

Revelation 3: 4-6; "They shall walk with Me in White", Sermon # 23 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 16th, 2006 in the Afternoon Worship Service.

We saw last week that the church at Sardis had a name to live, but was dead. And I said to you that the trouble with some Christians, and I would think especially those of the Reformed persuasion, is that when we come to believe in the sovereignty of God's grace and are persuaded that God will faithfully begin, continue, and complete the work of grace in our souls, that we think that somehow our responsibility to watch and to keep ourselves pure and to pursue after good works is not something that we need to pay much attention to. And what happens to us is that we do not realize that the life that we have been given by the Lord Jesus Christ is something that we need to stir up and cultivate lest we slowly die spiritually and fail to meet up to the expectations of our holy God. We are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. But after we are saved He expects that we will "pursue peace with all men and the holiness without which no one shall see the Lord." The Holy Spirit will not do the work that we are commanded to do. He will work in us to will and to do but it is possible to receive God's grace in vain. It is possible to have a name to live and yet be dead in the sight of Christ. But when we stir up and cultivate the spiritual life within us, it is then that we become the faithful and true witnesses to truth and righteousness that Jesus would have us to be.

I told you last week that this involves the principles of self-denial and self-control. We must consciously day by day learn by God's grace to die to ourselves and to our remaining sin, and live to righteousness. If any one would follow our Lord he must deny himself and pick up his cross. We must consciously move away in our thinking from listening to and using the supposed wisdom of men who promote godless living. There are many people in our society who want to leave God out of everything that they do. And in the place of righteous thinking and living in accordance with God's good commandments, they place before us activities of all kinds that are pleasing to self and to the flesh. The Apostle Paul warns against our having a name to live and yet being dead in 2 Timothy 3 when he says, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" Having a form of godliness but denying its power is having a name to live and yet being dead.

What are we to do if people around us in our society and perhaps even some in our church have fallen into this mindset and mentality? That was the problem in the church of Sardis, and Jesus knew who had been faithful in stimulating and cultivating the life that He had given them. He says in verse 4, "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." He wants the church at Sardis and the church here in Tama to understand the blessedness of walking with Him in white, the implications to ourselves of having a holy walk in the way that we live our Christian lives. Let me ask 3 questions this afternoon. 1st- What does it mean to "not defile my garments?" 2nd- What does it mean to "not have my name blotted out of the Book of life?" And 3rd- What does it mean that Christ will "confess my name

before His Father and before the holy angels?" May this study be a stimulus to our living more holy lives.

1st- What does it mean to "not defile my garments?"

The garments that are being spoken of here are the spiritual clothes that are given us to wear to cover "the shame of our nakedness," which is spoken of in Revelation 16: 15. It says in that place, "Behold I am coming as a thief." "Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest they see his shame." A true Christian would and should feel shame if he was not covered with these garments in the presence of God. It is a blessing for any Christian or any person desiring to be a Christian, to "keep his garments" because these garments cover what would be exposed to God's sight. Spiritually speaking they are covering what the person really is like apart from the grace of God if he were not covered. God's grace provides a covering. A true Christian still has remaining sin in his life and very much needs the garments of salvation to cover him as he walks before God and men. Isaiah 61: 10 says, "I will greatly rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels." When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God clothes us with a robe of His perfect righteousness, a robe which he worked on and woven for us while He was here upon the earth. It is perfect and "seamless", woven on the loom of obedience to God's holy law. Everything that he thought, everything that He said, everything that He did was holy, harmless, and undefiled by sin. His obedience was complete and perfect as a united work in God's sight. God was well-pleased with His obedience and pleased to accept it in the place of our incomplete obedience which we could never be acceptable because He expects perfection of motives, thoughts and feelings which we cannot render to Him because of our sin. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us by God as a robe that we wear to cover the shame of our nakedness. What we are really like would be readily apparent if we were not found wearing this robe. You remember the man in Matthew 22: 11, the parable of the Marriage Feast. He came into the feast where the hall was filled with dinner guests and didn't have on a wedding garment. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw this man immediately. He stood out to the king as if he had been naked. He said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" "And he was speechless." "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" "For many are called but few are chosen." We cannot expect to enter heaven and partake of the great marriage supper of the Lamb unless we have Christ's righteousness. Defiling your garments in regard to Christ's righteousness would be living as though that righteousness does not demand that we should live godly in Him.

But there are other garments of salvation that are given to us that we need to keep and these are the garments that can be defiled by our being careless as we walk through this world. These are the garments of salvation that relate directly to our being careful in the walk of sanctification and our keeping ourselves pure from the stains which we may allow to defile our garments. If you turn with me to Revelation 19 you will find the description of these garments. These words are given to us, set in the context of those who are part of Christ's bride the church, those who have "made themselves ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Verse 7) Then it says, "And to her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Here we have the

outcome of the process of sanctification. Garments of fine white linen. And these garments represent the righteousness of the saints. They represent Christ's righteousness given to us to be sure, but they also represent our righteous acts and deeds done by his grace and in obedience to His commandments. We do not add anything to what Christ has done for us, that is true. But everyone who says that they are a true Christian will pursue righteousness or find himself outside the kingdom in the end because God's salvation really changes us and conforms us to the image of Christ. If we are not becoming conformed our profession is a lie. That conformity involves much struggle, but that is all a part of the process. Only Christ can carry on this work in us and only Christ can complete it. Our text says, "You have a few names who have not defiled their garments and they shall walk with Me in white." There were only a few in the church who had not defiled their garments. It means that there were many in the church who were not walking in moral purity. Titus 1: 15 explains people like this in these words. "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and their heart are defiled." "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work." This is what needs to be understood. It is possible to think that we are a Christian when we are not, if in our deeds we deny Christ.

Let us ask - What does it mean to "not have my name blotted out of the Book of Life?"

Having explained what it means to defile my garments, we can now see what is meant by this description. It is the person who professes to be a Christian but is defiled and actually proving by his deeds that he is not really what he says that he is. God will never blot out any of His Elect people from the Lamb's book of Life, but he will blot those out of the book of Life who only wanted at times to be saved from their sins, but at many other points wanted to keep on sinning. It looked good for awhile for them. They thought that they were saved and on their way to eternal life but they later proved themselves hypocrites and self-deceived. Truly this is an awful state to be in. We must make sure of His calling and choosing us by engaging in good attitudes, good words, and good works, all from the motive that we are doing them for God's glory. I think that you can see the difference between a true believer and the false professor in Exodus chapter 32. God had brought Moses up to Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 commandments written in stone on both sides, the writing on the stones was the work of God. But because Moses was gone for 40 days the children of Israel used it as an excuse to think that he wasn't coming at all and they sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play on the feast day that Aaron appointed. (Verse 6) And the people persuaded Aaron to help them make a golden calf which they worshipped saying, "This is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt." And God was angry enough to destroy the people, but Moses prayed and reasoned with God and the Lord relented from the harm which He said that He would do to His people. But when Moses came down from the mountain and perceived the greatness of the sin that the people committed, it says that "he stood in the entrance of the camp and said, "Whoever is on the Lord's side come to me!" "And all the sons of Levi gathered to him." And he had them at the Lord's command put on swords and "go in and out throughout the camp, and let every man kill his companion, and every man his neighbor." Verse 29 is very significant to our study here today. Moses says, "Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and brother." This may be the very thing that we may have to do with each other if we perceive that any

among us will not give up the practice of sins that defile. The only way that this kind of plague can be stopped, and a blessing come to God's people is if they will set themselves apart to be holy. Notice now what Moses says in verse 30, "Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, 'You have committed a great sin.'" "So now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." "Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and made for themselves a god of gold!' "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.'" A true Christian sees the greatness of his sins and will take action decisive action against them. Put the sin to death! Consecrate yourselves! He takes himself to prayer that he might intercede for the sins of others. He wishes that he could be blotted out of God's book. This, it is evident, is the book in which God has written down the deeds of all men and not the book of God's secret Election. "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." "This person," God is saying, "I created to glorify Me, and he is not doing it." "I will blot Him out of My book." That is, "I will not give Him the grace of repentance in regard to these sins." "I will remove the possibility that he will enter into life, because of his sins." The only remedy for this is faith in Christ. No other name can blot out these defiling and deadly sins of idolatry. Even Moses cannot make atonement for these sins. But I preach to you One who is greater than Moses today. In Christ your name will not be blotted out if you will cry to Him in humble sincerity with full intention to deal with your sins. Isaiah 43: 25 says, "I even I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins." And remember also the verse which says, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses his sins and forsakes them will find mercy." (Proverbs 28: 13) Both confession and forsaking of sin is required of a disciple of Christ.

And 3rdly- We must ask - What does it mean that "Christ will confess my name before His Father and before His holy angels?"

Can't you see now dearly beloved? It is when you overcome the defilements of the world and the flesh, when you overcome the schemes of the Devil to have you and to hold you in hell forever that Christ can confess you before His Father as a true disciple. By a sincere repentance you become ashamed to hold on to these sins, and then Christ can do what you would what you now would be embarrassed to have Him to do now that you have been truly humbled. He can confess you before His Father. He is able to say something like this. "Yes, Father, here is a man, here is a woman who has truly come to terms with their sinfulness and repented." "It brings joy to My heart that he has overcome and now he is not just a professing Christian, he is a confessing Christian." "He confesses that only the power of my grace can do this in him." "I now can truly own him to be Mine and Yours forever." "And you angels who have ministered to him, and have wondered if he would ever come to this repentance and overcome to keep his garments from being defiled; here he is, now I can truly use him in My service to my glory." "For whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God." That is, if I am not mistaken, the kind of confession that Jesus makes before the Father and the holy angels. And there is joy in the presence of God and the holy angels over one sinner who repents and one saint who overcomes.