



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

Today's sermon is called "The Church That Cares... But Is Asleep?"
Today's scripture lesson comes from Revelation chapter 3 verses 1 to 3

Starting at verse 1:

Write to the angel of the church in Sardis:

The One who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says: I know your works; you have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead.

Be alert and strengthen what remains, which is about to die, for I have not found your works complete before My God.

Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; keep it, and repent. But if you are not alert, I will come like a thief, and you have no idea at what hour I will come against you.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word!

Church, let me ask you a hard question this morning. What is our reputation? If someone in this community were to describe our church, what would they say? "Oh, that church, they're so friendly." "They do great potlucks."

"They have wonderful programs." Those are good things. But the Lord, the One who holds the seven stars and walks among the seven lampstands, looks at the church in Sardis and says something terrifying.

He says, "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Sardis had a reputation. It was a city of great wealth and a seemingly impenetrable fortress. Twice in history, however, the city fell because the watchmen fell asleep. The church in Sardis had the same problem.

They were busy. They were active. They looked alive. But in the heart of God, they were a morgue.

A church can have all the programs of a caring community—the potlucks, the visitation lists, the committees—and still be spiritually dead. A **truly** caring church is a **watchful** church. It is a church that lives by the Spirit, not just by memory. Let's see what Jesus says to this sleeping church, and what He says to us.

1. The Diagnosis: The Tragedy of a Dead Reputation

"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

The Danger of Past Glory: Sardis was living on a memory. They had a great history. They had once been on fire for God. Now, the machinery was running, but the engine was cold. As a caring church, we can serve meals, visit the sick, and run Sunday School, but do it out of routine rather than love. We can have a great "name" in the community as a nice place, but if the love of Christ is not the pulse behind every act, it is a corpse.

The Perfect Deception: The scariest part? The world thought they were alive. Their name was good. Only Jesus saw the internal decay. A caring church is not a museum of past revivals; it is a nursery for present faith.

2. The Command: Wake Up and Strengthen What Remains

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die... Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent."

The Call to Vigilance (Be watchful): The word here means "to be awake." In Sardis, the guards fell asleep, and the enemy scaled the cliffs. In a caring church, we can fall asleep to the needs right in front of us.

We stop noticing the quiet person in the back. We stop seeing the broken family. Wake up! True caring requires spiritual caffeine.

The Call to Rescue (Strengthen what remains): Jesus sees a few embers in the ashes. Don't just mourn what is dead; fan the flame of what is still alive! Maybe it's a small prayer group. Maybe it's a few faithful servants.

Strengthen that! A caring church doesn't just point out the problems; it gets on its knees to nurture the last flicker of life.

The Call to Return (Remember... hold fast... repent): This is the cure for spiritual death. Go back to the beginning. Remember how you first loved Jesus. Remember how you first cared for others. It wasn't a duty;

it was joy. We must repent of our professional, programmatic "care" and return to heartfelt, Spirit-led love.

3. The Promise: The Reward for the Watchful Remnant

"If you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."

Warning is a Form of Love: God warns us because He loves us. He doesn't want to find us sleeping. A church that is genuinely caring is also a church that is ready for the Bridegroom.

The Alternative to Reality: If we refuse to wake up, Christ will come in judgment (or even in a "disturbance") to shake us. But for the one who watches? There is a crown. The caring church lives with an eternal perspective,

knowing that every act of love done in Christ's name is a treasure kept for that day.

1. The "Dead" Checklist: This week, ask the Holy Spirit to show you one area of your service in this church that has become a habit, not a heart. Is it teaching? Ushering? Greeting?
If you are visiting the sick just to check a box, stop. Repent. Ask God to fill that empty shell with His love again.
2. The "Watchful" Exercise: This week, look for someone. Don't just pass by. Look for the person who is "ready to die", the discouraged single parent, the elderly shutin, the young person struggling with doubt.
Your assignment is not to fix them, but to "strengthen" them with a word of encouragement or a prayer.
3. The "First Love" Reset: Take 5 minutes a day this week to "remember." Remember the moment God saved you. Remember the first time you felt His love.
Ask Him to let that fresh, powerful love spill over into how you treat everyone you meet.

I feel the weight of the Spirit right now. Maybe you are a Christian who feels like you are just going through the motions. Your faith is a reputation, not a reality. You serve, but you feel dead inside.

Maybe this church, this family, needs to repent of being a "sleeping giant", a church that looks good on paper but has lost its first love for Jesus and for the lost.

If you need to wake up today, if you need to repent of a dead faith and ask Jesus to breathe life back into your soul and into your service for His church, I want you to come to this altar right now. Don't just watch.
Come and be strengthened.

Please bow with me for our closing prayer.

Father, we confess that we are so busy "doing church" that we have forgotten how to be the Church. We repent of our reputations. We have looked alive, but we know You see the parts of our hearts that are dead.
Forgive us for caring out of routine rather than out of a vibrant love for You.

Right now, Lord, we ask You to blow the wind of Your Spirit into this place. Wake us up. Let us see the people around us with Your eyes. Strengthen the things that remain.
Give us the grace to hold fast and to return to our first love.

Come, Lord Jesus. Wake us up, for we want to be found watching—watching for You, and watching for the needs of the sheep You have entrusted to us. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed. For the more of a blessing you are, the more you will be blessed!