

## Captured By the Heavenly Vision

It is wonderful to be here. I am one of those guys that has been around almost fifty years, as one who came originally, as one who was in the process of being caught. I forget exactly how I got invited in those early days, but I came here, and I got caught. I should not have listened to Lance Lambert. I should have had other things to do when Brother Stephen Kaung was speaking. But at last, I listened, and I was caught. And so, for many years we have had these conferences over and over again, and yet it is so wonderful. Now we have two groups here basically, a younger group that is in the process of being caught by a heavenly vision, and an older group that has already been caught, but they have been here so many years that they think they are getting it for the first time every year; of course, the memory goes for those. In any case to rehearse these matters is a wonderful opportunity. I am glad to be here. I am so indebted to so much that I have discovered over the years and through this conference. And I was very happy in heart when I heard somehow that the Lord made a way for us to gather once again.

I would like for us to look again at this passage in Acts 26 and focus on a bit of its context today as we look at Paul's testimony before King Agrippa. So, we will begin in Acts 26:9, and I am cutting a few verses off there. He talks about his former life, but we want to get down to the bit where the sparks begin to fly, and the light from heaven comes.

So, in Acts 26:9 Paul continues his testimony before this great and noble king.

"So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.'"

*Lord, we pray this morning as we gather that by the time these days are up, all would have received the flash of light in their dungeon and apprehended in a heavenly vision, moved right until Your kingdom comes with overcoming life, walking in the light. Oh, Lord, we pray that You would do these things for Your glory. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.*

Well, what a conference we have gathered to. Year by year the themes have changed, but this year they just put them altogether. We have three themes, all of which could be the theme for the whole week, heavenly vision, the whole counsel of God, eternal purpose. Why not throw in the whole Bible in a summary form? Tremendous is each one of these thoughts, and I am so glad that I have five brothers, four brothers helping me as we try to declare all the bits. Kenny got a good start on it. Hopefully we can share things that will be living and real to all of us.

### **A Divine Love Story**

It is wonderful as we look at Paul's testimony, I just want to begin by saying the overall testimony of Paul is this: "This is a divine love story." How the Lord would capture, as our brother Kenny said, "such a wicked man." Now you just heard his own testimony; he was a wicked man, and yet the Lord caught him, forgave him, His own precious blood poured over Saul, and he became Paul. And He appointed him to be a steward to the Gentiles as well as an apostle to the Jews. So, he began to serve as a captive, as he calls himself, a lifelong bondsman. What a change has been wrought! Right? I mean that is only part of the love story.

It reaches further back because God wanted to touch not just Jews but Gentiles, and how was He going to do it? Unless He captured some and made them a steward to the Gentiles and open the door so that you and I could be saved and brought out of darkness into His marvelous light. So, He needed Paul, not just to save Paul because He loved Paul, but because He loved all mankind, He sent His only begotten Son. And Paul would be that kind of open door along with Peter to open the gospel. What a tremendous thing this new church was, this way that the disciples experienced when suddenly Gentiles got saved and nobody was trying to save them.

I live in New York City, and we encounter the Lubavitch, the Jewish Orthodox. Now the Lubavitch Orthodox Jews are wonderfully positive in loving Jews, which is quite different sometimes than the legalistic kind. But they are very loving, and when they meet you on the street, they have tracts. But the first thing they say to you is, "Are you Jewish?" If you are, they start preaching to you. If you are not, they say, "Have a good day." Imagine what would happen if Paul had never gotten out to the Gentiles, and all we met were Lubavitchers. Lubavitch is the name of the man they called the Messiah: "He is the Messiah." When you go around the country where there are retreat centers, there is inevitably a Jewish Retreat Center that says, "We have found the Messiah. Mashiach is here! Lubavitch died at 96 years old, ten years ago. The point is, how much God loves us that He grabbed hold of a sinner.

### **Once Captured No Escape**

And there is another layer there. So, when Paul says, "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, he was being humble. He was grabbed; he was captured. When he tried to escape, he was brought back. Like Kenny said, "Somehow, once the Lord gets you, I do not know if it is a lifelong thing, but it seems like as a fisherman, he has always got his hook into you. And

you might try to escape for a little while, but He has a long line, and He will eventually start going, “whish, whish, whish,” and begins pulling you back in.

So poor Paul, no matter what he tried to do, there were times where he was so discouraged that I think he would have said, “Lord, I cannot walk in this vision anymore.” And the Lord would say, “Oh, yes, you can.” And Paul said, “If You say, ‘Oh, yes, I can, Lord; OH YES! I CAN!’ And it is no longer because of my faith or my strength or my faithfulness, it is because He will not let me go. So, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, and I kept on going from town to town, even when I was beaten up or thrown in jail or lashed thirty-nine times. Every time I wanted to quit, the Lord said, “Do you love Me, Paul?” Paul broke down, “Where else can I go, Lord.” So do not think this is a proud testimony. Many of you, I think by the mercy of God at the end of your life will say, “I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

This capture includes us from before the foundation of the world. That is another amazing thing when we are talking about this heavenly vision, because we are talking about something where we must understand things in a two-dimensional, heaven and earth. Because from heaven’s point of view we were already captured before the foundation of the world by the precious blood of Jesus and by His sacrifice. And Paul was just part of the working out of this whole thing. The love of God was revealed to us when we saw God’s love in the face of Jesus Christ as Paul later testifies in II Corinthians 4:6: “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

### **Paul Saw the Shekinah Glory, Yeshua**

As a background to that, all of Paul’s life was as a rabid Jew, and there could only be two desires. One was that he would do so many acts of righteousness that he would be received into the afterlife in a resurrection as one Jewish hope.

The other Jewish hope while on this earth was, “Before I die could I just like Moses once see the Shekinah glory?” And then there on the road, he saw the Shekinah glory. Did you hear his account of it? That bright light shone all around him and thrust him to the ground, it was so powerful. Then he said, “What is the Shekinah? I see the Shekinah; is this Yahweh?” He said, “No, this is Yeshua.” “The Shekinah glory is Yeshua; I am seeing it for the first time, and I am done.” Like Moses said, “Show me Your glory even if it is going to kill me. Kill me, but I am seeing what I have desired all my life.”

Paul, for all his rabid misunderstanding, wanted to know God. That is why he was pressing in so much, totally in the wrong direction. He wanted to see the Shekinah. Well, he saw it there, didn’t he?

### **The Church Has to be a Prophetic Church**

Now, we are going to share this morning, if the Lord helps me, on the matter of heavenly vision because there is something very important involved in the end of time, at the end of this age, and it is this. The biggest gamble of God is that in the last days, if the church is going to stand in the testimony of Jesus, it must be a prophetic church. When we are talking about heavenly

vision, we are talking about a church with prophetic understanding, a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Now if there are individuals, and thank God there are always individuals who have been captured by a heavenly vision, it surely is a wonderful thing. But God's stakes are bigger. He is looking for a capture of a corporate bride with prophetic vision. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. Now it does not mean that all of us are to be prophets who might speak prophetically with vision, but it does mean this, that all of us have been captured in some way and are standing in this corporate vision. This is a tremendous issue in these days because, as we talk about Paul's testimony, we know, in one sense, he was a victim himself of what I call, "Finding himself in darkness in the camp." And for him to be saved and have a heavenly vision the Lord had to bring him outside the camp where Jesus was.

### **Judaism Was in the Shadows Without Heavenly Vision**

Paul was completely given to what in that day in the first century AD, Judaism had come to its highest form. Its priesthood was absolutely all set in order, and all educated. The Pharisees were all righteous, the scribes were all teachers, the Levites were professional singers, and they had one of those pipe organs, probably. They had a four-part harmony in the liturgy, and everybody knew what to say on Passover, the whole thing. And the whole of Judaism was in the shadows without heavenly vision. How did this begin as a revelation at Mount Sinai and become an outward thing? It had become a form; in fact, a perfected form, a nice and organized form but devoid of life.

You remember in Acts 13:27 Paul was preaching a gospel message to the city of Antioch, and he said this, talking about Jerusalem at the time he was there as a Pharisee.

Acts 13:27: "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled these prophecies by condemning him."

I remember the first time I read this interpretation by Brother Sparks and his book on prophetic ministry. Listen to the irony of the whole thing. Now here were the scribes or rabbis reading the prophets every Sabbath, and they knew Isaiah and Jeremiah, the whole thing. But because they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, because they knew Him not, even though they read all the prophecies about Him, including Isaiah 53, ironically, they ended up fulfilling those prophecies by killing Jesus. Now just think of the blindness of people who know the Bible backwards and forwards and have no light. And you will see what situation Paul in. He was the most excellent of those who knew the doctrines of the law and therefore could say, "I consider that my duty, King Agrippa, to do all I can to suppress this boom of Jesus, to bring people bound and even to kill them if need be. We have got to stop this thing; it is antigod. How do I know? Because the Bible tells me so." But he had no vision, and Judaism perished within forty years of their rejection of Jesus because they did not know the hour of His visitation. What good is it to know all the Old Testament prophecies if you cannot see Jesus in them? What kind of an organization are you?

## **The Church Is in the Shadow Without Heavenly Vision**

The reason I say this is because the church has gotten into that place. Now I speak, and I speak lovingly to the church. Listen, I was saved by the Southern Baptist Gospel Preachers. I went to seminary and became a Southern Baptist Preacher, and I love anybody who loves the Lord. I still remember the name of Brother Rudy Fegan who preached the gospel on the night I went forward and accepted Christ when I was 20 years old. I have known so many God loving Baptists, Pentecostals, Episcopalians. I am not going to talk about individuals, but you know the church is in the shadows because they have gotten such a form and nailed it down and perfected it in such a way that sometimes there is no revelation in it. And you know what happens when that happens. In the end, the church starts doing things that are against the very purpose and will of God.

Now you know today that there is big talk, not only among millennials but among Gen Z of a phrase that is called the deconstruction of the church. Do you know what that means? They say that “I do not believe all the garbage that this church is telling me to do. I do not even understand. Why is it that we take communion once every three months? What does it mean anyway?” And they are deconstructing the traditional structures that have been built up. They are not necessarily deconstructing their faith in Jesus nor the truth of the Word of God, but the things that the church has become. The church has fallen into the shadows, and only by a heavenly vision can we be brought outside the camp where Jesus is. Now that makes me revolutionary, I know. And I am sorry, but you know, we can talk about heavenly vision all you want, and I know there are perhaps a few people here who know all the doctrines, but they have never had one.

So I went to seminary, and I studied the gospel of John under the most outstanding scholar, Johannine Scholar, among Southern Baptists. He was our seminary, and he took us through the gospel, and we learned all the words in Greek and English, all of this and that. By the time we got through I was so confused, I gave up on the gospel of John. Seriously, I had been a Christian only three years when I hit that class, and it threw me into darkness, and when we got to Revelation 20, he gave us the wonderful news. “Well, this does not really mean that Jesus literally rose from the dead. This is talking about a spiritual matter. He brings in that is postmodern Bultmannism, Bultmann’s interpretations of form criticism, so I will not go into all that stuff. But it so struggled my mind that when I went into the Baptist Ministry as a missionary after that, I left the book of John alone except for John 3:16 because I could not understand it. Then I heard a dear brother about 5 feet 8, speaking on the gospel of John, and he said, “You know that this is all about recovering reality back to the church.” For the church itself, by the end of the first century, had forgotten that Jesus is the light because they had their own light. Or that Jesus was their living bread, or that Jesus was their living water because they had made forms out of it.

So back in the day when John remembered walking with Jesus in the early church, immediately afterwards, when somebody got saved, it was in a blaze of light. Even as we heard from this hymn of Charles Wesley, somebody saw Jesus. And just to amplify the reality, this was a major break in my life. When they were saved, they took them down to the local lake or whatever, in December or whenever, and baptized them. “You have seen the light now, and you are dead to the world, and you are alive to God.” They came back out of the water and then

boomed! They prayed for them, and the Holy Spirit would come down on them, and these people remembered forever: "This was the day I saw Jesus."

Now we have got it trimmed down so much. First, maybe ones will get saved at eleven, but we do not baptize them till they are fourteen, and maybe they get filled with the Spirit when they are thirty-six years old. So, we have a problem, don't we? Because in one sense, the heritage of the heavenly vision belongs to everybody who has seen Jesus as Savior. But if the church is in the shadows in such a way that the reality is absent, when they look around at the church, they do not see a living God. So, they fall back into a shadow which means, "I learned all the doctrines, I read my Bible, I do all the stuff, but there is something missing in the departments."

### **His Whole Church Is to Be a Prophetic Church**

So, when we talk about heavenly vision, we are talking about something that was predestined for us from heaven. But from our side, it must take a holy hunger to know reality whatever the cost. Because the cost of heavenly vision is costly. When the flash of light comes, for me because I was such a stubborn old fool, and I had already been to seminary and everything, I had to have a flash. I know when the flash happened. You see, here is the deal.

When God created the heavens and the earth, everything was beautiful, but by the time we get to Genesis there had already been a problem. So, the first thing that happened was that the God of light had to show up and say, "Let there be light;" suddenly there was light across this dark and formless void that was called the earth because of its calamitous preSatanic fall. But you do not have to believe all of that, but what you do need to understand is that it was light, creative light that brought life to the whole business.

How the Lord wants to do that for His whole church. The Lord is not just looking for some small little group of people who have seen something. The Lord wants His whole bride to be prophetic, have vision and to see a true flash of light.

Just last weekend about fifty of our folks from Manhattan went out on a camping trip up in the Catskill Mountains. They had a wonderful time until Saturday night at 11:00 when they had thunder and lightning with boomers worse than yesterday. Some of them scattered and went into their cars; some were in tents and got soaked, and they went home like rats, all wet. But one of their dear sisters, Priscilla, said, "Now here are my two kids and they are laying in the tent, and here I am." And every thirty seconds there was rolling thunder. It was not just a boom, but a really, loud boom coming down from the mountains. It was really something. But she said, "Every thirty seconds, there was a flash of light, and suddenly it was broad daylight in my tent." Every time she saw light, ahh! Meanwhile, her two kids were sound asleep. We need a flash of light in our tents, and this I hope the Lord can do in our midst.

### **God is Light**

So, let's begin it this way. God loves us so He wants to reveal Himself to us. We know that in the Bible God is in four essences, which is who He is. We know God is love; we know God is righteous; we know God is holy, and we know God is light. These are the four essences of God out of which all His attributes come. So, patience is a combination of love, righteousness, and so

on. But these four things are when God says, “I AM the light; I AM love; I AM righteous; I AM holy.” So, we must deal with that God, don’t we?

When we are talking about this matter of heavenly vision, we are talking about God is light. As Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He that comes to Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” So, we see as the imagery in the gospel of John, in its very beginning it goes back to creation, “In the beginning was the Word.” And it was the light, He says that came into the world, and that light brought life. So now John is talking about this recovery of reality in terms like a new creation where light comes rushing in, and it is just like He says in the statement in II Corinthians 4:6, “Let there be light, and there was light.”

So, I wanted us to sing that wonderful song, and I saw at the bottom that it says that hymn is anonymous. Oh no, it isn’t; that hymn is Charles Wesley’s hymn. It was written shortly after he got saved. May I say something? John Wesley is one of the most brilliant preachers that you could ever read. You could read tons and tons of his sermons. Everybody said, “Hey John, will you sit down and let Charles speak?” Because Charles saw heavenly vision. Listen to that 4<sup>th</sup> verse in which He said, “Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature’s night.”

There he was, a sinner in the dark of night, and couldn’t see a thing. He was bound in a prison. His thought was, “Peter being in a prison or Paul being in a prison.” That is what he was singing. He said, “Thine eye diffused a quickening ray.” God sent out a quickening beam of light from Your eye. “I woke and the dungeon was filled with light.” The whole tent was on fire because the lightning had gone off, and what did he see as he describes it? “My chains fell off.” Praise God, no more chains on me; “My heart was free.” He was no longer bound by guilt. You see, he had grown up in a religion in England of guilt and trying to be the best and hoping you were going to heaven. They formed the Oxford Club, and they prayed and read and gave to charity, hoping to get to heaven. But then his heart was free because he saw that he had been freed by the blood of Jesus. That beam of light changed Charles’ life when he wrote it in this wonderful hymn.

My chains fell off, my heart was free,

I rose went forth and followed Thee.

### **Salvation is Not the End; It Is Only the Beginning**

Hallelujah! There is a heavenly vision right there at the very moment of salvation, and it is true. Oh, this light! How we need this light. This light of salvation is a wonderful light, but salvation is not the end; it is only the beginning of why He shone His eternal life.

Some people just stop there. And young people have a major pressure point if they have grown up in a Christian home, and that is to get saved because mom and dad are praying for you every day. Dad says grace at the table: “Dear Lord, thank You for all Your blessings. Please help old sinner Joe gets saved.” They are under pressure. The pressure is taken off when they finally get saved. Then they get baptized and now they are Christians. Now they can be just as carnal as they want the rest of their lives. Oh, no, no!

That light did not shine on you by the cost of the cross of Calvary just to save you. You say, “Well, I know, it is because the Lord wants to sanctify me and make me holy.” Well, He does want

to make you holy, and thank God for an experience of sanctification by the Holy Spirit where your life is cut off from the world's emphasis and you can walk in the light as He is in the light. You do not have to fall into sin every other moment of your life. Wonderful sanctification! But He did not save you just so you could be a good boy. That is not the goal at all.

### Saved to Serve?

My old church where I got saved said, "We are saved to serve." Now that is true because anybody who has seen the heavenly light has been called into service. If you do not have any calling in your life, is that heavenly vision real to you? Oh no, there is a calling, and there is a calling to serve. There is a calling to be faithful in your service indeed. But that is not the main reason for that light.

### Saved to Worship?

How about a worshipper? Now today I think we all must thank God that there are some wonderfully anointed musicians who have written some beautiful worship songs. You know, the church has turned away from totally self-centered singing to some degree because of these wonderful songs of worship. Now some of them somehow get back to themselves. But there are many wonderful worship songs extant today to encourage us as worshippers. And He wants worshippers, and we will be worshipping in eternity but that is not the reason that the light came to you.

### Saved To Be Conformed into the Image of His Beloved Son

Now why does Paul say, "For what reason did that light shine on you?" He said, "Ever since that light shone on you all things work together for good to those who love God and were called according to His purpose." And what is His purpose? What would that purpose be? Is it saved to serve? Is it saved to be holy? There are those things, but there is more. "For whom He foreknew, those He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." That is why the light came into your life. It began the process of conforming your life into the image of His beloved Son.

### Heavenly Vision is Costly

And there is more; that is not the end. This is why I say, "The stakes are high." His predestined purpose is not just that you should be conformed personally but that the church could be conformed into the image of His Son. Now that is a costly thing. It means that the Lord brings you into a congregation of imperfect people and says, "I want you to be built together into a unity that starts in the spirit and ends in unity of the faith. I want you to stick it out and pray it out, love it out, and forgive it out because I want a bride that is corporate. That is My goal. You have not just been saved to be personally perfected. Sometimes you are going to have to put your being involved in a smallest assembly or large assembly, whatever the case may be. You will have to put that above your job promotions and prospects, sometimes over plans for vacations, and over possibilities of raises if you sell your soul a little further to the company store.

And the Lord says wait a minute, "Where did I place you? Where are you going? Who told you to go?" Now the Lord does sovereignly move people from place to place, but it must be His move. But somehow when we get back into the shadows in our church life, and everything is back

to normal. We know what is going on, and we live in a certain level of life. I don't deny that there is real life there, but it is not what the Lord wants. He wants to bring us back out into the light together, so that we can be this corporate bride. Now there is a lot of cost there.

### **The Ray of Light Brings in the Love of God that Captures**

So, we have no idea. I had no idea when I got saved at twenty years old, April Fool's Day, 1964, what God's purpose was for my life. And to be honest with you that Baptist preacher had no idea either, except for getting people saved. Then they baptized me in their baptismal pool, hung me up by my ears to dry until Jesus comes back. They had no more plan, except to be as good as you can. And if you are a good Baptist, you do not smoke. No, you do not drink; you could smoke all you wanted back in those days but that is another story.

But when that light comes into your life, I am telling you what, it is revolutionary; it is like a new creation. It is like God saying, "Let there be light," and boom, the tent lights up. And how do we know that the tents light up? What happens there? It is because we begin to see things. If Charles Wesley says, "The ray of light diffused from His eyes," then I am also going to say at the same time, the love of God diffused from His heart.

And what did Paul see? He cannot even say that he saw Jesus whom he fell in love with. That is the beginning of capture. It captures you at the heart level. The light may profoundly disturb you, but the heart level gets grabbed because you see God is one Person. So, when He is love, He is also light, He is also holy, He is also righteous, therefore all four of those things are going to grab you. It is not just light, and that's it. No, no, no! His love grabs you at the same time. That is what Charles was talking about, how God grabbed him. That is wonderful, and so Charles became a Christ-centered person as our brother Kenny shared because he loved Christ. Isn't that wonderful!

### **The Light is Holy**

Now this is where it gets tough. Maybe we should take a break. I told you the good news. Yes, you are saved, and the light of God has knocked off your chains, and the love of God captured your heart, but when the light shines, the light is also holy. That is what undoes a person who has really seen the light. Have you seen the light? Well, a bunch of these guys, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekial, Job, Paul, John, they all fell down like dead men when they saw Jesus. Why is that? Because when you see the holiness of God, there is something exposing your tent. It completely undoes. Holiness is overwhelming. I like that simple phrase that Peter used when he talked about the day that he saw Jesus transfigured there on the mountain. He said, "We heard a voice from the Majestic Glory." I love that phrase. Have you heard a voice from Majestic Glory? You see, a heavenly vision is as much hearing something as seeing something. When Paul saw this heavenly vision, he heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Boom! Down on the ground he went, blinded.

God is holy; therefore, we cannot mess around with holiness anymore. I am telling you what, the church is messing around with holiness. They are being much too accepting of things that are not right according to the Bible. And a clear division line in forming for churches that are saying,

“Oh, well, we tolerate and accept these things; it is okay. It is part of modern life.” Well, it is not part of what God wants. Holiness is still holiness, and so it brings us low.

### **Devastated by a Devastating Love**

I see in the back row that I am scaring young people, and I do not mean to scare you; I am just trying to prepare you for a heavenly vision; you will be devastated and undone. You will be devastated by a devastating love. And in devastation, you will be wholly captured because the Lord says, “I love you Mr. Devastation; let’s go; you are mine now. Let’s go.”

The philosophers would talk about the seeing of this light of God as the *mysterium tremendum*. Do you know what that is? It is a fancy word that means “a tremendous mystery.” That is how scholars look big. Instead of saying, “tremendous mysteries,” they say “*mysterium tremendum*.” But what they are talking about is this: when one sees God’s light, there are two things at the same moment. One, an attraction to the love of Jesus that draws you like a moth to a flame, and at the same moment a repulsion and a desire to escape from that light that is consuming in your life. So, like a moth to the flame comes that desire, “I want to see more of Him.” Yet like a lion before a campfire, you fear to go near because you see the fire, and that is what grips our life. That puts us in an immediate kind of Paradise, doesn’t it? So, you hear these stories of guys such as D. L. Moody who said, “When the Holy Spirit came down on his life, he said, “Oh Lord, stop, stop, I cannot take anymore.”” He was caught in the web of the *mysterium tremendum*. It is so terrible; it is so wonderful. It is so wonderfully terrible. Moses said, “God, God, nuke me. Show me Your glory; I am ready. But please, put me under a rock so I can make it.” Oh, a holy God, when He appears, is such a wonderful thing.

Now here is the interesting thing. You explore through the Bible, and you say, “Okay, these men of heavenly vision saw the glory of God. Now what does it look like? And strangely, nobody tells you. Have you ever noticed that? The God of glory appeared to Abraham: “Hey, what did He look like?” He does not say a thing. Isaiah said, “Woe is me because I have seen the Lord high and lifted up.” “Yeah, what did He look like exactly, Isaiah?” “No, I cannot tell you.” Job said, “I heard of You with the hearing of the ear, now my eyes see, and I repent.” Ezekiel, and others saw the glory, but it was indescribable. You know God that is light, unrefracted light. What does that mean? It means that it does not take a form at first. It is a light, and what does the light do? It brings life; you are alive. How did Jesus do it? I do not even know that. Something has changed as Paul said, “Something changed, and I saw light. Everything just changed.”

### **The Vision of Jesus Is a Heavenly Vision**

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a heavenly vision of the meek and mild Jesus who walked on the earth. A heavenly vision is a vision of Jesus glorified, powerful, full of authority, full of kingship, full of love. So, it is something heavenly, that is why it is a heavenly vision. It is no longer looking at Jesus meek and mild. If you have seen a heavenly vision, there is something that has touched your life. The closest we get to it is, of course, and we will not go into it, but the vision that John saw when he turned around, and heard the voice of Jesus speaking, gives as much of a description as it would be possible to give without giving the whole store away.

But anyway, the whole point is this, when that flash of light comes, and we do not know how long that flash of light was on the road to Damascus. How long do you think? You really want to extend it to five minutes? I doubt that it was that long. All it took was a two-minute capture, a few words, a few sentences. “Go to Damascus and I will tell you what to do next.” “Yes sir.” His friends had to take this blind man into the city. How long was that flash? I will tell you how long it was. It lasted forever in his life. It was a moment in his eyes, in his spirit it was forever. It was something that increased with time. As the light continues to shine, we begin to understand. It starts with a heavenly vision to our spirits, and that spirit is unrefracted light to our spirit. We cannot exactly describe it. Many times, when somebody has seen, you see an outward change in their lives, but the actual description of what they have seen is indescribable. They could not describe it because it is indescribable. But praise God, when you begin to study the Word of God, and occasionally when you are reading the Word of God—that is what I saw!

### **A Major Redirection of Life**

There are two effects that happen when somebody sees heavenly vision. We cannot really describe what the vision is, but there are two definite effects for everyone who is legitimately bombarded by the light of God.

The first is this: there is a major redirection of life by the work of the cross. Our dear brothers Ben Hiebert and Christian Chen—what precious brothers. I have known of many young people, maybe some here, who probably do not even know who Christian Chen is, but he left us this treasure of a hymn book with so much of his labor of love in it, along with our brother Ben and June Hiebert. We were trying to translate Brother Watchman Nee, who wrote some beautiful poems, which we tried to translate into English and did a terrible job. Then we tried to put some of them to song, and we did one song which has forever been lost in history. But back ten or fifteen years ago, we were working on it and our Brother Christian Chen said, “Please, let’s translate this; let’s make it a little song, and they had a seminar about the hymnary. So, they had Ben and June, and I sang a song from something Ben had translated. I am not going to bother singing this song to you because it is not good. But here is Watchman Nee’s few words: “Lord, You are redirecting my future, and you are tearing down what I have built. Make me decrease as You are increasing, till your will tastes sweeter than before. Lord, You are redirecting my future.”

### **Altogether Amazingly Liberating**

The second thing that the Lord does is just as remarkable. Despite the redirection and the discipline that comes from the Father’s hand and the difficult circumstances that it puts you in, the effect upon those who have been apprehended by a heavenly vision is altogether amazingly liberating.

A person sufficiently captured by heavenly vision is not disappointed when his plans do not go his way, because he is trusting something bigger. Somebody who should be complaining because their life has been so hard, but somehow there is such an exceeding joy and full of glory in this discipleship life that Paul when in jail writes Phillipi which is so full of joy; it is a joy pie. How could a man who was thrown in jail and tossed around like he was so full of joy. But you have seen them. I have had the privilege of seeing some of these dear brothers and sisters who are

captured and sent to work camps for years in China. You see some of them when they come out and they look like this: "Urh, it has been tough." No, no, that is not how they look. They say, "Praise God! I am alive." "Well, they took out half of your insides." "It's okay, I've still got half." And they find a way to praise the Lord because they have seen the value of their life. And even with all kinds of physical restrictions and problems they had, you are not going to hear them saying, "Oh boy, I cannot serve the Lord today, it is my lumbago." I do not even know what that is.

As a matter of fact, the discipline of His redirection is joy in the Lord, intimacy with the Lord, a friendship with the Lord that is embarrassing sometimes because He is so candid with you. The freedom that you must talk to the Lord about anything is just amazing.

My wife and I lost a son when he was nineteen years old; his name was Dana, and I went through a season of soul devastation. But out of it came a song that expressed something that welled up from deep inside my spirit. It is called this: "I am learning in dying you really start to live. I am learning that in dying you really start to live." When self is lost in body life, you touch what freedom is. Have you ever been part of such a body where you have given yourself to brothers and sisters wholly? Do you know the freedom of that? Just to be part of a group where I do not have to preach every Sunday. I used to be the paid preacher. They gave me \$200.00 a week to preach Sunday morning, Sunday night and lead the prayer meeting on Wednesday night. But now, for free I can preach five nights in a row or once a year as the Lord directs. When self is lost in body life, you touch what freedom is, and I can see that what I really know is not just in my head.

When I look out here, we have heads twice the size of our bodies, so full of knowledge, but what you really know is not what's in your head. What really counts is not the outward show; it is what is in the depths. And that is a little song I wrote, coming through that difficult time. You see, to be in His presence, as David said, "In Your presence is fulness of joy." It is the Lord's presence. You know, trials produce deeper abiding.

Also, when you are captured under heavenly vision, times may be tough, but what you see again and again and many times over in your life is that you live by His resurrection life. So, things go down the tube and things get bad. Just when you are at bust, the Lord resurrects the whole situation and brings you through it. You say, "How did that happen?" His life conquered death, sometimes a physical condition in your life, but sometimes it is in your ministry or in your circumstances. Resurrection is the name of the game for those who have been captured by heavenly vision.

And not only that, but it is also all the blessing of sensing that your life has a purpose. I cry when I see on television some rich Hollywood star or some sport figure who has just committed suicide. To think of all they had, and they had no purpose at all. On the other hand, I see some people as I travel around the world in developing countries who have so little of the earth's goods, and they were so happy, so full of joy. And it was not just because they did not have; it was because they found the source of their satisfaction in the Lord Jesus. The heavenly vision has this kind of effect.

This is what David said, “I know that He is for me.” Sometimes I blow it and do things wrong, but I know that He is for me. When I am not even for myself, He is for me. It is so wonderful. Listen, this matter of heavenly vision is a very sovereign thing.

### **Characters of Those Apprehended**

There are just four final things I want to say. When you meet people, and perhaps you have met somebody, and you can see they have been apprehended. There is just something about them. They do not have to be a big star or some big speaker. A lot of times there is a saint in the church, and when they are not at the prayer meeting, “Oh boy, we are going to have a tough time tonight because our dear sister knows how to pray and bring us into the heavenlies, and she is not here. So, all the brothers are going to have to go to the routine, our usual prayers, our list of prayers. We pray for this; we pray for that in Jesus’ name.” We have no woman of vision there, somebody who brings us to the heavenlies. But it does not have to be some big star. No, no; heavenly vision is somebody who is caught; it is a wonderful thing.

### **A Real Experience of the Holy Spirit**

I have found as you look at such veterans, people whom you can see have been captured, whether they say anything or not, you find one of four characteristics. One, they were brought to the place where they had a real experience of the Holy Spirit. There are many wonderful Christians, and for those of you old enough, like our brothers on the front here and me, we remember back in the Charismatic and Jesus movement days. What I remember is this: there were so many precious brothers and sisters in all the various churches and different denominations who were prodding along as best they could. Then the Holy Spirit fell upon them, changed their minds, and opened their eyes to a spiritual reality they had never experienced in all the years of faithful church existence. Oh, listen, those who are caught by heavenly vision, must have been administered to by the Holy Spirit in a redirecting powerful way. That is one thing you can notice when you watch people. They say, “Well, you know what happened. I was just going about my life, doing things my own way, and one night I went into a room, the Holy Spirit came down and I began to speak in tongues, or something happened, and I started to cry. I gave God my life and something happened.” they came into something new. You see, heavenly vision is not something you have; it is something that you are in. It is a reality that the Holy Spirit illumined to you. Sometimes they say, “You have been here all the time, but I did not know it.”

### **Service Came Out of a Life Not Their Own**

The second thing is this. Some people who came finally into wonderful vision had faithfully served the Lord obediently, faithfully. They had served the Lord for years. And it was not just pastors and teachers who were teaching Sunday School, helping children, doing this, serving in small ways, technical ways, all kinds of things. For years they would serve and serve, often so tired and fatigued because they were serving so much out of their best self-life. And then as their service came to a failure or a halt or a rest stop or a hospitalization, heavenly vision came to them, and from then on, their service came out of a life not their own. There are so many pastors, so many faithful people who you wish could be touched by a vision of the Lord’s absolute control of their lives. What a difference it would mean, setting them free. You know there are so many

pastors in the United States right now who are suffering from mental break downs or are quitting under the stress of ministry; there are thousands. Just think about that. I do not want any church, even the denomination that I do not even like, I do not want any church out there without even a shepherd. That is what it has come down to because people are trying to serve faithfully out of their own strength. Oh, but the Lord is merciful. If they will get under and see and look up to heaven, that spark will come down like a flash and exchange that life. It is so wonderful!

### **A Person is Shaped by the Word**

Then there is a third group that eventually come into a real holy vision of Christ and His purpose. And it is this: people who love the Word of God. There are some people who are studying the Word and know the Word, they want to live by the Word, they obey the Word, they want to know the whole counsel of God, and they are so faithful in this, but they are so powerless. There is truly somebody you would say is a person of the Word, but not a person, as the biography of T. Austin Sparks was called: "Somebody Shaped by Vision". Oh, the Word of God is so fundamental because what happens is that somebody has been studying the Word of God, and say, "I see all this, I see all this, as it were, in the letter." Then somebody comes along and says, "Oh, here is this little book "Concerning Spirituals" by Stephen Kaung. He opens it up because it is so alive with the Word of God. Boom, boom, boom! But they have the Word of God as their basis; they see the life. Or they hear a message by Lance Lambert through this wonderful podcast, and suddenly, boom, boom, boom! What is happening? It is like, "Remember that in the Word? Remember that in the Word? Remember that in the Word?" Now they are seeing it all in a living way. Wow! Those of you who love the Word of God, you are doomed to captivity by heavenly vision.

### **Seeing Christ is in His Body**

The fourth are those wonderful pilgrims who sometimes wander from church to church or commit themselves into a church that is living in the shadows. They serve, and they are going nowhere, but they are so hungry. Oh Lord, I read the book of Acts, and I just wish we had some reality, just something like this. And then one day along comes Priscilla and Aquila. Then there is dear old Apollos, you know the story in Acts chapter 18. And Apollos is the best preacher to the Jews that you could ever hear preaching Jesus the Messiah. He would go around the synagogues preaching that, and once he got through preaching, where did he go? To the next synagogue where he preached Jesus the Messiah. Then one day Priscilla and Aquila it was Priscilla because she was the one who knew the Bible, and she said, "You know, Apollos, there is a little something more about this than you realized. There is the body of Christ. Did you know that when you are saved, you do not just become a Jew who keeps going to a synagogue? Did you know this thing that God has given birth to is the body of Christ where all the members are together?" Do you remember what Aquila and Priscilla said? "Go visit Corinth because in Corinth the body of Christ is like popcorn. There are prophecies, there are healings, there are miracles—boom, boom, boom!" Can you imagine Apollos going there? It was like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July—boom, boom, boom! "This is Christ in His body; I never saw that before. I have been in church all my life. I never saw that Christ was in His body." They see that, then somebody invites them to their church, and this church has some reality, even if it is small. But it is enough reality to open the heavens and help somebody to see this most precious part of the heavenly vision. This heavenly vision is a corporate

thing. It is something that is working, not just in an individual life, but a whole thing going on here. So, what a wonderful day it is when somebody sees such a vision as that.

Well, there you are. Are you one of those in that category, one of those people? May the Lord touch you with His Holy Spirit. May the Lord so build a foundation of the Word of God in your life that when you see life, you will know it is life and not false life. May you have such a hunger to know reality in the body of Christ that you will not be satisfied with just living in the camp, but you will be willing to find Jesus outside the camp and fellowship with Him.

*Oh, thank You, Lord, for that flash of light that diffused from Your eyes upon us, and suddenly our tent was full. We saw our chains falling off, and we had been set free. You loved us, and it was enough for You to say, "Come and follow Me." Lord, this heavenly vision is beyond description, and yet it is something so desirable. Lord, there is such a devastation involved, it might redirect our whole plans, but Lord, it is worth it, every moment of it. And not just to see it but to live in it. Oh God, give us those who are living in heavenly vision in such a way that others see and say, "Wow! I see in them strong Jesus, I see the will of God being done, I see the kingdom come right here on earth. Oh Lord, would You do this among us, we pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.*