

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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ELDERS

David Anderson
Kenny French
Bobby Sheumaker

DEACONS

John McShane
Stacey Paulin
Jimmy Sweeney

MINISTER

Hiram Kemp
(386) 405-5372

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Brian Kenyon
(863) 944-8565

SECRETARIES

Michelle Paulin / Dee Parramore

OFFICE PHONE

(863) 682-4702

SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

EMAIL

SFA.church@gmail.com

WEB PAGE

www.southfloridaavenuechurchofchrist.com



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

The Church At Sardis: "Dead or Alive"

Brian R. Kenyon

John, while on the isle of Patmos, wrote the Book of Revelation. In Chapters 2-3, there are recorded seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor. Although each letter was written to a specific congregation, each is also applicable to us (cf. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," Rev. 3:6). The fifth of these letters was written to the church at Sardis. The subtitle, "Dead or Alive," is adapted from Ray Summers (*Worthy Is the Lamb*).

Background of the City

Sardis was located at a junction of five roads commanding the Hermus Valley, which made the city very active commercially. As a result, the city enjoyed great wealth. The main portion of the city was built upon a smooth, almost perpendicular rock hill about 150 feet above the valley. This provided a natural citadel. The city was practically inaccessible from three sides and easily protected from the fourth. Strengths, however, can often become weaknesses. Sardis' wealth and seemingly impregnable defenses became her weakness because she failed to maintain vigilance (cf. "be watchful," Rev. 3:2). The city was conquered twice in its history, both times by enemy soldiers scaling the rocky cliffs by night to find that no guard was set. Unlike the other churches, there is no mention of persecution of the saints in Sardis, which may indicate a serious lack of spirituality (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12).

Relevance of the Writer

This letter came from "He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (Rev. 3:1a cf. 1:4, 20). The "seven Spirits of God" are most likely a reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. Rev. 1:4-5), where "seven," a number of completeness, may take on the meaning "sevenfold," indicating the complete working of the Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:2-3). The "seven stars" were explicitly defined by John earlier: "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand ... The seven stars are the angels [or messengers] of the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20). The total picture shows that the Christ has all power, wisdom, and control.

(continued on page 2)

Christ's Evaluation

Being omnipotent, Christ knew their situation. "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (Rev. 3:1b). Although the church in Sardis had a reputation of being alive, the Lord assessed them as being "dead." An outside observer may have looked at Sardis as being an active, model church, but this congregation was dying of internal decay. It is possible for a person to be spiritually dead, even though he or she may appear to be alive (1 Tim. 5:6). The same is true of a congregation. It is possible for us to appear spiritual, but inwardly be inactive and spiritually dead. This represents a serious condition that cannot be hidden from Christ (Heb. 4:13).

Christ's Solution

Christ told the church at Sardis how to be alive spiritually. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent" (Rev. 3:2-3a). The admonition to "be watchful" recalls the city's downfall due to lack of vigilance. We must also realize that a lack of spiritual vigilance is deadly (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). Although the true character of the church in Sardis did not agree with their reputation of being alive, there was still a flicker of life. Thus, Christ commanded them to "strengthen" the remaining life. Their works were not complete. Like Ephesus, they got off to a good start, but later slacked-off to the point of faithlessness, which would explain their lack of persecution (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12). Like Ephesus, those in Sardis were also told to "remember." Obviously, at a time in the past, they "received and heard" God's word in exemplary fashion (cf. 1 Thes. 2:13). If they were to be "alive" before God, they must not only "remember" that former attitude, but they must also keep it ("hold fast").

Additionally, they must "repent." If they do not, Christ will visit them: "Therefore 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" (Rev. 3:3b). The word "if" reveals that this is not a reference to the Second Coming (cf. Mt. 24:36), but rather to a disciplinary judgment of some sort. If we are to be acceptable to God, we must also be watchful (Lk. 12:37), be willing to strengthen our weaknesses (cf. Phil. 4:13), and be filled with the same enthusiasm as when we first obeyed the Gospel (cf. Rev. 2:5).

Christ's Promised Blessings

Although the congregation was generally "dead" according to Christ's evaluation, there was a minority in Sardis that were approved of God. "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" (Rev. 3:4). A "garment spotted by the flesh" is equivalent to death (Jude 23 cf. Jas. 1:27), but these "few names" in Sardis had not polluted their once cleansed lives. They were said to "walk" with the Lord in purity and victory (cf. Isa. 1:18; Dan. 12:10).

In addition to those who remain faithful in Sardis, Christ gave promises to those who would overcome. "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5). To be "clothed in white" is to enjoy the holiness, purity, and victory that can only come from the redemptive work of Christ (cf. Rev. 6:11; 7:9; 19:8). To have one's name remain in the "book of life" is to enjoy the privileged and blessing that awaits all God's faithful (Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16; Phil. 4:3). To have one's name confessed before the Father is to have Christ acknowledge one's faithfulness before God (Mt. 10:32-33). These same blessings apply to us when we overcome.

Conclusion

This letter tells us that reputation is not always the same as true character. While we may appear spiritual on the outside, God knows and perfectly assesses our true condition (Jer. 17:10; Mt. 12:25; Jn. 2:25). Sardis also teaches us that it is possible for a "few" to remain faithful in a local church that can be characterized as being "dead." May we ever be alive for God, not forfeiting our place in His "book of life." ♥ Brian



PEW PACKERS THIS SUNDAY EVENING AT 5:45

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Melody Baxter was home sick with blood pressure and stomach problems. Sharon Washington, Dorothy Trice, Bill Long, Ron Cox, Wayne Shearer, Faith West, Jim Turner, Ginny Hamby, and Margaret Coone.

Shut In Members: Carol Eason, Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage and Sharon Edler.

Others: David Irizarry (Jagie Kenyon's brother), Lynn Stevens, Chrissi Fuesner, Ruth Brunson, Chip Bolding, Tonya Mathis, Sandy (daughter of Tim Croson), Barbara Paulin, Connie Jordan, Maureen Nichols, (relation to Darlene Thompson) and Dylan Martin (friend of Madison Caffee).

Upcoming Events

Saturday October 13th: Youth Devo and service project at 1:00 p.m. then car-wash for the Senior Saints.

Sunday October 14th: Elders/Deacons meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Monday October 15th: Senior Saints meeting, coffee and doughnuts at 9:30 a.m. Presenting Let's Retire Fire Program. Useful tips on fire safety.

Tuesday October 16th: F.S.O.P. Ladies class at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday October 20th: Semi-Annual Picnic and Sing at Mary Holland Park in Bartow. The host is Orange Street church of Christ.

Saturday Oct 20th: Trunk or Treat at Tyler & Jessica Anderson's house at 5:00 p.m. The address is 4120 Lake Hancock Rd. Lakeland, FL 33812.

Saturday Oct. 27th: Youth Seminar here at S.F.A. at 8:30 a.m.

November 2nd-3rd: Sixth Annual Central Florida Men's Retreat at the Florida FFA Leadership Training Center in Haines City.

November 4th-7th: **SAVE THE DATE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting** with Ty Rhymes. There will be a fellowship meal after the morning service.

Sunday November 4th: Fellowship In-Service after evening services.

Congratulations

We rejoice with Kathy Nester who was baptized into Christ on Thursday, Oct 4th. Let us all welcome and encourage Kathy in her new Christian walk.

Thank You

Dear church family, Thank you so much for the words of comfort and all the encouragement as well as love everyone has shown to my family. My husband Stacey's numbers are not where his doctor wants them to be yet, but they are better than where they used to be. The effectual prayers of the righteous availeth much. *Toney Wilson*

Visitors

Eric Bunch, Jerry Green, Lori Carter, Deborah Bush, Mike, Liz and Justin Bosley, Markowitz family and Johnny Davidson.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

October

David Anderson **Table** Phil Fife
Tyler Anderson..... **Assist** Kyle Faneuf

Sunday, October 14, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Jim Turner
Prayer..... Tucker Sweeney

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Kenny French
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Matt Willcut
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... John McShane
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Josh Estridge
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Tyler Anderson
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney
Greeters Pratts (before) Estridges (after)
Att. Cards..... Paul/Ian
Open & Close Building John McShane

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

Song Leader..... Jim Turner
Opening Prayer..... Steve Hunley
Closing Prayer..... Jeff Bingle

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Stacey Paulin so he can get a replacement - (863) 838-8911

Sunday, October 21, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Kyle Bingle
Prayer..... Paul Romine

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Kenny French
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Wayne Shearer
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... David Anderson
Sound Booth..... Casey Paulin

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Jimmy Sweeney
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... David Anderson
Sound Booth..... Casey Paulin
Greeters Fifes (before) Bingles(after)
Att. Cards..... Ian & Sebastian
Open & Close Building John McShane

Wednesday, October 24, 2018

Song Leader..... Ken Walker
Opening Prayer..... John McShane
Closing Prayer..... Stacey Paulin

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Sept	16	.....	\$5,625.80
Sept.	23	.....	\$5,728.87
Sept.	30	.....	\$6,637.58
Oct.	7	.....	\$5,736.26
Contribution Average			\$5,812.41
2018 Weekly Budget			\$4,887.98

~ Communion to Shut-ins ~

Oct	14	.....	Potvin
Oct	21	.....	Parramore
Oct	28	.....	Kemp
Nov	04	.....	Kenyon
Nov	11	.....	McShane



*South Florida Avenue church of Christ
invites you to the area-wide
Youth Seminar*

Falling in Love With Jesus

Saturday, Oct. 27

Registration @ 8:30 am, Seminar @ 9:00

Let's invite our friends and neighbors!

Gospel Meeting with

Ty Rhymes

Nov. 4-7, 2018

**“Lessons from
The Book of Joshua”**



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
*1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653*

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .



We praise God that Kathy was baptized into Christ Thursday, Oct. 4, 2018. She was first invited

to services a month or so ago by her neighbor, Woody, our brother in Christ who recently placed membership with us. We thank God for giving us a way of salvation (Acts 2:38). Let us welcome our new sister in Christ!



With growth comes challenges, so keep on praying for the SFA congregation as we continue to grow! May God grant our eldership wisdom and every member a mind to work in unity to God's glory!

Special Thanks to All the Ladies (and Men) Who Made the Ladies Day a Great Success!

