

Acts #7
We Need A Vision
Acts 2:16-21

It is interesting that on the birth date of the Church God draws our attention to the subject of visions. Why do you think God would do such a thing? The answer is simple, Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” **Without a vision we are like a rock that has been skipped on the top of some lake somewhere and we have no way of guiding ourselves.** We are at the lake’s mercy as to where we end up, as to how far we go, as to when we turn or stop. **We have no control over our own lives.**

Helen Keller was asked, “What would be worse than being born blind?” She replied, “Having sight without vision.”

What a profound statement by a girl who was born into this world Deaf, Dumb and blind. She could not help how she came into this world but she sure made a difference in how she left this world.

The wording of Proverbs 29:18 is interesting. The Hebrew word for “vision” means, “sight, dream, revelation or enlightenment.” **God is referring to a supernatural manifestation. He is talking about seeing something unveiled by God.** The Hebrew word for “perish” means, “to die or to expire.” **But the word in the Hebrew has a continuing tone to it.** In other words, individuals or a church with no vision are in the process of perishing and they will continue to perish apart from a divine vision from God.

Vision is that elusive thing that dares to dream big dreams about the future. Vision has been called hope with a blueprint. Vision is what an inventor has when he or she thinks outside the box to create something new. **Vision is what a mother has as she looks at her newborn baby and imagines all that child could grow up to become.**

Vision has a way of ignoring its critics and chasing its dream regardless of how many people say it can’t be done and doing it anyway.

And yet, there are times in life when the enemy will use people and circumstances to cause our vision fade. It is during those times that the flame of our vision begins to dim, its passion begins to ease, and its heat begins to cool.

There is an example of this in the life of Timothy, as seen in 2 Timothy 1:1-10, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God,

whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

You see, the Apostle Paul had sent Timothy to try to salvage a mess in the church in Ephesus. Yet when Timothy got there, he found himself in way over his head. The people who were “in charge” and “running” the Ephesian church was older than he was, and did not respect his leadership. **To make matters worse, Timothy was shy and timid, so he had a tendency to avoid confrontation.** The stress of his ministry assignment was affecting Timothy’s health, as he found himself sick with constant stomach ailments. In the meantime, the Roman government had arrested his beloved mentor, the Apostle Paul.

Therefore, because of his circumstances and the affect of the people on his life Timothy’s vision had dissipated. The excitement and enthusiasm he had once felt when he joined Paul’s ministry team some years earlier was gone. Somewhere between his bad health, his discouragement about the church in Ephesus, and his fear for Paul’s life, Timothy’s vision had slipped away. Timothy needed his vision renewed, and that is a big reason why Paul wrote him a second letter.

I am convinced that one of the great tricks of Satan is to use people and circumstances to steal away our vision and to leave us crippled in our walk with God. That is why I believe that every Christian out to have the freshness of new dreams and visions each day. Look with me a just a few.

First, we need a vision of Christ. The Bible tells us in Colossians 1:15 that Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.”

We need a vision of Christ as the eternal and sovereign God who was pre-existent in eternity and is Creator of all things. We need a vision of Christ as the Son of God; born of the Virgin Mary been conceived by the Holy Spirit.

We need a vision of Christ as the Incarnation of God that He might reveal to us the Father, and that He laid down His life at Calvary to atone for the sins of humanity. **We need a vision of Christ who was raised on the third day by the power of God, and proved Himself to be alive many times over a period of forty days.** The need a vision of Christ as ascended into the heavens and seated at the right hand of the Father; and that He is coming again.

We need a vision of Christ in our *Worship Services*. As a church, for us worship is first and foremost about celebrating Jesus Christ. It is about celebrating His presence among us, realizing that He is here with us when we gather as a congregation for worship. **We celebrate this reality every time we meet for worship.** It is a time when we as a church family come together to praise, honor and celebrate Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we need a vision of a better self. Philippians 1:21 simply says, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Galatians 2:20 gives us this challenge, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

The truth of the matter is that a better self requires more than just reformation, it requires a regeneration, and it was for this reason that Jesus told us in John 3:7, “Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again.”

The Bible teaches us that when we are saved we are brought into a relationship with God. Salvation is a free gift from God because of His amazing grace. In fact, all we contribute to our salvation is our sin; everything else comes as a free gift.

But with the gospel also comes a call to live a holy life, a life of spiritual depth and growth. Although we do not contribute anything to our salvation, once God saves us, He calls us to live differently. He calls us to a life of transformation, a life where we grow and mature. **He calls us to put down deep spiritual roots that are nourished by the truth of God.** He calls us to nurture a holy life.

I believe God wants our church to be filled each week with a constantly expanding multitude of growing Christians who are learning how to walk in daily intimacy with Him. The reason I am committed to teaching the Bible every time I stand before you is that you might continue to develop in your spiritual maturity. I challenge you to get a vision of a better self because of a more intimate walk with Christ.

Thirdly, we need to have a vision of a better church. Ephesians 1:22-23 says, “And (God) has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

I am afraid that we are living in a time when people seem to have the idea that the church is a hospital for the lame to seek refuge. Or a social organization for people to better their social standing. Or a “good luck center” where a person can come and pay a little change and expect their lives to run smooth.

But the church is none of these things. The church is a battle front against the powers of Satan, as seen in Ephesians 6:11-12, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Listen, we are all in this thing together and the ministry of this church is not the exclusive property of the pastor and staff. **For that reason we must continue to walk the pathway of faith and not allow ourselves to get too comfortable as we seek to make every member a minister.**

I believe God wants our church to be a church where our passion for Him and His purposes inspire us to believe Him for the impossible! Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot, we must not, we dare not, and by God’s grace, we shall not give the devil any ground in _____ Church. The time has come for us to rattle the gates of hell and march on to Zion with a new vision of victory!

Fourth, we need a vision of hell. Jesus has given us this warning in Mark 9:43-48, “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” Jesus is simply teaching that regardless of the price, it is better to go to heaven than to end up in hell, where there is no hope!

You see, I believe that worship and outreach belong together. We realize that there is a huge culture gap between most Christians and non-Christians. We live in different worlds even though we live in the same neighborhoods. **So we think it is our job to try to bridge that gap, to remove the barriers that might**

keep a person from truly understanding what it means to become a follower of Jesus! Because of that conviction, in our worship services we seek to meet the needs of our people in their every day living. Our aim is to translate the timeless truths of the Christ faith in ways that our secularized people can understand! Although our methods of ministry might continue to change to be culturally relevant, we must do this with an uncompromising commitment to the absolute authority of the Bible, because the message of salvation is still the same, “Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today, and forever.”

Last of all, we need a vision of heaven. Jesus has given us this promise in John 14:2-3, “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

There will be no back streets, no alleys, no slums, no dirt roads in heaven, only mansions and streets of gold. But the greatest of all things in heaven will be Jesus, and to hear those words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

I believe that everything I have shared with you tonight is real and needful, but there is a problem. And the problem is this – there is always tension between our vision and the way things are. That is because if vision only described the status quo, it would not be a vision. **So the disparity between vision and the status quo creates tension, like a rubber band that has been stretched.** Often we are tempted to let this tension pull the vision down to the status quo, to soften the vision and to make it more palatable to the way things are. Instead, we should let the tension us closer to the vision, creating the necessary changes in our lives needed to pull us toward what God has for us.

I believe God wants to pull us closer to our vision. God is looking for a people with a renewed vision of a better self, a better church, a vision of hell, and a vision of heaven. But the choice is up to each of us personally.

If you are not saved, why not come to Christ tonight?