

The Heavenly Vision

*“...I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”
Acts 26:19.*

God’s Vision for Paul

God’s vision for Paul was revealed to a disciple named Ananias in Acts 9:15, “...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles...”

Paul explained to King Agrippa what Jesus had said to him on the road to Damascus: “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose...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...” (Acts 26:16-18).

When Paul was converted he knew exactly what his purpose and vision in life was. God has a plan for each one of us. Paul knew what God wanted him to do, and he did it with excellence. Because of this he was able to reach the end of his ministry and say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Apostle Paul received his heavenly vision by asking, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Throughout his lifetime (as we should also do) he continued to ask this same question.

The heavenly vision always comes from God. Can you state in one sentence what are God’s purpose, plan, and vision for your life? In the small box given, write your God given vision for ministry. Keep this in mind, and remember it on a regular basis and explain it to others.

My Heavenly Vision is...

God spoke to Habakkuk and said, “...Write the vision, and make it plain...” (Habakkuk 2:2). Writing down the vision will help you to remember what God originally said to you. Thank God for His direction, and allow the vision to develop through prayer, fasting, and obedience. Most people go through life as a passenger in the vehicle called life. We need to get into the driver’s seat with our map of God’s vision and drive into the future. Remember, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.”

The Heavenly Vision Will Be Tested

*"Some men see things as they are
and ask, 'Why?'
I dream of things that never were
and ask, 'Why Not?'"
(George Bernard Shaw)*

Whenever you receive a vision from God people will try to persuade you that it is not from God. Satan will also try to convince you that God has not spoken to you.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus..." (Acts 20:24).

Visionary Leaders

Joseph was given a vision for his life through two dreams. These dreams revealed that he was going to be in a place of leadership over many people including his own family. His family members rejected this and his brothers became so jealous that they plotted to kill him, and eventually sold him into slavery. Through Joseph's experiences in the pit, in slavery, in prison, and in problems, we see that when God says 'Yes,' no one can say 'No!'. We learn that although our vision may be tested it will still be brought to pass.

Moses received a vision from God at the burning bush. However, getting Pharaoh to release the Israelites, and then taking the people of God through the wilderness was not an easy job. Pastoring this complaining, rebellious, stubborn group truly tested his vision. God promised that they would go into a land that flowed with milk and honey. This was His vision for His people. However, for them to possess the land they still had to fight the inhabitants. Did you ever think of "milk" and "honey?" They may have received the milk and honey but they still had to wrestle with the cows and the bees in order to get it.

Nehemiah was a godly leader with a vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He received this vision from God during a time of prayer and fasting. He was a man that was able to do the most possible dream because of his dependency on God. The Book of Nehemiah reveals an accomplished vision through prayer, fasting, sacrifice, hard work, and overcoming difficulties. Opposition reached such a level that those rebuilding the wall worked with one hand and held their weapons with the other hand. Every one of them had their sword by their side. They refused to disobey the heavenly vision and the walls of Jerusalem stood as their testimony.

Look at what happened between Paul receiving the heavenly vision and his finishing his course explained in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28: "I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a

day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather. And that's not the half of it, when you throw in the daily pressures and anxieties of all of the churches...I crawled through a window in the wall, was let down in a basket, and had to run for my life." (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*, Page 384)

In spite of all this he was determined to obey the heavenly vision with singleness of purpose. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

Vision – Looking At the Future

Our vision for ministry is the best predictor of our future. Vision is looking at the future. It is always looking ahead instead of merely looking at our past. No matter what has happened in your past, your future is spotless. It is fresh from all sins, failures, and mistakes. Each day God gives us a new chalkboard with nothing written on it. It is totally clean. What are you going to do with the future that God is going to give to you? George Barna stated, "Vision is not dreaming the impossible dream, but dreaming the most possible dream." You are not asked to dream the impossible but dream the most possible thing you can do with your life and ministry. As we look at our God given vision we focus on God.

We expect Him to do great things through us, and for us. Vision is an explanation of what God wants to accomplish through us.

"For I know the thoughts (*plans*) that I think (*plan*) toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

God wants us to reach our expected end. Like Paul we can say, "I have finished my course."

Study Questions

1. Why did Jesus appear to Saul? _____

2. What was Paul able to say when he reached the end? _____

3. What did God tell Habakkuk concerning vision? _____
