

(Heavenly Vision) 3 - Vision and Calling

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and obeying the heavenly vision that God reveals to us, which transforms our lives and calls us to a higher purpose.

Duration: 1:06:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 26:19, Ephesians 5:27, Colossians 1:26

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Spiritual Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of responding to the heavenly vision that God gives us. He uses the example of Abraham, who obeyed God's call to leave his idolatrous city and follow Him. The preacher also highlights that the heavenly vision transforms our lives and should be the testimony of our lives. He mentions that the heavenly vision consists of two parts: seeing the just one (Jesus) and hearing His voice. The Apostle Paul, in his declaration before King Agrippa, testifies that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, which completely changed his life.

Transcript

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

We do thank the Lord for gathering us together these days. The Lord has been good to us, and we are most grateful. We want to thank the Lord especially for giving us the privilege of visiting you.

We praise the Lord that He has His hidden ones all over the earth. And we do, together, look forward to the soon coming of our blessed Lord. The theme for our time together is on the heavenly vision.

We call it the heavenly vision because it is not earthly, it is not human. It is from heaven, it is from the Lord Himself. We thank God that it pleases Him to reveal His Son in us.

And we thank God for giving us as His gift to His beloved Son. We thank God for showing us His very heart, His very mind. And we thank God, He wants us to see this heavenly vision.

Because with this heavenly vision, we have a goal for us. With this heavenly vision, we have a goal for us. We have the inward strength to press on towards that goal.

That heavenly vision disciplines us. That heavenly vision gives us strength to endure. That heavenly vision gives us that inward love towards the Lord.

And this heavenly vision unites us as one body, one people. And this heavenly vision unites us as one body, one people. We believe that it is the will of God.

And it is His good pleasure that everyone who is the Lord should catch that vision. Or to put it in other words, this heavenly vision should obtain us. And it should transform our lives.

And it should be, in fact, the testimony of our lives. In this heavenly vision, we mention in the past two days that it is composed of two parts. One part of the heavenly vision saw Saul on the road to Damascus.

In that heavenly light, he saw the Just One. He heard His voice. Saul saw.

Why do you persecute me? Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? The hard thing for you is to kick the goat. And it pleased God to reveal His Son in him. In that heavenly vision, God allowed Saul to meet his true Master.

Because Saul was created by God for a purpose. But he never knew it. Until on the road to Damascus, he met his Master.

Even the Lord Jesus Christ. And to that Master, he surrendered himself. Also on the road, he saw something together with the Lord Himself.

He saw the Church as the Body of Christ. Because our Lord said, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? In other words, all those believers, all those followers of the Lord Jesus, they are part of our Lord Jesus. They are His Body.

The members of His Body. And whoever touches any member of that Body, even the smallest member, it touches the head. It touches Christ Himself.

So Saul saw that glorious Universal Man. The head is in heaven, but the Body covers the whole earth. And in this Body, the head manifests Himself.

This is the testimony of the Church. Dear brothers and sisters, there on the road to Damascus, Saul, as it were, was taken up to the third heaven. And there he saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

How emancipating was that vision. It really delivered him out of himself and into the very glory of God. The very purpose of God.

But dear brothers and sisters, this is only part of the vision. This heavenly vision continues on into the city of Damascus. And there in the city of Damascus, the Lord revealed to him the other part of the heavenly vision.

He showed him a little man, not that Universal Man, but a little man by the name of Ananias, a believer in the city of Damascus. And there he sent Ananias to see Saul, to lay hands on him, to identify himself with Saul by laying of hands. Saul was brought into the fellowship of the Body of Christ.

And Ananias said, Saul, brother, you are a brother in the Lord. Have your eyes opened and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And Saul's eyes were opened and he saw Ananias.

No longer enemies, but dear brothers in the Lord. So, brothers and sisters, this heavenly vision, this Universal Man, has to touch upon the earth. And there you'll find the church local where God's people are.

is a miniature of the church local. All the spiritual principles in the church universal must be practiced on earth in the church local. And they will complete the heavenly vision.

Dear brothers and sisters, if people only saw the heavenly part on the road to Damascus, and without seeing that vision in the city of Damascus, you know what would happen? He will be a person who is lifted up to the third heaven. He saw something glorious, but it is never being put into practice. Sooner or later, he will become a visionary.

What he has seen will gradually fade away. Brothers and sisters, on the other hand, if you only see the vision in the city of Damascus, you see what a local church is. Without seeing that heavenly vision on the road to Damascus, you know what would happen? You will find you will become gradually legalistic and eventually exclusive.

Because you do not see the wide horizon. So dear brothers and sisters, it is very, very important that by the grace of God He should reveal to us the two parts of that heavenly vision. Because God's truth is always balanced.

Now, this evening, we would like to concentrate ourselves on this declaration of the Apostle Paul. There the Apostle Paul, before King Agrippa and the nation, he declared, if you want to know who I am, if you want to know what makes me different, if you want to know what is my ministry, here is it. Wherefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

It is this heavenly vision that changed my life. Before I saw that heavenly vision, I was a Pharisee. I was a self-righteous person.

I was zealous for the traditions of the Fathers. I persecuted the Church. I was a blasphemer.

I thought I was serving God. But actually, I was opposing God. I was sincere.

But I was in darkness. But thank God by His grace, He has revealed that heavenly vision to me. And that heavenly vision changed my whole life.

I am what I am by the grace of God. Brothers and sisters, and furthermore, that heavenly vision controlled this life of this man. He became the Apostle Paul.

And he labored for the Lord Jesus. And God used him to establish churches all over. He became a witness, a servant of the Lord.

A chosen vessel of the Lord. And he suffered much for the Lord's sake. And yet to him, it's all worthwhile.

So towards the end of his life, he concluded his whole life of ministry in one sentence. I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Now, dear brothers and sisters, to be given that heavenly vision, to see that heavenly vision is the mercy of God.

Not because anyone is worthy. We are all unworthy. But it pleases God to reveal his Son in us.

It pleases God to show us what the church really is. There is nothing for us to boast of. It is all by grace.

It is all by mercy. But dear brothers and sisters, just seeing the heavenly vision doesn't mean that you have the vision. It doesn't mean that because you have seen it, you have seen it in your spirit.

God has given you an insight into his mystery. That doesn't mean that you have that vision. It is only the beginning.

The reason why God shows us the heavenly vision is not for us to boast of. It is not just for us to talk about. Because our God is most practical.

If he shows us anything from above, he wants us to enter into that vision. It should not be vision on one hand and we on the other side. It is God's will by showing that heavenly vision that we be drawn into that vision.

And that vision will come into us. That vision should become our vocation. If it doesn't become our vocation, then brothers and sisters, even seeing it is not enough.

Often times, we made a mistake. When by the grace of God, he opened our inner eye, he gave us understanding to see Jesus, the Son of God, the heir of all things. All the fullness of the Godhead dwell in him bodily.

The master of all. The Lord of all. Oh, thank God if he opens our eyes to see who Christ Jesus is.

To see him as the Father sees him. This is the mercy of God. Brothers and sisters, what we see of Jesus is just a little bit of him.

And how we are thankful for that. But we should see him as the Father sees him. It is God's will that we should see his Son as the Father sees the Son.

And if it pleases God to open our eyes to see the Lord in a fuller way. How thankful and grateful we must be. And, brothers and sisters, if God should open up his mystery, even the mystery of the Christ, and allow us to see the Church, that the Church is to be the body of Christ today.

To be filled with the fullness of Christ. And to manifest Christ Jesus on earth. That this Church, when it is matured, it will become the eternal bride of God's beloved Son.

What a glorious purpose that is! But, brothers and sisters, if God reveals these things to us, he wants us to enter into the vision. And allow the vision to enter into us. That the vision we see will become our life, our ministry, our vocation.

And to the Apostle Paul, we find that he not only saw the heavenly vision, but actually you find the vision really enter into his. And he was drawn into that vision. It is no longer the vision is vision, and Paul is Paul.

You cannot explain Paul without the vision. And when you see the vision, you saw Paul there. And we believe this is God's will for every one of us.

But dear brothers and sisters, how can seeing be transformed into being? How can what God has revealed to us in our spirit become our daily life? Even become our testimony on this earth? Where is the secret? The Apostle Paul said, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Brothers and sisters, Paul used a double negative. He does not say, I'm obedient to the heavenly vision.

He said, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Why did he put it in this way? I believe for two reasons. The first reason is for emphasis.

When you want to emphasize something, you use a double negative. So he said, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. But there is another reason.

It shows us how easy for us to be disobedient to the heavenly vision. It is most easy for us to disobey the heavenly vision. Thank God, many have seen the vision, but few are obedient to that heavenly vision.

Most people, by the grace of God, they caught a glimpse of that heavenly vision. It stirs up their heart. But, they fail to obey the vision.

Because there is a cost to be paid. Dear brothers and sisters, there is a challenge here. When God gives you a vision, there is a calling there.

God is expecting you to respond. And the way you respond makes all the difference. Think of Abraham.

When he was in Ur of Chaldea, a city full of idols, and tradition tells us even his father Terah was a builder of idols. And yet this young man, living in a city of idols, even in the home of an idol maker, somehow, God touched his heart. According to the Jewish story, one day his father was going away.

And he told his son Abraham, you take good care of these idols. But after his father left, Abraham began to take off the arm of one idol or the leg of the other idol. And he made a mess of these idols.

When his father came back and saw the situation, he asked his son, what have you done? His son said, father, after you left, these idols began to fight against each other. And that was the result. The father said, nonsense.

How could these idols fight against each other? So Abraham said, why should we worship them? Now, that was a Jewish story. But anyway, the Bible story is when he was in Ur of Chaldea, the God of Glory appeared to him. This young man must seek, must be seeking for truth.

And God knew his heart. So the God of Glory appeared to him. Brothers and sisters, whenever the God of Glory appears to you, there is a call.

The Glory of God appeared to Abraham. And God called Abraham. You go out, you leave your native city.

You leave all your kindred. You leave your family. You leave everything that speaks of your old relationship.

And you go to the place where I will show you. Dear brothers and sisters, whenever there is a vision from above, there is always a calling involved. Our God is most practical.

And the calling is, you leave everything in the past behind. Cut off every old relationship and go to where the Lord will lead you. Brothers and sisters, it is a leap of faith.

So the Bible says, by faith, Abraham left his city. He left his home. And he went out not knowing where to go.

He only knew one thing. He knew the God of Glory appeared to him. Brothers and sisters, whenever a vision from above comes to us, there is always a calling there.

And the calling is, leave everything of the past behind you. And go. Follow the Lord.

Not knowing where to go. And yet you go. It is a matter of faith.

Most people is not able to mingle faith with the word that they have heard. So the result is that vision gradually becomes a mirage. And you become a visionary.

There is no reality in life. Thank God. This young man, he said, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

He had to begin to walk the way of faith. He did not know what will be really involved. All that God told him was you will be my witness.

You will be my servant because I have chosen you. You will bear witness for me before kings and before Jews and before the nations. And you will suffer much for my name's sake.

How much? He was not told. In other words, God called him. That vision called him.

Called him to leave everything of the past behind. All his past success. All his past ambition and achievement.

All that he could be proud of himself. All that he sought after. Everything left behind.

And follow the Lord by faith. Not knowing where to go. Not knowing what will happen.

But knowing the God of glory was leading him. Brothers and sisters, what turns a vision into vocation? Very simple. It is the cross.

Without the cross. Without bearing our cross. And follow the Lord Jesus.

Our vision will never be turned into our vocation. Think of our Lord Jesus. He was equal with God.

And there was no something to be grasped at. Because he is God. And yet he emptied himself.

He emptied himself of all the glory, honor, worship that accompanied him as God. He emptied himself in order that he may come into this world. Of course, he could not empty himself of his deity.

Because this is what he is. But he emptied himself of every glory and honor accompanied deity. He came to this earth.

He took up the form of a born slave. Being in the fashion of a man, he was obedient to God. He was obedient even to death.

And that the death of the cross. Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus came into the world to die. He was born to die.

He was born to die for our sake. He was the sinless one. He should never die.

How could Gaga die? And yet, he took up a human form. And he lived upon this earth just like we do. Brothers and sisters, a heavenly man lived upon the earth.

Everything in him and about him is different from the world. As heaven is different from earth, so is he different from everything that is of the earth. He is different from everything that is of this world.

Because he does not belong to this world. He is a foreigner so far as the world is concerned. The Bible says, though he is on earth, yet he is still in heaven.

He brings heaven to the earth. His whole life was not governed by earth. His whole life was not governed by the world.

His whole life was governed by heaven, by his Father's will. He lived among people. So different so foreign no wonder the world does not understand him.

They do not understand him. Why does he not exercise his power and overturn the Roman Empire and make Israel the first of the nation? And make himself the Messiah that the Jews were expecting? He could do that. But he would not.

He said, I cannot do anything by myself. I cannot even say anything by myself. Whatever I heard the Father say, I say it.

Whatever I see the Father do, I do it. Brothers and sisters, here is a man who denied himself to the uttermost. He is the perfect man.

And yet, even with that perfect man, he denied himself completely. He would not even say a word by himself. It is always the Father's will.

My time is not my own. Your time is always ready. But I must wait for my Father's time.

Brothers and sisters, he was so foreign to the world that the world could not understand him. The world rejected him. The world crucified him because he did not belong.

Even his own disciples who followed him could not understand him. We do not know what he is talking about. When the Lord talked about things spiritual, he took it as being earthly and material.

How much our Lord must suffer the long suffering of our Lord Jesus. Brothers and sisters, he came to die on the cross. That's why he came.

Even though he was a son, yet he learned obedience to the things which he suffered. And being perfected, he became the leader of our redemption. Now, according to Hebrew, that word means he is the causer of our redemption.

He causes. We would never be able to walk this way of the cross. But our Lord Jesus, he walked the way of the cross until he was crucified.

He not only set an example for us, but he is the very life, the very power within us. He causes us to deny ourselves, to take our own cross and to follow him. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, why should you wonder if you want to follow the vision? You have to suffer.

Is it not what the word says? We must suffer much tribulation in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Do not think it is strange that the world will hate you because it has hated our Lord. Your servants cannot be greater, higher than the Messiah.

Dear brothers and sisters, we who follow the Lord Jesus, have we counted the cost? Heavenly vision is glorious, but it is very costly. It costs your very life because this natural life of ours is earthly. This natural life of ours is worldly.

This natural life of ours is fleshly. Everything in us is opposite to that which is heavenly. It is contrary to that which is spiritual.

Brothers and sisters, that is the reason why if you want to follow the heavenly vision, you have to pay the cost. Not only will there be outward suffering, but there will be inward suffering. You have to deny yourself.

You have to tell yourself, I do not know you. Oh, brothers and sisters, Simon Peter, he denied the Lord three times. He made a wrong denial.

What we should deny is deny himself. He had to deny himself. Brothers and sisters, do not blame Peter.

We are no better than him. So far as we are concerned, no one is able to bear the cross and follow the Lord. None of us is able to bear the cross and follow the Lord.

Peter thought he was able. If all the disciples will leave, I will follow you, even to death. Ah, our Lord says, Simon, Simon.

Satan wants to sit you as in a seat. But I have prayed for you. When your faith is restored, strengthen your brothers.

Oh, brothers and sisters, in our natural zeal, we will say, Lord, we are able. You have shown us the heavenly vision. For your sake, I am willing to die.

For your church's sake, I am willing to give myself. No matter how much suffering, I will follow you. But wait.

Have no trust in your flesh. Oh, how we need to humble ourselves and say, Lord, you have shown us the way, but it is impossible. You are the only way who can cause me to do the impossible.

The Apostle Paul, he said, I am what I am by the grace of God. I have nothing to boast of. I couldn't do it.

But it is the grace of God. Oh, brothers and sisters, His grace is sufficient for us. All He requires of us is a willingness.

Are we willing? If we are willing, He will make it possible. And after everything is done, you can only bow and say, Lord, it is all by grace. Glory.

Brothers and sisters, this is the only way to transform vision into vocation. And are we willing to go this way? It is the way of the cross. But the cross leads to the throne.

The cross leads to the crown. It is the cross that crosses you out completely, that crosses everything that is not of God out of you. And it is the cross that adds Christ into you.

He must increase, and I must decrease. This is the way of the cross. Are you willing to go this way? Thank God.

He never told us everything that would happen to us. If He should do, we dare not take one step. Thank God.

He leads us step by step. Dear brothers and sisters, are you willing to walk this way of faith? What is faith? Not your faith. It is His faithfulness.

We depend on Him. That is the reason why the Apostle Paul said, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. So far as I, myself, am concerned, I will be disobedient.

But thank God, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Look at the Apostle Paul. By the grace of God, he looked upon his past as trust.

Everything that he counted as his treasure. Now he looked upon these things as refuge. He would gladly let go these things.

Why? For the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Oh, if only I could win Christ. If only I could gain Christ.

If only I could know Him. And the power of His resurrection. And be partaker of His suffering.

And conform to His death. That I may arrive at our resurrection from among the dead. Not that I have already arrived.

I forgot the past. I press on towards the goal. And I may attain that which He has apprehended me.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you know the Lord has apprehended you? Do you know that the Lord has laid His hand on you? Do you know that the Lord has a purpose in your life? Do you know He wants to glorify you? Do you know He wants to transform you? And conform you to the image of His beloved Son? That's why He has apprehended you. And Paul said, I want to apprehend that which I have been apprehended by Him. Nothing less cannot be more.

All that God has purposed in my life will be fully realized to the glory of God. And no one other. What a life the Apostle Paul left behind him.

It is no longer I. It is Christ who lives in me. It is Christ who is formed in me. Dear brothers and sisters, is this our life? Is the vision becomes our life? In the vision we saw the Lord.

And in our life it is the Lord all and in all. Not only that. We find in the life of the Apostle Paul how he loved the Church.

As Christ loved the Church. He loved the Church. Not only in his life.

He always sought for fellowship. Wherever he went. The first thing he did was to find out the disciples.

Brothers and sisters, is this the first thing we do when we go anywhere? To find out, God's children, that you may be with them. He loved the Church. He gave himself for it.

Just like our Lord Jesus. He said, aside from all the sufferings that I have suffered, bearing my heart, I bear the burden of the assemblies. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who stumbles and I burn not? He said, I am willing to spend and be spent for you.

Brothers and sisters, he loved the Church. That is life. He is no longer independent.

He is always in fellowship. He needs the Lord. And he needs his brother and sister.

Brothers and sisters, this is vision becoming vocation. And think of his ministry. After that vision he sought.

That vision really consumed him. He lived for that vision. He became a witness, a testimony to the Lord.

He is willing to suffer in order that this testimony will go out. Thank God. Very few, if any, knew the mystery of God more than the Apostle Paul.

Knew the mystery of the Christ, the Church, as the Apostle Paul. He not only preached it, he also lived it. He said, I know nothing but Jesus Christ.

I know nothing but Jesus Christ and this Crucified. But among the perfect I will talk about the wisdom, not of this world, the wisdom of God, that eternal will of God, what God has prepared for those who love Him. Eyes have not seen.

Ears have not heard. And it never entered into man's mind. But God has prepared before him for those who love Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, for this ministry He gives His life in order that He may lead everyone perfect in Christ. Now, is this our vocation? What are you living for? What is our service? Are we serving the Lord according to the vision that the vision may become a reality? That the church may become a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any of such sort holy and dreamless fit for the beloved Son? Is this the goal of our ministry? Is the goal of our ministry that the Lord may be known? Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Brothers and sisters, is this our ministry? And look at Paul, how he suffered. He suffered more than any other apostle.

If you read 2 Corinthians chapter 11, brothers and sisters, how he suffered. But there was something within him that gave him strength, that gave him endurance, that he will be joyful in suffering. Knowing that suffering will end in glory.

Oh, brothers and sisters, isn't that worth it? Heavenly vision is not cheap. It costs your very life. It costs everything.

But it's worth it. Are we willing? We cannot. He can.

He has done it. He has demonstrated it. He has demonstrated it in his own life.

Our Lord Jesus has been perfected. And He is the author, the causer of our salvation. If only we trust in Him, He will make the impossible possible.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the love of Christ constrain us that we may rise up and follow. By the grace of God, we will do it. And we must do it.

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