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Series 6. Some Deeper Principles

E3. The Vision: Part 2.

Prov. 29.18 *“Where there is no vision (revelation) the people perish (cast off restraint);*

An angel is a messenger of God. But not all messengers are angels. *The Vision Pt. 1* concluded by looking closely at disciples of Christ, redeemed and regenerated believers, as being the messengers of God bringing forth visions to the Church. Most often the vision is the unveiling of a mystery, a hidden truth preserved in scriptures waiting to be revealed. These truths are preserved in the early writings of the Old Testament, being as shadows of their reality of the New Testament in Christ. If one sees my shadow, they do not see me; they only see a vague, dark outline that precedes me. So too, though the historical elements of the Old Testament stand as facts, the mysteries of God’s plan and purpose for man are present in types and shadows awaiting their revelation.

This ministry of the messenger of God, the disciple walking as a teacher, prophet, pastor, evangelist, or witness, uncovers and makes plain the mind of God involving His plans and purposes for His creation previously hidden or unknown. Take for example the prophetic word of God spoken by Ezekiel,

Ez. 36.26, *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”*

Hidden in this Old Testament prophecy is a truth waiting to be revealed, a truth hidden from Israel, and the entire world for that matter. None of the Jewish scholars or the brightest minds in all the world could see it, though they study and memorize the words. The principle reason for this is that both Israel, though being possessor of the Jewish religion, and all the world of the Gentiles, are spiritually dead to God. All could only understand this scripture with a “non-spiritual” or natural mind; they interpreting the scripture as God influencing mankind to such a degree that the desires of man’s heart would become less worldly oriented and more Godly minded, that his heart would become more mellow reflecting the qualities of a godly character. This paints a picture of a man repenting of his ways and living a new lifestyle.

This supposed modification of human nature would come from exercising one’s will power and self-determination, with much study and meditation on the written word, the Old Testament Bible. However, what they could not see or understand, is that hidden in that scripture is a revelation, a “vision,” of something far greater than religious obedience. Little did they realize that a *new heart* actually meant a “new heart” and the mention of a *new spirit* meant an altogether “new spirit”. One could take an old automobile, repair all damages to it, paint it, and even overhaul the engine. The automobile is new to look at and to drive, but it is not a new automobile. It can never, ever, be a new car. It will always be an old car, maybe a classic and refitted old car, maybe bright and shiny on the outside, but it is still old inside.

And so the shadow is this, that salvation is not so much fixing up the behavior of the outer man as it has to do with the regeneration and renewing of the inner man of the heart and spirit. Jesus revealed this truth to Nicodemus in Jn. 3.5-8,

5Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The “*new birth*” said Jesus, is the quintessential act of salvation; a regeneration of man’s spirit in which man’s spirit comes into union with God’s Holy Spirit, and all things become new. What was a mystery of a “new heart” and “new spirit” has come into the light and is no longer a mystery but a revelation of salvation of Christ “**in**” the believers. This revelation makes the Christian faith unique and as different as night and day from all religions of the world, including Judaism. The Christian faith is not a works-based religion requiring

obedience to commandments and lifestyle changes, it is simply the mystery revealed, in Col. 1.27,

*“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.”*

“Christ in you,” receive it by faith, meditate upon it, awake with this thought in your mind, lay hold of it as the full revelation of the greatest mystery of Christ, desire to look further into it, pray for insight or vision into this marvelous truth for the whole of the New Testament Gospel of Christ hinges upon it. Manifold wisdom is gained as one delves into its fullness of understanding. There is no light or life without it. It is a seed that is implanted into one’s soul and grows all the days of his or her life. As a seed having been implanted into the earth suddenly bursts into life, grows and mature, fully develops, and eventually bears by nature its fruit, so in like manner the one born of God, having the implanted innate nature of Christ (2 Pet. 1.4), spiritually matures and bears the fruit of Spirit (Gal. 5.22-23).

Insight. Insight is what is prayed for. Gaining a clear understanding of the “*new birth*” and the revelation of “*Christ in you*” is our bread of life, our food to live by. Going beyond a mental understanding, beyond the obvious, to grasp the core of knowing it above and beyond any scholarly explanation is a great goal in life. It is a multi-faceted truth that touches every aspect of our salvation, from deliverance from sin and death, to the regeneration of a new life within, to putting on a new man, to the resurrection of the dead, and the obtaining of our eternal inheritance. Thus, like the blind man of John 9 who was born blind but healed by Christ one can say with him, verse 25, “*One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.*”

Practical Visions - Following **are** some much abbreviated accounts of how God used certain messengers, godly men, disciples of Christ, to bring vision and revelation into my life.

Watchman Nee

Early in my walk with Christ I seemed to gravitate towards the writings of Watchman Nee (1903-1972), (NOT another who calls himself Watchman Lee.) Watchman Nee was a Chinese church leader and teacher and writer of many books. He, and other contemporaries such as Andrew Murray, A.W. Tozer, and T. Austin-Sparks, all emphasized what I may loosely term, “deeper life” teachings. Care must be taken to understand my intention of “deeper life” does not pertain to any particular denomination or ministry; but is, to me, a revelation of the call of God to a deeper, personal, “experiential relationship” with God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It goes beyond any intellectual assent to Christian doctrine or church rituals and practices; it’s focus is ultimately upon our lives being transformed through our spiritual union or oneness with Christ.

This is a vision, it is deeply rooted in the word of God, and it set, at an early age for me, a vision that transcends all denominations and religious activities, and set before me both a *direction* to pursue and a *destiny* to prepare for. The vision helps to set a deep spiritual yearning to know and experience the same fellowship with God that was experienced by the

apostle John and the early church; John wrote, 1 Jn. 1.3 *“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and **truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**”* In addition, is a desire to know, understand and truly experience the apostle Paul’s declaration, Gal. 2.20 *“20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* I set these scriptures before you as seed scriptures, perhaps to be received with an inquisitive mind and desire to understand more fully.

Albert Wadel

I have been blessed in my life by having had two spiritual fathers in which visions so greatly impacted their lives they affected mine as well. Seeds were implanted into my heart that eventually took root, and began to grow within bringing light and life, and further bringing spiritual *direction* and *destiny* into focus.

Albert Wadel was a farmer with barely an eighth-grade education. By faith he was plain Brethren, committed to a simple lifestyle and regulated by much legalism of commandments and rules to live by. He became very frustrated with his faith because of his continued failures to keep those laws upon which his salvation seemed to depend upon. It seemed that no matter how determined he was he could not control his inward nature, like temper, moods, and things involving the inclinations of his heart. He became overwhelmed with his religion of “works”_ that is, the need to perform certain rituals, “good deeds” to perform, and to behave properly, all to be on the right spiritual track to salvation; it is a mindset to “do this” but don’t “do that”.

Then one day while reading his Bible the revelation of the true meaning of “grace” came to him, it revolutionized his life, and he was never the same again. Two scriptures became his bulwark, his fortified wall which kept him safe within the wall of grace, and shielded him from religious commandments, the failure of attempted “works,” and his corrupt inner nature. Two passages laid the foundation for his life and seeming the basis for all his teachings; over the years these scriptures became as a vision and were firmly implanted into my heart. The first scripture is Gal. 2.19-21,

“19For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

It is important to note that verse 20, the focus, is bracketed by verses 19 and 21. These two verses blatantly set as salvation **opposite**, “religion and works” vs. “life and grace.” This dichotomy must become engraved into all our hearts. The religious Law of rituals, commandments, and works could not then, nor now, make a man righteous before God; because inwardly he remains dead to God through sin. But, in Christ we are, by grace, made righteous because not only are our sins cancelled but most importantly, we are made alive

and reconciled to God. Grace came as a breath of fresh air to Albert. The weight of legalism was lifted being replaced by the peace of grace.

To understand verse 20, the phrase “in Christ” must first take upon itself a new understanding. It refers to the spiritual union and relationship that we have with Jesus Christ_ something experiential, beyond mere intellectual understanding. Out of that relationship comes a deep, transformation where we envision ourselves being in Christ and Christ is reckoned as being in us. The natural mind cannot comprehend this, but it is received and consented to by faith. Verse 20 unveils the great depth of this revelation of how we may share in Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and all the spiritual blessings that come with it,

Note the factual declaration, “*I have been crucified with Christ,*” not will be, hope to be, or in like manner. It is a positive acknowledgement looking into the past and acknowledging this new life out of death. Continuing, “*Christ lives in me,*” again, not symbolically, or intellectually, but full acknowledgment of the fact of Christ in me, indwelling my heart, having a present union with the Spirit of Christ. And finally, “*the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God;*” meaning, I now live my life in union with Christ; it is His resurrected life in me. I am a partaker of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1.4). This is vision. Space here will not permit a much-needed further elaboration of Gal. 2.20.

There is a kind of Christian mysticism here that can be defined as a belief that we, as believers, are in spiritual union with the divine Christ, a belief in the direct, personal, and transformative power of God “in us” through this intimate relationship. This same vein of mysticism is seen in that second passage of scripture so meaningful to Albert, Rm. 6; it retains and further emphasizes the vision of conceiving our Christian life through the thought of our miraculous spiritual union with Christ. Though all Rm. 6.1-14 needs to be fully reflected upon, we will now only focus upon Rm. 6.3-4,

“³Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

The passage begins “*or do you not know,*” asking the question are they, or are we, ignorant of this great and mystical truth. Have you heard this important principle taught on in the churches today? I have not. The passage continues, “*were baptized into Christ.*” The clause begins with the verb “*were,*” indicating it is something that should have already taken place, perhaps coincident with the new birth experience. The importance being that one cannot act upon a truth in faith if they lack the knowledge of it. Thus the verse is intended to call to mind their state in Christ. To be “*baptized into Christ*” is coincident with, but distinct from, being baptized into water in the name of Jesus; It is the spiritual equivalent to the physical ritual of baptism; only one is immersed outwardly in water and the second is immersed inwardly into Christ.

“*Were baptized into Christ,*” meaning into communion with Him and the incorporation into His mystical body. Gal. 3.27 reads, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on*

Christ.” Thus, the Christian at his baptism, receives Christ, an act beyond merely professing His name, and hence seeks to grow more fully in oneness with Him.

There are three separate acts of this spiritual identification with Christ: 1) the death of the old man of sin, 2) his burial, and 3) the resurrection of life in the new man; all three acts: death, burial, and resurrection, are spiritually replicated, by faith, in the believer. This communion or fellowship with Christ carries with it a deep ethical sense of moral conduct as reflected in Christ Himself.

Sergio Valori

I consider Sergio Valori to be my second spiritual father; as one who helped impart a vision; a vision built upon my present foundation. That helped to give direction and sense of destiny to my Christian walk. Sergio came into ministry during what was known as the “Latter Rain Movement.” It was a Pentecostal-type movement beginning in 1948. It coincided with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit reigniting and restoring early church ministries, gifts of the Holy Spirit, the concept of the Church being the Body of Christ, and the preparation of the Church for the imminent return of Christ, among other doctrines and practices. Gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, and gifts of knowledge, as well as demonic deliverance, were widely practiced. All these practices then, as it does yet today in many Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, drew hundreds of thousands of people worldwide into its teachings and practices.

It seemed there were two roads for Sergio to pursue, which tugged at his heart. The first was the pursuit of the rapidly growing Pentecostal/Charismatic emphasis; this had been witnessed to draw thousands of seekers wanting to be blessed and to participate in a seemingly dynamically active church, especially in the exercise of the ministries (Eph. 4.11, 1 Cor. 12.27-28), and manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12.7-11). Here, worship services tended to be quite lively and emotionally stirring.

The second calling, to which he eventually responded with all his heart, was the commitment to a vision of spiritual maturity. Not denying the relevance and necessity of the Pentecostal/Charismatic influence, he felt the undeniable need for the Church to move on past it towards a higher calling in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3.12-14) I believe it is true that a ministry steeped in Pentecostalism alone can be intoxicating to the soul; the focus tends to shift from what God wants for Himself to what I want for myself. It must always be remembered that the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit are, in reality, spiritual tools necessary for the building up of the Church and that their manifestation is not the end product for the Church. Its influence can be exhilarating or exciting so as to impair the vision addressing “why” is the Church being built up; what is the ultimate high call of God?

The message of spiritual maturity is in character very sobering, calming the mind, making free from frivolity or soulish pursuits. It means that the mood and atmosphere of believers and church services become more focused and serious. So much so, that in the wee hours of the morning, while discussing these matters at a convention with an old acquaintance of Sergio, that this minister described Sergio to me as being “too heavy,” and that he had to “lighten up,” for “the people are drawn to the “lighter” messages and services.” While I agree it is true that the multitudes are drawn to prophecies, the healings, the deliverances, the

laying on of hands, and the free exercise of spiritual gifts and ministries, I believe it is also true that being stuck in such a movement blinds the soul of man to the more sobering upward call of God, for loftier visions or revelations like that spoken of in Eph. 4.11-16,

11"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the eedifying of the body of Christ, 13till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Perhaps the touchstone of Sergio's entire ministry is found in Heb. 6.1-3,

*"1Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, **let us go on to perfection**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3And this we will do if God permits."*

let us go on to perfection. Perhaps a better rendering of this scripture is, "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to **maturity**." (NASB) The more literal meaning of "let us press on" is "bear ourselves forward," implying an active exertion on our part. All things in this walk of faith are not just "automatic," but there will always come that time to break camp and to press on. But to press on to what? It means to press on to higher, more difficult truths, truths that advance us in sanctification and righteousness (being "set apart" to God, and walking in "His approval.")

There is an urgency in these words. The word "*perfection*" may be rendered "*full grown*" or "*mature*." There is a strong contrast presented here between "babes" and "*maturity*" (see previous verses Heb. 5.13-14) and between "*elementary*" instruction and the more "*complete*" teachings. And the introduction, "*let us*" means that both the teacher and the student need to respond, that it is a continual walk towards spiritual maturity_ something you do not outgrow the need for. It further implies, **and this is important**, that there is a close connection but a distinction between intellectual learning and having the truths imparted into your life practices.

For instance, recalling the first message I heard from Sergio fifty-some years ago made the clear distinction between *grace* and *fruit* in regards to righteousness. For example, Phil. 3.9 addresses our righteousness given to us by *grace*, something called "imputed" righteousness,

"and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;"

This is a divinely legal, free righteousness granted on our behalf because we are "in Christ". However, there is a second kind of righteousness, called "embodied" righteousness; this

righteousness comes as a fruit resulting from “Christ in us” changing our nature into His likeness, note Phil. 1.11,

“being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

The “*fruit of righteousness*” is the righteousness the heart produces because of Christ in me; it is fruit that is seen in my life; and some of those fruits are: honesty, truth, love, kindness, humility, goodness, etc.

Before closing this message, I must relate, ever so briefly, one further aspect of the vision or revelation emphasized by Sergio, and that relates to the Church being prepared for the return of Christ, thereby highlighting an aspect of our destiny. Eph. 5.27,

”zthat He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

In this message I have highlighted the foundations for the vision that has apprehended my life. It has given to me a solid foundation to unwaveringly stand upon, has shown light upon the road to walk all the days of my life, and has given to me a sense of destiny_abundantly beyond all I could ever ask or think. (Eph. 3.20) My prayer is, now having read or heard this, that you will also be caught up with the vision, and that you will pursue it, as I have, by filling it amply with the word of God and being an encouragement to others.

Questions for Discussion

1. Explain how Ez. 36.26 may be described as a prophetic utterance as a shadow for a spiritual reality in the New Testament in Christ.
2. Discuss the reality in your life, the meaning and extent experience, of Col. 1.27, “*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.*”
3. In like manner, explain to what degree your understanding of Gal. 2.19-20 has impacted your life.
4. Explain what is meant being, “*baptized into Christ*,” and how does this differ from water baptism.
5. To the best of your understanding explain “*spiritual maturity*,” and how does it relate to, or differ from Pentecostalism and the exercise of certain ministries and the gifts of the spirit?