

The Heavenly Vision Part 3

by Stephen Kaung

The heavenly vision is a divine revelation that shows us the Lord Jesus as the master of our being and the body of Christ as a universal man, requiring obedience and sacrifice.

Duration: 55:51

Scripture: Acts 9:15-16, Acts 9:23, Acts 26:15-23, Acts 26:26

Topics: "Heavenly Calling", "Spiritual Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that heavenly vision is not just something to see, but something to live. It is a calling from God that requires a response and action. The preacher highlights the importance of obedience to the heavenly vision and the responsibility that comes with receiving it. The sermon also emphasizes that the heavenly vision is not compatible with earthly desires and self-centeredness, and that it requires leaving behind natural inclinations and entering into the supernatural.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the book of Acts chapter 9, Acts chapter 9 verse 15 and verse 16. And the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is an elect vessel to me, to bear my name before both nations and kings and the sons of Israel, and I will show to him how much he must suffer for my name. And then again the same book, chapter 26, began with verse 15.

26 began with verse 15 to 23. And I say, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise up and stand on your feet, for for this purpose have I appeared to thee, to appoint thee to be a servant and a witness, both of what thou hast seen and of what I shall appear to thee in, taking thee out from among the people and the nations to whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.

Whereupon King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but have first to those both in Damascus and Jerusalem and to all the region of Judea and to the nations, announced that they shall repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance. On account of these things, the Jews, having seized me in the temple, attempted to lay hands on and destroy me, having therefore met with the help which is from God, I have stood firm until this day, witnessing both to the small and great, saying nothing else than those things which both the prophets and Moses have said should happen. Namely, whether Christ should suffer, whether he first through resurrection of the dead should announce light both to the

people and to the nations.

Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, once again we come before thy presence. We thank thee for thy precious word.

We acknowledge that unless thy spirit will quicken thy word to our hearts, we will not be able to enter into the reality of thy word. So Lord, our hearts do bow before thee. We look to thy spirit to open our hearts to thy word.

Set thy word free and set us free. That we may truly be those who are thy chosen vessels, servants and witnesses to thy great name. We ask in thy precious name.

Amen. For the past two Lord's days, we have been sharing together on the heavenly vision that the apostle Paul saw both on the road to Damascus and continue on to see in the city of Damascus. Now this heavenly vision that was given to the apostle Paul is actually given to every one of us because this testimony is repeated three times in this book of Acts.

That is to say, God wants to draw our attention to it. We need to see that heavenly vision. That heavenly vision transforms the life and ministry of this man.

And the same vision is able to transform every one of us. The vision that Saul, the Pharisee, saw on the road to Damascus is the vision of Jesus as the Lord. Because to him, as a Pharisee, he considered Jesus as an imposter.

He tried his very best to wipe out the name of Jesus. He disdained, despised and stamped on the name of Jesus. But to his surprise, on the road to Damascus, he met the same Jesus.

And he discovered for the first time that Jesus is not just that humble carpenter, that Nazarene, the one that is despised, rejected, crucified. He discovered that the same Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Lord of all.

He is the master of everyone. And when he discovered that, he surrendered himself to the Lordship of our Lord Jesus. Before that, he was his own master.

He even tried to master other people. But on the road to Damascus, he capitulated to our Lord Jesus and accepted our Lord Jesus as his Lord. That is the greatest vision, heavenly vision, one can ever see in this world.

Now, brothers and sisters, we need to see this. Thank God we have seen our Lord Jesus as our Savior. As one who died for us, shed his blood for us, give his life to us, redeem us, and brought us back to the Father's house.

We are grateful. But dear brothers and sisters, do we really see Jesus as the Lord? Have we really received him as the Lord of our life? Not just in name, but in reality. Do we allow him to be the Lord of our whole being? The Lord of our time, the Lord of everything that is related to our lives.

Now, this is something we need to consider very seriously before him. So we need to have our inner eyes open to see that truly this Jesus whom we believe is our Lord. He is the master of our being.

We are like the ox yoked to his will, and he is our master who has every right to command us, to guide us, to accomplish his will in our life. We need to ask ourselves, is he truly the Lord of our life? Is he truly Lord in everything that is related to our daily life? We do not want to call him Lord, Lord, and yet we say, Lord, you cannot do this. You cannot do that.

An absolute surrender to Jesus as Lord is the heavenly vision that God wants every one of us to see. And not only that, on the road to Damascus, this man saw, also saw that there is the body of Christ. Not only that personal body of Christ that was crucified on the cross and resurrected, but after Christ raised and ascended to heaven on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down upon those who believe on the Lord Jesus.

And 120 believers who gathered together in that upper room in Jerusalem, in one spirit, they were baptized into one body. In other words, today on earth, our Lord Jesus, who is in heaven, the head is in heaven, but his body is still on this earth. It is a corporate body, a mystic body.

All those who are the Lord's are members of the same body under the same headship of Christ. And whoever touch any member of the body touches Christ the head. So our Lord Jesus says, so, so, why do you persecute me? He doesn't say, why do you persecute my followers? He said, why do you persecute me? Because it is me.

In Stephen, it is me, in all the brothers and sisters that saw that Pharisees seized and condemned and even voted to put them to death. Every one of them is a member of the body of Christ, precious to the head. And there on the road to Damascus, saw, saw the body of Christ.

In other words, the heavenly vision on the road to Damascus is a universal man. Here is a man, the head is in heaven, the body is spread all over the earth, and all over these centuries, a universal man. And to that universal man, not only he gave himself, but he became a part of it.

That is the heavenly vision, saw, saw on the road to Damascus. And then we find this vision actually did not stop there. Because when Saul asked the Lord, Lord, what shall I do now? What do you want me to do? The Lord did not tell him right away, but instead the Lord said, you go to the city of Damascus, and you wait there until I will show you what I want you to do.

So here you'll find this man, he went into Damascus, he was blinded by the glorious light, and for three days and three night he was fasting and praying. And while he was praying, he saw in a vision. So brothers and sisters, you'll find the vision continue.

He saw in a vision, a man whom he had never known before, by the name of Ananias, coming to him, putting his hands upon him, and opened his eyes. And at the same time, there was a man called Ananias in the city of Damascus. He was a believer, and in a vision, he saw the Lord calling him.

The Lord said, Ananias, and Ananias said, Lord, here am I. Because he knew the Lord, he had a good relationship, intimate relationship with the Lord. And the Lord said, you go to the street called Strait, and find in the house a man called Saul from Tarsus. You go and open his eyes.

And Ananias said, Lord, I heard from many that this man came to Damascus to seize your followers. And the Lord said, you go. He is a chosen vessel of mine.

He is to be my servant and my witness, to witness what he has seen and what I'm going to show him. And also, he will suffer much for my name's sake. And Ananias, believing in the Lord.

You know, the Lord did not explain to him what happened to Saul. But Ananias knew the Lord, and he was obedient to the vision that he saw. So he went.

He found Saul there. He put his hands on him and said, Saul, brother, the Lord who has met you, Jesus, on the way, he command me to come to open your eyes and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And dear brothers and sisters, you'll find as Ananias laid his hands on Saul.

Now, we mentioned last time that these two men, naturally speaking, could not see each other. Because naturally speaking, Saul, the Pharisee, he came to seize the follower of Jesus. And Ananias was a follower of the Lord Jesus.

So they could not see each other. And yet, by the grace of God, you'll find God brought these two enemies together to be brothers in the Lord, in the body of Christ. So Ananias laid his hands on Saul.

Thank God it wasn't Saul laid hands on Ananias. But it was Ananias laid hands on Saul. And laying hands on, laying on hands means identification.

We are one. I am identified with you. And you are identified with me.

You are received into the body of Christ. And being received into the body of Christ, you receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. When Saul heard the word brother, you know how he would feel.

Me an enemy. You call me brother. And he is brother indeed.

Thank God for that. So here you'll find that heavenly vision on the road to Damascus. That universal man show us all the principles governs Christ and his church.

But all these principles have to be practiced on earth. He saw he met that little man. And through that little man, all that God has shown him are being put into practice.

So brothers and sisters, the heavenly vision is not something just for us to see. But it is something for us to live. Now that's what we have covered during the past two Sundays.

Now this morning we will continue on. Why? Because heavenly vision being from heaven can only be given to us by God himself. It is the mercy of God.

God revealed to us his own mind, his own heart, his own purpose. That is the mercy of God. The grace of God.

But after it pleases him to reveal his son in us, after it pleases him to reveal the church to us, we have a great responsibility. In other words, heavenly vision is given by God. But whether that heavenly vision will become a reality in our life has much to do with our reaction.

How do we respond? How do we react to the heavenly vision that God has so graciously shown us? You can be obedient to the heavenly vision. Or you can be disobedient to the heavenly vision. And that will make all the difference.

If you are obedient to the heavenly vision, that vision will become your vocation. If you are disobedient to the heavenly vision, that vision will become a mirage. It will soon disappear.

There is no reality in it. You will remain the same and maybe even worse. But there will be no transformation, no confirmation conforming to the image of Christ.

So brothers and sisters, we are faced with a very serious problem. If by the grace of God he should show us that heavenly vision, what will be our reaction? The apostle Paul, he put it in a very emphatic way. He does not just say that I'm obedient to the heavenly vision.

He said, I'm not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Now why is it that he uses two negatives? It is for emphasis. He wants to show us that he is not only not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but he is absolutely, wholly, fully obedient to the heavenly vision.

Now that is the way he tried to impress upon us. I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. You know, brothers and sisters, whenever there is a heavenly vision, there is a calling.

Vision never comes to us without any calling. You remember when the God of glory appeared to Abraham? Abraham saw the glory of the Lord. He was in the land of Chaldea, an idolatrous city.

He was in a family that built, made idols. And yet, one day, the glory of the Lord, the Lord of glory appeared to him. And when the Lord of glory appeared to him, there was a calling.

He was called to leave his native city, his kindred, and to go to the place where God will show him. In other words, that vision of the glory of the Lord will not allow him to stay put. There will be action.

There will be response. And the calling is coming out of all that is natural and enter into that which is supernatural. Brothers and sisters, if we see the heavenly vision, remember we are called out and to call in.

There will be action. You cannot just be indifferent and to stay where you are. It's impossible.

Because if you do, that calling will disappear and the vision will fade away. Because when God calls, when he gives a vision, he wants us to be in that vision and to have that vision in us. It is not something separate.

The vision that God shows you is the vision that God wants you to be. And because of that, you find there must be a calling involved. So, when we are given the vision from heaven, you know what will happen.

We are people of the earth. We are earthly. We are natural.

We are fleshly. We are self-centered. We are selfish.

That's what we are. Everything in us and about us and around us belong to the earth. All the evaluation, all the relationship are earthly.

That's what we know. That's what we are. That's what we are surrounded with.

That's how we live. That's our thinking. That's our life.

But there is a vision from heaven. And when that heavenly vision came to you, to an earthly man, you know what will happen. You cannot remain to be earthly anymore.

You cannot remain to be natural anymore. You cannot remain to be self-centered anymore. You cannot remain to belong to this world anymore.

You are called out of this earth and everything that is earthly into heaven and everything that is heavenly. That's what heavenly vision is. And that is where the conflict is.

You know what makes vision our vocation? The cross. Without the cross, vision will be just visionary. But with the cross, vision becomes vocation.

In other words, it becomes your very life. What you live for. Why the cross? What's crossing? Heaven and earth cross each other.

You cannot have both. That heavenly vision will cut across everything that is earthly, everything that is fleshly, everything that is natural, everything that is worldly, everything that is satanic. It will cut across everything that is earthly.

Heaven invades the earth and displace the earth. That's what it is. It is not a small thing.

And brothers and sisters, this cross is not only because you live in this world. The world has its own idea. The world has its own valuation.

The world has its own thought. So when that heavenly man, our Lord Jesus, came to this earth, the world evaluated him and said he was to be cast out. We couldn't have him because there is nothing in him that is the same as we are.

Everything is contrary, is different. This man, when he was on earth, he lived differently, he talked differently, he feel differently, he act and react differently. Everything is different.

And the world cannot allow it. Brothers and sisters, the world demands that we conform. So when our Lord Jesus was on earth, that heavenly man, living that heavenly life upon this earth, the result was the cross crucified him.

We cannot have him anymore. We have to get rid of him. And that's what they did.

So brothers and sisters, if we really are obedient to the heavenly vision, we will be persecuted. We will have tribulation upon this earth. Do not think that believing in the Lord Jesus is a smooth sailing into heaven or being carried off.

Not at all. There is a battle there. Because the earth, the world, is under the rule of Satan.

And how he opposed the kingdom of God. So brothers and sisters, you remember when Paul and Barnabas, when they first began their evangelistic work in Galatia, when they came back to these cities, they exhorted the brothers and sisters that we must pass through much tribulation in order to enter into the kingdom of God. We tend to forget that.

Brothers and sisters, our Christian life is too easy. We are so friendly with the world, that the world can afford to be friendly with us. Because we are not much different from them.

If you are different, if you really live in that heavenly vision, you will find the world will oppose you, will persecute you. Because these two cannot coexist. But that's the small part, the small part of the cross that you have to bear.

The greater part of the cross is the inward cross. The cross has to be implanted into your very being. It will cross your own ideas.

It will cross your own opinions. It will cross your own likes and dislikes. It will cross your emotions.

It will cross your mind, your thinking. It will even cross your volition, your will, what you want and what you don't want. Brothers and sisters, you find the cross will work and deal with you.

The sins that are in your life will not be allowed to continue. They have to go. The world in your life, they cannot continue.

They have to go. Your self-life has to go. You cannot have your own way.

Brothers and sisters, the cross has to be planted deep. That is the way for the Christ's life to increase in you. Only the cross will make vision vocation.

And that is where our problem is. We do not want to give up the world. We do not want to give up ourselves.

Vision is never cheap. It is very costly. And that's the reason why when our Lord was on earth, He said, before you do anything, sit down and count your cost.

Are you willing to pay the cost? If you're not willing to pay the cost, don't begin. It's useless. So dear brothers and sisters, we are faced with something that means life and death to our spiritual life.

It is not something that you can just ignore and go on. If you do, you lose the vision. The Apostle Paul, when God gave him that vision, how did he respond? Brothers and sisters, he was called to be a chosen vessel of God.

So are all of us. We are all called to be chosen vessels of God. But to be chosen vessel, to be vessels to honor, and not vessels to dishonor in a great house, you need to purify yourselves from that which is of dishonor.

You have to be purified from that which is wooden and earthen so that you may be vessels of gold and of silver. And the Apostle Paul, when you look into his life and when you look into his ministry, you'll find he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Since the time he received Jesus as his Lord, how he gave himself wholly to the Lord.

From that time onward, he never lived for a moment for himself. He lived for the Lord. He never tried to do his own will anymore.

He did the will of our Lord Jesus. Even until death, to him, Jesus' Lord is real. That is his life.

And since the day he met the Lord on the road of Damascus, his whole passion was towards the Lord. You read Philippians chapter three. He said, I look upon everything in the past as loss, as loss, as something to get rid of.

Why? Because of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In other words, his whole life was given to the Lord and allowed the Lord to be his whole life. His whole passion is to win Christ, to gain him, to know the power of his resurrection, to know the fellowship of his sufferings, to be conformed to his death, that he might arrive at our resurrection from among the dead.

To him, there is nothing, no one, not even himself in view. It is Christ the Lord. Brothers and sisters, his devotion to the Lord Jesus is perfect.

And not only that, but you'll find after he saw the body of Christ, how he lived as a member of that body. You know, he turned out to be a great member, a big member of the body of Christ. And yet he is but a member.

He never consider himself as complete by himself. He always need his brothers and sisters. In his letters, he asked brothers and sisters to pray for him.

He need their prayer to be completed. In his writings, he never try to be on his own. Always have some younger ones with him.

He respect those who are the Lord's. You know, there is a difference of opinions here. Some people said, Paul, you know, when he went to Jerusalem for the last time, he was wrong.

He shouldn't go to Jerusalem. Because everywhere, the Spirit of God was saying, there will be tribulation waiting for him in Jerusalem. So some people said, Saul was very obstinate.

And he went there, and there he was captured. He shouldn't go. But brothers and sisters, I personally feel very differently.

Because even though the Spirit was saying everywhere, he will be in tribulation, but the Spirit never directly say, don't go to Jerusalem. Instead, in his spirit, he was urged by the Spirit of God to go to Jerusalem before Pentecost. He didn't care about his own life.

He only cared to do the will of God. And when he was in Jerusalem, he went to see the elders of the church in Jerusalem. And you know, at that time, Jerusalem composed of all these Jewish believers, they were zealous for the law.

And they heard about Paul, what he was doing. And there was misunderstanding about him, thinking that he was not only asking the Gentiles not to be circumcised and to keep the law, he was even persuading the Jews not to do that. But he didn't do that.

You remember Paul himself, even when he was preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, he still kept the law. As a Jew, you remember, he take an oath and he shaved his head, the Nazarite's hair. So himself, he was still law abiding, because he was a Jew.

But to the Gentiles, they shouldn't be under the yoke of the law. But there was misunderstanding. So when he arrived in Jerusalem, James suggested, since there are so many zealous for the Lord, and they heard something about you, that you are not keeping the law as a Jew.

Now what, how should we solve the problem? Well, there's a way. We have some people here who have an oath of Nazarite. Now why don't you take them to the temple, give them money for the ceremony, and so they have their hair shaved.

And so Paul went there. And because he went there, you know, the Jews saw that he was in the temple, and thought that he was in the temple with some Gentiles. And that's how all the problem begins.

So people said, Paul was wrong. He who was so strong, saying that the Gentiles are not under the law, should not be circumcised. And yet he himself listened to James, and went to the temple and paid the price for the shaving of heads.

So because he did wrongs, therefore he got into trouble. Now brothers and sisters, do you really believe that? It shows how he submitted himself to the authority in the church in Jerusalem. If his conscience is not involved, he will submit to the uttermost.

That shows that he knew the body of Christ. That shows that he lived as a member of the body of Christ. He was not so big that he would neglect the elders in Jerusalem.

He was so strong defending the truth of the gospel, and yet he was willing to submit to the suggestion of the brothers in Jerusalem. So you can see how he lived literally as a member of the body of Christ. Even though because of that he suffered.

But what is that to him? He lived in that heavenly vision. And that heavenly vision lives in him. He was a part of that heavenly vision.

The fulfillment of that heavenly vision that God is working towards. That is the life of the Apostle Paul. And when you look into his ministry, what can you say? His whole ministry is that heavenly vision.

Christ and the church. The mystery of God is Christ. The mystery of the Christ is the church.

And who among the apostles had the greater understanding of these mysteries? Read Ephesians. Read Colossians. And there you see what a vision he had of our Lord Jesus.

And what a vision he has of the church as the body of Christ. He not only gave these messages, he lived it. He is a witness.

Now by witness means that he personally go through it, experience it. That makes him a witness. And that's the reason why his testimony is so forceful, so effective, because he lives it.

He lives what he teaches. He is a chosen vessel of God. And because of this, how he suffered for the name of our Lord Jesus.

If you read 2 Corinthians chapter 11, seldom if any servants of God suffer so much as this man Paul. Not only all these physical, awkward sufferings. How he was beaten by the Jews, beaten by the nations.

How he suffered shipwreck. How he went through the perils of the sea, the perils of the land, the perils of false brothers. And with all these outside things, inwardly, how he was burdened with the churches.

Who is weak and he is not weak? Who falls and he burns not? Brothers and sisters, he gave himself to the church. He not only suffered for the Lord from the Jews, from the nations, he suffered a lot from these Jewish believers. How they follow him everywhere, trying to increase his suffering.

Even when he was in the prison in Rome, they went to Rome and tried to increase his sufferings. And yet he said, what is that? If Christ is preached, I am satisfied. Dear brothers and sisters, you can see this

heavenly vision is not something, just a theory to him, not even a teaching to him.

This heavenly vision is his life. It is very being. That is what he is.

And thank God. How that heavenly vision is fulfilled in a very large part in that man's life. Now brothers and sisters, that heavenly vision is still not completed.

Time is still here. God is still working. Our Lord said, I'm my father, will get hit the toe and I work.

And what is he working at? For the completion of that heavenly vision. The day is coming when the body will be completed. The bride will be adorned.

And Christ, the King, will come back and rule. Thank God it's coming. But brothers and sisters, you have a part in it.

I have a part in it. Are we faithful? Are we obedient to the heavenly vision? Why is it that heavenly vision delays so long and is not completed? Do we have a responsibility to it? May we consider these things very seriously before the Lord. Brothers and sisters, to be a Christian is a serious business.

We cannot afford to be indifferent, complacent, lazy, rebellious. Oh, may the Lord have mercy. Let this heavenly vision be our vocation.

And God bless us. Let us pray. Dear Lord, we bow before Thee, acknowledging how we have delayed Thy purpose, Thy coming.

Lord, make us serious, diligent, absolute, that Thou art with Thou, will be able to use every one of us as Thou does use Thy servant Paul, a chosen vessel of God. We look to Thee for grace, knowing that in ourselves it is impossible, but nothing is impossible with Thee. Thou, the God of the impossible.

Oh, do it in each one of us, we pray, in the name of our beloved Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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