

Where there is no vision

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Prof J.W.Fraser

[0 : 00] Proverbs chapter 29 and the first 18. Where there is no vision, the people perish.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. A very sententious expository of the book of Proverbs who captured the brevity, so characteristic, of this book and has entitled his commentary Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth.

Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth. And that is a very uptight indeed because the book of Proverbs presents us with a voice of heavenly wisdom.

It is God speaking to man. It's not just true worldly wisdom. The son says you might get from David's counselor, Ahithophel, whose wisdom was like the oracle of God, but who himself was a corrupt man.

It is something deeper, higher, and far better. It's the wisdom that is not devilish and earthy, but the wisdom that comes down from above, that is first pure, and then peaceable.

[1 : 43] He said to be in people, full of righteousness, and good works, and sown in peace for those who love peace. I want us to look at this very terse comment tonight, and following the brevity of the book of self, just to notice two main things.

First of all, there is a sore life, no vision, where there is no vision, and then a sown result, the people tell.

A sore life, no vision, and a sown result, the people tell. Or, to give the more modern translation, which may indeed be true to the original Hebrew, the people throw off all the strength.

Or to be a little more tense, the people are undisciplined. There is no discipline, where there is no vision. And then, I want, by way of conclusion, to consider a plea.

To consider an appeal, and a prayer, following upon our meditation. First then, I want us to look at this so old act.

[3 : 27] no vision. And when the wise man here is speaking about vision, he is not considering the ordinary common or garden prudence, shrewd and far-seeing, or a cool calculating appraisal of the situation and all its circumstances.

There is such a thing, a cool calculating appraisal of the circumstances and the flip we find ourselves, it is an admirable thing.

There is another adage that you will not find in the book of Proverbs, look before you look. another is the wise man here thinking of a deep insight into hidden factors, which gives a counsel, a sharpness and a decisiveness, something that is called for, especially in times of crisis, or in the body of decision.

Rather, the good man is referring to prophetic vision, not just ordinary farsightedness, but to prophetic vision.

The vision of the seer, he is another Old Testament figure in name for the prophet, the prophet who is God's mouthpiece, and utters what God has given him to say, and may indeed commit it to righteousness.

[5 : 30] So in grief, the vision here refers to God's work, God's communication to men. vision, as that is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament for us.

And when the wise man complains that there is no vision, he is thinking of an absence of the word of God, a silence on God's part, and as a consequence, a lack of guidance, a lack of communication between earth and heaven, leading this world, in the phrase of C.S.

Lewis, the silent planet. No vision, no communication from God, no communion with God, no word, no prophetic word, no law or testimony, or prophetic word to guide and direct, to comfort to, and to help.

Now, this absence of vision, in the sense of communication from God, the word of God, is found in a complete lack of special revelation.

You might say, where there is no Bible, where there is no Bible, the people perish, the people throw off restraints, the people are undisciplined.

[7 : 23] It's the state of the pagan world, world, a world without the word of God. But even there, God has not left himself without witness.

As Paul told his pagan audience, God has given us fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, and if we had that, the eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the understanding heart, we can see something of the goodness of God, who makes his sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, and sends rain upon the evil and the good.

And more particularly, we might refer to the chapter we read in the Epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle says that God was never without witness, because that which may be known of God is manifest, he says, in them, for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, God's creation, even his eternal power on Godhead, so that men are without excuse.

But these are not sufficient to bring man into fellowship with God. these are not sufficient to show man the way back to God.

The poet who loves nature said, an impulse from a vernal good will teach you more of man of moral evil and of good than all the sages can, which is a lot of poetic nonsense.

[9 : 12] For the physical things cannot tell us much to do with the moral sphere, and man without the word of God, without the Bible, is left groping in the dark.

There is no vision, and where there is no vision, the people perish. The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone.

the heathen in his blindness. There is no vision, no revelation to lead and to guide, and that is one very good reason why we should support Bible societies, why we should seek the circulation of the word of God, because this is a very essential part of the missionary task given to the church by our Lord to fulfill.

Again, there is no vision that may be due to the imposition of what I might call positive erroneous beliefs. It's not just a mere lack of a creed or of a worth.

It may be, and indeed it is true, that there are many who have got what they think is a vision. they've got what they consider to be a word as good as, and indeed far better than, the word of the God in the Old and New Testament.

[10 : 53] And they'll tell us that some of that word is much older. The Muslim has got his Koran, which is not as old, of course.

the Hindu has got his own scriptures too. And so they consider that they have a vision, but it's a false vision.

It's not the truth, which is found only in its purity, in its fullness, in that special revelation God has given in the scriptures.

scriptures. But even in enlightened Israel, there could be such a state as this. There could be an absence of vision.

We read that in the days of Eli, the priest, the word of God was precious in those days. It was rare. There was no open vision.

[12 : 04] That is, revelations of God seemed to have ceased. There wasn't a prophet among them, or anyone who knew the time. There was no one to rally the people.

No leader endowed of God. Oh, true, they had got the law of Moses, but they had not got the prophets as yet, until God endowed young Samuel with the spirit of prophecy.

And a new era began in Israel that was to lead on to the great prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Isaiah and the others.

there was no one in Israel to convict the conscience. No one to enlighten the understanding.

No one with the knowledge of the times to know what Israel ought to do, until Samuel was raised up to be God's mouthpiece to the people.

[13 : 16] And my friend, the same can be sadly true still. Israel of Eli's day had at least got the law of Moses.

We today have long had the whole Bible and one of the privileges of this country is that it is the land of the open Bible.

the scriptures can be bought for a trifle. They are circulated almost free.

And no one has got the excuse to say, I can't find a Bible. I can't find the book of God. There is no vision. And yet it is true that this is the land of the unopened Bible.

That is the tragedy and the disgrace of our country. If you listen to these quiz programs that are on the radio or television, occasionally, quite often indeed, they slip in a Bible question.

[14 : 33] A simple Bible question as to who Eta was. and it's pathetic that those people who are well-schooled in other matters flounder and fumble when it comes to the answer and few of them indeed can give you the answer to a simple Bible question that a child in the primary in the old days would answer at once.

The land of the open Bible and the land of the unopened Bible. The land of a vision and the land of no vision because there is a gross and cross ignorance of the truth of Scripture in our land today.

And what is as bad is that the preaching from the pulpit is a different gospel from the gospel that Paul preached.

No longer do you hear Christ crucified preached. No longer the gospel of Christ that is a power of God and a salvation to all who believe.

Topical sermons, cozy chats, little essay, moral essay, and in a gospel that somehow or other bypasses sin and presents not the mystery of Calvary but the mystique of the cross.

[16 : 10] A mystique of the cross. One man was, the other Sunday morning, was speaking about the doctrines of Scripture.

and he was trying to comfort a believed woman with the doctrines of Scripture. And she commented on how well off he was to have faith.

But he himself wasn't at all sure whether there was a resurrection. He wasn't at all sure about the so-called doctrines of Scripture, only he had a kind of vague trust in the God of Scripture.

That's all it amounts to. A mystique that has got more of mistiness than mystery about it.

No vision, no clear cut teaching, no more thus saith the Scripture. Because the Scriptures of course are just a product of man himself, and are erroneous, so they tell us, on many factual accounts.

[17 : 28] But we don't believe that. Here we have the truth, the word of God, that is correct in every fact it states. No vision, because it is the land of the unopened Bible.

But my friends, there might be a lack of vision, because there is a lack of an inward illumination.

You see, you not only need light to see, but you need an inward vision. The eyes of the blind can make as little at midnight as they do at noon, can make as little of what's around them.

You see, they can't see at all, and that's unfortunate. He can't see the beauty of the landscape of a high summer noon.

So it is possible to be in a place where there is a vision in the sense of the revelation of God, of God's word, and yet no vision because of the natural blindness and unseenness of a heart that still waits to be enlightened.

[19 : 00] And that is a tragedy too, isn't it? We need not only a light, but a truth, but light.

O send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may be guides to me. And this is borne out by men or women when they are converted.

They may have sat under a gospel ministry, they may have heard the fact of the gospel set before them, faithfully and plainly and simply, but they've never understood them.

And when their eyes are enlightened by the Spirit of God, and they see for the first time the scales dropping of their eyes, they're ready to say, well, the preacher never spoke before like this.

He's telling us truths that he never mentioned before. While others in the congregation say we've listened to that for years. We've known it for years. You see, it's because they haven't the vision to appreciate the vision.

[20 : 14] They haven't the inward illumination to appreciate the word of God and the truth of that word. Take the case of young Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

You know the story of his conversion? Well, young Spurgeon was brought up under a gospel ministry. His father was an evangelical preacher.

His grandfather was quite an outstanding preacher of the gospel. And Spurgeon knew the scriptures as a child. He knew in theory the way of salvation but didn't know it in actual fact.

And under deep conviction of sin, you know the story, he turned aside this very wintry day because he could not make the place where he was wont to worship or rather to attend into a little chapel where the preacher himself didn't turn up.

There were but two or three people who made it and one of them, Spurgeon never knew what he was, felt that it wasn't right to let the occasion go by and dismissed the handful of people but went to the pulpit and went through the preliminaries of worship even chose a text, a good text too, look unto me and be saved all ye ends of the earth.

[21 : 50] He had a text, a good man, but he had no sermon. That was no fault of his because he wasn't prepared. And he soon exhausted himself. And then his eyes caught the sight of a young stranger.

And he said to him, very bluntly, young man, he says, you look miserable. And Spurgeon says he was right, I was miserable.

You look miserable, and miserable you will be until you look, look young man, look, look unto me and be saved. As strange as it was, Spurgeon says, I looked, I looked and I saw.

The scales fell off, and he saw the gospel in his beauty and fullness and sufficiency for himself. He might be ready to say, my father never preached this gospel, my grandfather never preached this gospel.

But that would have been wrong. Why did he not see it before? Because he had not got the inward illumination, he hadn't got the vision, in the subjective sense.

[23 : 01] Years later, when Spurgeon became famous, his grandfather said to him, Charles, he says, you can preach the gospel better than your grandfather, but you can preach a better gospel.

It's the same gospel, you see. Perhaps you've been in this place, in the same state, in which you've said, well, you know, the minister is preaching far better than ever he used to, I'm seeing things I never saw before, the same gospel.

You've got the inward illumination. This then is the sore lack, no vision, no special revelation from God, no word of God, no Bible, no eyes to see the truth.

So I want us now to turn to the sad result. Where there is no vision, the people perish. As I said at the beginning, the modern translation is probably more accurate.

Where there is no vision, the people throw off restraint. The people become undisciplined. This same word is used in the case of Israel when they made the golden calf while Moses was up on the mount with God.

[24 : 25] They made the golden calf at Horeb, they sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play, and the word of God says Aaron made them naked before their enemies. The same word, where there is no vision, the people are made naked.

The people throw off all restraint. They become undisciplined. There is no guidance, no teaching, no one to correct, no discipline of the law and the testimony, no prophetic voice to tell Israel what it ought to do in the special circumstances.

And so, they're like a vineyard, whose walls are broken down, they're like a fort, with the rotten and broken policy, they're like a city without walls, because there was out the word of God, which the apostle says in writing to Timothy, is profitable.

That word which is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Let's go over them again. The word of God, which is profitable for doctrine, to teach us the truth, for reproof, to give us a smut when we go wrong, for correction, that is, to set us on the right course when we deviate from it, for instruction, positive instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, truly fair and do all good work.

[26 : 06] But without the guidance of the word of God, without his teaching, without his compass, without his pilot, we wander in a wilderness in which there is no way.

We're like the people in the book of Judges, where every man did what was right in his own eyes, and it was mostly wrong in the eyes of God. The people threw off restraint.

They became undisciplined. They did as the mood took them. And is that not an exact description of our own day? Only we call it the permissive society.

Or it may be the swinging generation. Sounds much nicer, doesn't it? A generation that's thrown off the shackles, as they would say, of a crabbed Victorian morality.

And so every department in life is free, unfettered. Sex. Nothing wrong with fornication today.

[27 : 16] Or even adultery. In the eyes of the people of this world. Marriage. One marriage and three breaking down, ending in the divorce court.

in business dealing. Oh, you can alter the morality, change the weights and the measures. Truth is only relative.

It's a bondage to fix a belief. men are free. Should be a happier society, shouldn't it? But are we free?

Is it permissive society, a good society? Is it swinging generation, a happy generation? you see, license and liberty are not synonymous.

License is just another form of bondage. food. The food that is sweet in the mouth is bitter in the belly. And so, my friends, it is that people throw off restraint because they have not got the revelation of God, or have not got the eyes to understand, to see it, the understanding to understand the scripture, or because they don't want to understand it, which is true or still.

[28 : 52] And so, perhaps, the authorised version before us is not so far wrong after all. Where there is no vision, the people perish. This is the end product. The broad road leads to destruction.

The primrose path of dalliance ends in the fires of hell. the wicked shall be turned into shields with all the nations that forget God, who do not want to retain God in their minds, and every man and woman, boy and girl in that condition too, who do not want to know the God of salvation.

And so, I want to conclude briefly with an appeal and a prayer. Where there is no vision, the people throw off restraint, become undisciplined, and perish.

But, my friends, we've got the vision. The rest, the other part of the verse, shows the other side. But, he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

There is a vision in the law. And if we broaden that word to include the whole of the Bible, he who understands the scriptures, he who understands its message of salvation, he who gives heed to its guidance and its direction, he who walks in the way of the commandments forth and hits.

[30 : 31] Happy is he. And we've got that vision. We've got the Bible before us. We have that glorious vision, which John refers to when he said, we beheld his glory, the glorious of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, for the law was given by Moses.

But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We've got that vision, that revelation of God's grace in the whole of the scripture.

And I know many of you study the word of God diligently, privately, and when you meet together for it. have you got the inward illumination too?

Have you got the subjective vision of being able to see? If you have, happy are you? Blessed indeed.

If you have not, here is a prayer for you. open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thine law.

[31 : 54] Open thou mine eyes. God opens the blind eyes, just as Jesus did for blind Bartimaeus.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy worth, that I may understand the scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Let us pray. O Lord our God, we thank thee that we have thy word. We pray that it may dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

that it may be the man of our counsel and the mother of our meditation, that its holy precept may be stamped upon our hearts, incline our hearts to thy holy law and not to greed or to covetousness.

Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things in thy word and that we all may come to know Christ as our saviour and thy word may be precious to us as honey and a honeycomb for sweetness as gold and silver even refined gold for value.

[33 : 33] In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.