

Vision

“Where there is no vision the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Proverbs 29:18

The secular world uses the word **vision** with a different focus than the biblical application. It suggests that having vision means seeing what is and imagining what can be, thereby creating something new. Not so with the Bible’s use of this word. Note its use in 1 Samuel 3:1. The Word of God itself is our “vision” because it illuminates, or fully reveals, the truth to us. It helps us to see things as God sees them, including the path ahead and our final destination. By keeping the Word, we will travel sure and this brings us happiness. In contrast, the quotation from Proverbs reveals the dreadful end of those who do not have this vision.

The believer’s ultimate goal is to one day hear the King say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34b) God enables every sincere believer with the wisdom, divine power, and grace needed to reach this goal. Intellect and creativity as found in the world’s visionaries aren’t requisites in spiritual pursuits because God’s truths are plain and simple to understand. To reach this goal, we don’t need new vision created by man; we need the vision already revealed by God.

The difference between attaining the goal or not is found in man’s personal estimation of its value and his perseverance in striving after it. The Apostle Paul’s descriptive language reveals both its value to him and his perseverance toward reaching the goal. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

Both on a personal level and collectively as a church, we are faced with the challenge of being faithful, persevering to the end. For the purpose of this article, both are addressed, assuming the premise that the person has experienced true conversion and the church is spiritually alive.

True conversion as described by the Apostles John and Paul,

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:12)

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” (II Corinthians 5:17)

reveals that God saves man from his sins, not in his sins.

Our faithfulness, following a true conversion, is dependent on our personal relationship with our Lord and the world. Paul was conscious of the fact when he wrote to the Galatians, “But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” (Galatians 6:14)

This is also seen in the difference between the five wise and five foolish virgins in Christ's parable. (Matthew 25:1-13) All awaited his coming but five lost sight of the goal. Over time, their first love waxed cold (Matthew 24:12) and their friendship with the world became a snare unto them. (II Peter 2:20) The consequence this had on their personal relationship with their Lord is evident. The bridegroom came unexpectedly and they had no time to recover what they had lost. It was as Jesus had said, "*If a man love me he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.*" (John 14:23) Though all were asleep, the foolish five were not prepared for his arrival and he no longer knew them.

Vision from above reveals the true believer must keep the goal always in sight by fostering a closer relationship with Christ. However, Satan knows time is running out to achieve his own goal of deceiving the very elect of God. (Matthew 24:24) His goal is to make sure we don't attain our goal. He orders his angels to distract us from our eternal reward by drawing us away from having a closer walk with our Lord. Great is the deception in these last days.

Nevertheless, we are comforted in the Apostle John's declaration, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is *in* you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4) Thus, in these perilous times it will not suffice that we know Christ, that we have walked with him that we may even have performed miracles in his name. It is imperative that we be found *in* him, (Philippians 3:9) walking *in* him. (Colossians 2:6) We strive to be always in that one secure position Christ himself defined; "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" (John 15:7)

The vision for the church of the end times is its marriage to the Bridegroom. (Revelation 19:7-9) Its mission is to spread the simple gospel of "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21)

- The church must be a living example of what the Word of God declares. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love, one to another." (John 13:35)
- The church must serve as a vital support group for its believers. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently". (I Peter 1:22)
- The church must defend and practice the sound doctrines and biblical practices of a separated people without apology. (II Timothy 1:13 & 2:2)
- The church must include the vigilant posture God expected of Ezekiel; "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." (Ezekiel 33:7) Jesus also expects every disciple to be a watchman, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch! (Mark 13:35-37)
- The church must adopt the spirit of repentance that Christ exhorted the churches addressed in Revelation.

- The church must be introspective, acknowledging and correcting what the Spirit reveals as not satisfactory in the sight of God.

Ephesians 4:11-16 has set the standard of perfection for the church. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”