

The Door of Vision

by Duncan Campbell

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a Throne Vision, which reveals the measure of our responsibility and possibility, and also reveals the measure of our resources.

Scripture: Revelation 4:1

Topics: "Vision", "Divine Authority"

Description

Duncan Campbell emphasizes the significance of the 'Door of Vision' as he reflects on John's awe-inspiring vision of God's throne in Revelation. He highlights the importance of maintaining a connection with the Throne to empower believers in their spiritual journey and service. Campbell shares a powerful testimony from the Lewis revival, illustrating how a young man's vision of the Lamb on the throne led to a transformative outpouring of God's power. He urges the congregation to recognize their need for divine help and to seek a deeper communion with Christ, which is essential for a life of sacrificial service. Ultimately, Campbell calls for a renewed focus on the Throne Vision to inspire faithfulness and victory in the face of life's challenges.

Transcript

"I looked... behold, a door was opened in heaven and, behold a throne... and... I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment... and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Revelation 4.1-5).

Following upon the vision of the closed door of Rev. 3.10, John lifts his eyes towards heaven, and in vision is transported through an open door. The vision must have filled him with a sense of awe and wonder as he is made to gaze upon the throne. How arresting is his description of what he saw -- "a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" (Rev. 4.2). Suddenly, the sense of awe and wonder is broken by a voice speaking with trumpet clarity to him: "Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (Rev. 4.1).

I do not propose to deal with the prophetic aspect of this great passage. My purpose is to direct attention to several thoughts it suggests.

We have here the DOOR OF VISION: "I looked." What a conception John had of the transcendent majesty of God! The throne in heaven immediately suggests authority and power. Here one is reminded of the words of the Psalmist: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right

sceptre" (Psalm 45.6). That was David's comprehensive description of the throne of God. Behind this declaration is the implied conviction of the almightiness of God.

Here I would record the prayer of a young man during the Lewis revival. A goodly congregation had gathered in the parish church, but so far, revival blessing had not touched the parish. The minister in the pulpit found the going hard, and was about to end the address when he saw a young man strangely moved, and obviously under a burden. The minister closed his Bible and stood in silence -- a silence that was tense. Suddenly that silence was broken by the cry of this young man as he prayed: "God, I am now looking through the open door, and I see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, with the keys of death and hell at his girdle." Again, there is silence in the congregation, to be broken once more by the continued prayer of this young man: "Lord, there is power there; let it loose!" What followed can never be adequately described. "Miracle" would be the only definition! Suddenly, the congregation was gripped by the power of God, and not only the congregation, but every community in the parish, and many souls that night felt the mighty impact of the convicting and converting power of Almighty God. Following this visitation the local press reported that "more were now attending the prayer meetings than had attended public worship before the revival." What was it that brought about this gracious visitation? The sovereignty of God? Yes! But God had found His agent in a young man who had the Throne Vision.

I sometimes wonder if our weakness in face of the problems that confront us, is not due to the fact that we are not in touch with the Throne. How easy it is to develop a mentality that unconsciously ignores the fact that the need of Divine help is greater than we imagine, and especially when we remember that the issues of our words and actions are so influential. How true are the words of McCheyne: "If we are to walk worthy of our high and holy calling, we must live daily in consideration of the greatness and glory of Jesus." This is the prime qualification of any man for the service of Christ's Kingdom, and is clearly set forth in the words of Ananias to Saul of Tarsus: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth" (Acts 22.14), i.e. to have personal and intimate communion with Christ. This surely, is the secret of all that is of enduring value and influence. To see the face and hear the voice of that Just One, is to know the vision that inspires, and the fellowship that alone moves the soul to a life of sacrificial service. In the case of Paul, the vision and the voice sent him to be a witness unto all men of what he had seen and heard.

There are few men who do not, more or less, make their own life and character the theme of occasional study. It is good to look back. David found it so: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies" (Psalm 119.59). Jeremiah calls upon Israel to look back: "See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done" (Jer. 2.23). By so doing, he reminds them of their backslidden state.

It is good that we should ponder Vision in Retrospect. Henry Ward Beecher, surveying the past, and remembering the greatness of God's mercy towards him, writes: "I recall three or four instances in which it seemed to me that if certain occurrences had not taken place just as they did I should have been overthrown. If I had not been taken out of Boston at one time, as I was, I do not see what would have prevented me from going to destruction. I look back upon passionate moments, upon moments of willfulness, which would have led me to worse disaster, had not events in the providence of God transpired to check me in my course and change my career." That, surely, could be the testimony of many of us. As we review our past, we see many instances that would have proved fatal to our character, testimony, and witness if they had been allowed to go undisturbed.

I read somewhere the story of a traveler who, at night, shouted to the keeper of a toll bridge, to let the gate rise in order that he might pass through. A terrible storm was raging and the night was dark. The keeper was prevailed upon to come out and open the gate. When he did so, he found the traveler on the bridge side of the gate, and said to him: "In the name of God, where did you come from?" The traveler replied, "I crossed the bridge." The gate-keeper kept him that night, and in the morning showed him the bridge which he had crossed. The storm had so destroyed the footpath that night, that only one beam remained, and the sure-footed horse had kept to the beam, the rider quite unconscious of how near he was to being hurled into the raging torrent 100 feet below! "See thy way in the valley," said the prophet. And as we look back, some of us see how very narrow and slippery was the path on which we trod, and but for the mercy of God, we would have fallen to destruction. The Psalmist, remembering the sustaining and protecting hand of God, exclaims: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107.8). That, I am sure, would be the language of many a heart on contemplating the goodness and the sustaining mercy of God. The hymn-writer, Addison, dwelling on the wonder of God's protecting and sustaining grace, pens these imperishable words:

"When in the slippery paths of youth

With heedless steps I ran,

Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,

And led me up to man.

"Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,

It gently cleared my way;

And through the pleasing snares of vice,

More to be feared than they."

There is another aspect relative to Vision in Retrospect, to which I would draw attention: it is what one might call the Disturbing Vision. Looking back, we see moments that gave birth to great resolutions. We had our dreams, and we aspired to something good and great. The call of Christ was full of appeal, and at that time it appeared easy to sing: "Make me a channel of blessing." As we look back, what is it that we now see: what has the 'way in the valley' recorded? It is true, we had our dreams, and we aspired to a life of usefulness in the cause of Christ, but today, looking back, we cannot record positive achievement. Broken vows and resolutions are the sad reminder of our failure and defeat, and with David we say: "I remembered God, and was troubled" (Psalm 77.3). What caused the failure? Was it that the Throne Vision did not dominate, inspire, and empower? Self-confidence and an unwarranted self-sufficiency that finds expression in the neglect of an utter dependence upon God has blinded the eye of the Throne Vision. How many there are today who began well, whose lives were full of promise, and radiant with hope, but who today live to remember their neglect of the Throne of Grace -- the pathway to the Throne. Oh, how great is our need ever to seek the constant ministry of sustaining grace which alone enables us to stand "in the evil day," and our prayer should ever be that of David:

"Shew me Thy ways, O Lord;

Thy paths, O teach Thou me:

And do Thou lead me in Thy truth,
Therein my teacher be:
For Thou art God that dost
To me salvation send,
And I upon Thee all the day
Expecting do attend" (Psalm 25.4-5).

We come now to consider Vision in Prospect, and here the words of David bring encouragement:

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid.
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made."
(Psalm 121.1-2).

'Aid' and 'safety' are assured by the Throne Vision. How precious to the man conscious of failure are the words: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: And... have the petitions that we desired of Him" (I John 5.14-15). That is the measure of God's provision, and it is our privilege, unworthy though we are, to avail ourselves of all the resources of His saving and sanctifying grace. How frequently we need to remind ourselves of this when faced with temptations and trials that so often beset us. Worthy views of the throne, and all that the throne stands for, are the secret of victorious living, for no man is stronger than what his communion with God makes him. It is the men of faith who see the hand that grips us when tempted to disregard the voice that speaks from the throne. Such are the heroes of faith, who have a God who sits upon the throne as a present help, and who is ever at their side to lead them to victory. Confident in the God who has never failed them, they are not moved from their steadfast purpose.

Here, let it be said that there are occasions in life when faithfulness to the throne involves persecution, and the faithful servant may have to stand alone. It is an easy thing to go with the crowd, and to do as others do, without any reference to God's claims, but the man who takes his directions from on high, will not be moved. "Men of Athens," cried Socrates, "I hold you in the highest reverence and love, but I am going to obey God rather than you."

The story of the Church of God down through the ages is one of conflict, but also of conquest: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12.11). John saw in "the blood of the Lamb" the eternal sign of Satan's defeat, and the assurance of ultimate victory. Here I would quote from an address by the late Gordon B. Watt: "The finished work of Christ is our plea before the throne, and our weapon against the enemy. Our right it is in Christ to ask God to bear witness on the battlefield of life, to the power of the blood and the effectiveness of the Cross against Satan and all his forces. He will not disappoint us. He cannot fail."

Here let me stress one truth: the obedience to the known will of God. It was Christ Himself who declared that entrance to the heavenly kingdom is denied to those who merely say, "Lord, Lord," and is awarded only to those who do the will of the Father. The path of His will may be narrow but it is never obscure, as to His requirements. But the Throne Vision, while it reveals the measure of our responsibility and possibility, also reveals the measure of our resources.

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