

THE EFFECTUAL VISION OF GOD

We are calling today Vision Sunday. I like the positive aspect that title promises. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." The word "vision" is from the Hebrew word "chazown" which means a mental sight, i.e. a dream, revelation, or oracle, divine communication in a vision, prophecy, in other words, the writings of prophets. In other words, it means "a word from God." We can surmise that is what it means because the next phrase says, "...but he that keepeth the law...." So here we have God lining up "vision" with the law, the ultimate revelation from God. Then God closes the verse telling us, "...happy is he." There is guaranteed happiness to one who obeys the word from God.

To further verify the meaning of "vision" biblically, consider these Bible verses: I Samuel 3:1, "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision." Obadiah, verse 1a: "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom...." Habakkuk 2:2: "And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." II Samuel 7:17: "According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David." Acts 16:9: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Later Paul said in Acts 26:19, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Now that we have established that a vision is a word from God, examine what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 23:16: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD." So today's message must be more than a message that says, "This is what I want to do in 2016." If we are true to God's vision i.e., God's Word, the message would be finding out what God wants us to do and going in that direction. Let me share with you the truth of I John 5:14: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." There is power in doing what God reveals to us, for in the very next verse it says, "And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:15).

Let's take a look at my assignment as pastor of Christchurch Baptist Fellowship. Hebrews 13:7, 17: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of

their conversation. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." According to the biblical injunction, I am required as your pastor to speak the Word of God to you, realizing that I must stand before Christ and give account. And all of us must one day give an account at the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10, II Corinthians 5:10).

I pray that our vision will be effectual. "Effectual" means successful in producing a desired or intended result. The Greek word from which we translate our word "effectual" in the Bible is "energeo" which means active, efficient; be mighty in; to be operative, be at work, put forth power; to work for one, aid one. This is where we get our English word "energy." Breaking it down from the Latin root, "en + ergon" translates to "in or within + work." In other words, a deep inner working that brings positive and powerful action into play. My goal in this message is to bring the vision from God to become effectual in our lives. I am going to take the six times in the Bible the word "effectual" is used and hopefully we shall better see not merely the vision I have for you as your pastor, but the vision that God Himself has for you.

1. Find the will of God and do it.

The Bible says in Ephesians 3:7, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power." Every Christian has been gifted by God to do something in His service. He leaves no one out as revealed in Ephesians 4:16, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

2. Everything you have experienced in God's will is beneficial; accept it.

One of the great temptations, even among the most mature Christians, is to think of our trials as skirmishes of spiritual warfare that on any given day may award the victory just as easily to the Devil or to you. I Corinthians 16:9 tells us that we are indeed in warfare: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." But remember, the door God opens is effectual, full of the energy of power from God to do all things that God so desires for you (Philippians

2:13). So we need to acknowledge that I Peter 4:12-14 tells us, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” This is a far cry from “licking our proverbial wounds” as though we must live in defeat. Even among the most fiery trials we are to rejoice. Not only did Peter tell us this, but so did James in James 1:2-4.

The reason we can rejoice is found in II Corinthians 1:6, “And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.” In a fuller, more contextual study of this passage, we see in the preceding verses that all that God brings into our life is not only for our good, but also for ministry to others. Therefore, let us accept everything God brings to us in His will (Job 2:10; I Thessalonians 5:18).

3. Live in the light of eternity.

Paul said to Philemon in the 6th verse of the epistle with the same name, “That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” We all shall live somewhere forever. An overwhelming dream I have is to know that everyone I preach to will see me in heaven. May God help of all us to so communicate our faith that we influence countless thousands, if not millions, to come to Christ.

4. Pray with Power.

James 5:16 tells us, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” It is not prayer, but effectual prayer that makes the difference. My desire to pastor a praying church has not diminished. More than ever we must pray. Prayer brings what God wants to give us into reality. We can talk about vision, but that only metaphorically puts the “key in the door.” It is only when we pray that the key turns and the door is opened! Prayer clears the fog of the world allowing us to see the vision of God. Prayer activates our witness for the Lord. Jesus said in Luke 24:49: “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” We too often rush to make things happen, when God, all along, wants us to wait on Him in prayer until He moves the mountains through us according to His vision (Mark 11:23, 24).

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