painful, but it will produce fruit; it will yield a harvest of righteousness, by those who have been exercised or trained by it. Remember like any garden, it needs to be diligently cultivated and then of course the pulling of the weeds out of the garden. Your heart is like a garden and we need to pull out those corrupt weeds which we do by mortifying sin.
 4. Therefore in verse 14, we need to follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

In verses 12 and 13 we are encouraged to persevere in faith, in spite all the afflictions that come upon us. He begins verse 12 with wherefore or if you wish, therefore, that is, in view of everything that has been stated before; he now encourages us to persevere. He is saying, instead of being cast down and discouraged, because of afflictions and chastisements, he says, strengthen yourselves, see; that you continue in faith as you go through this. Thus, since they had apprehended the gospel, they are now encouraged to believe it and follow it, by trusting and obeying God. Notice those whom he encourages, (vs.12) those whose hands are weak and whose knees are feeble. **(Illustration in basketball when players have hands on their knees, when they are tired they make mental mistakes therefore when we are physically tired we can make spiritual mistakes or when we are spiritually tired we can have weak hands and weak knees, that can make it hard to mortify sin or walk spiritually.)** In other words don't give up, victory is before you if

you continue. Remember, Hebrews is a book of warnings. There are 5 specific warnings in the book of Hebrews. This book was written to those Jews/Hebrews that had converted from Judaism to Christianity. But because of intense persecution many of the Hebrews were resorting back to Judaism. The warnings are:

1. The Danger of Drifting, therefore the exhortation: Don't Drift, but be steadfast and established!
2. The Danger of Doubting, therefore the exhortation: Don't Doubt, but believe and trust!
3. The Danger of Departing, therefore the exhortation: Don't Depart, but continue to the end!
4. The Danger of Despising, therefore the exhortation: Don't Despise, but appreciate and treasure and value the Word of God.
5. The Danger of Denying, therefore the exhortation: Don't Deny, but confirm; make good and confess the truth of the gospel, that is, HAVE CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST!

This book is not only a book of warnings but also a book of encouragement, so that we can persevere to the end, that is, don't give up, don't go back, continue to run the race, set your eyes upon Him who is the Author and Finisher of our Faith. Many are weak, many have feeble knees and we are exhorted to continue to the end. The idea of the writer here in verse 12 is not only to strengthen our hands and knees, but also the brethren around us, to help them also. In verse 13 he tells us to make straight paths for your feet, that is, stay in your lane, like a runner in a race. You must stay in your lane or be disqualified. Proverbs 4:23 – 27. (This is where we ended last time: 10/11/09)

It is the second part of verse 13 that we must give careful attention, “...lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.” It is at this point where a severe and careful warning is set forth. The word “**lest**” gives the idea of something or someone turning you out of the way, that is, do not let anything or anyone turn you out of the way. Let nothing get in the way that can turn you away, as perhaps others were turned away and apostatized. The word “**lame**” is very interesting, Charles Spurgeon, preached a sermon upon this text and entitled it, LAME SHEEP. The word lame can be applied to weak and hurting sheep. Albert Barnes says, “*A lame man needs a smooth path to walk in. The idea is here, that everything which would prevent those in the church who were in any danger of falling--the feeble, the unestablished, the weak--from walking in the path to heaven, or which might be an occasion to, them of falling, should be removed. Or it may mean, that in a road that was not level, those who were lame would be in danger of spraining, distorting, or wrenching a lame limb; and the counsel is, that whatever would have a tendency to this should be removed. Divested of the figure, the passage means, that everything should be removed which would hinder any one from walking in the path to life.*” I'm not in disagreement with Spurgeon or Barnes, but there is also a sense that the word **lame 'could be applied' to mere professors of Christianity**, that is, it is speaking religiously of lost people, perhaps, tares that are mixed with the wheat in church. They had the appearance and the lingo of Christianity, but they had not really come to Christ in true faith, thus, they would be candidates for apostasy, if they would never lay hold of Christ. (See Matt.13:24-30 parable of wheat and tares) > verse 24 kingdom of heaven is like a man sowing good seed in a field (vss 37 & 38)

- > verse 25 while men slept an enemy sowed tares among the wheat (vs 39)
- > verse 26 as the seeds grow they look identical
- > verse 27 the servants are the ministers of Christ the householder, they were confused as to the wheat and tares
- > verses 28 & 29 Christ tells his servants (ministers) that an enemy (the devil) had done this. They immediately wanted to remove the tares, but Christ told them to be careful and to leave them because in removing the tares, they would also affect the wheat, they could also be rooted out.
- > verse 30 Christ tells them: Let them grow together, **UNTIL THE HARVEST!** Thus, until Christ comes back there will be in the church wheat and tares. There was in the Church of Sardis wheat and tares, in the 21st century church there are wheat and tares. Not everyone that totes a Bible and sits on church pews in our day are WHEAT, many are plain TARES! (vss 39 & 40)

Now, there is no question that there were many tares in the Church of Sardis who stained and defiled their professed garments. These were the fence-straddling, mediocre professors. Verse 13 again says, *“And make straight paths for your feet, **lest that which is lame** be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”* The Greek word for lame is “*cholos*,” which means to hesitate, maimed and or halt. Interesting that it is the same word in the Septuagint, in the Old Testament in 1 Kings 18:21, please turn there, *“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, **How long halt ye between two opinions?** if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”* Elijah confronted those lame and wavering, double minded people, by challenging them to take a side. John MacArthur says, *“The writer of Hebrews was warning believers a bout the danger of misleading lame, uncommitted unbelievers and of causing them to apostatize back into Judaism...A poor testimony can cause irreparable harm, many times without our knowing it. It can cause an already limping unbeliever to be put out of joint, completely dislocated spiritually.”* The writer to Hebrews says our testimony should rather be positive, in order that others may be healed or if you wish saved. Again, a sober reminder of the importance of being salt and light in a lost dying dark world. Let us project a testimony of salt and light, that others would see what we have in Christ and would want what we have. Therefore, he tells us in verse 14, *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* There's more here but we must press on.

- **A Coming Short** (7) in verse 15 we see a warning to those who were but mere professors who come short of salvation. The writer to the Hebrews does say, *“...**LEST ANY MAN**...”* But remember the exhortation is also to true possessors of Christ to persevere and continue to the end. You can sense the urgency of the writer as he says, looking diligently, that is, see to it, concern yourselves with this matter, heaven and hell are at stake. The phrase, *“Looking diligently,”* is the Greek word, *“episkopeo,”* related closely to *“episkopos,”* which means bishop, overseer, elder, those that have the oversight. In other words we are to have the oversight over our souls as well as others in our midst. We must abide by the

principle of Jude, verses 21-23, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” This is very critical, because he says again, “...**lest any man fail of the grace of God...**” Now, there are some that apply this text wrongfully and falsely. They teach that this text speaks of a person who can lose their salvation, that is, they can fall from grace. This is not what the writer is saying, the phrase “*fail of the grace*” basically means “**coming short**,” that is, coming a day too late, therefore, being left out. Sad to say, but many will die being a day late, a day short of salvation, because they keep putting salvation off, some willfully, some who hate the gospel, some by self-deception, some by mere neglect, some because they are more concerned about what others may say about them, some because of friends or family, some because of their employment and some for other reasons. They know that they should believe they know that they should repent, but they keep putting off their need of being saved. What they don't understand is that God will shut the door of salvation one day, God will close the door of salvation one day and it will be too late. This is such a fearful thought. Genesis 7:13-24; Luke 13:22-27; Matt.25:1-13.

- > Genesis 7:13-14, “*In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, **as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.** And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.”*
- > Luke 13: 22-30, “*And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. **When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,** and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the*

prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”

- > *Matthew 25:1-13, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: **and the door was shut**. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”*

The sad situation is that there will be many like these, who will have the door of salvation shut to them and will die in their sinful defiled state before God. Now, the writer of Hebrews continues, “...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” The first part of this text is a quote from Deuteronomy 29:18 & 19. The idea of bitterness is like a poisonous fruit with its awful affects. John MacArthur says, “The root of bitterness refers to a person who is superficially identified with God’s people and who falls back into paganism. But he is no ordinary apostate. He is arrogant and defiant concerning the things of God. He thumbs his nose at God. God’s response to such boastful unbelief is hard and final.” Look at verse 20 and following. Back to Hebrews 12:15. The problem is, these false professors and tares cause much trouble in the church and because of this many others are deceived, because they think that these false professors and tares are genuine bona-fide Christians, which in turn causes them to look at Christianity indifferently and with contempt. The tares create many problems in the church, but the trouble is, that you cannot tell the difference between the tares and the wheat. How many have you known that have made a profession in Christ, join the church and follow for a while and then return to the world and in awful bitterness. Again verse 15, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and **thereby many be defiled**.” They come a day short. They are like those whom Peter spoke about in 2 Peter 2:19-22. “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true

proverb, *The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*”

- > Notice in verse 20 how Peter says that they escaped the pollutions of the world by the knowledge of Christ. How can this be? What is the difference between these here and those in chapter 1 and verses 3 & 4, “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*”
- > It plainly states that both of these groups were somewhat delivered by the knowledge of Christ. What is the difference? One is saved and one is lost, what makes the difference? I believe the answer is found in what they were delivered from. Those in 1 Peter 1, the true saved Christians were delivered from the corruption of the world, verse 4, “*...having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*” The ones in chapter 2 and verses 19 & 20, “*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...*”
- > The difference is this: the saved are delivered from the corruption of the world, that is, an inward deliverance whereas the mere professors were delivered from the pollutions of the world, that is, an outward deliverance and thus no inward effect at all. They just turned over a new leaf.

Verse 15 again, “*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled*”

Until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back there will be tares in the church. This is why it is so important not to base salvation on someone else, but only upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith! Cast your eyes, your heart, your lives upon Christ and Christ alone. I admonish you to come to Christ this morning, come in repentance and faith and lay hold of Christ for your salvation!

Next week: **A Careful Seeking** (8) In verses 16-17 we see the example of one who came a day short, even though he sought it carefully, or if you wish a careful seeker.

[TO BE CONTINUED: We will look at the lives of Esau and Jacob as types of wheat and tares next week]