

The Heavenly Vision as It Struck Paul

Acts 26:9-19: "So then, I thought to myself (Paul speaking) 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 prisons, 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 thus 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 art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But arise, 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; delivering 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, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' "Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Acts 20:17: "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church."

Verse 27: "'For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."

Ephesians 1:8b-10: "In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth."

Then he gives us three pictures to understand that verse.

Ephesians 2:19-22: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

The second picture is in chapter 4:4: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;"

Verse 11-13: "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the

building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Verse 15-16: “But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

So, we read about the house, we read about the body, and then one last picture.

Chapter 5:25-27: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”

Verse 29-30: “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.”

Verse 31-32: “FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

Lord, we worship You this morning. We bow our hearts before You. We thank You, Lord, for Your magnificent grace that You have revealed to a fallen and broken people, some of these wonderful things that have always been in Your heart. So, Lord, we are praying this morning that You would clear away all the things that might hinder Your heart to be able to speak to ours, in the speaking and in the listening. So, Lord, we need You so much, and we put this time into Your hands. Lord, we pray that Your mercy may fall on this place. We thank You, Lord, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Introduction

So, brothers and sisters, my charge for this time has been to share on the theme of being caught and kept by the heavenly vision as expressed in the life of an individual Christian. We have already heard from our brothers this wonderful word three times in three different layers and perspectives and vantage points. And what we began to realize is that this vision is a corporate vision of something the Lord is building in all of us into one. But in His grace as we experience that building in a corporate expression, there is meaning for each individual Christian, and the expression of the Lord’s purpose in our lives.

So, in my time there is a two-fold burden, and it is manifested in the impact that the vision had on Paul. In the first phase of that vision, there is the light that shone upon him, and the reflection of that light as he pondered it in that lonely house on Straight Street. And that is what we would like to share about today. Then tomorrow, the second half of that vision is when his eyes were opened, he experienced something of being in the house of God for the first time when Ananias came to visit him because “where two are gathered in His name, there I am in their midst.” So those are the two sides of what I would like to share for this time.

For this time, we would like to share about the heavenly vision as it struck Saul on that day, and how for three days in the dark in the house on Straight Street in Damascus, the eyes of his heart were opened. The marvel of touching the church, even with the intention of harming her, changed him and the impact it had on his life. Tomorrow night we will see that first person experience for the first time in Saul's life becoming a living stone.

In Matthew 10:27a, when the Lord was about to send the disciples out, He gave them an instruction: "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; ..." It is interesting because the Lord's teaching of us always seems to have a similar pattern. When we are in the dark, sometimes hidden in the secret place talking near to Him, the Lord tends to show us some of the wonderful things in His heart.

And so it was with Saul, but Saul's is a little bit more violent because Saul had fury in his heart. However, the Lord engineered a way for Saul to quiet down and see something in the darkness. And that vision he saw was so magnificent that over two decades later he still remembered it in great detail. And over those two and a half decades that he had seen it, he had grown. The vision had grown in his life so that when he met with the Ephesian believers, he told them, "I have not held back from sharing with you the entire counsel of God," and in the letter that he would write to them shortly after this episode of standing before Agrippa, he described the mystery of His will, and the mystery for ages that had been hidden in God.

Now this is a chapter in the Bible that I think many of you have heard messages about. But if you are like me, I remember when I heard this message the first time, I thought to myself, "What in the world does this mean?" Because I did not understand anything that the brothers had said, and so I went home, and I read it again. I read chapter one of Ephesians. You may be like me, I read it fast, and then I read it slow, and then I read it in the context of the book. And it was hard for me to understand at the beginning. I remember I was in San Diego at the time, and one of the brothers, sixteen years old, who was in the youth group, gave me advice. He said, "When things are hard to understand, try reading it to yourself with an accent." And I thought to myself, "What!" I did not try that, but brothers and sisters, you can see that it was something that I was struggling to understand.

Then I remember one year, about twenty-five years ago, I was at a conference, and Brother Kaung spoke on this topic, and I got a little bit of the message. I went back to my room, and we were traveling, so I was traveling that day. As I was in my room, I was looking out the window, and the only thing I could say was, "It is not me; it is not me." It showed that I really did not understand the whole thing or even three quarters of the whole thing, but it was the beginning of understanding. I do not even know what I meant when I was saying, "It is not me." It partly meant, "It is not about me." And I think part of it was that I began to see what He was doing was bigger than me.

Then I go back and read in chapter 1, "We are part, by the grace of God, of something extremely marvelous that travels backwards to the beginning of eternity. Then we travel forward to see when all the fulness of everything in His heart is accomplished, and it is quite remarkable. So, it is okay that sometimes this is taught to us over time even as it was taught to Saul when the Lord told him, "You have seen something, and I will show you more."

The other thing that we remember of that moment was that He told Saul, “You are charged with sharing what you have seen and what you will see with Jews and with Gentiles to whom I am sending you.” So, what He was suggesting was this is not a vision for the elite. It is not just for those two or ten at a time at any given moment in history. It was really something that the Lord had in his heart for every believer to begin to explore. Because we are captured in it, it is what He has invested in each one of us, and there is not even one to whom He did not plan to be a part of this vision that was in His heart. He did not save everyone and then cast some aside. We are saved so that we can take part in this wonderful thing that He is doing.

Summing Up of All Things in Christ

In Ephesians chapter 1:10a, in the mystery of His will, the Lord said, “With an administration suitable to the fulness of the times.” That is the summing up of all things in Christ.” What we read here, brothers and sisters, is something quite amazing. We all know that when we are saved, and we meet the Lord Jesus for the first time, what we find of Him is that He stands alone. He is so amazing in His love, His worth, that when He was crucified on the cross for me that in one Person the worth was able to pay for all the sins of all who have ever walked on this earth, should we call upon His name. He is all sufficient, and that is our objective view and rightfully so. Christ stands alone.

As we read what He writes here to us from His assessment, and this is the condescension and the love of the Lord Jesus. He tells us that I am not home until another part is summed together in Christ. This mathematically does not make sense because you know that He stands alone, but what He is telling us is that in His heart there needs to be a summing up of things in Christ. The struggle to understand this verse, we realize as we read all the different translations that everyone is trying to discover, “How do we describe the bringing together of things in Christ? How do we make of One the uniting and bringing under one Head?” This sense of how it is possible that in the mystery of His will, the perfect One would suggest that there is a making whole of Christ. Again, we need to remember that He stands alone in all sufficiency, but in His heart, He is telling us that He is longing for the bringing together to make one in Christ. And the marvel of this statement is so large and so impossible to understand that as he wrote it to the Ephesians, he gave them three pictures, which we will talk about in just a moment. It is to help those of us with limited minds understand to some degree what was occupying His heart.

Paul’s Testimony to King Agrippa

When Saul was on the road to Damascus, he had been enraged and caught up in his fury. It started when the light shone upon him, and we remember that he was struck blind. Then they had to carry him and walk him to Damascus where he ended up in the house on the street called Straight. And twenty-five years later as he stood before Festus, the Roman Governor, and King Agrippa, he shared his story. He told King Agrippa, “At midday O King, a light shone upon us brighter than the sun.” And he shares with him that in that moment “we all fell down, and I was struck blind.” And he heard this voice that called to him specifically, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Now this is an interesting statement. And then the Lord says, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” Then Saul replied, “Who are You, Lord?” And because he knew that He was the Lord, His response was, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Now we all remember

that Saul had never lifted a hand against the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus had died, and it was far before he became enraged and started hunting down the Christians. So how is it possible that Saul had been persecuting the Lord Jesus? But something had happened, and Saul's eyes began to open. He had struck something. He had struck something in his fury, and what he had struck was Christ. And he realized in that moment that Christ was alive.

Festus would say later to Agrippa, "I spoke to the Jews. I wanted to know what they were accusing Paul of. (Saul's name had been changed to Paul.) Well, there are various things about the religion, and then they say, 'It was all about a dead Man, Jesus, whom Paul said He was still alive.'"

The first thing that happened was Saul saw that Christ lives, and He lives in those whom he had struck. And it was a moment for him as he was blinded, kneeled, and bowed down that he began to see this extraordinary vision. Then, as we read, he was raised and walked.

In Ephesians, as Paul is telling the story, he shares that the vision came to him before he was even saved. Then he says, "And I am the least of all saints." The Lord shared this heavenly vision with a man who had murdered His people, and Saul would never forget that and he said, "I am the chief of all sinners." It was not a false modesty. When he says in Ephesians, as he describes the vision, "It is revealed to the least of all saints." It means that it is a vision for all of us to become engaged in. And it is for all of us to live a life in which that light is shining into our lives so that we might understand it and realize for what great purpose He has saved us.

Saul's Pedigree

As we begin, I would like to share about Saul, how he came to Straight Street, and what happened to him. And I know for many of you that you are familiar with this story, but I hope you can allow me a chance to walk through it, because some of us may not be.

Saul was born in Tarsus of Celecia, which is on the southern side of Asia Minor, meaning it was north of Jerusalem and north of Damascus, and it was a freed Roman city. His parents were Romans, and when Saul was born, he was born a Roman, which was a huge honor at that time. He was about three to five years younger than the Lord Jesus. So, they grew up in different parts of the world, but in parallel, one born the Son of a carpenter in an occupied nation. The other was born a Roman citizen in Tarsus.

Saul was a Benjamite; his family was of the tribe of Benjamin, and he described himself as the Hebrew of Hebrews; as he grew up, he was very familiar with the ways and culture of his people. Their culture was so important to him, and he knew and studied the Old Testament. He knew the Mosaic Books, he studied the law, he knew the prophets, he knew the Psalms, the poems, and the books of wisdom. And because he was such a bright young man, he was selected to study with one of the leading Pharisees, Gamaliel, who will come into the story in a number of years.

When he became a Pharisee, he wrote of himself that according to the law, "I lived blameless." He was not being falsely proud; this was just a mark of the self-control by which he lived. He was a superstar. On the other hand, a goad is a sharp iron tool used to poke superstars.

It is used by God to poke farm animals to teach them where they should go, to help them to know the straight way forward. And at some point, in Saul's life, he began to hear about this young Carpenter who was about five years his senior, uneducated, but He began to teach. As he heard Him teach, he began to be poked; the goads began to poke him. His mentor, Gamaliel, told them all: "If there is nothing there, it will die away." So, they waited, and He continued to teach. And Saul heard things, poke, and he saw things, poke.

Saul Was Poked by This Man Jesus and His Followers

He watched this Man show acts of kindness that made alive the Old Testament word, and they poked him. And building in him began this piled-up rage. He heard Him criticize the Pharisees, and Saul, being a Hebrew of Hebrews, so earnest for the law, there may have been something in Saul that even agreed with this Man Jesus. Saul was seeing with his own eyes what was happening in his world, how they were falling away and chasing these outward forms. But there was something in him that valued the truth of the Old Testament. And when he heard Jesus, it may have been that the ray of truth poked him, but he kept fighting back, and then he heard what Gamaliel said, "When the leaders die, maybe it will pass away."

Then on that day the Leader died; Christ was crucified. He thought that now it is the end, but it did not happen. On that day, as our brother shared before we sang, when the Lord Jesus died, a remarkable thing happened; He gave up His Spirit, and His life came down into the hearts of those who believe in Him, and a life was implanted into my heart like a light. And as I shared before, if we turned off all the lights in the world, and we looked out into the auditorium, we would see the light of the life of the Lord Jesus, sparkling through all of His people. When the Lord Jesus died, His life was being implanted in us, and that life is being built up, the summing up all into one.

So, for five to seven years after the Lord was crucified, poke, poke, poke. Nothing was dying, nothing was ending. He saw them grow; he saw them meet together, he heard the teaching, and it never died. And the rage grew because he knew that if he let his heart open a little and the light shone into his heart, he knew that the trajectory of his life was going to come head to head with the trajectory of the teaching of Jesus that was speaking to his heart. He could not let that happen.

Then one day all the Pharisee leaders gathered to confront an uneducated waiter named Stephen. When they came together, they gave him, as they did all the ones on trial, the chance to defend himself or deny. And Stephen began to share from the Old Testament. This was Saul's space: "You share about the Old Testament; I know the Old Testament" And Stephen began to share, and as Saul listened to him, the poking began again because everything he said, Saul knew was true. But it enraged him, so when Stephen died and he saw on his face the peace of an angel, a driving fury overcame him, and he hunted down Christians left and right.

He tried to get them to blaspheme; they would not. He tried to get them to stop gathering; they would not. He tried to get them to reveal each other; they would not. So, he was forced to go from house to house. It would have been so much more efficient if he had found one Christian, and they caved in and said that he lives down there. And if you go, you can skip all the blank

rooms, but they would not. So, he went from house to house to house, but they would not deny Him, they would not stop gathering. He was so frustrated, and the fury consumed him. And the Bible tells us that he dragged out men and women and killed them. He voted against them for their death in front of their families, and yet they still met. They refused to deny, and they would not betray one another. Why? He touched the church. It was early, but as our brother shared yesterday evening, she was empowered by the living Holy Spirit that was building her up from birth to what she would become.

The Lord Jesus Is Alive in His Church

So, on that day, he sought permission to go to Damascus to hunt down more, and a light as bright as the sun shone down on him, and he said, “Who are You?” And the Lord Jesus said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” And the Lord said to him: “It is hard to kick against the goads, isn’t it?” He had been poking him for so long, but he saw the Lord Jesus alive in his church.

He was then led to Damascus to the house on Straight Street. Straight Street is a very appropriate name because the street was probably straight. But what happened there was a little bit of an alignment in Saul’s mind. He knew the Old Testament; he knew it back and forth. He knew that the picture of the church was back in the Old Testament, and it was all coming alive as he walked there, as he lay there in the dark, and then he had touched the church. So, he had two points of reference, and then the Spirit began to show him what he would do. He would teach him over time, eventually ending up in the letter that he wrote to the brothers and sisters in Ephesus. He shared with them the whole counsel of God and it became a three points alliance. It is like if you had a little eyesight, you could look down and see them all lined up, and it happened, straightened on Straight Street. The Lord began to show him the mystery of His will.

So, when he met with King Agrippa, and he stood there twenty-five years later he said, “I devoted my life to what I saw that day, that straight life, and I shared from it.” What we see as we read the Bible and the portions where he was charged to write what the Holy Spirit had put in his heart; we see that he continued to write about Christ and His church. And he is seeing in small ways, in large ways, in down to earth ways, and in heavenly ways, but the vision of it is dominant and saturated throughout all the words.

In the book of Ephesians, we read that he sees Christ and His church, a life that fills the fulness in the church that in the end there is the summing up of all these things into one. And it is a remarkable vision. As we mentioned for those of us who are limited like myself, when I heard it for the first time, I did not really know where it was going. All I could mutter to myself was, “It is not me; I did not even know.” And so, what happens is that the Lord begins to give us these pictures in Ephesians to help us begin to see what it means. And it aligns so much with what Saul had seen from the Old Testament, and it aligns so much with what he experienced of the early church. So, we would like to go through those three very briefly.

The House of God

The first picture, “We are a house of God.” And I would like to start, and I hope, brothers and sisters, if you can forgive me because I have tried to think about what Saul would have done when

he was persecuting the church, and it is not directly written in the Bible, but we can sort of sense it from the other things that he has written.

God's People Are Together

So, the first thing that I think they would have done based on what Gamaliel had told him: "Stop meeting together." That was one of the charges to the Pharisees. They wanted the Christians to stop gathering together because gathering together was the mark of the movement. And they knew it was over when the followers, the devotees stopped meeting together. As I mentioned, Gamaliel told them, "If it is not real, it will die. They will stop meeting together." Then he said, "Of course, if it is real, you will find yourself fighting against God Himself."

So, the Pharisees were familiar with controlling lives. They did it in a variety of ways. They threatened them with casting them out of the temple; they condemned them. It was a very easy way to get people to align, but it did not work with this group of people. They pressured them, they kicked them out of the temple, out of the synagogues, and yet they could not stop them. They kept meeting. The Bible tells us that the church grew over these years. "Stop teaching!" Peter was told, and Peter in Acts 4:20 was saying, "We cannot stop talking about the things we have seen and heard. You can capture us, you can kill us, you can torture us, but we will not stop meeting."

God's Glory Dwells Among His People

Why, brothers and sisters, did this affect Saul in this way, and how is it that it began to grow in his mind? It is because we are the house of God; we are the dwelling place for God in the Spirit. We will not stop meeting together, because this is the place where His glory dwells. So, fury engulfed him because these people believed in something. They believed in something so valuable that you could kill them, you could kill their families, and it would not stop them because this is the place where the Lord dwells.

Now I have a really good vantage point as my brothers have suggested, when I look back and it is a big room, and there are a lot of us. We know that we are here together today by His grace, but our hearts also bow because we know in this place, He is meeting with us. It is the place where His glory dwells.

He knew the Old Testament so well that he knew this had been why they existed in the past. They lived because the Lord met them at Mount Sinai, and He not only gave them the Ten Commandments, but He gave them the architectural description of a tabernacle where He could come down and be as close as He could to His people, though yet separated because of men's sins. It was like, "I wanted to draw as near as I could to the people whom I love, but I could not embrace them, and I had to be separated by a veil." But He came down for that purpose.

It reminds us of that famous picture during the height of covid where that old man, who was dying of covid, was putting his hand up against the barrier, and his wife, who was on the other side, was putting her hands against the barrier also. He loved her, but because he knew that direct exposure was a risk to her, there had to be a veil. So, what happened is that the Lord drew as close as He could.

God's Tabernacle and Temple Brought His People Together with a Purpose

We also know that when the tabernacle marched through the land of their enemies, they saw that the tabernacle was among the people. In other words, they saw the two together; they saw that this was a people who was separated from this world. They also saw and heard that there was a declaration of a King in their midst, and they saw that they would go for a distance and then stop, and they would meet around His presence. They knew who they were, they knew how they were aligned, and they knew that they belonged to one another because of Him. He knew from the Old Testament that this was what it was supposed to be.

Then he also knew that when Solomon's temple was built that the Shekinah glory came into that space and everyone fell on their face, just as he had fallen on His face. But he knew that Solomon had prayed: "This place, O Lord, when Your people pray to You, maintain their cause." They knew that the house gave them meaning and purpose. He knew that when people were taken away to the lands of their enemies, they would think back and remember the house. And it would give them courage to come back and rebuild the wall and the house. And they would be able to stand and watch as the house was being rebuilt and say, "The latter glory would be greater than the former glory."

The Believers, in Christ, are the House of God

He knew all these things, yet as he looked at the temple in his time, he also saw that it was a den of thieves. And the Lord Jesus, the Carpenter, said, "You tear this place down, and in three days I will raise her up again." And it was such a famous line that all the Pharisees knew it. They even used it to accuse Him when He was standing before the authorities to crucify Him. They all knew Saul had lined up. He was not talking about rebuilding a building; he was talking about the body of Jesus being raised up, and new life in Christians being birthed into the church.

He saw something that captured his heart; he saw and knew that the Lord Jesus was led out of the city, out of the tent to be crucified, and he knew that this old building was no longer what was true, that we are the house of God, and we are living stones. We were dead stones, but we were made alive when He died for us. His life was planted into our hearts; each one of us held that perfect, purposed place in His house. It all lined up; this is the house of God.

The Body of Christ

The second picture is that we are the body of Christ. So, what else could he have done? We mentioned earlier it would have been much easier for the persecutors to say, "Look, where are the other Christians? If you tell us where the other Christians are, we will let you go." It was a logical thing to say. The other thing we ponder is what Gamaliel would have said, "Who are the leaders? Because if you take down the leaders, maybe we can get the movement to end." We know that in the house the Lord told His people, "Consider each other more important than yourselves." He knelt and washed their feet, teaching them to love one another, and it permeated the church. So, the persecutors must have asked, but they would not turn each other in. That is why they went house to house because if they would betray others, they would be free, but they would not.

Brothers and Sisters Are Precious One to Another

I have this memory of the West Coast Christian Conference in 2017 when the responsible brothers asked me to organize a portion of it. And on the third day the wildest thing happened. The chief of police and the conference coordinator came to me and told me there had been a shooting threat against the campus, that there was going to be someone who would come in and shoot everyone. And I remember taking this as totally surreal, and I shared it with the brothers, but we did not know what to do. We did think about whether to cancel the meeting, and then I remembered that the decision was made that we should continue. But we were going to post two brothers at every exit, in the meeting place, at the front, every youth group, every children's ministry there would be two brothers. So, we gathered up brothers from all the different fellowships and told them what had happened. We let them know that we were going to need brothers to be at every door. And I remember, as I was telling them this, I did not know how else to say it, and I said, "I think you know what that means." And in the room, everyone was nodding. So, then you ask them, "No one needs to do this." We had counted how many doors there were, so who would be willing. And brothers and sisters, you know what happened. It was amazing! The sense of it, watching all these hands raised, you knew that in the house of God brothers and sisters are precious one to another.

The Head of the Church is Christ

At that time when Saul saw it, what was behind this devotion, dedication? They had to go house to house; it is infuriating to be so inefficient. And what about the leaders? Maybe they found some of the ones who were organizers. Maybe they were even able to drag them out, and maybe they died. And you could strike down all the leaders, but what would happen? They would still meet. Why? Because there is only one Head of the church. The Head of the church is not man who is mortal. You could strike all the men, but the church is a body, and the body has one Head. And He is the inspiration for all of us.

So, it must have driven them crazy. Why can't we stop these people? He had touched the church, and not only was it growing, nourishing, but being empowered by the Holy Spirit. And his mind must have gone to the Old Testament, and I honestly do not know what he would have thought about the people of God. Maybe it was the Levites, maybe it was the priests, maybe he thought of many.

The Church in the Cherubim

I recently read a book, or I should say that I am reading a book that is in public domain written by an old English minister named James Gosset Tanner. I found it and it is on Google. It is in the Public Domain so you can print it. I did not realize it was so huge. I would have brought it with me except I would have had to check in my luggage. It is this huge book, and it is called, "The Church in the Cherubim," and it is really interesting. He talks about the cherubim and how the cherubim and how they represent the church and the body of Christ as he was inspired in it. He said, "Why?" And he says, "Because the cherubim were charged as the protectors and defenders of the testimony of Jesus. The cherubim were placed where the glory of the Lord dwells. He was describing Ezekiel chapter 10 that the cherubim make this under an open heaven, that the

heavens are open and there is an extraordinary throne room above them, and the cherubim are there with their different faces. They have the nature and character of their Lord. And then there are these cool wheels within a wheel that go with them. And I do not know if they are sitting on them, riding them or whatever, but they move like lightening, as the Bible says. They are super-fast, and they do not turn, so you move but you do not turn, because there is a wheel within a wheel.

And Brother Kaung in this book “Glory: as Seen by Ezekiel” that is everyone is buying up, and on the last page of it he describes this wheel within the wheel. He says that the inner wheel is like Christ. And in Ezekiel chapter 10 it is like the Spirit of the Lord is right there in the middle of the wheel, and the outer rim of the wheel is like the church that is connected by all these spokes that are experiences and works of the Holy Spirit. Then the center, the hub, turns, and the wheel turns, and it is immediate. It sits under the open heaven, and the cherubim are there. And it speaks of this picture of the body of Christ, which is connected to the Head, and then the body is always waiting for the will of God, that when the Lord gives an instruction, the church moves. We are His outreach; we are His representative. We are the defenders of the things that are in His heart.

So, in this picture it is that the will of God is everything to the body of Christ because it grows up into the Head. And the will that comes from the Head into the body enables us to move in this way. That was seen in the cherubim, like the guardian angels, and they would move according to His command.

We remember when Peter, in his valiant defense of the Lord pulls out his sword, and looks at these people coming to attack, and he sees soldiers and servants: “I will strike the servant,” and he cuts his ear off. The Lord said, “Don’t you know that I have a legion of angels waiting at my command?” The cherubim were ready, and if He had given the command, it would have been over, done, no one would have stood a chance. But what we see here is the cherubim and the church and the body are waiting for the will of God. We are waiting for His command, for what He desires in our lives we are waiting for His command. The will of God is the highest priority to the body of Christ.

Fullness and Oneness in the Body

The Bible tells us that there is a fullness in the body, and that the expression of His life is coming together as one. And throughout the book of Ephesians there are these two themes, fullness and oneness, the breadth, the depth, the density, and the mass are full in the Head and in the body. It is also one. That One will out to all. One Head, every extremity of the body are all under governance from that one source. And so, this is what we begin to see of the house of God of the Christ and His church.

The Bride of Christ

The last picture is in chapter 5:25-31, and this of course is where our heart melts because the Lord says to us, “Husbands, love your wives, (that is important but that is not the point.) just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church

in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. So, husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.”

Ephesians 5:31 (from the Old Testament Genesis 2:24): “FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”

Divine Love Story – Picture of Two

So, what we see here is that He begins to tell us: “I have loved you from the beginning.” And it speaks to what our brother was saying yesterday morning that this story is really a divine love story that was from the beginning until now. And we begin to see that as you look into the Old Testament, and as we tell the story of Christ in the Old Testament, you always see Christ and another; there is always two. They are descriptions of the greatness of Christ in the pictures, but there is always two, and that is really the marvel of it.

You can see that when Saul was going after the Lord’s people, he would go and knock on the door, open the door, and say, “Are there any Christians in here?” What kind of person would say, “Yeah, actually there are.” It was not that he had to ask them to deny Him, all you had to do was stay silent. But he would ask the question: “Are there any Christians here?” And the people would not deny Him. Now why, brothers and sisters? This is not hard to believe because he believed in the process. Paul was a Roman; he believed that everyone deserved a trial, and they did it even with Stephen. You could see that he would say to them: “Are you a Christian? If you deny Him, you can go home.” And yet people would not deny Him. It is a remarkable thing, right? But he saw that in their minds they were fools, that they were fools who believed in something that Saul did not have.

Then as the light shone upon him, his mind must have gone back into the Old Testament, as we mentioned. All the pictures are two, and even from Genesis, when the Lord was creating beautiful and amazing things, He said, “It is good, this is good, and this is good, and that is good.”

He finishes all of that, and then he says, “It is not good that man should be alone. The trick of it is that there was no sin yet. So how come something is not good, because sin came later? Something was there that was not good or not whole, even from the beginning. So, before sin, before our little personal view of the universe which was, “I sinned, and I was saved.” Before that small aperture, there was a bigger picture that something was not whole, and he saw it there. As you think through the Old Testament, through the poems and the Psalms, and the Song of Songs there is always this picture of two that the Lord loves something. And this something drove all the things that He was doing, and because of that, He knew that He could not snuff this out because you cannot snuff out the love of Christ for His church. He began to realize that you cannot snuff out the love of the church for her Christ. It is growing and becoming real.

Christ Loves the Church

So, twenty-five years later he wrote in Ephesians chapter 5 that Christ loves the church. He began to see more and more, that it is the driving force for all these things. He saw the church as His bride, the one who belongs to Him, who makes him whole. There is a summing up of the two into one, and a man and a woman shall cleave to one another, and they shall become one.

So, this oneness becomes real to Saul, and he writes that all the work that Christ is doing, that He gave Himself for her, in order that He might present her to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And they should cleave to one another and become one. Saul began to see that, "Yes, there is to be individual Christians, which is the marvel of the work of God to save me from my sins. Then we see the wonder of the work of God that makes me a part of the church, and now I can see my brothers and sisters in the life of this love, and how precious it is that we have the chance to gather together.

Conclusion

As Saul looked back, he knew that this was the heritage of everything he had learned. However, he never saw it until he met these pesky Christians in this church that was in life, alive, courageous, who could not be foiled. And then a light struck, and something birthed in him. He was saved, and he knew that Jesus was alive. Then he looked down this view finder that aligned the Old Testament to the church that he had touched, to a church that he was making ready. And what he sees is that all along in history, He was saying, "I will build My church." He is always at work. He said, "The bride will be made ready, and the church, the body will grow in all things into the Head.

So, he begins to see that it is the summing up of these things into one, and that picture should strike us dead to see it, and yet the Lord made it visible to us and holdable to us. It is not separated from any of us, from our youngest to our oldest; it is the same vision that allows us to keep growing. So, we are thankful to the Lord. Tomorrow we will share about how the vision became manifested in his life as his eyes were opened.

Let us bow for a word of prayer:

Lord, we worship You and thank You for all the amazing things that You do, that You have done, and that You are doing, and that You will do. So, Lord, we pray, do those things for Your glory. We thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Contents

The Heavenly Vision as It Struck Paul	1
Introduction	2
Summing Up of All Things in Christ.....	4
Paul's Testimony to King Agrippa	4
Saul's Pedigree	5
Saul Was Poked by This Man Jesus and His Followers.....	6
The Lord Jesus Is Alive in His Church	7
The House of God	7
God's People Are Together	8
God's Glory Dwells Among His People.....	8
God's Tabernacle and Temple Brought His People Together with a Purpose	9
The Believers, in Christ, are the House of God	9
The Body of Christ.....	9
Brothers and Sisters Are Precious One to Another.....	10
The Head of the Church is Christ	10
The Church in the Cherubim.....	10
Fullness and Oneness in the Body	11
The Bride of Christ	11
Divine Love Story – Picture of Two	12
Christ Loves the Church	13
Conclusion.....	13

Speaker	P., David
Venue	Christian Family Conference
Date	July 2 nd , 2024
Link	https://christiantestimonyministry.com/item/the-heavenly-vision-as-it-struck-paul-