

A SPIRITUAL VISION FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

1 Pet.2:5; Eph.2:21,22; 2 Cor.3:1-6,8

I. REASONS FOR A SPIRITUAL VISION

1. Apostasy of the Last Days.

2 Tim.3:1,5,7: But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim.4:1-3; 2 Tim.3:13; Matt.24:5-14,24).

2. A Tendency Towards Blindness.

-Without the regulating, preserving influence of spiritual discernment and conviction we lose staying power and drift towards extremes and lose priorities.

2 Pet.1:2,3,5-9a: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the *knowledge* of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the *knowledge* of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue *knowledge*, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the *knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness....”

3. The Problem of Forgetting God’s Spiritual Plan for the Church.

2 Pet.1:9b-15: “...and has *forgotten* that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 For this reason I will not be negligent to *remind* you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by *reminding* you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease (See also Hosea 4:6; Jer.3:21).

4. The need of a witness and testimony of the remnant church (1 Kings 19:18).

Matt.24:13,14: But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

II. THE GOALS OF THE SPIRITUAL VISION

1. To Glorify God.

John 15:8: By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

2. The Salvation of Souls.

Matt.28:18-20: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.

3. The Sanctification of the Saints.

1 Thess.4:3: For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

Heb.13:13: Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

1 Pet.3:15: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

III. THE MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING THE GOALS

Through the corporate body by:

1. A Spiritual Ministry.

- A church grows spiritually in a spiritual environment.

1 Peter 2:5: You also, as *living stones*, are being built up a *spiritual* house, a holy priesthood, to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Eph.2:21,22: In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

2 Cor.3:1-6,8: 1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you? 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart. 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

2. A Balanced Ministry.

-We need the balance of both word and Spirit.

-We are either a means of life or a means of death.

2 Thess.2:13: But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

John 4:23,24: But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

2 Cor.3:6: Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Tim.3:7: Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

3. A Christ Centered Ministry.

1 Cor.2:2: For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Gal.6:14: But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Gal.2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Rom.10:4: For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

1 Cor.3:11: For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

2 Cor.3:18: But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

4. A Praying Ministry

Isa.56:7: Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will *be* accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.

1 Tim.2:1,8: Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men. 8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

5. A Discerning Ministry.

1 Tim.4:1: Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

2 Pet.1:9: For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Col.1:9: For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

1 Cor.8:2,3: Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. 2 And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.

Ja.3:13-17: Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

6. A Determined Ministry.

Rev.2:2-5: I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

Rev.3:1-5,14-19: And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. 4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 14 And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Through the Individual Members By:

1. Knowing Christ (Eph.3:17-19; Eph.3:3-5; Col.1:27; 2:19; 2 Thess.1:10,12).
2. Walking in the Spirit (Gal.5:16; Rom.8:1-16).
3. Living as Lights in Darkness (Eph.5:8-14).
4. Edifying the Body of Christ (Rom.14:19; 1 Thess.5:11; 1 Cor.14:26; Eph.4:16).
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Through the Deacons By:

1. Caring for the physical needs of the church (Acts 6:1-6).
2. Relieving the elders of unnecessary administrative duties (Acts 6:3,4).
3. Being channels of spiritual life (1 Tim.3:9ff).
4. Being examples of faithful service (1 Cor.4:2).

Through Elders By:

1. Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph.4:11,12).
2. Uniting the saints more deeply with Christ (Eph.4:13).
3. laboring to Present the saints perfect on the last day (Col.1:28; 1 Tim.4:16; Heb.13:17).

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