

Faith Part 2 – Vision for the Journey (3-17-2019)

New Series: Faith – Seeing our way Home

Review: Introduction to the series - Story of Gideon: God sees & believes long before we do, and He is with us!
Our response: Wrestle with Him, Trust Him, and tear down idols that hinder us walking with Him.

Key Verse: For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

This Week: Vision for the Journey

1) Our Aim

Hebrews 11:1-3 (ESV)

(1) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (2) For by it the people of old received their commendation. (3) By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Vs. 1: We need Vision – or an Aim, without it we are lost.

We want things to be better. We want to make progress. So, we are constantly changing things, looking for improvement.

However, 1 big flaw: We equate change to progress. Change is not progress, its just change. It might be good, neutral, or bad. Its only progress if the change has an aim, and its only progress if we aim rightly! Listen, it is hard enough if we are aiming for the right mark and missing it, but we have no hope if we are aimless, or aiming for the wrong thing and hitting it!

We live in a truly aimless generation. So how do we learn to Aim? The writer of Hebrews answers and says:

1st - Faith admits our blindness, and then looks toward what we cannot see, in search of this vision . . .

Vs. 2: We can learn to aim by looking back to our elders (Tradition)

Vs. 3: We can learn to aim by looking to the unseen that sits behind the seen (Natural World)

Vs. 3: Ultimately - We can learn to aim by listening to the very Word of God that made the natural world and led the elders of old followed it. (God's Word)

2 quick notes before our primary focus (as was Hebrews) upon God's Word as the source of Vision . . .

- a) **Tradition** – We are so quick to reflect on what our elders have gotten wrong, we disregard them as archaic and flawed, and so look to our own “wisdom” & “progress” instead. Yet, each generation considers themselves wise – what will our children look back on in disgust & shame?

Let's look at G.K. Chesterton and his warning against so quickly disregarding what has been passed down . . .

G.K. Chesterton from his book: "Orthodoxy"

It is obvious that tradition is only democracy extended through time. It is trusting to a consensus of common human voices rather than to some isolated or arbitrary record . . . Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about.

Notes: Tradition is the stuff that stuck, that lasted. The key is keeping it fresh for you, and then holding our "traditions" to the standards upon which they were based. Not over correcting, but correcting. Don't trade one over-emphasis or under-emphasis for another. Let's follow the full gospel of Jesus!

- b) **Natural World** – Read Romans chapter 1 for Paul's explanation on how we can see the evidence for God in the world around us. And his heart-breaking description of what happens when we choose to close our eyes to that reality. If you can read that chapter and not think of our nation right now, you need to get you head out of the sand!

Now let's turn our attention to the source that enables us to aim rightly . . .

2) Our Map

"For lack of vision, the people perish" – (old KJV)

- **Vision** – means: "Prophetic Word". Used throughout scripture to describe . . .
 - The written Word of God
 - Divine revelation – people Hearing God's Voice
- **Perish "Cast off Restraint"** – means: to let go, ignore, loosed of restraint, to act as leader
 - Often translated as uncovered, naked, refusing instruction, set at naught (aimless)
 - Basically what we previously described: aimless or aiming wrongly!

Examples of "Casting off restraint" . . .

Proverbs 13:18 (ESV)

Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.

Proverbs 15:32 (ESV)

Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

There is a 2nd half to this verse that we rarely quote, let's read the whole thing . . .

Proverbs 29:18 (ESV)

Where there is no **prophetic vision** the people **cast off restraint**, but blessed is he who keeps the **law**.

- **Law** – means: Torah. This is used to describe both the original 1st 5 books of the bible, and later as a reference to the whole of scripture. We are called blessed if we keep to God's Word!

- **Note: Sadly, often in church circles the 1st half of this verse is used, followed by a call to follow the “leaders” vision** – which is really just pushing forward someone else’s agenda, instead of urging people to follow the call of God! This has undermined our focus being on following God and His Word, and has harmed people’s views of “tradition” along the way because we have misrepresented the vision God calls us too!

Can we trust the Bible? This has been under-attack since the only instruction of God was, “Enjoy this awesome garden, but whatever you do, don’t eat that!”

So, why trust the Bible?

- **History** – Hittites, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon & Cyrus of Persia
- **Archeology** – Dead Sea Scrolls & Masoretic Text
- **Prophecy** – Jesus birthplace (Micah 5:2), Daniel 9 prophecy & Palm Sunday (The Coming Prince by Robert Anderson), Isaiah 53 describes in detail the death of the Messiah, as if he was at the foot of the cross.
- **Harmony of The Bible** - 66 books – 39 O.T., 27 N.T., written by 40 authors, in 3 languages, from 3 continents, over 1,600 years, with 1 central theme: The redemption of mankind by a loving God who would send a Savior!
- **Personal witness** – Billy Graham story (pg. 210 in Streams of living water)

3) Our Guide

A.W. Tozer Sermon: “Truth Is A Person”

Let me say boldly that it is not the difficulty of discovering truth, but the unwillingness to obey it, that makes it so rare among men. Our Lord said, "I am the Truth." And again He said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Truth, therefore, is not hard to find for the very reason that it is seeking us! So we learn that Truth is not a thing for which we must search, but a Person to whom we must hearken! In the New Testament, multitudes came to Jesus for physical help, but only rarely did one seek Him out to learn the Truth. The whole picture in the gospels is one of a seeking Savior, not one of seeking men. The Truth was hunting for those who would receive it, and relatively few did, for "many are called, but few are chosen."

Truth is a person, and He is personally pursuing you & me! Remember when we are talking about following God’s Word, we are really talking about following the God that the Bible points to!

Hebrews 11:32 (ESV)

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets

Let’s look at the start to Samuel’s faith Journey as a young child, the story is found in 1 Samuel chapter 3 . . .

1 Samuel 3:1, 4-5, 8-10 (ESV)

(1) Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD in the presence of Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision. . . (4) Then the LORD called Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" (5) and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. (*Note: this continued several times, until finally*) . . . (8) And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. (9) Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. (10) And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

- **Aimless Generation** - There was a lack of vision in that day (as there is today, and always)
- **Broken Tradition** - Eli was a broken & flawed priest, but at least He knew to point Samuel to listen to God's Voice, and obey
- **Walking by Faith** - Samuel heard God speak, and humbly position himself to listen - the rest is history!

Conclusion: Paul in Romans chapter 10 unpacks our receiving of the Gospel, through the power of God and the faithful witness of those who have passed it down to us. And he summarizes by writing these words . . .

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

My closing thoughts:

Maybe I'm wrong . . . in devoting my life to Jesus and His words, to believing in the good Heavenly Father that Jesus loved & followed even unto death, and maybe I'm wrong trying to listen and follow the Holy Spirit whose presence Jesus promised to those who believed. But even if I'm wrong, I can't think of a better Aim to have, a better Road to walk, and a better Companion and Guide to follow. Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't believe Jesus is wrong, and I don't have enough faith to discount Him.