

“WITHOUT A VISION A PEOPLE PERISH”

Without a clear purpose and aim to inspire one’s actions a nation, a church, a family or a group perish. This is the message of Proverbs 29:18.

Do you have a vision of the world’s need?

Before Isaiah could have a vision of God, he had to experience a vision of the evil that people do (Isaiah 5:8 – 6:8). Paul’s vision of the Lord included a vision of what the world outside of Christ really is – lost, blind, in darkness, under the power of Satan, bound, unforgiven, condemned and guilty (Acts 26:18).

Islam, Humanism, Egalitarianism, Antinomianism, guilt manipulation, cowardice, compromise, escapism and defeatism are the curse of our age.

English cricketer and missionary pioneer, C.T. Studd, had a vision of hell. He declared: *“Some like to live within sound of church or chapel bell – I’d like to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”*

Do you have a vision of the world’s problems?

Do you have any conception of the devastation caused by drugs and crime, terrorism and Communism, materialism and loneliness, deception and apostasy, immorality and alcohol abuse, selfishness, greed and hatred (2 Timothy 3:1 – 5). Sin and Satan are cruel masters. *“Without a vision a people perish.”* We need a clear vision of the reality of a world in rebellion to God...rushing on its way to hell.

Do you have a vision of God?

“I saw the Lord,” says Isaiah. *“High and exalted.”*

“Holy, Holy, Holy! The Lord Almighty is Holy! His glory fills the world.” Isaiah 6:3

Do you see the Lord? There are three directions we can look: **Inwards** – at ourselves – which is selfish. **Outwards** – at others – which can be critical or compassionate, or **Upwards** – to God – which is worship.

“Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends.” Hebrews 12:2

Do you have a vision of who God is?

He is glorious and infinite – without limitation. He is eternal – without beginning and without end. He is Holy and righteous, just and merciful, all-powerful, all knowing and everywhere present. The perfect Creator of the universe. Sovereign Judge of us all. Wonderful. Awesome in Majesty.

What comes into our minds when we think of God is the most important thing about us. No person is greater than his religion and no religion is greater than its God. God is greater than any of us have ever imagined or realised. We need to study the Bible more to realise how great and mighty is the God we worship. (I recommend in particular Nahum 1, Deuteronomy 32, Daniel and the Psalms).

“He is a living God and He will rule for ever. His Kingdom will never be destroyed, and His power will never come to an end. He saves and rescues; He performs wonders and miracles in Heaven and on earth.”

Daniel 6:26 – 27

Do you have a vision of what God can do?

He can do the impossible. He created all things seen and unseen. He can do a lot with a little. He fed an entire nation in the desert for forty years. He fed 5,000 with just 5 loaves and 2 fish. He controls nature. He parted the Red Sea for all the people of Israel to pass through. He calmed the storm. He raised the dead. He heals the sick. He forgives sinners. He changes lives. He answers prayer.

Do you understand the Biblical vision of Victory – the Puritan Hope?

As Christians, are we doomed to defeat on earth – or are we destined for victory?

Is the fulfillment of our Lord’s Great Commission your supreme ambition? Or is your main obsession to be raptured from your responsibilities on earth?

Is your faith being strengthened by the victorious vision of the Bible? Or have you been neutralized by a defeatist view of the end times?

Does your understanding of the future inspire you to positive prayer and action? Or are you being paralysed into inactivity by an eschatology of escapism?

Do you long to see the church revived and faithfully “*making disciples of all nations*”? Or do you long to be removed from your responsibilities here on earth?

Is the glory of Christ inspiring you to greater service for Him? Or are speculations about the antichrist depressing you into inactivity?

Most Christians today are neutralized. Very few truly fear God. Instead most are paralysed by the fear of man (Luke 12:4 – 5). The majority seem to have succumbed to a negative and defeatist view of the future.

Paralysed by permission, these passive pew-warmers pray for the rapture to rescue them out of their responsibilities.

Yet, if we were rightly divide the Word of truth, and correctly understand the signs of the times, we would return to the fight of faith with renewed vigour and a revitalized vision.

God is all-powerful, all knowing and everywhere present. He is Sovereign over the affairs of men. He has not predestined defeat for His people. The ultimate victory of the Kingdom of God is inevitable (Daniel 2:34 – 44). Christians are not doomed to defeat, but called to conquest (Psalm 2:3 – 9).

“All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations.” Psalm 22:27 – 28

In fact it should be obvious that it is the enemies of God who are destined for defeat. Humanism is a self-destructive ideology.

“Evil will slay the wicked...” Psalm 34:21

Permissiveness:

Those who believe the life of “*safe sex*”, who sow sex education and promote promiscuity will reap the inevitable consequences of sexually transmitted diseases – gonorrhoea, herpes, AIDS. Whatever a man sows that shall he reap.

Economics:

Those who worship the idol of chance by squandering their earnings in gambling will end up as bankrupt as those who engage in the unworkable wastage of welfare and socialism.

Evolution:

By promoting the theory of evolution Humanists are promoting a meaningless existence in a chance universe – coming from nothing and going nowhere.

Education:

By removing the Bible from schools and by purging all moral values from education, humanist schools inevitably end up with a functionally illiterate, incompetent, incapable and immoral generation. By abandoning the enforcement of discipline of children, Humanists make rods for their own backs as those children grow up into rebellious, lawless and selfish adults.

Homosexuality:

When the Humanists advocate “*alternative lifestyles*” and promote homosexuality, lesbianism and bisexuality they are undermining the essential foundation of society – the family.

Abortion:

By campaigning for abortion the “*pro-choicers*” are destroying their descendants. They are aborting their own futures.

In short, atheism offers: no God, no future and no hope.

The Future Belongs to God's People

On the other hand, obedience to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ results in the joy of sins forgiven, peace of heart and mind and a restored relationship of love with God as our Father. Jesus Christ gives His people spiritual life now, eternal life after death and abundant life always.

Those who live clean and moral lives and remain faithful to their marriage partner will have the best chance of surviving the AIDS plague.

Those who work hard, save wisely and spend their money carefully will be blessed with financial security. Biblical free enterprise produces wealth and rewards hard work and ingenuity.

Those who invest their lives in bringing up God-fearing children, ensuring that they receive Bible based education, will build the future.

As Christians we need to believe in tomorrow. Because we believe in the God who is the beginning and the end. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He controls the future. And he answers the prayers of His people.

“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is the Lord of lords and King of kings – and with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers.” Revelation 17:14

The Biblical Vision of Victory

“Ask of Me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery. Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear...” Psalm 2:8 – 11

“All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations.” Psalm 22:27 – 28

“In His days the righteous will flourish...He will rule from sea to sea...to the ends of the earth...His enemies will lick the dust...All kings will bow down to Him and all nations will serve Him.” Psalm 72:11

“For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the Government will be on His shoulders...of the increase of His Government and peace there will be no end.” Isaiah 9:6 – 7

“In the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever.” Daniel 2:44

“He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” Daniel 7:14

“Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His Kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him.” Daniel 7:27

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”
Habakkuk 2:14

“The Lord will be awesome to them when He destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship Him, every one in its own land.” Zephaniah 2:11

“The Lord will be King over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and His Name the only Name.” Zech. 14:9

“The kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.” Revelation 11:15

This is what the Great Commission calls us to:

“All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:18 – 19

This is what it means to pray the Lord’s Prayer:

“...Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Matthew 6:10

Do you have a vision of what God can do through a person?

When D.L. Moody heard the challenge: *“The world has yet to see what God can do with a man completely surrendered to Him.”* He ran forward shouting: *“I will be that man! I will be that man!”*

When General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was asked about the secret of his success, he replied simply: *“God had all of me that there was to have.”*

John Wesley’s challenge still rings out to us today:

“Give me a hundred men who fear no one but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I will shake the world.”

The Scriptures promise: *“If anyone makes himself clean from all those evil things, he will be used for special purposes, because he is dedicated and useful to his Master, ready to be used for every good deed.”*

2 Timothy 2:21

Do you have a vision of what God can do through you?

Do you have a vision of what God can do through a church?

The church at Antioch (Acts 13:1 – 3) sent out Paul and Barnabas. Through these two missionaries the Gospel was taken to Europe, many churches were planted in Asia and Greece, and much of the New Testament was written!

Napoleon once said as he looked out over the vast expanse of China: *“There lies a sleeping giant – let him sleep, for if he wakes he will shake the world.”* And I wonder if satan could not be saying about your church – *“THERE LIES A SLEEPING GIANT – LET HER SLEEP...IF SHE WAKES – SHE WILL SHAKE THE WORLD.”*

The Gospel is powerful. The Church has been given the power to limit the influence of evil and to extend the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18:18 – 19). Can we truly be praying against wicked plans, standing up for the Lord and fighting the forces of evil – when we see that evil increasing?

Do you have vision of what God can do through **your** church?

Do you have a vision of what God can do through a prayer fellowship?

Count Nicolas von Zinzindorff started a prayer chain in the Moravian church, which lasted for 150 years! During that time of unbroken intercession that congregation sent out 2,500 missionaries to every part of the world.

Do you have a vision of what God can do through a country?

Through one man – Abraham (Genesis 12:1 – 3) – God produced a nation – Israel – through which God raised up prophets and apostles (Hebrews 1:1 – 3) – who were used to produce the Bible. Through one nation, God has blessed the world with the Word of God and the Son of God. No greater privilege or achievement could be possible. However, Deuteronomy 28 details the blessings that will benefit a country which seeks to be obedient to God...and the curses, which will befall a disobedient nation.

The Word of God in Jeremiah 18:7 – 10 is clear:

If any nation turns away from evil, God will build up and bless that nation. But, if any nation turns away from God, then God will uproot, break down and destroy that nation.

Do you have a vision of what God can do through you, in your church, through your prayer fellowship, in and with and through our country?

“Without a vision – a people perish.”

Patience

Victory will not be won in a day. It will take patient, persistent perseverance.

We must not be anxious (Philippians 4:6); We should not worry (Matthew 6:25); We should not be troubled (Luke 12:22).

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); an attribute of love (1 Corinthians 13:4); a qualification of leadership (2 Timothy 2:24).

We are to be patient in times of persecution (1 Peter 2:20); suffering (James 5:10) and confrontation (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

“There is a time for every purpose under Heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 8

*“I am the only one,
but I am one.
I can’t do everything,
but I can do something.
What I can do, I must do.
What I must do, by the grace of God I will do.”*

Urgency

Life is short. Needs are great. Time is limited.

We are to ***“make the most of the time”*** (Ephesians 5:15); ***“redeem the time”*** (Colossians 4:5); utilize ***“every day to the utmost”*** Hebrews 3:13.

“Only one life – it will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

These are times of crisis and calamity, there is no room for lethargy or procrastination. This is the time for determination, single-mindedness, and decisiveness. The task before us is urgent. Our pace should be fervent.

DO YOU HAVE A VISION – OF GOD – AND WHAT HE WANTS DONE?

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