

Catch The Vision

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Date: 28 March 2010

[0:00] Proverbs 29 verse 18! It says there, Where there is no vision, the people perish.

! He that keepeth the law, happy is he. It says where there is no vision, the people perish. If you'd like to turn to Acts 26.

Acts 26 and the account of Paul's conversion. And we read there from verse 1. Paul talks to Agrippa the king.

He stretches forth his hand and he speaks to King Agrippa. And he tells him the story of his conversion. And he says from verse 4, My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, known to all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning if they would testify, that after the most straightest act of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. And he goes on and describes how he would persecute the Christians.

[1:18] Verse 11. I punished them often every synagogue. I compelled them to blaspheme. And being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them, even unto strange cities.

As I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven above, the brightness of the sun shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the prince. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet. For I have appeared unto them for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them, which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. Then it goes on how he went, and declared to the people how they should repent and turn unto God and do works me will fit for repentance.

[2:54] Paul had a heavenly vision, and he wasn't disobedient to it. Verse 19, His vision, the commission he was given from the Lord Jesus, was to open their eyes that they would be turned from darkness to light.

Proverbs says, where there is no vision, the people perish. Vision. It's important that we have our vision right, that we can see clearly, that we can have eyes to see and ears to hear.

The sun, as we know, the word says, the sun, they've got ears that count hear and eyes that count see. And we can declare, as the writer of amazing grace did, once I was lost, but now I'm found.

Once I was blind, but now I can see, as it says in the scriptures too. And what is vision? What does it mean? And why do we need it? How can it help us? What's it all about, this word vision?

You know, it's something we use in the natural sense of our eyesight, whether we need specs or whether we need some kind of help to see. And vision, for me, in the word of God, it means having that kind of heavenly perspective on life, that kind of heavenly viewpoint, to see things from God's viewpoint and to live his fulfilling way of life while we are still in the here below.

[4:13] It's having that kind of sense of the eternal. And vision creates, firstly I put it, that it creates a sense of discovery. A sense of discovery. Vision is about discovery.

Unless you've got eyes, you can't see. You can't discover. You can't really find things. In a Christian life too, that we can see, we can discover, we can see all around us, the goodness of God to us. I was just walking around today, had to do some, running around in the rain to fix a brake light for Julie's car. And in the car park, and I had to walk some distance to a car park shop.

And it was raining on me. I was just seeing the goodness of God. I was just thinking, wow, I could be in a prison cell. I could be a tortured Christian, a persecuted Christian. I could be in a hospital ward, with a fatal illness or something.

But no, I'm walking in the rain. Hallelujah. And it was beautiful, just to enjoy the goodness of God, just to feel the rain on my skin, that I wasn't locked in some jail cell.

[5:16] I have freedom and liberty to enjoy the fresh air, and the day that it was. And it's about perspective, isn't it? It's about what you see, and what you really realise, the goodness of God to us.

And then I got to the church, and there was leaks in the roof, and I had to get the ladder out, and climb up in my best clothes, trying to stick silicon, where it would stop the leaks coming down, with my best pants on, and worry that I was going to get silicon on myself, which I did.

And my Julie will turn me off later. But, you know, it's about perspective, isn't it? And I was feeling really sorry for myself, that I had some work to do, and I didn't so much like the rain then, when that happened.

It's about perspective, isn't it? It's about seeing things from a different angle. And when you're a Christian, life takes on a whole new way of being, doesn't it? We realise that we're created for a reason, we're created to have fellowship with God, and there's a new sense of discovery, about receiving from God, and that's what Paul experienced there.

There was a discovery there, as that light shined from heaven, as God got his attention, and grabbed the whole of his life. There was a discovery made, and that's the Christian life, isn't it?

[6:25] The discovery of salvation, of everlasting life, of becoming a new creation. And it's like being on a chairlift, if you go up to those snow-capped mountains, down below, it doesn't look so crash hot, because there's not so much snow, but as you go up the chairlift, you start to get a new perspective, you start to see things from a different angle.

And we need to go up to higher ground. We need to go up, higher up the mountain, and take a look at things from God's way of looking. And in talking about getting a vision, we don't mean how some people can presumptuously and flippantly say, God told me this, or God told me that.

But we want a vision that's discovering what God has for us, in his word, and we see that, like the psalmist cried out, in Psalm 119, verse 18, he says, Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

He wanted God to open his eyes, that he could behold the wondrous things out of God's word. And that's discovery, isn't it? This book is full of discoveries that you've not yet made, because we haven't looked long enough in it.

We haven't looked enough. Brothers and sisters, there's always a new discovery that we can make. And it's getting that vision right. We're starting looking into the word of God, making first of all that wonderful discovery of finding Christ for you, finding Christ died for our sins, finding out that we can repent and receive this wonderful gift of forgiveness of everlasting life, getting that vision right.

[8:02] That's what Paul found as he told King Agrippa, that was a life-changing moment when he got the vision, that heavenly vision, and he says that he wasn't disobedient to it. There was a new discovery.

And God's word is jam-packed with things for you to discover, to uncover wondrous things that you can find. If you just ask the Lord, as the psalmist said, open thou mine eyes.

Psalm 119, verse 18, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. And it is by the word of God that we test our perception of life, of how things are, whether they're truly of God or not.

It is here that we find that measuring stick, that line, that we measure things by. And the Bible is God's will. The Bible is God's will. The Bible is God's vision.

It gives you that lens through which to look at life and the world around you and make sense of it all. And our vision must spring from the word of God. It's like we're going into uncharted waters, but we've got the manual for life, the word of God on that voyage of discovery.

[9:13] Faith is an adventure, and the word of God will help us make that discovery. So vision brings a sense of discovery. And secondly, vision

gives us a sense of direction.

Now, I was trying to explain yesterday to the speaker who's coming to our Christian camp. He's a blind man. He is fully blind.

He's got no sight at all. And yet you can email him, and I guess he's got some kind of computerised way of it, reading back to him the words that you type in the email so that he can actually hear what you send to him electronically in terms of text that you send to him.

But I sent him a map. Now, of course, he won't be able to see that map. He won't be able to get the direction of that map, but thankfully he's got a wife who can see. So his wife obviously will read that map so that he can find his way to the church when we meet to head off to the camp.

And to have a lack of vision means that you have a lack of direction. Have a lack of direction.

Without eyes to see, you won't know which path to take.

[10:23] It's very easy to go astray. Without seeing a road map, we will get lost. Without having eyes to see, it's very easy to stray from the path.

And we see that in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, how the world is full of people who are blind. They might have eyes, but they can't see the truth. 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, it says, of those who the gospel is hidden to.

It says of them in verse 4, of 2 Corinthians 4, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Their eyes, the eyes of their mind are blinded so that they cannot see. They cannot believe. And likewise, in Ephesians 4, verse 18, it says, it speaks of the blindness of their heart.

There's people who, they might have physical eyes to see, but they're truly blind as regards Christian things, as regards God's truth. They haven't got that sense of direction, that direction for life.

[11:32] They've not made the U-turn yet. They've not come to the fork in the road or maybe they're still heading on the wrong track. Friends, the direction for life is found as we get the vision, as we truly see Christ and Him crucified, as we truly get a picture, as we truly get His call, as we truly get that encounter on the Damascus Road.

That was a turning point for Paul, wasn't it? As he was then Saul, that was the turning point. He got a new direction. In fact, he was blinded, as we know, but yet, he had a vision from God.

He had that heavenly vision. And vision makes the path ahead clear for us. It's about finding out what is God's will for my life? What is God's purpose? What is God's best?

What has God for me? When we have a vision, we'll have that sense of direction, that sense of what way should I go? How should I live? And He makes that way known to us again.

It is to His Word. Like the psalmist says in Psalm 119, 105, that familiar one, Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

[12:41] The Word of God is that light unto my feet, a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. There's direction there. The Lord sets the way. In fact, the Christian life and the Christian church of Acts, it was called the people of the way, wasn't it?

That they had found the way, the way. That was the name of the church of God. One of the names of the Bible church was they were the people of the way. And of course we know who is the way, the truth, and the life.

The Lord Jesus is. He is the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. And when you get saved, there's a whole new way of living, a whole new way of looking. You get a direction for life.

It's a challenging path, a lonesome path. It might be a path less travelled, a pilgrim walk. And we're not meant to stay here, we're just passing through. The steps that we take should be ordered by the Lord.

And as you go higher, you see further. Let's get back up in that chairlift, so to speak, and go higher up the mountain, to that higher ground. See things from God's perspective.

[13:45] Realise that you've got breath to breathe, you've got a day to live to serve Him, to make the most of, to redeem the time, because the days are evil. And see things from His way of looking.

Maybe you have got some illness, or some tragedy, or some poor memories, or difficult experiences. Maybe even this very day that you're going through, and yet you can rejoice. Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian. Lift up your voice and sing. We can rejoice because we've got something higher, we've got something beyond this present day, this present time. We've got a direction, and that direction is heavenward. It's heavenward, and we've got guidance for the day at hand. And God gives us that, that new sense of discovery, that new sense of direction.

And thirdly, there's a way that, as we get this kind of Christian vision, this heavenly vision that Paul had at the Damascus Road, that he was not disobedient to, there's a whole new dimension happens.

[14:45] There's a new direction, a new discovery, there's a new dimension. And sometimes we can get so short-sighted, we can just get so earth-bound, and so earth-focused about the humdrum, the day-by-day, the every day.

Sometimes we get so short-sighted, perhaps we're caught up with looking backwards down the train, harking backwards, maybe there's sin in your past.

If you've repented, it's gone. He's taken it, every bit of it, every bit of the wrong that has happened in the backwards view of your life. It's gone. By his blood, he's blotted it out, he's washed it, he's thrown it in the sea of forgetfulness, and he doesn't want us to look backwards.

It talks about pressing towards the mark, doesn't it? It talks about looking unto Jesus, the author, and finish your eye of faith. It's looking forward, it's looking ahead, it's looking for each new day to find some opportunity to live by heaven's value.

It's not earth-bound, but by heaven's values. For that which is real, that which is everlasting, that which matters, that will count forever. And vision takes us from this earth-bound world that we're living in into heaven, even while our feet are still on this earth.

[16:03] And it takes us from man's viewpoint of life and the everyday to God's viewpoint, that there's something beyond, there's something beyond this perspective of earth, to that which is beyond, and takes us beyond our own stream to His.

And there's a verse in Scripture, and this was the verse that Charles Spurgeon was moved by to trust Christ. And it says in Isaiah 45, verse 22, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

For I am God, and there is none else. God says, Look unto me, and be ye saved. It's getting that look of faith.

It's getting that look of life. It's seeing Christ and Him crucified. It's seeing that bleeding lamb, that perfect spotless one, bleeding and dying, and then rising from the dead, alive, victorious, our conquering Savior.

It's having that faith that sees beyond the present tense into the beyond. It's getting a glimpse of God like Paul did on that road. He was intent on destroying and damaging and hurting the Christians of his day.

[17:20] It was vicious. It was vile what he was about. That work of the devil that he was really doing in the name of God as he thought. And yet, when truly he encountered that heavenly vision, he realised what a mess he was making, what a mistake he was making of his life.

And that can be true for you, for me. Maybe you've not had that heavenly vision yet. Maybe you've not had that vision of Christ, that glimpse of God and who He is. When you get that vision, life takes a new path.

It's a bold new path, a new way of living. And this vision inspires us. It's like the name of God who cried out, We will see Jesus.

The disciples, they cried out, We will see Jesus. They wanted to see Jesus. And we see those that had the encounter. As we're working through the Gospels in the Wednesday night Bible study time now, we've seen the encounters with Christ and how lives were turned around, how lives were touched and transformed when they wanted to see Jesus.

They wanted Him to reach them. They wanted to reach Him. Faith inspires us. Vision inspires us. We would see Jesus. We want to please Him. We want to have life eternal.

[18:37] And this was what happened to Paul. It was an encounter with God, with the Almighty, a meeting with God that turned His life upside down. It was a vision. It was graphic.

It was shocking. It was alarming. And one day, there will be a heavenly vision and it will be too late for planet Earth, for those that haven't trusted Christ. In Romans 1.18, it tells us of another heavenly vision called, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. God's wrath. What a sight. What a sight. What a gripping sight.

What a shocking sight. If you're not right with God when that heavenly vision happens, God, help you. It will be too late. If we could but catch a glimpse of the anger of God, we wouldn't trifle with sin.

We wouldn't toy with the passing pleasures of this world. When you become a Christian, it talks about how the eyes are opened. As Paul was given the commission to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

[19:51] You begin to see things differently. When you get that vision, you get Christ's eyes because he comes to live within you. It's Christ in you and you in Christ.

It gives you that new set of eyes to see things differently in the world around you. Your eyes are open. You see the need of the world. You see the loss and hurting. You see the sin.

You see the error. You see those things that need correcting. You see the lies that are Christless and bound and blind and you want to give them life and sight. It gives you that lens through which to look at life and really that humdrum that day by day doesn't really have that same attraction, that same obsession because there's something greater, there's something more important.

We catch a vision of God's displeasure. We catch a vision of God's judgment to come and vision changes us.

When we get that vision we'll be like Christ as we read recently in Matthew 9 where it talks about Christ, he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion and he saw as they fainted and were scattered abroad, he was moved with compassion when he saw the people, the Christless ones.

[21:08] And when you see the world around you through his eyes, you see the great need. You see the burden. It's been said we'll see better when our eyes are filled with tears.

When we've wept for the lost and hell bound, there's lost ones, Christless ones. Get that new dimension today, that new dimension. There's opportunity to reach out whether trance or witness or other ways.

There's opportunity for you to be a part of reaching the lost and to have that faith that is active aggressive, working. Shouldn't we in the light of eternity, 2 Thessalonians 1 verse 7 it says, The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.

Friends, hell is real. Get a vision of hell. It's been said, Booth said, if people just spend a few seconds in hell or catch a real glimpse of hell and it should make us be gripped with the reality of the vision, that terrifying vision of hell and the danger the lost are in and yet the comforting sight for us that are saved, that Christ has saved us from hell.

And so, think of it today. Catch a vision of the flaming fire of God's judgment. Can we picture it? We can't even conceive of it, can we? What that might be like.

[22:58] But it should shake us, it should shock us and drive us to action. In Revelation 20, verse 12, John had a vision. His book is called The Revelation. The Revelation, the uncovering, that manifestation, that unfolding of God's wonderful working.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ. It was a vision. Really a book of vision, isn't it? Of visions. And in Revelation 20, verse 12, it says, John wrote, And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.

And the books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books. What a vision.

What a vision. A vision of judgment. Where will you stand? Picture the last days. Can you picture it? Put yourself in the picture. Which side are you going to be on? On his right hand or on his left?

There's a cutting. There's a dividing. There's a separating. And it depends on where you are with Christ. Don't put it off. In the Word it says, Behold, now is the accepted time.

[24:10] Today is the day of salvation. If only you could grasp that. If only you could see. If only God could break through that blindness on your mind today if you're not saved. But you could realise the danger, the peril, the tragedy of missing it.

And we naturally like to stay in our comfort zone. It's natural for us. Why should I step over the line and trust Christ? Why should I become an out Christian? It's when you get those eyes.

When the scales get removed like they were for Paul. When that blindness gets taken. Once I was blind but now I can see. Once I was lost but now I have been found.

And we need to get that vision. Friends just to wrap up shortly. There was a story told in the American Civil War of a General Stonewall Jackson.

And he wanted to get his troops across a certain river. And he wanted to ensure that they had made it across that river that night. And he gave orders to the engineers at the time so that they could start planning and working out a way across for the artillery and the wagons to get the men across.

[25:21] And he called also the wagon master who was a blacksmith and gave them instructions to get the wagon train across the river as fast as possible. And the engineers gathered in a tent and went about their work beavering the way with their expert manner drawing up the plans carefully for the bridge.

And the blacksmith knowing only that something had to be done. Knowing only that something had to be done. And that right quickly something practical had to be the outcome and he proceeded to gather a group of men and with logs and rocks and fence rails they built a crossing across the river. Just before dawn the blacksmith awakened the general and told him the wagon's artillery and the men were across the river. And in astonishment the general said where are the engineers?

And the blacksmith replied they're over in the tent still drawing pictures and planning a bridge. You know we can have the truth and we can play games with it.

We can pretend or we can get about the work. We can realise something has to be done. And when you get the vision you get active. You get activated.

[26:32] You get motivated. And what we need is some men and women of this hour who won't be messing around drawing pictures and planning a bridge but getting about the work of building the bridge.

There's a bridge to be built today. There's lost souls beneath Christ. There's a river to cross. There's a passage from death unto life. And we need to present Christ to these ones while we can.

Noah got the vision soon. Hebrews 11 7 being warned of God by faith Noah being warned of God but things not seen as yet moved with fear prepared an ark for the saving of his house.

He heard from God. Got a vision. He was moved by faith. Ezekiel 2 had a vision. Ezekiel had a vision. It was a vision of hands covered with blood. Hands covered with blood.

A picture of blood on hands. A gruesome vision. And the vision meant that there were some that we hadn't warned. There were some we hadn't told. A warning of neglected duty.

[27:37] A warning of the blood of judgment. vision. Because the watchman had not warned. What a vision.

When our eyes are open to the eternal need we'll get activated. We'll see that eternal dimension. It's not just the here and now. There's the hereafter.

And vision prompts us. It stirs us. It enlivens us. It empowers us to do something. Do something with your life. Make it count. Put your hands to the plough.

Be about his work while you can. And every one of us needs to be activated. As we see the one who is at work behind the scenes. Moses had a vision.

Hebrews 11 27. He by faith he forsook Egypt. It goes on as seeing him who is invisible. He saw the invisible one.

[28:35] That's what you need to do. That's what I need to do. To see him who is invisible. Isaiah had a vision. We know that one where he saw the Lord high and lifted up.

He saw the uncleanness, the undone-ness of his life. And he heard the voice, whom shall I send? Who will go for us? And he said, here am I.

Send me. Vision disturbs us. The vision of judgment of the rapt of God of eternity if we're not prepared. Vision.

Vision. It's opening our eyes and seeing the need. It's getting the burden. It's hearing the warning. It's activating us. It's driving us to action to stop playing church and to do something for Christ. To do something for Christ. It means saying, yes, Lord. It means saying, yes, Lord, when he puts the finger on things that need changing. You know what they are.

[29:33] What God is moving on your heart about. Do something. Are we a people with vision? Can we see or are we blind?

something.