

Limited Vision

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Jeremiah 33:1-16; Ephesians 3:20-21

INTRO: When I was in Junior High and High School, I would sometimes think about whom I might marry.

1. There were a couple of girls that I had hopes for during that time but neither of them was really interested in me in that way.

2. I have often wondered what would have happened if I had asked God who He wanted me to marry. Would He have told me? Possibly.

3. I grew up on a farm four and a half miles south of I-40, south of Canute. Looking west from there, I could see for about seven miles to where a ridge blocked my view.

(1. Jeanie grew up on a farm five miles south of I-40, south of the Prairie View church.

(2. Fourteen miles west of where I grew up was where my future wife lived.

4. If I had gone to the dirt road south of my house and driven 14 miles west, I would have arrived at her home.

(1. I could see seven miles but it was not far enough to see my future wife.

I. I had limited vision when I was a teenager and I still have limited vision. My physical and mental vision does not allow me to see very far.

1. Now, I can reasonably plan for today, tomorrow, the next few weeks and even months. But that does not mean that I know for certain that my plan will actually be workable.

(1. Because I cannot see into the future with a certainty. We make our plans, and we should - but only God knows what tomorrow holds.

2. When I was a teenager, I did not know Jesus as my personal Savior. I was spiritually lost and spiritually blind. What a difference it would have made in my life at that point if I had known Christ as my Savior.

(1. I could have talked to Him during the difficult times and He could have led me in the right way through so many times that I know now I made bad decisions.

(2. My vision was very limited but His was and is infinite. He can see beyond that ridge. He can see over and around whatever mountains that may arise.

(3. Time and space is not a limitation for God. He sees beyond what we can. He knows beyond what we know.

3. The apostle Paul while praying in **Ephesians 3** praises God as he says, **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).”**

4. God is able to go beyond our limited physical, human abilities. As Paul says God is **“able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”**

(1. He can go beyond anything that we are capable of thinking, or dreaming, or conceiving in our minds.

(2. He is above us in His capabilities. His vision is not limited. He knows what will happen tomorrow with a certainty.

(3. He knows what will happen next year, and the year after with a certainty.

II. However, there is a limitation upon God’s ability. What is that limitation? That limitation is us. That limitation is me, it is you. What do I mean?

1. Look again at Paul's prayer of praise, "**Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us....**" "**according to the power that works in us....**"

2. God is "**able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think**" depending on how much of Him is at work within us.

(1. "**according to the power that works in us....**"

3. How much of God is at work within you? How much of God do you want to be at work in your life?

(1. That really is the question because there is no limit to what God wants to do in your life. The limits are placed there by you.

4. In Ezekiel 47 we have a word picture of the water of life or you could say the power of God through the Holy Spirit or as Paul puts it "**the power that works in us.**"

5. In **Ezekiel 47** God is allowing Ezekiel to see a vision of that power, "**He walked to the east with a measuring tape and measured off fifteen hundred feet, leading me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet, leading me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet, leading me through water waist-deep. He measured off another fifteen hundred feet. By now it was a river over my head, water to swim in, water no one could possibly walk through (Ezekiel 47:3-5 - The Message)."**

6. The power of God is immeasurable. The power of God available to you is immeasurable. It depends on how much power you want to have.

(1. Do you want "**ankle-deep**" power?

(2. Do you want "**knee-deep**" power?

(3. Do you want "**waist-deep**" power?

(4. Or, do you want power that is like a river, a **river over (my) your head**, a river **to swim in**?

III. How do you have the power of God that is like a river to swim in?

1. Some of you know who Dwight L. Moody was. He was the greatest evangelist of the last half of the 19th Century. The Billy Graham of his time in the late 1800s.

2. During this time period a committee of pastors in a city was discussing the possibility of having Moody to be the evangelist during a crusade in their city.

(1. Finally, one pastor who did not want to invite Moody stood up and said: “Why Moody? Does he have a monopoly of the Holy Spirit?”

(2. There was silence. Then another pastor spoke up: “No, he does not have a monopoly of the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly of D. L. Moody.”

3. If you want to have the power of the Holy Spirit like a river to swim in then the Holy Spirit must have a monopoly, complete, total control of your life.

4. Do you know what that piece in the middle of a clothes washer is called? The part in the middle that moves back and forth or up and down and shakes the clothes?

(1. Do you know what that is called? I think a good name for it is the Agitator.... What is the purpose of the Agitator?

5. It looks like its only purpose is to cause havoc for the dirty clothes...

(1. it's there to shake and separate the clothes from all the dirt and grime that may be in or on the clothes.

6. At the moment of our salvation, the Holy Spirit comes into, moves into, our hearts, but He doesn't have our heart to himself... there is still a lot of things in there...

(1. the main one being our own selfish desires...even though we have been saved from our past sins, there still remains some things of the world that we are still fond of...

(2. these things of the world have a way of attaching themselves to us like dirt on clothes... they can stain us, and they seem or appear to be impossible to get out.

7. The Holy Spirit, being Holy....His nature doesn't allow Him to live in a dirty environment, so He begins - gently and lovingly, He begins to agitate, to shake...

(1. to convict us of the things that need to leave our heart....

8. You see God wants us to be filled with His Spirit... and only when we come to a place in our lives where we are willing to remove all the dirt...can we truly be Filled with His Spirit.

9. Until then, many times our spiritual life feels like we are in a washing machine.... The Holy Spirit constantly, because He loves us so much, constantly causes agitation within us,

(1. convicting us of the things that need to be removed from our lives....

10. The truth is it is God's will for all to be filled with the Spirit.... It is a command. But it's your choice... it's up to you...

11. If you willing to surrender every area of your life... every area.. Past, present, future... habits, control, finances, family... everything that means something to you....

(1. Total surrender - That's what it takes to have power that is like a river to swim in living within you. (Washing machine illustration from SermonCentral.com contributed by Glenn Newton.)

12. Sadly, so many of us settle for walking about "ankle deep" or perhaps even toe-deep in His power.

(1. It is no wonder we have so little vision of what God has for our lives.

(2. It is no wonder we have so little power to do what God wants to do in our lives.

(3. We've got a power problem and it is probably why so few people are in church because they have had a spiritual "brown-out" and couldn't get out of bed this morning.

13. They've had the power of God so sucked out of their lives that they have little interest in the things of God but instead are captivated by things of this world.

(1. And they are getting weaker and weaker. As Dwight L Moody put it, "Church attendance is as vital to a disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood to a sick man."

IV. What is the solution to our powerlessness? The solution to our powerlessness, to our lack of vision was given to Jeremiah. **Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).**"

1. The people of Israel and Judah had a power problem which had created all of their physical problems being scattered for Israel and Judah's soon to be captivity in Babylon.

(1. Their power problem had also eliminated their vision. They could not see beyond their current misery, their current difficulties and the disaster that was coming upon them.

2. The northern Kingdom of Israel had already been overrun and the people scattered to other regions and nations.

3. Jeremiah who lived during the reigns of seven kings of Judah had an unpopular message.

(1. That message was the inevitable and inescapable judgment of God upon the nation for its rebellion and disobedience.

4. But through the power of God Jeremiah could see beyond the captivity, beyond the destruction of Jerusalem. **Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).**”

(1. This word, “**mighty**” is literally “*fenced in,*” with the connotation being “*cut off*” or “*inaccessible.*”

5. God is able to reveal that which has formerly been hidden, and He is committed to deliver and to preserve His people.

6. Jeremiah through the power of God could see beyond the horrific destruction and the seventy years of captivity.

(1. Through the power of God he could see the restoration of Jerusalem and the coming of a King whose Kingdom would never end - the King of kings and the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ.

7. God says to you and me, “**Call to me.**” In other words, “*Talk to me.*” If we will simply ask God, talk to Him, He promises what? He promises to, “**answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.**”

8. We may not think that God can help us or reveal to us anything that we ourselves cannot do or see. However, the apostle Paul says about God that He is “**able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think....**”

9. What is God’s will for your life? You may be bogged down in some terrible thing right now? Or, some terrible thing may have happened to you.

(1. But what is beyond? What is ahead?

10. If the people of Judah could have caught a glimpse of the glory of their future through a life committed to God it would have changed everything for them.

11. When you look ahead what do you see? If you can catch a glimpse of the glory of a life committed to God, committed to serving Him, it will change everything for you.

12. Do you have a vision problem? Do you have some other kind of problem? Why deny yourself the wisdom, vision, and help of God?

(1. He pleads with you to **“Call to Me.”**)

13. A wise man once said, "A Blind man's world is bound by the limits of his touch; an ignorant man's world is bound by the limits of his knowledge; a great man's world is bound by the limits of his vision."

14. Helen Keller, at one time probably the most recognized blind person who had ever lived, once said, "What would be worse than being born blind? To have sight without vision."

15. William Booth founder of the Salvation Army said this, I will tell you the secret: God has had all that there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, even with greater opportunities, but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart and caught a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with me and them, on that day I made up my mind that God should have all of William Booth there was. And if there is anything of power in the Salvation Army, it is because God has had all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life.

16. Author Irving Stone has spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelized biographies of famous people ... He was once asked if he had found a thread that runs through the lives of all these exceptional people. He said, "I write about people who sometime in their life...have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished ... and they go to work. They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified and for years they get nowhere. But every time they're knocked down they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. And at the end of their lives they've accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do."

17. Birds of all kinds can see where they are going. They pick and choose their direction and path. As birds fly by instinct they head where they are directed.

(1. But they can only see what is in front of them.

18. Eagles are known to have vision. An eagle can see up to five miles and often times is able to see well beyond normal sight.

19. The eagle knows where it is going and determines how it is going to get there. While other birds migrate by instinct the eagle stays in its territory throughout the year, season after season.

20. The eagle is dependable and will hold its place in its territory. When a storm approaches, other birds fly in fear while the eagle is energized by the challenge of the storm.

(1. The eagle catches the wind and rises above the storm.

21. The eagle glides through its territory during the storm and will only leave its post if it is badly hurt and must leave to repair its injuries.

22. I believe God is looking for men and women of vision "*who can see*" with their spiritual eyes and catch the wind of God's Spirit.

23. These men and women like the eagle are dependable, focused and fearless when it comes to their God given assignments.

("Eagle Vision And Dependability" written by Christi Harken from Maple Grove, Minnesota, USA.)

IV. CONCLUSION: One of the greatest tragedies for people would be to live in darkness when they could live in the light...

1. Rose Crawford had been blind for 50 years, she was born blind. Then she had an operation in an Ontario hospital. She said, "I just can't believe it," as the doctor lifted the bandages from her eyes.

2. She wept - when for the 1st time in her life she saw a dazzling and beautiful world of form and color greeted her eyes and she could now see.

3. The amazing thing about her story, however, was that 20 years of her blindness was unnecessary.

(1. She didn't know that surgical techniques had been developed, and that an operation could have restored her vision at the age of 30.

4. The Dr. said, "She just figured there was nothing that could be done for her condition. Much of her life could have been different."

5. Sadly I lived my teenage years in spiritual darkness not knowing Christ as my Savior.

(1. Even more sad is that after I was saved I failed to avail my self take advantage of the vision that God so freely wanted to give to me.

6. You don't have to be spiritually blind. God wants to give you vision. He wants to help you to see beyond what this world has to offer.

7. God says to you and to me. He says to this church **"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3)."** **"Call to Me"**

8. As we call out to God daily, frequently, continually we will find ourselves to come to a point like J. Wilbur Chapman who once said, "My life is governed by this rule: Anything that dims my vision of Christ or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it."

9. You don't have to be spiritually blind, you don't have to be spiritually powerless - but there is a cost. Are you willing to pay it? Will you put Christ first in your life?

(1. Will you call upon the Name of the Lord, so that you can see? So that you can have vision?