



EYE HATH NOT SEEN

I Corinthians 2:9

A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We Brother Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ love you with our hearts and minds fully engaged in hopes for your well-being and salvation. We send this as encouragement to take full advantage of God's offerings and to "see" Him and His promises as He wants to be perceived.

How many unique things have you seen or heard of in the course of your life? Too many to count! While we cannot enumerate all of the scenarios mankind has seen or heard of, these form the basis for all that we can imagine. This is a vast, seemingly infinite scope. When reading scriptures, we automatically use this natural experience base as the raw materials to form our own mental pictures of the things that God has in store for His servants. Of course, we only use the best of our mental conceptions to build the impressions of God's future for us – the rewards of the righteous. But, even in doing that, we still sell God very short.

In fact, the human mind cannot grasp the promises of God - try as we might. Human nature makes comparisons that are conceivable by the human senses, and this can expose us to the wiles of the enemy. For example, consider our first parents in the Garden. The enemy convinced them to use their human imaginations to evaluate the promises God gave them against His requirement of obedience. They could not realistically imagine what they would be giving up by partaking of the Tree of Knowledge. They had never worked the earth to produce a living nor had they witnessed anyone's demise and death. They were confronted with a choice. It was an opportunity to obey God – by trusting spiritually – but they were enticed to accept the suggestions of someone else who said there was a better way. Only trusting God and obedience to His word would have sustained them in the Garden. The knowledge and understanding that they eventually acquired through disobedience was too little and too late to save them.

Comparing us to Adam and Eve, we all confront the choice to serve God or not. It is a choice put before men repeatedly from the beginning until this day (Josh. 24:15 ...choose you this day whom ye will serve...). We certainly have seen and heard much more of life upon which to build our knowledge reserve and, thereby, the basis of our imaginations and our choices. This suggests that we should be better prepared than they were to engage temptations. Even as children, when we first learned about their experience in the Garden, the little bit of understanding in our young minds caused us to wonder at their choice. To

us, their temptation did not seem that it would have been insurmountable. Every child pictures himself obeying God and remaining in the Garden.

However, the true “vision” needed to navigate through life is not found by use of our natural thought. Psalm 110:10 says: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments...* If Adam and Eve had adhered to this simple statement, they would not have been vulnerable, but they convinced themselves to believe a different scenario. It was pursuit of that false scenario, appealing to their egos but falling far short of what God actually offered, that prompted them to choose to put aside God’s commandment.

Let’s modernize the scene in the Garden and personalize it. Would you process the following scenario with your natural mentality, or would you seek inspired wisdom? You are given a set of instructions (*Bible and Book of Mormon*) and are told that only by faith in Jesus and obedience to those instructions will you inherit eternal life. Meanwhile, society (friends, family, associates, media, government, etc.) is constantly rebutting those instructions, telling you that they are obsolete, fantasy, unreasonable, unnecessary and that almost any path chosen by anyone in this life is valid. In fact, popular “wisdom” directly conflicts with the instructions (scriptures) you have been given. Temptation: You might naturally obey some of your instructions, but surely you can sort through and discard the parts that don’t suit you.

About 500 years before David wrote the 110th Psalm mentioned above, Job was facing terrific temptation. His challenge was different than Adam’s and Eve’s in that his losses did not occur as a result of disobedience. In fact, most of the Book of Job deals with his and his associates’ struggles and debates over the reasons for his difficulties. In the 28th chapter, Job contemplates: *But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?* He goes on, answering his own rhetorical questions by profoundly stating that wisdom is priceless, not to be found anywhere on earth, nor can it be bought or exchanged for any precious item.

He adds: *Whence then cometh wisdom?... It is hid from the eyes of all the living... Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof... Then he did see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said: Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*

Job simply realized that his natural mind would never fully grasp his suffering in terms of why or wherefore. The fear of the Lord opened his natural mind to a spiritual “vision” that embraced wisdom and understanding. He realized that his losses and afflictions presented the temptation to doubt God, but that the only real comfort available to him required that he continue to trust God and avoid evil. In so doing, he was able to perceive God’s bigger picture – the one that includes the eternal reward for faithfulness no matter what difficulties are presented in this life. While his spiritual vision was not specific or crystal clear in terms of his afflictions, it manifested within him a joy sufficient to overcome his distress.

This is the spiritual “vision” – wisdom and understanding – that we must fervently and diligently maintain during good times or bad.

Our natural inability to fully perceive God's promises was discussed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 2) wherein he states: *...your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God...we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory... **Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.** (See also Isaiah 64.)* Faith that rests in human understanding is not sustainable. God's plan has always been in place. However, man – of himself - has no natural reference points (no memories or even imagined wonders) sufficient to fully perceive those things that God has in store for us if we love Him and serve Him accordingly.

For example, consider the words of Jesus (John 14:2): *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go now to prepare a place for you.* Does this statement stimulate mental images of mansions that you have seen somewhere? Of course it does. In fact, Jesus used the term *mansions* because he knew that it would stimulate a perception of opulence and luxury beyond that which is attainable by the majority of people. However, to believe that the mansions in glory are duplicates of those on earth today is presumptuous. In fact, the mansions of the first century would not be comparable to those of today – and would not even be aspired to by us. So, it is fair to agree that the people who actually heard Jesus tell of mansions mentally pictured something different than we who read His words today. Nevertheless, reading and digesting His words with the Spirit rather than the natural mind creates the identical spiritual "vision" - understanding (Per David and Job: desire to obey God and avoid evil) - today as did hearing it in the first century. Amazing: the mental pictures may be vastly different, but the inspired "vision" can be identical.

Continuing the letter to the Corinthians, Paul confirms this: *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;...the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God....But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

Consider the last declaration of the prophet, Enos (Enos vs. 27) who preceded both Jesus and Paul in the flesh. Though he never met or read either of them, the spirit revealed to Enos that there are *mansions* in the eternal place of rest with God. Here again, the key was the Spirit of God stimulating spiritual "vision" - wisdom and understanding.

By the laying on of hands, we are given the Holy Ghost – the mind of Christ. We need to use it for our comfort, our guidance, our wisdom, and our understanding: our "vision". We must not allow our natural mentality to create the scenarios that determine our preferences and choices and even limit our hopes. If we rely upon the mind of Christ, we will always be in possession of that true wisdom (the fear of the Lord) and understanding (desire to obey God and avoid evil) that David and Job described.

In the first century, Paul wrote of the natural man's perception of the things of God as *foolishness*. The 21st century is not the innovator of this conflict. We all know this, but,

somehow, it seems convenient or natural to allow that there is something new and more valid about today's thinking. Consider, in popular society:

- Sex outside of marriage is commonly, openly discussed and practiced.
- Official and unofficial mainstream authorities endorse various sexual choices.
- Marriages commonly end through lack of respect for the marriage vows.
- Adultery is common.
- Revelry and intoxication is normal, especially among the younger.
- Literature and entertainment validate many forms of spirituality (e.g.: witchcraft, morbid immortality).

Hopefully, none of the above brings an acceptable scenario to your mind or fits behaviors you engage, but society rebuts the scriptures and pressures us to choose acceptance of these things and participation in them. In Galatians 5:13-21 many of the above are addressed as lusts and works of the flesh. It is spiritual "vision" - wisdom and understanding - that sustains our rejection of them.

In everyday life we also encounter less dramatic challenges to our vigilance that may ultimately lead us similarly off the strait and narrow to destruction. The enemy's flaxen cord (II Nephi 26:22) is presented in more subtle challenges to spiritual wisdom and understanding designed to contaminate our spiritual wisdom with natural imaginations of the flesh. We are challenged by complexities in life that pull us in multiple directions, often making natural priorities seem to take precedence over spiritual. Sometimes short "departures" from the Spirit seem harmless.

Should we use spiritual "vision" – wisdom and understanding – to prioritize our lives in every aspect? Surely, none of us would ever consider "departure from the Lord" as his ultimate destination, but are we sensitive enough to recognize the spiritual direction we take with every choice we make? Each action is a move toward or away from the Lord. We cannot afford to use anything less than God's Spirit to prepare our hearts and minds so that our "vision" is inspired by God and our decisions are made with His wisdom and understanding. Refer to the type provided by Liahona (Alma 37: 37-46). It is easy to be led by Christ, but it is a choice – over and over. *Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and He will direct thee for good...* God has not changed and never will. (See Mormon 9:9–15) Allowing our imaginations to embrace variance in God amounts to denial of Him. *The way is prepared, and if we look we may live forever.*

In the Love of God,

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

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