

“Step 3 - The Power of Vision”

Romans 8:12-17

Why should I deny myself this pleasure? Why should I refuse to harm myself and live through another day with depression? Why should I refuse to let rage, fear, prejudice, lust, hunger, envy, etc. swell up and take control of me? Why do I fight this fight day after day, year after year? What do I have to gain? Surely I'm not that important in any grand scheme of things. It would be so much easier to let go and let these things have their way. These are the sorts of thoughts that undermine a person's determination to live free. Last week we saw that in order to live free of depression, temper, appetites or addiction I must honestly answer this question: "Am I really willing to live without this?" It's possible to surrender to Jesus but still love certain sins or be comfortable with familiar areas of pain. We saw that God must give me a revelation of the death in these to escape their grip. But if I'm going to stay free over a lifetime it's not enough to just see the death. If I am to have a true resolve to obey it's even more important that I see the prize, which means I have another important question to answer: "Why do I want to be free?" To be free I must learn to say "yes," not just "no."

Review the message of Romans 1-8
Read Romans 8:1-4, 12-17

The nature of the battle

Living free means learning to find freedom moment by moment, and day by day. We will certainly experience real stages of victory, and the intensity of the battle in certain areas will diminish dramatically. But the truth is there will always be temptations and assaults until we see Jesus. When I receive Christ my spirit loves Him and wants to obey, yet Paul says:

- 1) The body we live in has been "sold into bondage to sin" (Ro 7:14)
- 2) There are forces in the members of my body that wage war against the obedient desires of my mind (Ro 7:23)
- 3) There is also a definite spiritual component to the battle in which the enemy can come to influence and harass (Ro 16:20; Eph 6:12-17)

So living in freedom doesn't come from just one event or a special prayer. It's a lifestyle with a new set of skills by which I quickly and effectively draw on the Holy Spirit many times a day. And when I do I discover how great His power is and that He never leaves me.

It's one thing to win a battle, it's another to win the war, and we might think to ourselves, "Wow, that's hard" and in the truth, it is. But there's something harder, something far more difficult than winning these battles, and that's losing them.

- Romans 6:6, 12-14, 16-23
- We are all slaves of someone, either we are controlled by our body appetites, the compulsive rebelliousness and independence we were born with, and the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2)
- Or: we freely make ourselves slaves of God by constantly presenting our thoughts, appetites and emotional impulses as slaves to righteousness

Frankly, it's a far more difficult path to be enslaved to my body and my rebellion and demonic control.

The power of vision

People who live free and stay free are people who are pursuing a vision. For them life is full of importance; so every day is valuable and they are glad to be alive. They see themselves in a long race and their hearts anticipate a great prize at the end. They aren't running away from things, they're running toward something, and as they run hindrances, obstacles, temptations and assaults are seen as dangerous distractions and enemies that have come to steal away glorious victory. So when they arrive they are put aside with relative ease because the desire for the prize is so strong. Proverbs says it this way:

- Proverbs 29:18 - "Where there is no vision (prophetic direction which God has shown people; they "see" it in their mind) the people are unrestrained" (out of control, let loose, uncovered, run wild; Ex 32:25).

As humans we have been designed to move toward something, and only God can tell us what that is, and He has to keep telling us or we forget. And if we aren't moving toward something our discipline and unrestrained passions run wild.

Warning

Our society is at war with this kind of vision. First it says there's no God, then it tells us we are evolved from primordial ooze, and then it says when we die we cease to exist. And then with that happy vision in front of us we're all expected to say no to drugs and save the planet. Apparently the world can't admit the real implications of its vision.



LIFE LESSONS

WITH DR. STEVE SCHELL

Teaching the Bible
practically & understandably
and seeing lives changed by
the truth of the Gospel

Timothy and Paul

Here are the examples of two men who pursued the vision God gave them:

1) Timothy: First, let's listen to Paul refresh the vision in a young man (2Ti 1:1-6)

- v1 - Paul starts with his own call and the prize his eyes are fixed on
- v2 - he tells Timothy he loves him and then prays a blessing over him
- v3 - he assures him he is constantly praying for him
- v4 - and knows he is suffering and feeling alone
- v5 - he reminds him of the steady faith of his godly grandmother and mother

And then he says this:

• v6 - I remind you to fan into flame the grace - gift (charisma) God gave you when He called you and set you apart for ministry. In other words, remember your assignment and the Holy Spirit who empowers you to fulfill it

Later he says to Timothy:

- 2:3, 4 - Like a soldier don't get entangled in daily life and lose your focus
- 2:5 - Like an athlete run between the lines God has given you, and obey his rules
- 2:6 - Like a farmer, don't grow impatient; crops grow slowly but you'll be rewarded by God for your endurance

2) Paul: In the very first verse of the Book of Romans Paul tells us his vision. He's:

- A bondservant of Christ Jesus
- Called as an apostle
- Set apart for the gospel of God

Now let's listen to how that vision effects him:

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Where does vision come from?

There are probably many ways we receive vision, but only one real Source: God Himself.

1) The Lord's voice to my heart

- Isaiah 58:13, 14
- We need our calling refreshed, but we also need a constant flow of revelation or we lose our passion and fall into a rut.

2) Sensitive parents who watch how God has made each child and gently encourage, provide opportunity, remind of vision and most of all pray with faith. Such parenting is a lifelong process and involves children beyond our natural children.

3) Affirming words spoken by the Body of Christ (a future sermon)

Questions

1) Do you feel you have an important assignment in your life? Would you share that with us? By the way, don't be embarrassed to share the "bigness" of your vision. God doesn't give small visions.

2) When was the last time God refreshed your vision. How did He do that, where were you, how did His voice come? Did it come in words or a picture or a feeling?