

# I have not found thy works perfect

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Principal W.J.Cameron

[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me now to the book of Revelation chapter 3. Revelation chapter 3 verse 2.

And the second part of that verse. Where we read, I have not found thy works perfect before God. It was probably 40 years before John's exile in Patmos.

That the gospel came with saving and liberating power to a group of men and women in pleasure loving and lax living sardis.

At the time when the book of Revelation was written, the local memorial of that initial evangelism was a church probably numerically strong.

[ 1 : 18 ] Noted for Christian liberality. Well spoken of by the neighbouring churches. It was not disturbed by false teaching nor subjected to persecution.

And probably there were those around in Asia Minor of the day who thought that the church at Sardis was specially favoured by God.

They may have envied it in some respects. Yet when Christ addressed the letter to that congregation, it was to express deep dissatisfaction and to give stern reproof.

The works which were well spoken of by others and were satisfactory in the view of the congregation itself.

Were sadly lacking. Seriously wanting in the view of Christ. This was a shattering exposure.

[ 2 : 41 ] Of a reputable congregation. And I wish this evening for a little. To consider Christ's handling of the situation there.

In the hope that by the blessing of the Spirit. We may learn something for our congregational and individual profit. To begin with then.

These words. Turn our attention to the opinion that matters. The opinions that men have of one another.

Are often based on limited knowledge. And a superficial understanding. But that is never the way. With Christ's estimate of people or a situation. His knowledge is penetrating and perfect. Now it is possible.

[ 3 : 52 ] That there was a period. In the history of the church at Sardis. When that church was distinguished. By a membership.

That was God-fearing. Earnestly prayerful. Zealous in evangelism. Given to works that were acceptable to Christ.

And it is quite possible. That although the influence and impact. Of that godly generation. Was almost spent. That the people of John's time.

To whom this letter is addressed. Took some pride. In speaking of the godly. Predecessors. Of that. Of their own generation in the past.

Without reflecting. That the difference. The contrast. Between the lives that these men and women led. And their own lives.

[ 4 : 57 ] Was a reproach. Upon the measure of their own declension. They were aware. That the people round about them.

Thought well of them. And that boosted their self-esteem. And so. By reason of the distorting of judgment.

By indwelling sin. And by. The subtlety of Satan. They were so utterly blinded. To the reality of their spiritual state.

That Christ's letter must have taken them by surprise. Indeed some commentators have gone the length of saying. That they could hardly believe it. That Christ would have pronounced such a sentence upon them.

That they were dead. And such was the sentence. That he pronounced upon them. And it was emphatic.

[ 6 : 00 ] For if they. Heard read to them. As the book of revelation. Would have been read to a congregation. When only one copy of it existed. If they heard read to them.

Not only the letter to themselves. But the other letters. They would notice this. That in five of these letters. Out of the seven. Commendation for Christ.

Stood in the forefront. Whereas in their letter. Condemnation. Comes in at the beginning. And there is very little about commendation at all.

And yet. Christ is the verdict. That matters. For his. Is the penetrating gaze.

His eyes are as a flame of fire. As John saw him. In his vision. Given at the beginning of the book. Christ sees. Beyond the surface.

[ 7 : 04 ] To the motives of congregational activity. To the secrets of the individual heart. You may recall. That God said to Samuel. To Samuel. Long ago.

When he sent him. To Bethlehem. To anoint a king. And Samuel. Was so struck. By the handsome appearance. Of Eliab.

Man said. God sees the outward appearance. But God sees the heart. So it is with Christ. God sees the truth. God sees the truth. God sees the truth.

All of us. Are fully exposed. To his scrutiny. He knows. What is in the darkness. What is in the secret of our hearts.

And our minds. What lies behind us. What exists in our present. And what is before us. Christ. And Christ is the head of the church.

[ 7 : 59 ] His is the right. To set the standard. To be attained. To please him. To glorify him.

To seek to resemble him. Should be the goal. Of all individual. And collective. Christian endeavor. Moreover. Christ is the final judge.

And when he was on earth. He taught. That at the last. Some. Who expected. To be saved. To be welcomed by him.

Will be rejected. He will say to them. I never knew you. He taught also. Not everyone that says to me. Lord. Lord. Shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But he who does the will of my father. Who is in heaven. Christ is the opinion that matters. And therefore it should be our great concern.

[ 9 : 04 ] Individually. To seek grace. That we may not only trust in him. But continue to do the things that please him. That we may learn here.

To do the will of his father. And to walk in his ways. And to have his approval. Lest at the last. We be of those. Of whom he will be ashamed.

And to whom he will speak the awful word. Depart. So much then. So much then. For the opinion that matters.

The second main point. I wish to consider. Is the works. That were unacceptable. And before we come to the works. There are two things in the text.

That require particular attention. The first is that Christ said. I have not found thy works. Perfect before God.

[ 10 : 05 ] The words before God. The standards by which men and women commonly judge. Are influenced by the scale of values.

Current in the community around them. And influenced by a sinful self complacency. So they are often substandard.

Subchristian standards. That they choose. And by which they are content to measure themselves. And be satisfied. But Christ looks at things from God's point of view.

He is himself God. But as the mediatorial king. He acts for God. And here he says. I have not found your works. Perfect before God.

He taught his disciples. To be perfect. As their father in heaven was perfect. Peter in addressing Christians.

[ 11 : 09 ] In this same locality. Or in the surrounding locality. He said to them. He reminded them of words used. To Israel long ago. Be ye holy said God.

For I am holy. God's holiness. Is the ultimate standard. The ultimate comparison. For our standard of living. Of aiming.

The other thing is. That he uses the word perfect. Now we must find out. What the meaning of perfect. In this context means. Is.

In a sense. No works of a man upon earth. An ordinary man. Are perfect in the sight of God. For so long as a person is upon earth.

He or she is never perfect. But Christ was not asking. That the congregation obtain. To an impossible standard. To an impossible standard. For the works.

[12:12] Of a true believer. Done. By the grace of God. Out of love to God. And his fellows. With a view to God's glory.

And the advancement of his kingdom. Are acceptable. In God's sight. For Jesus sake. Through the merits of Christ. Christ. Very well then.

Now let us. Ask. What was lacking. In the works at Sardis. Probably. Much was there.

That was promising. In the view of outsiders. There were good attendances. For public worship. There was much Christian liberality.

In all probability. But yet. There was something lacking. You see. It could be said.

[13:08] Of the Pharisees. That they had. They were. Regular in attendance. At the synagogue. They professed. To have great. Regard.

For God's law. And to do. The works. That were. Commended in the law. And they had all sorts. Of additional rules. Themselves. To make sure. That in the details. Of daily life.

They were. Obeying the law. By their way of it. And yet. Christ. Denounced them. For their hypocrisy. He said. That the inner life.

That they lived. Didn't correspond. With what they claimed. To be at all. Didn't correspond. With the aim. That they had. So.

Here we have people. Who probably. Were very zealous. About. Church attendance. And. What they regarded. As acceptable.

[14:02] Christian works. And yet. They were probably. More concerned. About the praise. Of men. Than they were. About the praise. Of God. And like.

The Pharisees. They probably. Laid a great deal. Of stress. On what was external. Rather than. What was within. They were.

Proud. Probably. Of all the good works. That they did. Now of course. The church. At a very early age. Recognized. That it had social. Responsibilities. Social obligations.

They were taught. To provide. For the poor. In their own midst. For poor. Christians. At a distance. As they had opportunity.

To do good. To all men. Especially those. Of the household. Of faith. And. In every generation. As the church.

[14:58] Has had opportunity. These are obligations. Upon it. The support. Of the gospel ministry. The promotion. Of the work of Christ. In lands of heart. The upkeep.

Of buildings. Set aside. For the purposes. Of public worship. Or connected. With the worship. And work. Of the church. Providing. For the hungry. And needy. In various parts.

Of the world. Through Christian aid. And what have you. But there is a danger. Even where. A congregation. Or a church. Does magnificently.

In these directions. That there may be. More satisfaction. With financial progress. Than there is concern.

About the lack. Of corresponding addition. To the communion role. And corresponding. In gathering. Of the unsaved. Around them. Again.

[15:56] It may well be. That the church. Of Sardis. Like the Pharisees. Made a great deal. About. Of their orthodoxy. You see.

In this letter. There is no. Charge. That there is any. False teaching. Among them. As there is. In some of the other letters. They may have made.

Much of their. Orthodox beliefs. But they were less. Concerned about. Christian character. For although. Christ makes no. Charge about.

False belief. Or heretical. Teaching. He also. He says. At the same time. That there were only. A few. Insurgents. That had not.

Soiled their garments. They had compromised. To a greater or less degree.

[16:51] With the lack. Standards of living around them. They may not have done so. To the extent. That brought them into the civil courts. Or exposed them to church censures.

But they did it to the extent. That offended and dishonored Christ. And brought down his censure upon them. There were only a few.

Who had not soiled their garments. Now like the people of Sardis. We are living today. With many around us.

Whose standards are far other. Than the standards of the scripture. We are. When ethical standards.

Are being promoted. And supported by legislation. Between which. And the teaching of scriptures. The gap is continually widening.

[17:50] And therefore. It is very important. That Christian people. Be concerned. To keep in touch. With the teaching of the word.

And to seek the blessing of the spirit. Upon the word. That the word might be a counteracting influence. To the evil influences. That come to us today. Through so many channels.

And from so many directions. For it is very easy. As we go about our business. And mingle. With people of various views. It is very easy.

For us to be influenced. By such views. Almost imperceptibly. I believe. That the media. Have a very.

A very. Ruining. Perfect. Effect. Upon some of our young people. Because they are getting into the habit. Of accepting. The standards that they see.

[18:46] Continually. Boosted on the media. Or set forth on the media. As the way of living. To be enjoyed. And the way of living. That is proper. The command of Christ.

To his people. Was. Through Paul. Writing to the Corinthians. Quoting from the Old Testament. Come out from among them. And touch not the unclean thing.

And I will receive you. Saith the Lord. And be to you a father. And ye shall be my sons and daughters. That does not mean. To live a monastic. Or a life. Or a life like a hermit.

But it means. That we must avoid. Having unnecessary. And to intimate contact. With those who are evil doers. And we must seek grace. In the midst of them.

Tactfully. And courteously. And with a Christian spirit. To stand firm for the truth. As it is set forth by Christ. And in the word of God. Let us come now.

[19:47] In the third place. To the remedies required. For although this letter. Is stern. And has much to say. By way of condemnation.

There are gleams of hope in it. For one thing. Christ says. That there were found at Sardis.

For all its declension. For all its offense to the Lord. Some who had not soiled their garments. They were people.

Who waited humbly on the Lord. And were kept by his power. And to them. Christ promised. To go on keeping them. And that as they pursued.

The way of obedience. They would attain to the place. That they were looking forward to. In glory. And stand among his people. In righteousness. Their names would not be.

[20:47] Cast out by Christ. As people. Citizens of an earthly city. Have their names stroked out. Of the civil registers. When they die. Christ said.

I will not discard them. I will not blot out their names. From the book of life. That is the figure that he uses. And probably with reference here. To the earthly registers. But furthermore.

There are five commands given here. In the letter. Five commands that would remedy the situation. One is be watchful or wake up.

Now you see. The majority of the congregation are described as dead. Is there any purpose. Any value.

In telling a dead man to wake up. Not if you and I were to say it. As our own command. But Christ is the voice that wakes the dead.

[21:54] He proclaimed when he was teaching. That the hour is coming. And now is. When the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God. And they that hear shall live. And he contrasts that in the following verse.

With the resurrection at the last. This is the resurrection of the gospel preaching. That he is talking of. Christ is the voice that wakes the dead. Christ stood by the grave of Lazarus.

And said Lazarus come forth. And the dead man came forth. Christ said to the man. Lying helpless with paralysis before him. Rise and take up your bed and walk.

And with his voice was accompanied with power. And so it is with the gospel accompanied with power. It wakes the dead. But this may be a call to the living.

As well as to the dead. For we find in various parts of the New Testament. The living called upon. To awake. To be watchful. Right into the Romans.

[ 22 : 54 ] Paul says. It is high time to awake out of sleep. For now is your salvation nearer than when you believed. And he right into the Ephesians.

He says. Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead. And Christ shall give thee light. Dr. Moody Stewart. Some of his books are still in circulation.

Tells of a time when preceding a communion service. A communion Sabbath. He was greatly depressed by his own unfitness to go to the Lord's table.

And his eyes lighted upon this verse. And with power it came home to him. And filled him with an assurance. Of his trust in Christ. And his fitness to go forward.

Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead. And Christ shall give thee light. My friend. He says. He was able to give you light tonight. And light. New life.

[ 23 : 55 ] If you call upon him as ever he was. To give it to Dr. Stewart and to others. In days that are gone. First he says.

Wake up. But then. He says. Strengthen the things that remain. Well you may ask. What did remain. Well the forms were there.

Probably they. When they had a name to be living. They were giving some evidence to the outside world. As if they were alive. They were attending. Well we may assume.

Public worship. Now that is a good thing. In itself. But it is not acceptable to God. Unless. The object of attending public worship.

Is to meet with God in his house. To receive God's blessing. To wait upon him with that in view. That you may know him. And serve him. And that you may. If you have come to know him by his grace.

[ 24 : 54 ] That you may be able to serve him better. And to hold on your way. And have assurance. That you will be kept by the power of God. Through faith unto salvation. The worship had to be infused.

With a hunger and thirst after righteousness. With the grace of God. Enabling them to worship in spirit and in truth. And then the blessing would come down from on high.

And if they had good. What appeared to be good works. In the light of those round about them. What motivated these works. Not hitherto love to God or man.

That was acceptable to Christ. But by the grace of God that could come. And it would be in the first instance. For the people of God. Those who had not defiled their garments. To pray.

To entreat God for the work of the spirit. That would bring alive with reviving power. The deadness round about them. So that not only would those revived benefit.

[ 25 : 53 ] But they themselves would benefit. By the impact of a strength and spiritual fellowship. Enabling themselves to carry on. Strengthen the things that remain.

Remember. Remember. But then he says. Remember. Remember how you have received. And the word translated remember.

Is in a tense that suggests. In the original language. In a tense that suggests. That these things that they had heard. And received were of permanent value.

And so they were. For the gospel that came to them. Awakening them. To the guilt. And the peril of sin. Revealing to them.

The provision of God. In a great. Sufficient. Suitable. Accessible. Savior. Enabling those among them. Who were believers. To put their trust in that Savior.

[ 26 : 53 ] That gospel. Was of permanent value. The essential truths. That set forth. Must be the Christian's guide. And aid. All through the pilgrimage way.

With further light. Set upon them. In their relevancy. To the changing need. Of the believer. So they were asked. To remember. How they had heard.

But notice the word. How. It is not what they had heard. But how they had heard. It is upon how the emphasis is. How had they heard. When Paul describes it.

In this epistle. To the Thessalonians. How they had heard. When the gospel. Was first planted. In the hearts of those. People in Sardis. So that a church was formed.

They heard. With the Holy Spirit. Sent down from heaven. That had tested. The authority of the preacher. Commissioned by Christ. It was the Holy Spirit.

[ 27 : 52 ] Sent down from heaven. That made the word. Effectual to salvation. And he asked them. To remember this. And to seek. The same outpouring. Another outpouring.

Of the same spirit. That they might hear. The word preached. With the Holy Spirit. Sent down from heaven. And know the impact. Of the word. In their innermost being. Liberating them. From the darkness. And the power. And dominion. Of sin and Satan. Bringing them to Jesus Christ. And enabling them. To receive out of his fullness. Remember how you have heard. And then he says. Keep it. Jesus said to some. Would be disciples. At Jerusalem. If he continue. In my word.

Then are ye my disciples. Indeed. And ye shall know the truth. And the truth shall make you free. Continue in the hearing of the word.

[ 28 : 49 ] In prayerful dependence. Upon the preaching. And teaching of the word. That you may be able to submit. To the authority. And guiding. And molding. Influence of the word. Then.

By the grace of God. The word will make you free. Liberate you from the dominion of error. And from the power of evil. And be a lamp to your feet. And a light to your path.

Setting you in the way. That is as the shining. Light. That shines more and more. Unto the perfect day. And fifthly he says. Repent.

They were to repent. Of present sin. But to go on repenting. All their days. As the Holy Spirit. Revealed to them. Where they were out of line.

With the teaching and requirement. Of the word of God. What is repentance. It includes. Reflection. Regret. Return.

[ 29 : 47 ] Receiving of Christ. And receiving. Into his. Receiving of his fullness. And repentance. Like faith. As God's own gift.

Christ is exalted. A prince and savior. To give repentance. And remission of sins. The psalmist illustrates. What repentance made to him.

When he says. Quoting the metrical version. I did not stay. Nor linger long. As those. That slothful are. But hastily.

Thy laws. To keep myself. I did prepare. Prepare. And before that. He said. I thought upon. My former ways. And did my life. Well try. And hastily.

He turned himself. To keep God's law. Try friend. To look at your life. In the light of God's word.

[ 30 : 41 ] Ask that the Holy Spirit. May show you. Where it is out of line. With God's will. Ask that the same spirit. May bring you. To the feet of Christ.

Seeking. Cleansing. And forgiveness. And grace. To turn. Wholeheartedly. And consistently. And progressively. From every evil way.

And lead you. In the way everlasting. But then. There followed. These war. These commands. Warning.

And encouragement. If. Said Christ. You will not repent. I will come to you. Like a thief. It would sound.

To the people. At Sardis. Like the coming. Of some. Unexpected calamity. And they had known. Something of that sort. Twice. In their long history. Their city.

[ 31 : 37 ] Which they believed. To be impregnable. Was penetrated. Unexpectedly. By an enemy. But that was. Some distance. Behind them. But a terrible earthquake.

Was not so far. Behind them. For. A large part. Of their city. Had been. Some 50 years before. Destroyed.

By earthquake. And rebuilt. By the generosity. Of the emperor. Tiberius. They knew. What sudden calamity. Meant in the providence. Of God. They might gather.

From that. What sudden calamity. That might sweep them. Into a lost eternity. Would mean. But then there was. There is encouragement.

And we must not overlook. The beginning of this letter. For each letter. That we find. Among these seven.

[ 32 : 33 ] Addressed to the churches. In Asia. Begins. By. Applying. Some aspect. Or mentioning. Some aspect. Of Christ.

That is particularly suited. To the situation. Of the church addressed. Almost all these. Descriptions. Of Christ. Are taken from.

The vision. Which John saw. At the outset. Of his visions. In Patmos. Now here. We find Christ. Described. As. He that hath.

The seven spirits. Of God. And the seven stars. Now we are not concerned. With the latter part. At the moment. But we are concerned. With the seven spirits. Of God. For in the book.

Of Revelation. That no doubt. Means. The holy spirit. In the fullness. Of his power. And ability. To meet the needs.

[ 33 : 30 ] Of all the churches. And each church. And each individual believer. And to this church. Almost utterly dead. Having only a few.

That had not defiled. Their garments. Christ introduces himself. As the one. Who has. This sevenfold spirit. This spirit. In all his sufficiency. To bestow.

On those. Who seek his mercy. For repentance. And for progress. And for growth. In grace. You know. I sometimes hear. People say.

That they will not. Come forward. To make a public. Profession for Christ. Because they fear. They will not be able. To go on. They fear. That they will not. Keep it up.

As they say. God never asked. Any of them. To anybody. To keep it up. In his own strength. He that begins. The good work. If you are truly Christ. You didn't attain.

[ 34 : 25 ] To salvation. He began. The work. In your soul. He brought it. To the stage. Of completion. At which it is. And the Bible. Assured. The scripture. Assures us.

That he who begins. The good work. Will carry it forward. He will be responsible. For seeing. That the true believer. Who commits himself. Or herself. To him. And seeks.

To come out. Publicly. On his side. Will be kept. In the hour. Of temptation. Will be held up. On his way. That although. Sometimes he may fall. He will not be cast down.

Naturally. Because the Lord. Will mightily uphold. If the Lord. Begins a good work. He will not. He will not. Bring a reflection. Upon his own glory.

And his own purposes. By desisting. From that work. And if you have truly. Come to Christ. For salvation. And committed yourself. To him. Leave it to him.

[ 35 : 16 ] To keep you. And obey his command. In the strength. Of his grace. And come out. From among those. Who are not publicly. Professing him. Are giving him. The glory. Of their salvation.

The sevenfold spirit. Now. One thing more. What was the probable response. Of the church at Sardis. Well there is nothing.

In the letter. To tell us that. But. It is interesting. That. That. Some. Fifty years or more.

Further on. There was still a church in Sardis. And apparently a flourishing church. That church was not swept away. Its candle was not put out.

There was at Sardis. The earliest church historian tells us. There was one. At the head of the church. Of Sardis. Who was recognized. As a man.

[ 36 : 15 ] Full of the Holy Spirit. He was the first commentator. Of the book. Of Revelation. First commentator. On the book of Revelation. And in a time of persecution.

He made a notable defense. Of the Christian faith. And forwarded it. To the Roman Empire. Emperor. And therefore. There is reason to believe.

That. Perhaps a considerable number of Sardis. Responded to the appeal. Took the warning to heart. Sought and obtained repentance. Attained to growth in grace.

And returned. To loyalty to Christ. And what of ourselves. We are all. Under Christ's scrutiny. We are all.

Accountable to him. And we will stand before him. At the last. His. Is all the grace. All the mercy. All the power.

[ 37 : 16 ] That we need. To turn from sin now. And to learn. To do his will. And at the end. Of this whole book of Revelation. He says. As his last invitation.

To a sinful world. Whosoever will. Let him take. The water of life freely. He said.

In the days of his flesh. When he was here upon earth. Crying out aloud. So that all. Who came within the reach. Of his voice. Who were within hearing. Of his voice.

Might respond. If they would. If any man thirst. Let him come. Unto me and drink. Let us pray. Lord God.

Almighty. Merciful and gracious. Bless to us. The solemn warnings. Of thy word. Bless to us. The hope held out. By thy word. Thou knowest.

