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## Series 6. Some Deeper Principles

# E2. The Vision: Part 1.

Prov. 29.18 *“Where there is no vision (revelation) the people perish (cast off restraint);  
But happy is he who keeps the law.”*

Where there is no revelation of God’s will, His people become *unrestrained*, ungovernable, or disorderly. Everyone decides in their own mind what is right or wrong, good or bad. (Jud. 21.25) Once, I was driving a small boat on a lake and the steering mechanism broke. The motor could still provide all the power necessary to move the boat, but I could no longer steer the boat in the direction it should go. I was at the mercy of the winds to determine where I would go. Now, if direction and destiny are critical aspects of boating, should they not also be the most critical quintessential focus of the salvation of our souls? Or should our lives be determined by the prevailing winds of worldly circumstance, best judgments and good intentions?

It has been written elsewhere that, “*vision* is the actual contact between God and the human spirit, which is the necessary condition of any true revelation.” Take “the Law” of the Old Covenant for example, whether passed on orally, or written on scrolls or in books, divine insight was given in these writings into the mind, heart, and will of God. Where there is no such *vision*, the bonds that hold the people of God together are relaxed or broken. And now, under the New Covenant in Christ, such *vision* is passed on not just orally or written, but by Spiritual revelation, as it is written, Heb. 8.10, “*I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*”

To *write them upon their hearts* is contrasted with the physical tablets or scrolls of the Law; meaning not writing them on tablets of stone or scrolls but on the soul itself by inward revelation. For the individual believer it is the setting forth of a real and powerful work of the Spirit of Christ imparting the mind and will of God upon the soul of the believer. This is the outcome of one’s true relationship with Christ. These writings upon our souls by the Spirit of Christ convey to us a new light, life, and power so that we may become partakers of a new divine nature. A new nature whereby we are less influenced by external commandments and social norms and more influenced by the innate sense of right and wrong being conformed to the divine nature. This ability to discern the will of God is what separates “religion” from “life.” It is no longer a matter of what you do to become something, but it becomes a matter of what you have become and then do as a result of that.

If you were to read any definition for the word ‘*salvation*,’ that explanation will only describe the essential nature of what one is being saved “**from**”; for example, in Christianity salvation (also called deliverance or redemption) is the saving of one’s soul from sin and its consequences, which includes death and separation from God, a salvation accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection. These definitions of salvation fail to explain what one’s soul is being saved “**to**”, or “**for**.” They offer no guidance for one’s life-giving direction as to “where do I go from here” or of our destiny as to, “what am I being equipped for; is there an end purpose for my faith, perhaps a preparation for something eternal?”

Once, my wife Petra and I were invited to my granddaughter’s church for a family day service. Instead of a sermon the pastor showed a video depicting salvation as a young man purchasing a ticket on a train to heaven\_ the bottom line, explaining salvation as getting a ticket to heaven by believing in Jesus Christ. It was one of the worse presentations of the Gospel I have ever seen or heard; it was demeaning to our Lord, self-serving to man and deceptive to salvation. The movie made the sacredness of salvation into a fairy tale, a children’s story having zero spiritual truth. The greatest tragedy is that the whole adult congregation, including the pastor, found it quite amusing and acceptable.

The warning is, “*Where there is no vision (revelation,) the people cast off restraint.*” Without a proper Godly vision or revelation, people have no *direction* in life and no *destiny* to press towards. They flounder about like a ship without a rudder, without guidance or control, subject only to the winds of daily life. The net result is that “*every man doing what is right in his own eyes*” (Jud. 17.6) \_ meaning each believer independently eats of the *Tree of the*

*Knowledge of Good and Evil.* One person believes this is the right thing to do or purpose to press towards while another thinks his estimate of God's will and plan for man is better. Their lives often become a kind of Greek tragedy as their wrong assumptions and false conclusion lead to error, dead works, and missed blessings in this life and the age to come.

## **Restraints**

Vision (revelation) must add to the concept of salvation the notions of *direction* and *destiny*, that is to answer the questions: "Where do I go from here in my Christian walk," and "what is the divine plan for the culmination of all things?" Similarly, a distinction must be made between the past event of "*being saved*" and the future events involving a "*calling*" as intimated in 2 Tim. 1.9,

*"who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."*

Yes, the believer is saved from sin and death; however 'to what' and 'for what' has he been delivered, herein described as his "*calling*?" That is, what must be the nature of the road upon which I wish to walk, the nature of that narrow gate and narrow path in which few find? And what are the eternal consequences, my destiny, of having walked that road, or perhaps, having rejected it for a path more frequently traveled? There are many religious roads but only one is the true "Way," Jesus proclaimed in Jn. 14.6 "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" Note that Jesus said explicitly that He was "the way," not "a way" or another way; the definite article "the" is the sole determiner of "way." Many are there that seek "a" way to eternal life, but few find "the" narrow way (Jesus Christ).

What keeps one in the "way;" on that true road? A bit in the mouth of a horse is the restraint used to guide it in the direction it is to go. With the bit in the mouth of the horse, the rider and the horse become as one, as they move towards their destiny. The restraint for the Old Testament is "the Law," but for the New Covenant the restraint is the "vision," revelation made by the Spirit of Christ into the soul of the believer. In the light of the Gospel, he sees more clearly "the Way" to walk and goal to press towards.

## **A Further Distinction**

2 Cor. 12.1 "*It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.*"

Biblically, the word used for "*vision*" means those things perceived in a state that is neither sleeping nor awake and is objective, that is, it is not influenced by feelings or opinions. It is the mode in which divine communication is made to people. I had heard the expression '*born again*' many times and had given it a crude level of understanding, but then revelation entered in and, not only did its understanding magnify a hundred fold, but the whole of

scripture took on new meaning as clarity entered and new relationships can be seen among passages of scriptures. The same may be said about concepts like ‘*spiritual maturity*,’ ‘*spiritual warfare*,’ and even the true meaning and intent of ‘*baptism*.’

And so, do you see that by virtue of “*having the eyes of my understanding being enlightened*” that I might see into the spiritual mind of the Spirit, the resulting “*revelations*” bring to me new or fuller truths and spiritual reality. The complete passage of scripture reads as Eph. 1.17-21,

*“ 17that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and **revelation** in the knowledge of Him, 18the eyes of your understanding **being enlightened**; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”*

In other words, by coming into the light of Christ, the believer may become privileged to understanding the mysteries of God, things people living in darkness cannot even imagine or hope for. Whereby the term *revelation* is principally used of Jesus Christ (who is the Word), not just of His person but of a particular spiritual manifestation of His life, and of His life in me. This is previously unknown\_ completely hidden to those in darkness, but waiting to be revealed or uncovered, as it is written, “*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*” Eph. 5.8

## **Making Known the Vision**

At one time God came down and conversed directly with Adam in the Garden, making known His will and His plan for mankind. But this ability to communicate directly was lost with the fall of Adam into sin; the wickedness of man and the righteousness of God could not occupy the same place; like light and darkness or heaven and hell cannot coexist in the same environment. The ultimate plan for restoration of fellowship was to visit mankind “as a man” and communicate to all mankind the perfect will and purpose of God; this was fulfilled in the coming for Jesus Christ who was fully the Son of God the Father and fully the Son of Man born of the flesh to Mary. However, between the times of Adam and Christ there could be no such personal relationship. Instead, God gave visions and revelations to man indirectly in various supernatural ways.

**Angels.** One such mode of communication between God and man are the use of angels. Actually, the Greek word for angel, *aggelos*, literally means “messenger.” The word is used 176 times in the N.T. but only the context of the passage can determine whether it refers to and “angel” of God (Acts 12.7), or, of evil, Satan (a demon) (Jud. 1.6), or by implication a person, such as John the Baptist (John 5.33) and the apostle Paul (Col. 4.3), (or a disciple, evangelist, prophet, pastor, elder, etc.). or even an animal (donkey) (Num. 22.22-31); all may be used to carry forth a message from God. The spiritual beings who serve God are often seen as having

human qualities, like speaking, having human names, and able to converse vocally with man and even eat a meal with him. They are sent by God to deliver messages, to guide or commission people into service, often warning of cataclysmic events to come, or bearing a plan to escape or to change the situation.

In Genesis 18 three angels appearing as men visited with Abraham. Abraham seemed to acknowledge some special qualities of the angels as he was very hospitable to them, welcoming them, even preparing a special meal for them. The angels then revealed to Abraham firstly that his wife Sarah would have a son, and secondly of their mission to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah due to the cities' wickedness. Then in Genesis 19 two angels in human form appeared to Abraham's nephew in Sodom, offering him a chance to escape the impending destruction of the city; so much so that they eventually took him and his family by the hand and led them out when he showed some reluctance to leave.

Peter was rescued from Herod's prison by an angel\_ even though he was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and with sentries standing guard at the entrance!

**Prophets.** Whether of Old or New Testament, a prophet is one who speaks forth by the inspiration of God. The inspired message declares the mind of God, sometimes predicting the future, but more commonly addressing a particular situation. The prophets of the Old Testament gave directions, warnings, and exhortations to the people of Israel. But most importantly they laid the groundwork, hidden in types and shadows, for the coming Christ.

Along with apostles, prophets are a principle ministry set forth by Christ to give direction to the Church; so much so it is stated in Eph. 2.20, that the Church, described as "*members of the household of God*", "*are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone;*"

The spiritual "gift of prophecy" is listed among the gifts of the Spirit. (1 Cor. 12.10.) As in the case of all prophecies, it is not just about predicting the future, but is primarily focused on the encouragement, building up, and comfort of the Church and individuals thereof. Prophetic inspiration comes from the prompting of the Holy Spirit and is meant to benefit both believers and unbelievers. (1 Cor. 14.24)

The two greatest errors in the Church regarding prophecy are first the deliverance of a word not spoken from true inspiration but by private reasoning or thought, and second by failing of the Church elders and overseers to properly *discern* false prophecy and bring immediate correction. The ministry of prophecy has been greatly abused in the Church today. Because the scripture reads, 1 Cor.14.31 "*31For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged;*" many take advantage and "try" their best to prophesy, with good intentions, but lacking true inspiration. Whether it be a prophecy to the whole of the Church or a word to an individual, false prophecy can do harm to the people. Prophecy containing 10% error is like gold having 10% impurities or a statement containing 10% lie. It is best not to speak than to speak in error.

The errant prophecy is on the heads of the elders and overseers as well who have been set in place in the church to protect the flock. It is written in 1 Cor. 14.29 *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”* Judging prophecy or doctrine is not a privilege but a responsibility and must be exercised with all due diligence. The *“others”* spoken of here are the ones who have gained a sense of “discernment,” as it is written in Heb. 5.14 *“But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to **discern** both good and evil.”* People pray for many things in being a part of the Body of Christ, but few pray for the essential gift of discernment.

**The Disciple.** Ah, the messenger of God so dear to my heart. These are the men and women, disciples of Christ, who by grace come into higher revelations of the Gospel of Christ and the great divine plan for salvation with such a gripping reality that they sense a *calling* on their lives to enlarge upon that vision and to freely unveil that mystery to the Church. The evangelist may clearly present the Gospel of salvation to the unsaved, but this is only the beginning of God’s plan of salvation and not the ending or ultimate end goal. That “saved” individual must now become a functioning member of the Church and learn of the higher things of God and grow up and mature spiritually.

To simply explain scripture and provide their proper interpretation is one matter, but to unveil the **mysteries of God** is quite another matter. Teachers and pastors and elders are looked upon for the former, the interpretation of scriptures, but it takes those of yet another calling to lead the flock unveiling the “yet to be understood” mysteries and the nature of God’s upward call in Christ Jesus. Paul intimated this to the Corinthian church when he wrote,

1 Cor. 4.15 *“For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”*

There have been multiple interpretations of this scripture but few to my preference. Because if one (as an evangelist) leads a former unbeliever to Christ, it does not automatically make him his spiritual father. He is simply fulfilling his calling as a messenger of the Gospel of Christ. Rather, I believe Paul is here making a clear distinction in the hearts of the various ministries of those called to oversee the Church. The *“instructors”* or *“tutors or schoolmasters”* are those teachers, pastors and elders who, appointed as overseers, are called to train or bring up the child of God. They administer instruction, discipline, even bring chastisement; that is, doing whatever is necessary to promote development in individual members of the church and the church as a whole. Each overseer may have a heart and passion for their ministry, but it is according to their narrowly defined calling.

The heart of the spiritual “father” is altogether different than the instructors. It is not written, *“one Father,”* because that applies to God alone; but clearly says, *“not many fathers.”* Spiritual fatherhood has in it a peculiar tie to a special relationship with those of the flock above and different from the closeness of other ministries. The spiritual father seems to have the “big picture” of salvation at heart; though they are concerned with every minute detail,

they are more focused on the ultimate outcome of salvation, the higher purposes of the functioning church, and the fullest understanding of the end product of inheritances: an inheritance both for the individual and for each person of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thus, as a spiritual father they have good spiritual **vision**, in that in various ways they perceive the deeper things of God and an understanding of the “**mysteries** of God”\_ these mysteries they patiently unveil to the Church. Take for example Paul writing to the church at Corinth, in 1 Cor. 2.4-8,

*“<sup>4</sup>And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. <sup>6</sup>However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup>But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom** which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup>which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*

And to the Church at Ephesus Paul writes, Eph. 3.3-5

*“<sup>3</sup>how that **by revelation He made known to me the mystery** (as I have briefly written already, <sup>4</sup>by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), <sup>5</sup>which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:”*

**Mystery.** In the Bible, a mystery is not something unknowable. Rather it is what can only be known through revelation, that is because God reveals it. The word “mystery” is commonly used conveying the thought of something beyond mere comprehension and applied to doctrine containing ideas too difficult to explain. However, this is not the sense the word “mystery” is used in the Bible. Here, the word denotes that which was “concealed” or “hidden” and has not yet been made known, or openly revealed. It is applied to those truths which were concealed from people. Thinking they had the word of God, those of the Old Testament merely had the word hidden in types, shadows, and patterns and prophecies awaiting their full revelation at the comings of Jesus Christ. For instance, to highlight this thought, we can use the example having occurred just after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. He joined up with two disciples walking the road home to Emmaus talking of the crucifixion. They did not recognize Him as the risen Christ. Lk. 24.25-26,

*“<sup>25</sup>Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: <sup>26</sup>Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? <sup>27</sup>And **beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.***

The three divisions noted here, **Moses** (meaning the Pentateuch\_ the first five books of the Bible, the **prophets**, and all the **Scriptures**, cover the whole of the Old Testament. Jesus

explained to the two disciples that in all the Old Testament writings there are hidden mysteries waiting to be revealed. The Lord drew from the whole series of writings from Genesis to Malachi. Not only is Christ Himself hidden in type and shadows, but the whole of the plan and purpose of God is hidden in there as well...unrevealed, **but** now made manifest in Christ and by His disciples, those now called into ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, as written in Eph. 4.11-13,

*“<sup>11</sup>And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we mature to the full measure of the stature of Christ.”* (See also Rom. 16.25, Eph. 3.10)

We will continue this thought of “visions” next time with some practical examples, in accordance with what God had ordained “*before the beginning of time*” to our “glory,” a glory quite distinct from the coming to naught of the world’s teachings.

## Questions for Discussion

1. There is the idea of a vision as being something dreamlike, and there is also the idea of vision as relating to divine revelation into the plans and purposes of God. Explain more fully the latter.
2. Explain what is meant by Prov. 29.18 *“Where there is no vision (revelation) the people perish; But happy is he who keeps the law.”* How can this apply in your life, or the life of the life of your church.
3. 2 Tim. 1.9 makes a distinction between *“has saved us”* and *“called us.”* Explain the difference.
4. What are “angels?” What is their purpose? Are angels only spirit beings? Can John the Baptist also be considered an angel? Explain.
5. 1 Cor. 4.15 speaks of spiritual fathers distinguished from instructors. What is the significance of spiritual fathers? Do you consider anyone a spiritual father? Explain.
6. What are “mysteries”? Cite some examples of truths being unveiled as a mystery.