

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF A LIVING CHURCH

Bible Reading: Revelation 3:1-13

Our text shows two contrasting churches. Sardis had a reputation for being alive but was spiritually dead (vv. 3:1-6), while Philadelphia was faithful, spiritually vibrant, and pleasing to God (vv. 3:7-13). A living church is neither worldly () nor dead with religious routines and no spiritual power (2 Cor 6:17; Rev 3:1). It is Spirit-led (John 16:13), built on God's eternal plan (Eph 3:10-11), and attentive to His voice (Rev 3:13).

FORMATION OF A LIVING CHURCH

Jesus declared, ***"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"*** (Mat 16:18). The Church was inaugurated with power by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). It stands on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself as the cornerstone (Eph 2:19-20). A living church is not driven by worldly systems or trends. It is a called-out community, distinct in its nature and mission. ***"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..."*** (1 Pet 2:9). Like the Church in Philadelphia, it remains faithful to God's Word and purpose (Rev 3:8), unlike Sardis, which had a name but no life (Rev 3:1).

FEATURES OF A LIVING CHURCH

There are churches by name or title; but God desires a Church in deed and in truth. The Church in Sardis had a name, a history, a recognition among people, but Jesus said it was dead. Ours must be different. The Church in Philadelphia was a living one; Jesus commended them though they apparently did not have a big name. What are its features of such a Church?

1. Reverence for the word of God (Acts 2:42; Rev 3:8,10).
2. Consciousness of the presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-4; 9:31; 13:1,2).
3. Fervent love among the brethren (John 13:35; Acts 4:34-37).
4. Apostolic-time fellowship with caring and sharing (Acts 4:32; 2:44-46).
5. Visible growth and grace as the Lord adds to them (Acts 2:47; 6:7; 11:22,23)
6. Visible victory over the works of the flesh (Rom 8:9,10; 6:14).
7. Prayer that brings results, testimonies
8. Authority over Satan, his works and his agents

FUNCTIONS OF A LIVING CHURCH

God expects every member of the Church to commit him- or herself to the life and ministry of the Church. A living Church is centred around pleasing God. Their focus is on doing God's will, glorifying Him. What are the main functions of a living Church?

1. Exaltation of Jesus through worship (Heb 13:15; 1 Pet 2:9).
2. Expansion of God's Kingdom through outreach (Acts 8:1-5).
3. Exposition of the truth through preaching (1 Tim 3:15).
4. Expulsion of error through doctrine (2 Tim 4:1-5).
5. Expression of Christ's love through good works (Tit 3:8,14).
6. Exercise of authority through prayer (Mat 18:18-20).
7. Exposure of darkness through purity (Eph 5:8-13).
8. Extension of peace through intercession (1 Tim 2:1-4).