

Vision - When God's Purpose Captures My Heart

Last Week

Last week we talked about VISION - defined as a way God communicates (either through a literal vision or through a word)

- We talked about how a vision from Jesus changed Paul's life forever
- It enabled him to overcome his past as a violent persecutor of the church
- It enabled him to lay aside the glory of personal accomplishment that he might know Jesus
- It captured the focus and commitment of his life for as long as he lived

Vision is from the LORD, not generated by man

- Jer 23:16 ESV Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. **They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.**
- Lam 2:9 ESV [*The Lord is speaking about Israel*]...Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; the law is no more, **and her prophets find no vision from the LORD.**

Nehemiah - a story of how a man receives the vision from the LORD

It usually starts with seeing the human condition

Neh 1:2-4 ESV that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And **I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.** 3 And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." 4 **As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.**

- God's vision starts with the human condition
 - He saw the condition of the children of Israel in Egypt and went to set them free
- He saw the multitudes like sheep without a shepherd and said pray the LORD of the harvest would send laborers
- The condition of his fellow countrymen, moved Nehemiah to weep and fast and pray

The reality of the condition of Jerusalem moved him to pray

Vs 5-11 ESV And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the **great and awesome** God who **keeps covenant** and steadfast **love** with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, **to hear the prayer** of your servant that I now pray before you **day and night for the people of Israel** your servants, **confessing the sins** of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. **Even I and my father's house have sinned.** 7 **We have acted very corruptly** against you and have not kept the 8 **Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments** and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant

Moses. 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and **give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.**

- His focus was on God's **greatness**, His **faithfulness to his covenant**, and his **steadfast love**
- He asked that God hear his prayer - and he positioned himself as a **SERVANT**
- His prayer was **day and night**
- He **confessed his sins** and the **sins of the people**
- He had **confidence because of the word of God** to Moses
- He **asked for success** in the presence of the king
- Somewhere along the line in his prayer, the LORD was giving him a plan
- STEP ONE - talk to the king

The growing desire to do something to change the situation helped him overcome fear

Neh 2:1-3 ESV In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. 2 And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." **Then I was very much afraid.**

Time in prayer produced a plan

3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" 4 Then the king said to me, "**What are you requesting?**" **So I prayed to the God of heaven.** 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you **send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it.**" 6 And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it **pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.** 7 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let **letters** be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, **that they may let me pass through** until I come to Judah, 8 and **a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams** for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And **the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.** 9 Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.

- **To be sent and to build the city**
- **He had a deadline in mind**
- **Letters of passage**
- **Letters requesting needed supplies**
- **THE KING GRANTED WHAT I ASKED --- FOR THE GOOD HAND OF GOD WAS UPON ME**
- **Nehemiah was carrying out God's vision**

As God was moving Nehemiah there were "naysayers"

10 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel. 11 So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days.

Vision = What God puts into his heart to do for Jerusalem

12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one **what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem.** There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode.

Vision looks at reality, but is not defeated, discouraged or overcome

13 I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the **walls** of Jerusalem that were **broken down** and its **gates that had been destroyed by fire.** 14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was **no room for the animal that was under me to pass.** 15 Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.

Vision will gather the help of others

16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, **and the rest who were to do the work.**

Imparting vision = taking what God has put in your heart to do and telling others

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." 18 And **I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good,** and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "**Let us rise up and build.**" So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

Neh 6:15 ESV So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

- This city lie in ruin for 70 years, they had the **manpower** and the **materials** for all those years, yet nothing was done...the only thing Nehemiah brought was the VISION from the LORD. And in 51 days the wall was built.

Vision gives us confidence that God will prosper the work - it is after all HIS

VISION

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" 20 Then I replied to them, "**The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build,** but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

I hope you are not dead to the condition of the world around us.
Is there a people group you are concerned about?
Maybe God is stirring your heart.
Set your heart to prayer and fasting - and see how the LORD speaks to you
You might find some plans begin to form
You may still fight fear
You may still find obstacles
But you can begin to move forward in the things the LORD is speaking