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# THE HEAVENLY VISION

by Jonathan

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“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” (Acts 26:16-19).

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

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The gospel of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” reveals that man is a sinner and Jesus Christ became our substitute in taking our place on the cross- “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Even though God’s plan of salvation is simple, pride and self-righteousness have caused multitudes to be held as captive to a bondage that is deadly: the bondage of religion. We say that religion is a terrible bondage because it consists of “the works of the law”. The Bible, in Galatians 2:16, teaches us, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”. We recognize that while the law (which is good and proper in its rightful position) was given by God (read Romans 7:12), it would still not effect salvation whatsoever. Actually, it was purposed by God to show the utter sinfulness of man and how he would not be able to keep it perfectly- “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Moreover, whenever we attempt to add works (which constitute law) to God’s salvation, we are in reality, adding a curse upon ourselves. You see, for almost every one of us, prior to our coming to Jesus, we were all exposed to some philosophy, religion and tradition in whatever capacity. Without realizing them as such, we continue to allow certain seemingly noble code of ethics and reasoning (of our upbringing or religious traditions) and we intertwine them with our Christianity. In order for us to be free from the bondage of religion and the curse of the law, it becomes

necessary for us to cease leaning on the arm of the flesh and begin identifying totally and completely with the substitutionary (as well as expiatory) atoning work of Christ on the cross. Knowing this, as we encounter problems, or what may even look like total defeat, we will cast ourselves at the foot of the cross, submitting and yielding ourselves absolutely to the Master.

### **NO CONDEMNATION**

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

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It may sound strange, but it is generally true. We Christians preach love and forgiveness to the unsaved, but whenever we fail the Lord through sin and disobedience, we allow condemnation and guilt to overwhelm us even after we have confessed our wrongdoings. It seems that we want to do penance of some kind to merit the attention of God, to prove that our confession is genuine and sincere.

Instead of trusting the One who has provided the Lamb for the offering, we prefer to suffer and toil to work up an atonement. O, what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear! The gospel of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” submits to us that no amount of works or prayers can effect anything towards contributing a basis of our acceptance before our God. We need to understand that we are holy and righteous not because we have a great prayer life or because we have great knowledge in the Bible (as noble and as necessary as they certainly are!), but because we are trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary and the Resurrection. Any thing that we substitute in the place of Christ and Him crucified becomes works and can lift us up in “the pride of life” (according to 1 John 2:16). For example, if we think that our prayers merits us some favour with God, then we would have fallen into the place of carnality, the arena of the flesh.

### **GLORY IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

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In order for us to walk in the Spirit and to allow the grace of God to flow abundantly through our lives, we need to remove the idols that might have subtly penetrated into our spiritual walk even after we have been born-again. I believe an idol is any thing that we give allegiance and preoccupation to any way other than the place of God. Even the legitimate and noble things can be made into an idol- if we are not careful. For example, whatever that arises from mere duty, be it our praying, our study of God’s Word or our good works- other than with pure joy and love of the Lord become our idols.

Lest we lose sight of the focus of Bible Christianity which is grace and grace alone, we need to be consumed with “the heavenly vision” to not only preach the gospel, but to “live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14) as well.

And while the modern pulpit is standing with more and more preachers with higher levels of education, we should understand that it is just a mere vehicle (as helpful and as wonderful as it is) in the supernatural work of God. The Word of God still charges every minister and believer alike to fulfill the call with total dependency on the ways of the Holy Spirit whereby the exercise of faith will endue and equip him in a greater capacity than with mere intellect alone. Paul said, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). You see, true Spirit-filled missions workers when ministering in places steeped in idol or even demon-worship will attest that it is still the simplicity of the gospel, preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit that will break the yoke of bondage and set the scores of people free. The level of education is of little consequence when it comes to engaging in spiritual warfare. And I can think of no better example than to direct you to the words of one of the most learned man of his day, the Apostle Paul, and he said, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:7-8).

Friends, I realize that such a liberating truth in the Bible may sound foolish to the ears of the spiritually unregenerate, but if we are to be found diligent and faithful to the call of God upon our lives, then we must be humble and yet bold enough to cast “down imaginations, and every high

thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). We need to lay down all of our self-determined efforts of the flesh and say instead, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:20-21).

I pray that you will embrace the gospel of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” if you have not already done so. The invitation is for you to trust in the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world!

Will you submit to the Saviour’s bidding and come now?

Praise the Lord!

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