

B.O.S.S. Study Guide - Week of May 10, 2010
Studies in the Book of Revelation

Take a few minutes and read Revelation 3:1-6, the letter to the church at Sardis.

What was the most striking thing about the letter and why?

The great tragedy at the church was the self-delusion they had that all was well, when in fact, they were dying and almost dead. The reason for their condition (the condition of all the churches in the book) was due to a lack of understanding of the person and work of Jesus in their lives. To the church at Sardis He describes Himself as the one who holds the work of the Spirit of God in His hands. They did not know, practically and experientially, that the Christian life could only be lived through the life giving power of the Spirit. We misunderstand, often willingly, that the Christian life is not lived by us, it is lived by Him living through us.

Paul makes a very strong argument for this in **Romans 8:9-14**.

This Spirit lived life is not mystical or in other realms of consciousness as eastern mystic religions and even those in some charismatic camps, would teach. The Spirit lived life is dependent on one thing.

See Ephesians 5:18 - This is the only activity of the Holy Spirit that we are commanded to do, "Be filled". This is a command which requires our activity and involvement. The other 6 ministries of the Spirit are passive verbs. That is, they happen to or for us at the moment we trust Christ as our savior.

What does it mean to "be filled"? He answers that question by comparing it to the consumption of alcohol. Answer this question and we will answer; **What does it mean to "be filled"?**

When we consume alcohol, what does it begin to influence and control the more it is consumed? Personality, speech, reaction, thinking, hearing, touch, smell, taste – in reality it's consumption controls everything and in proportion to the amount ingested.

That's what it means to "be filled". It means to allow the Spirit of God to control every aspect of our lives at all times, in all circumstances and in all situations. When that happens, life, life given by God, divine life that never ends, is experienced, now. This is not accomplished by keeping or observing the law, the rules and regulations on how to live the Christian life. Such rules do not bring life, they actually bring death. The one thing that the Spirit lived life is dependent on, is my willingness to be continually controlled by Him, not by keeping the rules.

Paul reiterates this in II Corinthians 3:2-6 & Galatians 5:22-25

So was it that the church at Sardis had become filled with those attempting to live the Christian life through the power of the flesh and in doing so soiling their white garments of worship? This is probably the case and the reason that Jesus not only saw them as dead but also as soiled. Was it due to the fact that their own flesh, which is controlled by their pride, had lead them down this path of self-righteousness and human accomplished spirituality? More than likely.

This is the problem Paul is addressing at Galatia – **Read 3:1-14.**

How does the Christian life get destroyed by human religion?

**Do you find yourself trying to live the Christian life by keeping religious rules?
Why do we do that?**

Living by principles is always harder than living by rules. Rules give us a sense of self accomplishment. They tell us how far we can go and still feel good about ourselves. How fast we can drive and not get pulled over. Principles demand trust, submission, obedience and often self-denial. Principles challenge us to slow down, when we don't have to, in order to be considerate of others. Principles change it from, "how much can I," to "how little will I." Or, "how little can I," to "how much will I." Paul sums up his points to the **Galatians in 5:13,14.**

What is it?

Such behavior is only possible as a result of the Spirit of God living through us. No such love directed for the benefit of others is accomplished through the flesh, but is the fruit of the Spirit, giving evidence that we are ALIVE! Other similar fruit of the Spirit lived life is mentioned in Galatians 5: 22,23. We are "in Him and He in us", and bearing "much fruit." (John 15)

Something that the Sardis church was missing. **Are we at MLC?**