

The Heavenly Vision: Part 1

by Stephen Kaung

The heavenly vision is a vision from heaven that is all-inclusive and concerned with the eternal will of God, and it is the will of God for us to have it.

Duration: 55:21

Scripture: Genesis 1:3, Proverbs 29:18, Acts 9:3-4, Acts 22:6-8, Acts 26:13-16, Acts 26:19

Topics: "Heavenly Vision", "Gods Mercy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by referencing Genesis chapter one, where God brought light into the darkness of the world. He then connects this concept of light revealing things to the story of a young man who experienced a heavenly light that showed him the darkness in his own life. The preacher emphasizes that God's voice was not angry or condemning, but rather a voice of love and mercy. He also mentions the importance of having a heavenly vision and seeing Jesus as Lord in our lives.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 26 verse 19. Acts chapter 26 verse 19. Wherefore, whereupon King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Whereupon King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Proverbs, Proverbs 29 verse 18, the first part. Proverbs 29 verse 18.

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint. And in some version it said, the people disintegrate. Or in another version it said, the people perish.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, as we continue in thy presence, we look to thy Holy Spirit to quicken thy word to our hearts. Lord, we acknowledge that without thy revelation we are utterly helpless and hopeless.

But we do praise and thank thee that it is thy good pleasure to reveal thy Son in us. So Lord, we pray that this morning thou will be pleased to reveal thy Son to us in a fuller way. And we want to give thee all the glory.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. The Lord seems to put into my heart this matter of the heavenly vision.

You know, this is the testimony of the Apostle Paul. He testified before King Agrippa and he concluded, as it were, his testimony by saying that whereupon, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. In other words, this heavenly vision explains Paul's life as well as his ministry.

And you remember that this testimony of Paul is recorded three times in the book of Acts. In chapter 9, Luke records the incident. And then in chapter 22, Paul bore this testimony before the Jewish people in Jerusalem.

And then again in chapter 26, he gave his testimony before King Agrippa and the Gentiles. So altogether you find even in this book of Acts, this testimony that Paul gave is recorded three times. Now we know that when God speaks once and twice and even thrice, that means something to us.

In other words, it is not something for us to neglect. Put it in another way, this testimony of the Apostle Paul is supposed to be our testimony. This is the will of God, that the heavenly vision is not only just given to Paul, the heavenly vision is through Paul given to all of us today.

Now before we go into this matter of the heavenly vision that Apostle Paul saw on the road to Damascus, I think it is important for us to consider what is heavenly vision. We are not talking about earthly vision. You know in this world, if you want to succeed in any area, you need a vision.

Or you need a dream. You need an ambition. You need something that you really is fully occupied with.

And with that objective, you're able to succeed in whatever field you may be in. But we are not talking about earthly vision. We are talking about heavenly vision.

In other words, there is the heavenly vision that God desires that all his children should have. It is even more than what you find in Acts chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit shall come, the young man shall see visions, and the old man shall dream dreams. And there you'll find the visions is in plural number.

In other words, they are all visions that belong to heaven. But these are visions, not the vision. In other words, there is the heavenly vision.

That vision which is from heaven, that vision which is all-inclusive, that vision which is concerned with the eternal will of God. And that vision includes all the various visions, even from heaven, that we may receive. Now, brothers and sisters, in my travel, as I contact brothers and sisters in various parts of the world, there is no lack of vision, even heavenly vision, in small letter.

Now, what I mean is this. Some people have the vision of evangelism. And certainly we find there are people who are so taken up by such vision, and God used them mightily in evangelizing.

And there are other people who have vision, say, for education, Christian education. And God does use these people to help many people. So you find that in the Christian world there is no lack of vision in the small letter.

By that I mean that there is a vision of a part of the whole. People see visions, but the great lack among God's people today is the vision. In other words, we may have visions, but we do not have that heavenly vision.

And because of that, you find that visions even divide God's people. Now, actually, these visions are part of the heavenly vision. But unfortunately, because we do not see the whole, and we only see the parts,

and in a sense, people find their emphasis are so different, and they differ from one another.

So what we need is, we need to see the heavenly vision that the Apostle Paul saw. And in that vision, you find God will raise the people to fulfill that vision in its various parts. But with that vision, visions will not separate us.

Actually, will enable us to work together and complement one another. Now, by vision we do not mean something that you see with your naked eyes. Now, it is true that the Apostle Paul, on the road to Damascus, he saw with his naked eyes.

But because of this, his naked eyes were blinded. But on the road to Damascus, actually, he saw something more than physically. Because in his own testimony, in Galatians chapter 1, verse 16, he said, it pleased God to reveal his Son in me.

In other words, it is something inward, not just something outward. When God gives revelation, then we receive vision. It happens in our spirit.

The Spirit of God will unveil God's heart, God's mind, God's will, God's purpose to us. And when the Spirit reveals, then in our spirit, we receive the impression. And by the grace of God, he gives us understanding to know what is being impressed upon our spirit.

And that's the reason why the Apostle Paul, when he was sharing with the efficient believers, immediately he gave himself to prayer, praying that God will give, grant a spirit of wisdom and revelation to the full knowledge of God. Why? Because in spiritual things, without revelation, we are completely strangers. Even in this matter of our salvation, we may know all about the gospel, and we may be able to preach it.

But without revelation from above, we are not born again. We do not receive life. So, brothers and sisters, from the very beginning of our Christian life to the very end, you find it is a matter of revelation.

It is a matter of vision. And we need to receive revelation, and we need to live in the vision. So, this is what is meant by the heavenly vision that Apostle Paul tried to share with us all.

Now, before Paul saw the heavenly vision, we all know his past history, because it is recorded in the Word of God. Even the Apostle Paul himself, in Philippians chapter 3, he told us his past. Now, the Apostle Paul, before he became the Apostle, he was Saul, the Pharisee.

And Saul had a glorious past. Why? Because he said in Philippians chapter 3, that he was circumcised on the eighth day. Now, we know this is something very important to the Jewish people, because in Genesis 17, God made a covenant with Abraham.

And the sign of that covenant is circumcision. And God commanded Abraham that all the children born, sons born, should be circumcised on the eighth day. But we know that Abraham himself was circumcised when he was 99.

And Ishmael was circumcised when he was 13. But when Isaac was born, he was circumcised on the eighth day. In other words, this has much to do with God's covenant.

It is the proof that he was the covenant people of God. He had the privilege to enjoy all God's promises in the covenant. And Saul, he was circumcised on the eighth day.

Not only that, he said, he was of the race of Isaac. In other words, he is not of Israel. In other words, he is not of Esau.

He is of Jacob, because Jacob continued in the line of God's covenant right. So he was of the race of Israel. And not only that, he said he is of the tribe of Benjamin.

Now of the 12 tribes of Israel, only Benjamin was born in the promised land. All the other sons were born not in the promised land. And furthermore, so far as his education was concerned, he said he was a Pharisee.

He was trained as a Pharisee. Now today we may have bad thought about the Pharisees, but you know in the old days, the Pharisees were looked up to by all the Jewish people, because they were a people who specialized in the law of God. They not only studied the law, but they kept the law in great detail according to the traditions of the rabbis of the fathers.

And Saul was trained as a Pharisee. He was trained under the feet of Gamaliel. And Gamaliel at that time was the greatest rabbi in Israel.

He was the grandson of Heli. And Paul, Saul was trained under him. And he also testified that he was a Pharisee of Pharisees.

In other words, he was a true Pharisee. He was not like the other hypocritical Pharisees. He made business with the Lord, and he was real.

So far as the law was concerned, the righteousness of the law was concerned, Saul was blameless. He was such a good man. He kept all the laws so far as he understood.

And so far as the zeal according to Judaism is concerned, he was so zealous for Judaism, for the Jewish religion, for the traditions of the fathers, that he persecuted the followers of Jesus. And these were his credentials. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, even though he was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, which was a Gentile city.

And yet, in his family, they spoke Hebrew. Therefore, he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, a bona fide Hebrew. Now these were his background, his tradition.

Now as a young man, he was different from the other young men. The other young men might seek the things of this world, were ambitious for the world. But this young man, he was different.

His ambition was in religious things. He sought religious things. Or put it another way, he sought for things spiritual, heavenly, eternal.

That was the intention of that young man. And I think this made him most unusual. Now even in our days, you'll find that very few young people really seek after eternal things.

Most young people, their ambition were all upon the things of this world. He was such a promising young man. He was pious.

He was righteous according to the law. He was moral. He was religious.

And he served God. He said he served God by persecuting the followers of Jesus. Why? Because according to the traditions of the fathers, Jesus was considered by them as an imposter of Judaism.

So they crucified him. And those who follow the Lord Jesus were also considered as imposters. So you find that this young man, he tried his very best to wipe out so-called the sect of the Nazarenes.

He thought he was serving God, but he was in darkness, in total darkness. So brothers and sisters, this tells us that even the best of the tradition of man is darkness. Only that which is from above, only that which is from heaven, from God, there's light.

Now if we live according to the tradition of the world, the tradition of the fathers, even if it is the best, it is total darkness. So this young man, he meant well. He was sincere, but he was in total darkness.

And he didn't know it. He was so zealous for God. He not only persecuted the believers in Jerusalem, in the Jewish cities, he even asked for documents, official documents from the chief priests that he would go to the Gentile cities and seize believers of the Lord Jesus and brought them to Jerusalem to be sentenced.

But while he was on the way to Damascus, it is very strange that God allowed him to go so far, allowed him to even go to Damascus. And he almost arrived at that city. And then you find God stopped him.

You know, brothers and sisters, God's cord of love is very long. I remember when I was a little boy, my grandfather took me on a boat ride. And he was afraid that I might fall into the river because as boys, you know, they are active.

So he tied me with a rope around my waist and he hold it. So wherever I go, I was under his control. Now, you know, God's rope of love is very long.

He will allow you to go so far, but as far as he allows. So here you'll find God's cord of love began to tighten up. And there, before he reached the city of Damascus, at noontime, suddenly a light from heaven shone upon him and those with him.

And that light was so powerful, brighter than the sun, so powerful that they were all being hit and prostrate upon the ground. And there he heard a voice. Now, brothers and sisters, God look upon the hearts.

By all outward appearance, this young man was doing such a havoc, sin against God. But God knew his heart. His heart was sincere.

But he was misled. He was blinded. And because of this, God's mercy came upon him.

Now, I saw Paul himself later on testify. He said, I did all these things in ignorance. I didn't know that.

And God upon, look upon his heart and drew him back. You know, the first thing that entered into our life is light. You remember in Genesis chapter 1, when God began to restore this earth to make it habitable? Because the earth was filled with darkness.

And the first day, God said, let there be light and light be. And when the light shines, what happened? It shows all the things in darkness. It reveals.

Light reveals. So, brothers and sisters, you'll find in the life of this young man, the first thing that came upon him was light. A heavenly light shone upon him.

He was smitten to the ground. And I believe that light enlightened him to show him all the darkness that he lived in the past. And he heard a voice, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the gods.

Now, brothers and sisters, is that heavenly voice an angry voice? A condemning, judging voice? No. That heavenly voice is full of tenderness, full of sympathy, full of love, full of mercy. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the gods.

This young man did not know God. By outward appearance, he seemed to know God. He was trained to learn about God.

And he was even serving God, as he thought. But he didn't know Him. He knew God in his mind, but he didn't know God in his heart.

There was no direct relationship between him and God. No divine communication. He was in total darkness.

But God knew him all along. The Apostle Paul later testified that even in my mother's womb, God has set me apart. Even before the foundation of the world, God has chosen him in Christ Jesus.

He didn't know that, but God knew all along. God knew his name, Saul, Saul, and God called him. And dear brothers and sisters, this is true to every one of us.

Before we knew him, he knew us all along. Before we were born, even in eternity past, he had already chosen us in Christ Jesus. Now that's love.

Not because of what we are, but because of what he is. Dear brothers and sisters, we need to worship him. That he knew us, even before the foundation of the world.

And he did call us, even when we are in our mother's womb. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? God asked him a question. It is hard for you to kick against the gods.

Now you know that in the old days, the farmer, they used ox or donkey or other horse to till the ground. So they will put the ox under a yoke, and it will tie to the plow. And the farmer, he will guide the plow, driving the ox or the horse.

But because the ox or the horse has its own idea, so sometimes you'll find it refused to follow the direction of the farmer. They may see something on the east or the west, on the right or the left, and they may go off. And because of that, you know, the farmer has in his other hand a thing called goats.

It is a sharp thing. And the farmer, when the ox try to deviate, disobey his command, then the farmer will use the goats and lightly touch the leg of the ox. Now, the farmer does not want to hurt the ox, but just to remind the ox that you have a master.

You are not free. You are serving me. And so he will lightly touch the leg of the ox with that goats.

Make him feel it. Make it feel it. But the ox feels stubborn, so he kicks back.

And it kicks back, it hurts. You know, and this is the way that the ox began to learn to be obedient to the master. And our Lord Jesus is saying to this young man, Saul, Saul, Saul, do you know that it is hard for

you to kick against the goats? Now, what does it mean? It means that you are not free.

Do not think that you are free. You are independent. You are your own master.

No. Everyone that comes into the world is yoked to the purpose of God. Our Creator is our master.

We are created to do His will. This is God's will, God's purpose. We are not born for ourselves, to live our own life, to do our own things.

That is not God's will. We are born to do the will of God. We are yoked to God's work, to fulfill God's purpose.

That's the meaning of the creation of man. God created man in His own image, after His own likeness. Why? To give dominion to them, to rule for God, to do God's will.

But unfortunately, we forget. We think that we are our own master. We can do things according to what we want.

And thank God, when we are doing that, He will lightly touch us with that goat. Now, have you ever felt that before? You know, so far as this young man was concerned, there was no doubt about it. Why? Because when Stephen was martyred, this young man, he was there, watching the clothes of those who stoned Stephen.

Now, in what capacity? Probably as the official person to see the execution. And when Stephen, now even before he died, when he was questioned by the council, the Bible said his face shone like the face of an angel. And no doubt this young man was there.

And when they stoned Stephen, Stephen said, I saw the heavens open. The Son of Man standing by the throne of God. Brothers and sisters, he saw the heavens open.

Our Lord in heaven stood up, as it were, to receive him. And Saul heard it. And when Stephen was dying, he prayed, Lord, do not put this sin upon these people.

And Saul, being a Pharisee, a true Pharisee, trained in the law of God, a moral person, his conscience could not help but be touched. There is something there. It must have touched his conscience.

And not only just a slight touch, but even touched him very deeply. But tradition was so strong, he tried to silence the voice of his conscience by doubling his effort in persecuting the believers. And that you can see in the Word of God.

Because after death you find persecution broke out. And Saul was the agent, the main agent in doing that. Now why? And he went into houses to draw men and women out.

Now a gentleman would not do that. And when these people, he forced them to bless him in the synagogues. Now he has lost his mind.

Why? Because he tried to silence his conscience. How strong is tradition? Brothers and sisters, we do not know how strong tradition can affect us. And this young man, God must have touched him again and again when he sees these Christians being persecuted and how they endured.

His conscience must be touched again and again. But he refused. So our Lord Jesus said, Saul, do you know it is hard to kick against the good? If you are doing that, what will happen? It will mean death.

It is a voice of gentleness, of tenderness, of sympathy, of love. Why do you persecute me? Brothers and sisters, this young man not only saw the righteous one, he heard his voice. And you know how he reacted? He said, Lord, who are you? For this young man to acknowledge somebody else as Lord was not easy.

Because he was his own Lord. But now he found someone mightier than he. Someone that he could not fight against.

But he did not know who he was. And yet, instinctively, he knew he had met his Lord. So he called him Lord.

Who are you? And the Lord Jesus said, I am Jesus whom you persecuted. Now in the mind of this Pharisee, Jesus was an imposter. He was that humble carpenter of Nazareth.

He was nobody. He did not know that this humble carpenter of Nazareth is the Lord of the universe. To him, it was such a light.

I mean, he never dreamed that such things could happen. That the one whom he persecuted as an imposter is his Lord. Now I believe at this very moment, probably his whole life will be like a picture.

Everything will be brought back to him. And he repented. Accept Jesus as his Lord.

Now brothers and sisters, this is the heavenly vision. Now what is the heavenly vision? The heavenly vision is very simple. Jesus is Lord.

Now do we know that? Sure we do. But do we really know that? We receive Jesus as our Savior. He is for us.

But we refuse to accept Him as our Lord, that we are for Him. Even if mentally we accept that, because we know He is. He is the Lord of the universe.

He is our Lord. But dear brothers and sisters, are we like Peter? Call Him Lord, and yet Lord over Him. When our Lord Jesus began to reveal to the disciples that He was to go to Jerusalem, be persecuted, and die, on the third day He would be raised again, Peter took hold of the Lord, shook Him a little bit, and said, Lord, this won't happen to you.

Even when Peter was used of the Lord, and he was in that roof, praying, he saw that vision. A sheep coming down from heaven, tied on four corners, and full of quadruples, and creeping things, unclean things. And the voice said, Peter, rise, kill, and eat.

And Peter said, Lord, I cannot do that. I've never done that three times. Brothers and sisters, is this our experience? Do we have the heavenly vision? Do we see Jesus as Lord in such a way that He is really Lord to us, that we do not challenge Him anymore? We do not try to set up ourselves as another Lord, but we give Him absolute service.

Now, brothers and sisters, this is the heavenly vision, and this is something that we all lack very, very much. When the Spirit of God began to examine our life, we discover that we are more our own Lord than

we allow Jesus to be our Lord. This Lord of the universe is none other than the Son of the living God.

It has pleased God to reveal His Son in me. He saw that Jesus is more than a man. He is the Son of God.

And He is now exalted as Lord over all. Now, this is the heavenly vision. Brothers and sisters, we need that vision.

And to that vision, this young man gave full surrender, because in his second question, he said, Lord, what do you want me to do? He handed over his right to himself, to the Lord Jesus. Brothers and sisters, have we done that? But this heavenly vision is more than that. Because when this young man asked, Who are you, Lord? The Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you persecuted.

Now, Saul was trained a Pharisee. And you know, the training of the Pharisee is such that they know how to argue. They are trained in that way.

And Saul could very well, according to his training, said, You say something wrong, because I have never persecuted you. Saul had never seen Jesus. He had never persecuted Jesus.

And furthermore, Jesus is in heaven. Saul was on earth. How could he reach Him? So, Saul has ever reason to argue.

I haven't done that. But he didn't. Why? Because in that light, he saw something.

He saw the body of Christ. Brothers and sisters, he not only saw Jesus the Lord, the head, he also immediately saw the body of Christ. Because when he watched Stephen being stoned to death, you touch the body of Christ, you touch the head, you touch Christ.

This is me. All the men and women that he has seized, they were members of the body of Christ. And the Lord said, It is me you are persecuting.

The ones that he put his vote to sentence them to death were the body of Christ, were the members of the body of Christ. And the heavenly head said, Why do you persecute me? So, brothers and sisters, immediately you find a great revelation was given to this young man. The first revelation is Jesus is Lord.

That is the greatest revelation in the world. And the next to it is the church as the body of Christ. Every believer is a member of the body of Christ.

They are all connected to Christ. They are parts of Christ. And whoever touches any of the members of the body of Christ, touches Christ.

And he saw it. Oh, brothers and sisters, no wonder this becomes the ministry of the Apostle Paul. How he talks about the body of Christ.

Because from the very beginning, the Lord revealed that to him. In other words, on the road to Damascus, he met a universal man. He met that universal man.

The head is in heaven. The body covers the whole world. Even Satan cannot fight against this universal man.

So, our Lord Jesus said, On this rock I will build my church, and hades gates shall not prevail against it. And to that universal man, this young man. So, brothers and sisters, this is the heavenly vision in a

nugget.

Now, of course, that is only the beginning of the revelation. Because as Paul continues in following the Lord, more and more revelation is being given concerning Jesus as the Lord and concerning the church as the body of Christ. So, that constitutes his ministry.

And then, when Saul said, Lord, what should I do? And the Lord said, You go to Damascus. Wait there until I send someone to tell you what I want you to do. So, brothers and sisters, this heavenly vision does not stop on the road to Damascus.

It continues on to the city of Damascus. And this we will share, God willing, next time. So, let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we worship Thee because Thou hast Thy eternal will. And in Thy eternal will, Thou hast included us. Lord, we thank Thee that Thou hast made us parts of Thy eternal will.

And it is Thy good pleasure to reveal Thy Son in us and to draw us into Thy eternal will, that we may do Thy will and glorify Thy name. So, Lord, as we wait upon Thee, we pray, Lord, that Thou will continue to open our understanding, shed Thy light upon us and draw us closer and closer to that heavenly vision that Thou dost desire us to see and to enter in. And we give Thee all the praise and glory.

In Thy precious name we pray. Amen.

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