

COME UNTO ME

by

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CHAPTER TWO

THE HEAVENLY VISION

Tonight I read you some verses of Scripture from the 26th chapter of the Book of Acts.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself . . . I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth . . . Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:1, 9, 12-23).

I am taking as my text this statement of Paul, **“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”**

Paul is unquestionably the greatest argument for Christianity that there ever has been, that there is now, or perhaps there ever shall be, in all the world. This may be new to you, and yet I am sure it is not new to all of you.

The unbelieving Jew, who gives time to the study of Christianity, who hates it and tries to argue against it, despises, detests, and literally burns with hatred toward Paul the Apostle, more than toward anybody else who has ever preached the religion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I have heard them say with my own ears that Jesus was a good Man, that He was a great Jewish rabbi, but that Paul the Apostle twisted his arguments to make Christianity out of them; that it was not the intention of the Lord Jesus Christ to start a new religion at all. Of course, you and I know that it is just not so. Paul the Apostle was preaching the verities which are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why did Paul become a Christian? See it through for just a few minutes by way of introduction. He certainly did not become a Christian because it was the thing to do. He was the most unpopular man in the world of his day and time. The Jews hated him. The Romans despised him. His own fellow Christians debated with him. He was always in trouble. He had more trouble from the false brethren in the church than he had perhaps from all the rest of his enemies put together.

I will guarantee that the imprisonments, that the shipwrecks, that the hunger, that the tears, that the pains, he endured in preaching the gospel were nothing compared with the heartaches and heartbreaks, that were his because of the indifference, the defalcations of his fellow church members. Certainly Paul didn't become a Christian for popularity's sake.

NOT FOR POSITION

Paul did not become a Christian because it would give him an exalted position. He was a member of the Sanhedrin at the time that he became a Christian (the Sanhedrin, as you know, being the highest Jewish body of Paul's day and time). Certainly Scripture definitely teaches that Paul was leader, a ruler, an official among his people.

When he became a Christian, he became the offscourings of the earth. Everyone looked down on Paul, and thought that he had either lost his mind or that he was just a stupid fool to begin with.

NOT FOR PROFIT

Paul certainly did not become a Christian for profit. During most of his preaching days Paul made tests with his own hands in order to take care of himself and his party, even though it was contrary to the established custom of that day. The incident of the boy who fell out of the window and broke his neck and was restored to life by Paul, would indicate that Paul worked all day and preached all night.

BECAUSE OF PRESSURE WITHIN

No, my friends, Paul became a Christian because of the pressure within, because of the pressure on his heart, the pressure on his soul, the pressure on his life. That pressure came to him through the vision that he had of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only way this something can happen and keep on happening to us is that we have this vision of the Lord Jesus Christ constantly before us;

- The vision of the fact that He is the Son of cost,
- The vision of the fact that He died for our sins,
- The vision of the fact that God raised Him from the dead,
- The vision of the fact He ascended to glory,
- The vision of the fact that He is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us,
- The vision of the fact that he poured out this Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost,
- The vision of the fact that one of these glorious days He is coming again.

He will receive us unto Himself that we may reign, and rejoice with Him forever.

In Paul's case, as in our case, this vision works in three ways.

First of all, Paul the Apostle was not disobedient to the heavenly vision that saved him. He was saved by that vision. In what way? In these ways. First of all, that vision convicted him of his sinfulness. Paul the Apostle thought he was pretty good. Why? He could say concerning the law that he was without blame. Who of us can say that we have lived up to the law of God? Yet this man could say that he had been zealous, a righteous man, as righteous men went in the Jewish economy, all the day of his life. Paul never was a liar: he must have been telling the truth. Yet, when he measured himself by the standard of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he saw the beauty of Christ's holiness, when he saw the matchlessness of Christ's perfections, he abhorred himself. He realized his head to foot corruption and cried out for the age, **"There is none righteous, no, not one."**

You know, in my experience in personal work, sinners have brought up all sorts of excuses.

- They say, "Why, I am not so bad. I don't do this, I don't do that, I don't do something else, I don't do a fourth thing."
- They say, "Why, I am just as good as the hypocrites in the church. Why, I am just as good as the people you have on your church rolls."

But if you can get those sinners face to face with Jesus Christ, every argument stops. I have seen that so many times, I have no hesitation in saying that it is a divine rule. There is something about Jesus that strips every man of defense, every man of excuse, every man of debate, every man of false hope, every man of any sort of consideration of his own goodness, of his own righteousness, let alone of his own holiness.

Not only did this heavenly vision convict Paul, it also converted him.

- It convicted him of his sinfulness.
- It convicted him of his helplessness.
- It convicted him of his powerlessness.

He realized in a blinding flash of revelation that none of his works could save him, that he needed the salvation of God.

- It converted him to a compulsion to throw himself upon the Lord, to seek salvation God's way.
- It converted him by stripping him of every sense of personal merit.
- It converted him by constraining him to throw himself on the mercy of the Lord, on the blood of Christ.

It was R. A. Torrey who used to repeat this story again and again. How appropriate, how true it is, and will continue to be in this dispensation of grace.

He said he held a revival in a city in Scotland. I have forgotten its name. He mentions it. He stayed at an inn one night, by special invitation. It wasn't very large. It was a family hotel, comparatively small. When he got ready to go to bed, Dr. Torrey suggested that, inasmuch as it was a family hotel, the servants and guests should come together to have a family worship. The innkeeper went around, knocked on the guests' doors, and told everybody that Torrey was there and would like them together. They all came, servants, guests and everybody, and gathered in the lobby of the hotel.

Dr. Torrey turned to the innkeeper, saying, "Are they all here?"

The innkeeper looked around, looked at Torrey, hesitated a minute, then said, "They are all here." Torrey led them in prayer, read some scripture and called the innkeeper to pray. Then they went about their business. As they started out, Torrey said to the hotel man, calling him by name, "Are you sure they were all here?"

"Well, no, but I couldn't stop to explain. The scullery maid is in the kitchen. I asked her to come, but she said she was too dirty. She had been scrubbing pots and pans. She didn't care to come."

"Is she still there in the kitchen?"

"Yes."

Torrey went back to the kitchen. The girl looked up at him, but went on with her work. The great preacher drew a stool to her side.

"Daughter," he said, "are you a Christian?"

"No, No."

"Do you go to church?" "Never."

"Have you read your Bible?" "Hardly any."

"Would you like to be a Christian?" "I don't know how."

"Would you like to be a Christian?" "Yes."

"I will tell you what to do. You read the New Testament and pray this prayer, 'Lord, show me myself. Show me myself.'"

Torrey left the inn that night and went about his preaching. About three or four months later, he came back to the same town, and put up at the same family hotel.

The innkeeper greeted him, "I am so glad to see you. What did you do to that girl? What did you tell her? What did you say to her?"

"What's the matter with her?"

"Why she's crying all the time. She won't eat. She is losing weight. I don't know what to do with her. Can't you do something?"

"Where is she?"

"She is in the kitchen working."

Torrey walked into the kitchen. The girl looked up, dropped her work, bowed her head, began to sob aloud. Torrey pulled a stool to her side, sat down, calmed her quietly, then said:

"Daughter, why are you crying?"

She said, "You remember what you told me to do?"

"Yes."

"I have been reading my New Testament and praying, 'Lord, show me myself,' and He showed me myself. I'm lost. I'm a sinner. I'm going to Hell." She began to sob again. Torrey waited for the storm of her feelings to subside.

"Daughter," he said, "I want you to change your prayer. Keep on reading the New Testament, but now pray, 'Lord, show me Thyself.'"

Several years later, when Torrey was coming back from his swing around the world, he preached in a great hall in London one afternoon. At the close, a well dressed, intelligent looking, stately young woman came up to him, reached up her hand, and as he bent down from the platform, smiled up into his face, and said, "How are you, Dr. Torrey?"

"I am fine, but who are you?"

"I am the scullery maid you talked to in the hotel."

"Well, daughter, what happened to you?"

"When I prayed, 'Lord, show me myself, I saw all the sins of my life. When I began to pray, 'Lord, show me Thyself,' I saw the holiness of Jesus, the perfections of the Son of God, the

blood He shed for my sins. I have accepted Him as my Saviour, and I am now on my way to Heaven rejoicing.”

It was a different story. The vision that convicts us, that shows us our utter unworthiness, that shows us our guilty corruption is supplanted by the vision that converts us, that leads us to accept Christ—Christ’s merits, Christ’s death, Christ’s resurrection, Christ’s power, Christ’s offer of our salvation.

THE VISION THAT SENT HIM

That is not all. I believe the Apostle Paul meant it when he said, “**Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.**” Not only was Paul obedient unto the heavenly vision which saved him, but he was also obedient unto the heavenly vision that sent him, that sent him out to serve God. Yes, *he was called to salvation*, but *he was also commissioned to service*. Yes, he “**was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision**” that sent him. Here, also you have a twofold vision.

THE VISION OF A LOST WORLD

First of all, there is a vision of a world lost in sin, of men, women, children, all about us, on the road to eternal torment, to fearful destruction, to endless desolation, to everlasting doom.

Listen carefully, my friends. If in your heart there is not a burning compassion for the souls of men, put a question mark after your own salvation. The first thing that happens to you when you are converted is that you want to see somebody else saved.

My friends, the very first thought that comes into your soul then is that somebody else might get to know the joy that you have experienced because you have accepted Christ as your Saviour. Before you are a Christian, you can walk up and down the streets, you can see men going into saloons, young people going to shows, to dance halls, drunkards reeling around, and it doesn’t seem to affect you.

But the minute you are washed in the blood, the minute you are regenerated by the Spirit—that minute your soul becomes concerned for the souls of others. Listen, friends, as I warn you! If in your heart there is not a desire, a deep desire, an impelling desire to tell others about Jesus, remember I am warning you, you will face this at the judgment,

- You are probably no more saved than Judas Iscariot.
- You are probably no more saved than was Pilate or Caiaphas.
- You are probably no more saved than anyone else who turns his or her back on the Son of God.

THE VISION OF GOD’S PROVISION

The second part of the vision that sent him was not only the need of the world but the gracious, merciful provision made by God to supply this need in, by, through, and because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen. I am not going to pay a bit of attention to you, so don't come and give me any advice, any suggestions. I have received advice from all over the world. I have received numberless suggestions. I suffer dreadfully with hay fever. Don't come and suggest any cures. I know all. I know them better than you do. I have taken enough medicine to float the United States Navy. I have been to the best doctors in America. There is nothing that can be done about it, not a thing. Just put me in the best cave and seal it. During the months of April, May, June, the hay fever will get me. This place is no exception.

The dearest, sweetest, greatest, most concerned people in the world, kindly, graciously, helpfully, come to suggest remedies, panaceas, sure cures. They are genuinely sincere. Why? Because somewhere down the line they thought they had hay fever—perhaps did have it. They obtained a cure for it. It helped them. They like me, so they want to pass it on to me.

Listen. Supposing, God forbid, your child were to get sick of a nameless disease. The doctors couldn't do a thing for that child. The child was dying. A specialist came, examined the child, diagnosed the case, gave you a prescription. You went to the drug store. You filled it. You gave it to the child. The child lived—got well. A bit later a dreadful epidemic broke out in your city. Children of every sort and description were sick with the same sickness your child had had. You knew the doctor. You knew the medicine. You kept your mouth shut. You know what they ought to do to you? They ought to tar and feather you. You ought to be scourged to death because you withheld the life-saving medicine from children that were dying.

Here we are, you and I. Here is Paul the apostle. We know the source of the balm of Gilead. We know where men, women, children can find the supply, the medicine that will save them from hell. Yet we sit still and do nothing about it. Oh, God, stir our souls, break our hearts, melt us into a burning blazing passion for the lost. Yes, the vision first sent Paul to Calvary for his own supply of life giving blood. The vision then sent Paul, with that blood, to a world lost in the death and depths of sin.

DR. TRUETT'S STORY

Dr. Truett used to tell this story. He said this years ago in his own church in Dallas. In that tremendous church he preached a great sermon that day. More than twenty people came down the aisles to Christ. One of them was a German servant girl. She had just come from the old country. She spoke broken English. She was a girl of about twenty. Dr. Truett walked up to her, heard her confession of faith, then said:

“Daughter, the deacons are having a meeting tomorrow night. You come, present yourself to the deacons that we may talk to you about your salvation, and recommend you to the church for membership, for baptism.”

She said, “Thank you.”

He turned away to greet the rest of the people who had responded to the Gospel invitation. The girl started to cry softly. Dr. Truett going back to her, said:

“Daughter, I am not asking you to wait because I doubt your salvation. We do it to everybody. It is customary in this church that a candidate for baptism meet with the deacons.”

Rising to her feet, she sobbed out, “Dr. Truett, I am not crying because you are making me wait. I don’t mind that at all.”

“Well, why are you crying?”

“Dr. Truett, my twenty-three-year-old brother lives with me. We came over together from Germany. He is not a Christian. Dr. Truett, please pray and ask these people to pray that my brother will be saved.”

She had no more than finished when the chairman of the Board of Deacons spoke up, “Brother Pastor.”

The pastor said, “Brother Deacon.”

“Brother Pastor, I move that we accept this young woman as a candidate for baptism, and after baptism accept her into full membership in this church, because she has already given ample and abundant proof of her salvation.”

That’s right.

- Up to that minute, she wasn’t crying about her brother.
- Up to that minute, she didn’t care a thing about her brother.
- Up to that minute her soul was not for her brother.

But, the minute she came over on Christ’s side, there was agony in her soul that her brother might find the freeness of salvation through God’s grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul knew all this. Paul felt it! It drove him! It constrained him! He couldn’t sleep nights. He couldn’t be quiet days. He was in a holy torture, in a holy agony, in a nameless anguish. He had a longing to bring others to the fountain of life.

But, even that is not all. There is one more thing, one more truth in this text. I know I speak the mind of Paul. When we get to heaven, I will introduce truth?”

He will say, “Son, you surely did.” Perhaps he will say, “Brother, you surely did.”

VISIONS THAT SUSTAINED

Not only was Paul “**not disobedient to the heavenly vision**” that saved him, not only was he “**not disobedient to the heavenly vision**” that sent him, but he was “**not disobedient to the heavenly vision**” that sustained him.

There never was a child of God in all the history of Christianity who had as much trouble as did Paul. There never was a man who went through as much for Jesus as did this man. He suffered at everybody's hands. He was the most maligned, the most ridiculed, the most misunderstood, the most criticized preacher perhaps of all the ages. To this day, in Christian circles, Paul is still being criticized, is still being castigated.

Why, if the modernists could take Paul out of this book, they would have a shindig. They would throw the biggest party that theologians have ever thrown in the history of the world, that is if you can call such men theologians who haven't a thing to do with the "Theos" and refuse to accept the "*logos*." However they call themselves theologians. Theology means the Word of God, the study of God. They haven't the Word of God and they haven't God. Paul the apostle was tested by God. The vision of Christ sustained him. He could find help nowhere else.

First of all, there was *the vision of his own assured salvation*.

"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

How can anybody say, "You can't know when you are saved?" Why, it is giving the lie to Paul the apostle. He knew that he was saved. He had the assurance of it. He was sustained by the certainty of his salvation. If Paul the apostle had lived in Texas, he would have used that old Negro spiritual:

I'm sometimes up, and I'm sometimes down,
But thank God, I am heavenward bound.

He knew that. That was the satisfaction, the source constant of joy to him. Come weal, come woe, come mistakes, come sins, come sufferings, come misunderstandings, he was going to reach heaven one of these days. His own salvation was a source of sustenance to him.

But to go on, there was not only the vision of his own salvation, but *there was also the vision of the salvation of others*.

There was the sustaining vision of the multitude pressing into the kingdom of God. Permit this. Men have come to me and said, "How can you keep it up?"

I preach three and four times a day. I preach more than a thousand, generally about twelve hundred, sermons a year, morning, noon and night—strain, drive from one meeting to another—morning services, radio services, special meetings, the exhausting night hours, cold churches, warm churches, fast, slow, swift moving; all kinds of circumstances and conditions.

I'll tell you. I've got some vitamins that are a whole lot better than A.B.C.D. They are a whole lot better than Vitacaps. They are a whole lot better than Unicaps. They are a whole lot better than anything science has ever been able to discover. You know what my vitamins are? I will tell you. When I see a flood of souls come down the aisle for Christ, Devil, you had better get out of my way because I will knock you out if you don't!

There are your vitamins. When you see scores, hundreds pour down the aisles, you just pant, pant, pant, for the next time to preach. You just can't wait for the next time to get up there to give the invitation. I see some of you understand. Some of you do not. I am sorry if you do not. It is joy in the Lord, assurance, certainty, positiveness, happiness, when you see people come flocking to Christ, induced to accept Him as Saviour by your own testimony.

But, we hasten on. The vision that sustained him not only sustained him in his own salvation, not only sustained him in the fruitfulness of his life, in the salvation of others, but *it also sustained him in satisfaction.*

There was the fact that one day he was going to cross chilly Jordan, to look long into the shining face of Jesus, to hear from the lips of Jesus, **“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”**

Remember where he himself says,

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Oh, my friends,

- The vision that saves us is available to every one of us by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The vision that sends us is available to everyone of us upon the dedication of ourselves to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The vision that sustains us in the assurance of our own salvation, and in the salvation of others.

It will constrain us to say, “Jesus Christ is my Saviour. I am enthroning Him as my Lord and Master. I care not what others may do, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

My prayer is that God might give every one of us a renewed vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. That vision will save us. That vision will send us. That vision will sustain, and keep on sustaining us until the day we drop at the feet of our Redeemer to receive the certain crowns of reward that are waiting for every one of us. God grant it through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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