

## The Vision Provision

Habakkuk 2:1-3

### Intro & Segue from Pastor Matthew's Message Last Week

This past Sunday we heard our pastor share a powerful message on El Roi: "The God Who Sees." It was a kind of a coda message (a follow-up) to the sermon series we had been in during the Fall. As he shared God's Word, Pastor Matthew spoke about "God Sees Where You're Going" in the 3<sup>rd</sup> point of the sermon. This reality should be a comforting truth to us in our troubled times as well as in our personal daily life.

Psalm 8:4 – *"What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"*

I would commend to you that God cares deeply for His people, for those who love Him and live for Him. He shows them the way. Pastor Matthew showed us that God reveals the future and requires faith, and He did this and does this according to His great plan, not ours.

The point that "God Sees Where You're Going" is a perfect prelude to the message today.

It is the beginning of a new year. We always hear talk of New Year's resolutions around this time. Quite frankly, most New Year's resolutions frustrate me. Even watching the news, you hear commentators discuss back and forth about the new trends and goals we should be setting for ourselves that some celebrity or TikTok personality has all over the internet. People generally do not establish these beginning of the year goals in such a way that lead to long term commitment or passion. Many are also selfish in nature. People make grand goals that sound wonderful and promising. There is passion and excitement and determination. By February, most people don't remember what they even were and certainly aren't meeting the lofty expectations that were set. New Year's resolutions or commitments can be great intentions and endeavors, so if you have already made one, I am not knocking it – but over the course of the message I would challenge you to do something a bit more with it than maybe you intended. I would say as Christians, those who believe in Jesus Christ, should do more. We are called to do more with our life.

Personally, I do not make New Year's resolutions. I cast vision. Semantics? I would declare they are not the same thing. I pray that you will see by the end of the message today, the two ideas are quite different.

Instead of a New Year's resolution, one of the challenges I want you to consider and walk away with today is that by the end of this message if you find you don't have what we are going to talk about in terms of a life vision, mission, and purpose statement, that you commit to having one in 2024, and if you do, that you commit to that calling, that direction, and live it out for the glory of God in 2024.

The type of vision I am talking about today is in the context of a vision that comes from the Lord and living out that vision on mission with purpose for the Lord.

With a clear vision of what we can become in Christ, no ocean of difficulty is too great. No stretch of wilderness too difficult to traverse. Without it, we rarely move beyond our current boundaries.

Founding Pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University, Jerry Falwell, said many times:

- *“God has a vision for you. Don’t settle for second best. Don’t ever retire. Don’t ever quit. Let your vision become an obsessive reality.”*
- *“You are never really fulfilled in life until you recognize your vision and fulfill it.”*

Consider these analogies of what life without vision is like:

- A movie set: merely a facade
- A flashlight w/o batteries: able, but powerless
- A car w/o gasoline: capable of forward movement, but lacking the necessary fuel
- A symphony orchestra w/o a score: lots of talent, but no music - just noise
- A church of believers in Jesus Christ w/ no vision: exactly what Satan wants
- A Christian without a personal vision: a pawn of the enemy

We can find dozens of examples of men who God used by giving them a vision and who carried out that vision for God’s purposes:

- Abraham – to establish the nation of Israel leading his people to live in total obedience to God
- Moses – to deliver the Israelites from oppression to the Promised Land and establish a code of conduct
- Joshua – to conquer and settle the Promised Land
- Josiah – to restore the God of Israel to the throne of people’s hearts
- Nehemiah – to rally the people of Israel to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and bring spiritual revival to the nation
- Peter – to evangelize the Jews, to establish the Church
- Paul – to evangelize the Gentiles, organize and nurture new churches throughout the Roman world
- Jesus – to bring salvation and hope to the world by dying on the cross for our sins, defeating death, and rising again, bringing the gift of eternal life to all who believe in faith

Many historical and modern Christian visionaries – individuals who lived for and obeyed God – sought Him for and when they received their vision – worked to carry it out: William Carey, Charles Finney, Chuck Colson, James Dobson, Billy Graham, Billy Sunday, Jerry Falwell Sr.

Those names were examples of modern heroes of our faith, and you might think – well that’s not me, I can’t live up to that. And you might be right – that’s not the point of the message, nor should it be our goal to be just like them or achieve the same things they did. It should be our goal to pursue the Lord and His commandments, having a vision for our personal life that seeks to accomplish what the Lord has for us to do.

Psalms 37:5 – *“Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it.”*

That verse was a verse I shared with each of our staff last month as Pastor Matthew and I met with the team individually before the start of the new year. I hadn’t gone into those meetings with that

intention, but the Lord prompted me with that verse in my quiet time on the morning of those meetings to share as a reminder and encouragement to our team of who our work needs to be committed to, where our trust needs to be, and that God is ultimately who accomplishes the work.

Proverbs 29:18 (MSG) – *“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what He reveals, they are most blessed.”*

In addition to those I mentioned a moment ago, there was another biblical individual – a rather unorthodox prophet we find among the minor prophets of the OT; a prophet who was:

- restless and wrestled with God
- who had a sense of urgency for his people and his time
- and possessed great conviction to pray courageously

### **Picture and Background of the Man and the Book:**

- **Habakkuk** – let’s pronounce his name for a moment...
- His name means to “embrace” or to “wrestle,” and he does both in this book.
- He was a contemporary of Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah who lived and served during the reigns of Josiah and Jehoiakim.
- Assyria was off the scene and Babylon was in power. Nebuchadnezzar had defeated Egypt and had turned his eyes to Judah.
- Jeremiah had announced that Babylon would invade Judah, destroy Jerusalem, the temple, and send the nation into exile.
- Habakkuk demonstrates he knew Scripture well, was a competent in the Hebrew language with scholarly writing skills, he was in tune with his people’s spiritual condition, and had he great faith. He quite likely was a priest who led worship in the temple.
- He wrestles with God concerning the problem of how a holy God could use a wicked nation like Babylon to discipline Judah. He wrestles with the spiritual decline of his nation and why God wasn’t doing something about it. By faith, he embraces God and clings to His promises.
- God’s statement, “The just shall live by faith” found in Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted 3x in the NT in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.
- There is a very unique quality about Habakkuk that we need to recognize. Instead of speaking to the people for God, Habakkuk spoke to God for the people.
- He was deeply burdened by the problem of injustice in God’s world. He saw that evil was prevalent and didn’t seem to be punished and asked what God’s response to such evil and suffering was going to be. God answered that Habakkuk must wait and see the work He was about to do on the stage of history.
- Habakkuk’s message is set within the backdrop of real people facing real questions. The prophet’s questions prompted God’s direction and revelation.

That same message is a challenge for us today.

*Turn with me to Habakkuk 2 – Jonah, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk OR back up 5 books from Malachi - the end of the OT.*

### **Habakkuk 2:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> *“I will stand on my guard post  
And station myself on the rampart;  
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,  
And how I may reply when I am reprovved.*

<sup>2</sup> *Then the Lord answered me and said,  
‘Record the vision  
And inscribe it on tablets,  
That the one who reads it may run.*

<sup>3</sup> *For the vision is yet for the appointed time;  
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.  
Though it tarries, wait for it;  
For it will certainly come, it will not delay.’ ”*

*Let’s take a look verse by verse at what the text says in view of the subject of vision -*

#### **I. Be Ready at Your Station While Waiting on the Lord’s Communication (vs. 1)**

*“I will stand on my guard post  
And station myself on the rampart;  
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,  
And how I may reply when I am reprovved.”*

- Verse 1 is Habakkuk’s prophetic declaration of what he intends to do. We find him worried about God’s silence, which he had to endure.
- Not even a prophet of old could force God to answer what appeared to be a burning, immediate issue. He had to stand and wait, and literally did just that! This is a preparatory action on Habakkuk’s part.
- It is also a purposeful action:
  - Stand on watch
  - Stand on rampart
    - Reflects sense of responsibility
    - Reflects sense of resolve
    - Reflects that he was ready
- As someone with the calling of prophet on him, he had a position much like a military watchman – to see what was coming – a lookout. He also made a place where he could withdraw and focus on God.
- He sought wisdom not of his own – he was dependent upon God – even if it meant waiting.
- The verse stresses the importance of our human work alongside the work of God.
- 1<sup>st</sup> half of verse: Habakkuk determined to station himself so as to receive revelation from God.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> half of verse: He expected that God would indeed answer. He needed to know how to respond to God's ways. One of the wonders of Habakkuk's message is the engagement of God with His people.
- God answered Habakkuk in an unexpected way. He gave a command to the prophet – not a word “for” the prophet.

When we are seeking the Lord or waiting on Him, what we are called to do in the meantime is wait, to wait upon the Lord. Most of us don't like this thing...waiting. I don't. I am not a good waiter. Naturally I am a pacer. I am a thinker. I want solutions. I want answers. I want plans. And I naturally think I have them. I want to “make it so.” When it comes to waiting, naturally when I am not exercising spiritual maturity, I am a line jumper.

This is not very good practice for us when it comes to following the Lord's direction and plan for our life. It certainly is not a mature way to carry out ministry, and over time the Lord has shown me and taught me the value of “strategically...waiting.” We must exercise patience, which is the picture Habakkuk is giving us here. Remember, I described Habakkuk as restless. He was at first, earlier in his story. When we jump around trying to come up with our own plan and way, we can easily get out of line from where God wants us to be. We must “keep watch” to see what He has to speak to us and show us.

**Our attempts at productivity can cause us to miss God's activity.** Our impatience can lead to improper action or understanding of what God has for us to do. Such watching and waiting constitutes a fundamental ingredient of faith in God and established vision for our life, but is so often missing from our frantic lifestyle of faithless believers. We are better talkers and doers. In particular, we find it very difficult to watch and to wait for God to answer our prayers, especially impassioned ones which are torn from broken hearts and baffled minds like Habakkuk.

This point is perhaps the most important of the points because we so often get it wrong right off the bat. There is great wisdom in the waiting. Yet when God moves, we cannot keep standing or waiting.

## **II. Record the Vision, Writing Down the Lord's Direction (vs. 2a)**

*“Then the Lord answered me and said,  
‘Record the vision  
And inscribe it on tablets.’”*

- God is faithful and calls for faithfulness on the part of His people.
- Write the message.
- Make it clear on tablets.
- These words are imperatives. They are directions from the Lord with a purpose in mind.
- Same word used in Exodus for the stone tablets of the 10 commandments.
- Presents the context of four clear and plain ideas:
  - To be recognized
  - To be referred to
  - To be repeated
  - To be remembered

## **III. Run the Mission, Working Out the Lord's Instruction (vs. 2b)**

*“And inscribe it on tablets,  
That the one who reads it may run.”*

- Interpretations:
  - A messenger who may run from place to place with the message
    - OR
  - Whoever reads it may run with it
- Idea of speedily obeying the message – following what it says to do.
- The Hebrew clearly puts the emphasis on the running of the reader, not the reading of the runner.
- Either way...
- It means that the person who reads the message will adopt it as a guide for living.
  - They will run life according to it.
- Large modern advertisement boards beside main roads
  - Lottery, car sales, restaurants, insurance
- I think the words of this verse are incredibly important for us to grasp today because there is a modern-day equivalent here. In our hasty soundbite video story saturated culture, it is so easy to get caught up in the newly trending TikTok video message or social media rant. Explainer videos are out there everywhere for everything today. We should be cautious about these media avenues, as well as do a better job of taking advantage of them in a wise way. We need to consider the runner or the communicator of the message we find grabbing our attention. And as we seek God’s vision and establish our own personal vision from it – what messaging are we conveying to those around us? What is our “soundbite?” What is our reel clip?
- The text here literally means “make the message plain enough so the person running may read the message” – “so it can literally be read at glance.” If ever any critic wants to say God’s Word isn’t relevant for today’s life, I would straight away take them to this obscure Old Testament book and passage and prove them wrong.

#### **IV. Recognize the Provision, Walking in the Lord’s Expectation (vs. 3)**

*“For the vision is yet for the appointed time;  
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.  
Though it tarries, wait for it;  
For it will certainly come, it will not delay.”*

- This is the motivation for verse 2.
- Habakkuk’s humanity is evident by the way he approaches his questions to God.
- We often demand and expect God to answer our requests, our desires, our dreams in our time.
- We expect to see these things fulfilled according to our timetables.
- We end up demanding of God a response according to our dizzying earthly schedules of those who are pressed for time.

(Guilty as charged – yep, this is me here!)

#### **My Sabbatical Testimony**

- Family sickness
- Mom’s health and hospitalization
- Changes in travel plans / anxiety

- Van accident
  - John Kubler's passing
  - Time w/ XPs and friends
  - The Phone Call
  - Time in TX w/ XP and unexpected preacher
  - Confidence in Calling
- 
- God reminds Habakkuk of the certainty of the message – the vision He was going to give him – and the parameters for it being fulfilled.
  - He gave it to him w/o the promise of meeting Habakkuk's time schedule.
  - God knew the timing and it wouldn't be a delay – not in God's timing, anyway.
  - God's timing is not our timing and when we go about establishing a vision in our lives, vision that comes from the Lord, we must remember that. It must remain God's vision or else it will become frustrated and fail as opposed to being fulfilled by our faithfulness.
  - Faith precedes understanding, not the reverse. We must trust the Lord, even when we do not understand everything. The Lord was testing Habakkuk's trust in Him. (He was testing my trust in Him).
  - Impatience with plans or decisions is the normal human response to God's promise to answer His people. Some of us simply embody this better (or worse) than others. But as in Habakkuk's case, God had already decided upon a solution and would reveal it according to His timetable, but God was not indebted to Habakkuk or anyone else to reveal the answer before He chose to. In the prophetic context of Habakkuk, this solution was Jesus Christ and His coming. As one commentator put it, "Habakkuk, like all of us, was living between the times, between the promise and the fulfillment." In Habakkuk's case it was the coming Messiah. In our case it is Christ's return.
  - The answer we seek when casting a vision or pursuing a decision may be delayed, but when surrendered and submitted to the Lord and His timing, it will be sure.
- 
- ❖ Having vision is a process, not a flash-in-a-pan kind of moment that most try to make it.
  - ❖ It involves commitment, not a haphazard prospect.
  - ❖ It entails faithful endurance, not immediate fruition.
  - ❖ God can and does give inspiration and revelation in a moment that can be developed into vision.

**Warren Wiersbe** said this when describing this passage:

*"When you behold the glory of God and believe the Word of God, it gives you faith to accept the will of God."*

***So – How do I get vision? What does having this vision and turning it into a life mission and purpose look like? I'm not a prophet...I'm not Abraham, Moses or Joshua, Daniel or Habakkuk...***

As I said, there is a process. Let us now practically examine that process.

## Understanding Vision

- The American Heritage Dictionary defines vision as:
  1. The faculty of sight
  2. Something that is or has been seen
  3. Discerning perception
- Vision is a clear and concise tangible and mental portrait of a future goal imparted by God to His servant based on an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances.
- Vision is the starting point AND end point. (*Begin with the end in mind.*)
- Godly Vision:
  - The capacity to create a compelling picture of the desired state of affairs that inspires people to respond to that which is desirable, which could be, should be; that which is attainable.
  - A godly vision is right for the times, right for the church, and right for the people.
  - A godly vision promotes faith rather than fear.
  - A godly vision motivates people to action.
  - A godly vision requires risk-taking.
  - A godly vision glorifies God, not people.
- The mission/purpose statement is the foundation of the vision.
- Core values – another component of establishing vision – they are the framework of the vision.
- Sports analogy:
  - Mission is the stadium in which you will play; Vision identifies the sport to be played in the stadium, and your core values are the rules and plays of the game.
- Vision is also the link between mission and action. You can have a mission with directionless action, but with vision you can have purposeful action that is influential and productive.
- A mission statement pictures the future and sets a goal. A vision statement tells how to get there.
- A vision w/o a task makes a visionary,
- A task w/o a vision is a boring task,
- A vision with a task makes a missionary.

**We are called to be missionaries, right? As disciples, that is our calling purpose.**

## Crosslink Mission Statement!

Impact the Valley and Bless the Nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Our vision that we carry out to accomplish is something that can change from time to time. It has and will again change. In fact, it is something that your Lead Pastor has been wrestling with, along with the pastoral team and leadership. We have been in prayer and discussion the past few months about clarifying God's vision for us as a church in how we lead and how we carry out the mission we have



been given. This very week, in the next few days, your pastoral team will be going on an overnight retreat to seek the Lord, discuss, write, and develop some fresh vision for the days ahead. I call on each of you to be in prayer for us in that process.

Similar to the type of resources one might need when going on a journey or expedition, so is the function of having a vision statement or statements to live out in our life. These same things can also be said of God's Word being alive and used in our life:

God's Word Object Comparisons:

- **Candle/Light**
  - To see the path ahead of you and staying the right course
- **Map**
  - Tells you how to get where you are going and gives you guidance
- **Compass**
  - Points you in the right direction on track to your destination
- **Magnifying glass**
  - To look at things closely and make sure things are what they seem
- **Binoculars**
  - Tool to aid in your long distance vision; things far away can be deceiving or hard to make out but you can bring them into focus
- **Level**
  - To measure and balance details of your life to determine if they are helping or hindering you in your journey

**Four Action Items to Begin and Pursue a Personal Vision Statement:**

**1. Discern the Vision**

- Knowing Yourself
  - Involves knowing who you are at the most intimate levels of self-knowledge – personality, strengths, weaknesses, abilities, habits, identity
- Knowing God
  - You do this through prayer, through meditation, through fasting, and through reading Scripture
- Knowing Your Context
  - You must understand the past and the present, your own and that of your present life situation – EVERYONE's will be unique
- Knowing Good Advice
  - As iron sharpens iron, trusted and respected advisors and friends can provide keen insight you are not capable of seeing in the midst of your vision quest

Proverbs 16:1-2 – *“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives.”*

**2. Detect the Vision**

- Vision, mission, and values represent the perspectives you have on life and on what God has for you to do.
- Your goals, strategies, and tactics flow from those perspectives and result in your plans.
- The context of your vision, mission, and core values originate from your life experiences, your personality, your spiritual gifts, your natural talents, and most importantly your inspiration

from the Holy Spirit. These components represent the preparation provided by God for your life and how you can have and make an impact living for and serving HIM.

Proverbs 16:3 – *“Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.”*

### **3. Develop the Vision**

- Having and maintaining a vision is equivalent to maintaining a campfire
  - Process:
    - Gathering wood, kindling
    - Build the fire
    - Ignition source – match, flint
    - Enjoy!.....BUT
    - Tend to the fire - rebuild
- Process:
  1. Prayer
  2. Identify your identity
  3. Idea/Theme
  4. Goal – Key words
  5. Action of the goals
  6. Christ-centered
  7. Finalize & revise with prayer

Incorporate a Life Verse

- Encompasses the concept
- Umbrellas the purpose statement

*“Eyes that see are common; Eyes that look are not so much.”*

Proverbs 16:9 – *“The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”*

### **4. Deploy the Vision**

- The life of one living their vision will show in their personal behavior, personal interactions, their productivity, their spirituality.
- “PAUL” – Colossians 3:17, 23, Philippians 3:12-14.
- Your life vision requires a commitment; there is no room for compromise.

Proverbs 3:5-6 – *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”*

### **Conclusion**

- Your vision is a journey through time.
- It is not developed or reached overnight.
- It is not understood or realized all at once.
- We were made for a purpose beyond ourselves. When we give ourselves irrevocably and ultimately to the Lord, we find the vision, purpose, and direction to sustain us for a lifetime.

*“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”*

-C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

*“To every man (woman) there comes in his lifetime that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered that chance to do a very special thing, unique to him and his talents. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared or unqualified for that work.”*

-Winston Churchill

We need to start becoming more aware of the presence of time rather than the passage of time.

Ephesians 5:15-16 – *“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”*

This exhortation is the Latin sentiment CARPE DIEM! I prefer an adaptation or expansion of that thought:

*Coram Deo, Carpe Diem*

Time is like a companion who goes with us on a journey. It reminds us to cherish every moment, because it will never come again.

Greek philosopher – *“Life is like a river; you cannot step into the same water in a river twice. An opportunity lost is lost forever.”*

We need to treat each day as a gift from God.

What are we going to do with the time that we have?

As Christians, we have ALREADY been given a basic/fundamental vision by God – love Him, love others, make disciples.

With that vision comes mission statements we can find in Scripture:

Acts 20:24   John 17:18   Matthew 28:19-20   Acts 1:8

Our mission is a continuation of Jesus’ mission on earth.

Our mission has eternal significance.

It is time to move beyond our current boundaries which stifle and restrict us like those early settlers.

Like Habakkuk

It is time for a God-sized purpose in 2024. It is time to have personal vision that leads to a mission that generates action for Jesus Christ!