

GETTING GOD'S VISION

The apostle Paul was under house arrest in Rome in the early 60's. He made the most of his opportunity as he was chained to several Roman guards over a period of two years. He shared the message of the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Before his conversion, he was Saul....the persecutor of Christians. Then he encountered Jesus and was initially blinded for 3 days when he saw the light from heaven. But then, his physical eyesight came back. Even more importantly Paul's spiritual eyesight was transformed as he caught **God's vision for his life**. Paul now prayed for others, that they may have the same experience.

'.....that the **eyes of your heart** may be enlightened in order that you may **know** the **hope** to which he has called you, the riches of **his glorious inheritance** in the saints, and **his incomparably great power** for us who believe.' - Ephesians 1:18-19

I headed to Hope College with the hope of completing 4 years of college and 3 years of Seminary. As a young boy I knew that God had a call on my life to be in Christian ministry. I was in church three times a week. Sun AM, PM and Wed. prayer. Sunday morning meetings were formal and not everybody seemed to love Jesus like I did. I remember one man who always took a nap during the sermon. I felt closer to God in the Sunday evening services. There was lots of singing and it was good to be with those who were fully committed to Christ.

Fear entered my life at the age of four, which I only realized a few years ago. When I told my mother that I thought I knew when fear had entered my life, she mentioned the same instance. It was when I had been quarantined for a week at the hospital as they thought that I had polio.(turned out to be rheumatic fever). I still remember seeing my mother walk away on the sidewalk far below as I cried out; 'MOM!!!!' through the hospital window screen. It seemed that a spirit of timidity later plagued me in many areas of my life. **Fear is a thief**. It can hinder us from walking in God's plan for us.

Another key moment occurred in the 3rd year of high school. My father also had rheumatic fever as a child, but his heart had been damaged. He now needed heart surgery which required my brother and I to put in extra time to keep our dairy farm running. I had to choose one subject to neglect at school. I chose Trigonometry. I ended up failing it. Up until this time, I had always been near the top of my class throughout my school days. But now, seeds of a bad attitude were planted into my spirit which later produced a bad harvest in my life.

My first semester at college was a disaster grade wise. I was distracted by many people and things. Over the next semesters my grades improved but the damage had been done to adversely effect my grade point average. I drifted spiritually. In fact there was a period of 1 1/2 years when I did not even go to church. Not a good plan if one intends to be a minister. After 3 1/2 years I left college as I had **lost my vision**. The enemy of our souls will always try to cloud our vision and rob us of our inheritance in God. I knew practically nothing about spiritual warfare and the battle for the mind. I had lost the battle.... at least for awhile.

It was about 5 years later that **God began to open the eyes of my heart to the call** that He had given me as a boy. I had a hunger to read the Bible again. I also discovered the exciting new world of the Holy Spirit when I explored a Saturday night gathering of charismatics at a Catholic school in Erie, Pa. I arrived very early, sat in my car and scouted out the people who entered. They looked fairly normal, so I cautiously entered and sat in the back row of the semi-circle. There was a guitarist up front who led a time of worship. Eventually I moved up closer with the others. I got caught up with the heavenly atmosphere. I almost felt there must be angels there worshiping with us as I had never sensed God's presence in such a way before. I would return to the meeting again as I knew I wanted more of God in my life. Awhile later I found a closer meeting at a Catholic school in Jamestown, N.Y. It also included a 5 week Life In the Spirit Seminar. We had some great times of worship on those Thursday nights. I remember one person telling us of a similar gathering in upstate NY towards Syracuse where there was fire seen over the building where they were praising the Lord. I began to praise the Lord with all my might in hopes that God would send his fire in a similar

way! (it never happened...darn). It is normal to want to see God manifest things, but God also wants us to live in faith..... regardless of what we see or feel. God is still real and his Word is true. Nonetheless, I still want to **see** and **be in God's glory** here on this earth before I get to the glory in heaven!

I would later finish college but I never went to Seminary. God led me to a 10 week ministry school after I had read a book called: **Following the Fire**. It was the story of a Mennonite, Gerald Derstine, who had gone from Pennsylvania to Minnesota as a missionary Pastor among the Indians. In a time of **praying for revival**, they got more than they ever dreamed or expected. The Holy Spirit fell in a powerful way in 1955. Derstine was no longer welcomed among the Mennonite churches (until several years later). God had bigger plans. He began teaching about the kingdom of God and Life in the Holy Spirit. He later went to Florida to start a church in Sarasota. God then called him to open a Christian Retreat in Bradenton in 1968. All the top charismatic teachers came there during the winter season as meetings were held nearly every night of the week for 30 years. They still have a few conferences today but not nearly as many as they used to. Probably the most exciting one is the Feast of Tabernacles for 8 days every autumn. Derstine has seen hundreds of churches planted around the world through the movement and has established a few other Christian Retreats. It just shows what God can do through someone who has **tapped into God's vision and God's power**.

Keep praying Ephesians 1:15-23. This is one of the prayers that Mike Bickle has prayed nearly every day for 30 years. It is the most common prayer used at IHOP (the International House of Prayer) in Kansas City. I will share some of his insights next week.

God wants us to **receive his power**, but **FIRST** he wants us **to see Him** and to **see His plan.....the hope of our calling**.

AN AGGRESSIVE PRAYER FOR TERRORISTS

Glorious Father in heaven. You changed one terrorist, Saul, who was against Jesus and believers in him. As a new man, Paul wrote about your **glory** in 2 Corinthians chap. 3 and 4. He said the ministry of the Holy Spirit is **glorious** (3:8). He said we are transformed by that **glory** (3:18). He said that the god of this age has blinded the minds of people from seeing the light of the gospel of the **glory of Christ**. (4:4) God....you changed Saul from a persecutor to a preacher of that gospel. You can do it again!!!! You can reveal yourself to Isis terrorists. That same **glory** that changed Saul can change their key leaders. According to (4:6) you speak light into the darkness and change hearts.

You have given us authority in Jesus to speak boldly. **Light and glory** of Jesus..... come to key Isis terrorist leaders. Even as they seek to kill our brothers and sisters in Christ, may your **glory** be seen as it was upon the first martyr Stephen. May your **glory** be revealed to these Isis terrorists who are blinded by satan. We claim one key leader to be saved and become an ambassador for Jesus. In the glorious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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