

WCCC 2023

Brother Godwin Sun

**Have not been disobedient to the heavenly vision
(2)**

As we begin, brothers and sisters, let us read the Word of God together.

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
Acts 26:19

No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of
Man who is in heaven.
John 3:13

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of
the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.
John 3:31

Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the
Jews marveled, saying, “How does this Man know letters, having never studied?”
John 7:14-15

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord
Jesus Christ,
Philippians 3:20

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High
Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,
Hebrews 3:1

For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be
holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps
on the earth.
Leviticus 11:44

Last evening, we shared about how vision is spiritual seeing. The Lord has given us a life that is able to see. Therefore, as Christians, not only do we desire to hear the preaching of the Word, but all the more we long that the Lord open our eyes that we may see Him.

In each of our experiences, we understand that by seeing, we can understand even more than we can by hearing. We know that knowing Christ is an important pursuit.

Last evening we shared that “to know” has 2 levels, denoted by the 2 Greek words *Ginōskō*, and *Oida*. I thank the Lord that our brother Dana helped explain the word *Epiginōskō* this morning. In fact, in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1, the translation for *Epiginōskō* in Chinese is to “truly know”. In the original text, there it is “complete, perfect knowing”.

Our understanding of the Lord is not merely a little. In order to fully know Christ, we must have the Holy Spirit open our eyes. Paul tells us that only when the Holy Spirit open our eyes, we can have *Epiginōskō*.

The Greek word *Oida* has been used many times in the Bible, translated as “to know” or sometimes “to see”. In simple words, this knowing is from seeing. Therefore we shared last night that you need not have *Ginōskō* to have a general seeing. May the Lord open our eyes that we may fully know.

We have also mentioned how the writer of Hebrews also speaks of these 2 levels of knowing. In Hebrews 9, there is the principle of the veil. The writer of Hebrews tells us not to merely remain at the first level. God’s desire is for us to enter through the second veil.

We know that in the Old Testament, the high priest can only enter the veil once a year, because that is the Most Holy Place. In the new covenant, the veil within was torn from top to bottom. Through the breaking of His body on the Cross, our Lord has torn the veil from top to bottom, and now we have a new and living way into the Most Holy Place, open to all the children of God.

If we are in the first veil, there is showbread and the light from the lampstands. This is done by the priests. But when you enter within the veil, there is God’s glory there. This is the shekinah glory. There is the manna, the bread from above. It is completely different.

Today, may the children of God live in the Most Holy Place. But unfortunately, we see so many of the children of God stay within only the first veil. In the first century, the apostles already felt this. The writer of Hebrews tells us to enter within the second veil.

May the Lord open our eyes that we may know Christ and have a direct relationship with Him, that the glory of Christ may shine within us; that He Himself will be our heavenly provision from within.

This is an important matter.

We know spiritual seeing is a special blessing for the children of God. The vision has to do with spiritual seeing. In the Old Testament or even in the New Testament, when we read the scriptures carefully, we see that visions appear especially during times of tribulation. When there is darkness in this world, when there is a great multitude who has fallen away, this is when God gives all the more vision.

When you read from Genesis to Revelation, you see the vision of Jacob come up during times of tribulation in his life. He saw the ladder to heaven, and angels ascending and descending. The next day, he had a special response.

“How terrible, I saw this ladder from earth to heaven! God was here and I did not know it! This is none other but the gate to heaven, the house of God!”

Jacob’s response to this vision touched the heart of God. We know that this ladder is a type of Christ, revealed in the New Testament.

This is the same with Isaiah. In the year that King Uzziah died there was great tribulation. When Isaiah went into the temple he saw a great vision.

We see Ezekiel during the early stage of the captivity of Israel. Families were broken, the temple and the holy city was destroyed. They underwent great tribulation. It was at this time God gave this glorious vision to Ezekiel.

In the New Testament, when Paul encountered hardship, imprisoned in Rome, wrote 4 important epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. The mysteries hidden in the ages were revealed to him. These books provided a thread throughout the whole of the history of the New Testament.

John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos. On that island God revealed the book of Revelation to John. That was the last vision in the scriptures.

Today, likewise, we are in hard times. There is turmoil around the world. The entire world is going through hardship. Our brother has shared that we, the church on earth, are encountering hardship that has never been seen before. The church you and I know today is weaker than ever before. She is under great attack from the enemy. All assemblies encounter such hardship.

Brothers and sisters, our hearts must be reminded all the more, that in such times, the Holy Spirit will do His greatest work to open the eyes of many. May we have the vision to see the glory of God. May we be blessed with such grace that our spiritual eyes may be opened. So that

in these dark and difficult times, we may see the vision of God. So that He may lead His people forward according to His own glorious will.

It is important for us to have spiritual seeing.

As I consider this topic, it is heavy on my heart. Because we are not speaking of what is to come. It is right before our eyes. We must pray urgently and fervently, that our Heavenly Father may be merciful to open our spiritual eyes. That we may not be people who are blind. That we may clearly see the purpose for our lives, and the way for the church.

This is what is of utmost importance in the heart of God for us to receive.

In Acts 26:19, Paul tells us that the vision is a heavenly vision. We know that people of this earth have their visions as well. Many intellectual people are visionaries. But Paul tells us that his vision is from heaven. All that he sees is of heaven. The central thought of this vision speaks of Christ. This heavenly vision that Paul saw is completely different from those of earth.

This evening my burden is to share the difference between the two.

We know that our Lord Jesus descended from above to bring heaven to earth. While He was on earth, He was like us in flesh, but His nature within is completely different. It is our Lord who brought heaven on earth. So when He spoke or acted, it confounded the Jews of His time. He spoke differently, He acted differently. Not only could He cast out demons, even the wind and waves listened to Him. They wondered and marveled, "Who is this man?" They saw that He was different from any other man.

Brothers and sisters, we must see this example upon our Lord today. This true testimony. Outwardly we are the same as others, but inwardly we are completely different. Of course, we are fallen man, the same as any other. But when the Lord gave us new life, and this new life is developed and manifested, growing from a seed into all the parts of our life, the more it is expressed, the more the differences show.

We thank the Lord that He has brought heaven on earth. Our brother Sparks used the word "otherness". "Otherness" means that there is a separation. Our brother never explained it, but just wrote about Christ's "otherness". In his own feeling, Christ expressed an otherness.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord is completely different. Today, through His grace upon us, He means to bring us out of this world into this otherness. He saved us out of this world. So we must understand the glorious purpose that He has upon each and every one of us.

In the Old Testament times, God had already made known His heart to us through typology. He said "I am holy, therefore you must be holy". Today, we have a misconception of the word "holy".

It is a commonly used word in religion. Many religious people are considered “holy”, and so in our natural mind, we have a concept of what it means to be a holy person. Perhaps it is one who behaves in a solemn way, who speaks in a different manner, adhering to strict rules of eating and drinking; perhaps they do not marry. This is our understanding of a holy person.

God’s holiness as depicted in scripture speaks to an otherness. It is not an outward action. Throughout church history, those who pursued after holiness focused on outward action, not touching this or that. They assumed that that was holiness.

I once shared this amusing story with you. I was visiting a brother and it was lunchtime. He told me that he could not offer me a meal at his house, because his wife is pursuing to be a holy woman, which meant that she could not enter the kitchen. So we had a meal outside. I was quite amused that day.

Being holy isn’t an outward action. It is an otherness within. Paul says that Christ is our sanctification. He is of heaven. He is from heaven. He is completely different. Today, He is within us. When the fullness of His life is manifest within us, He will separate us from this defiled, unclean world.

In the Old Testament, God had already placed this thought among His people: that “I am holy, and therefore you must be holy”. So now you understand that to be holy is to be different.

Why did God deliver His people from Egypt? Could they not serve Him in Egypt? This great nation of more than a million people - it would be hard to move such a large group. But this represents the heart of God: that they should be separated from the other people.

God is holy, so we must be separated and different.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, what they wore, what they ate, where they dwelled, and how they walked was completely different from the time they lived in Egypt. The Israelites did not like to be different, so they continually murmured against God.

Today, many Christians do not like being different too. We feel that if we believe in the Lord, we cannot do this or that. Brothers and sisters, today the Lord desires for His people to be consecrated and set apart from this world.

Back then, even when they dressed, they had a blue hem on their garment representing that they are of heaven, separated from this world. God gave them manna daily. They complained that they ate manna until it was tasteless, and longed after the melon and leeks of Egypt.

Are we also this way? Now that we are Christians, do we constantly think of the good things of this world? God wants to separate us from this world.

The way Israel walked was also different. They were led by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. In the 40 years they were in the wilderness, it represented our life on earth today. God's purpose is to lead us into Canaan, that is to be in Christ. That is where we are headed.

Today, while we are on earth, the Lord continues to work in our midst to separate us from this world. Brothers and sisters, in Hebrews it says, "they served the form and pattern that is of heaven". Even in the Old Testament the Lord is speaking through the Israelites. He desires to separate us from the earth and unto the heavenly.

We must see that when Paul speaks of the vision, he speaks of the vision from heaven. He sees that all the matters concerning the church are of heaven.

Here, I would to share something with brothers and sisters. Let us look at the differences we ought to have living in this age.

First, in the church and in the people of God, we ought to be different in our nature and character. Paul says that the church is a new man. The life of the new man is completely different from that of the old man. First of all, we have this new life within us.

Brothers and sisters, where we are going, this new heaven and new earth is vastly different from the old. The church is the new man, and there is vast chasm between the new and the old. In Ephesians and Colossians, there is a lot written about this new man. He has a different nature.

The second thing is that we have a different life. The most important aspect of our life is to manifest the nature and character of Christ, showing His beauty through our life. In order to live out His nature in us, we must go through this experience of death and life.

I often tell brothers and sisters that while we live on this earth, we live on the principle of right and wrong. After we are saved by grace, the principle of life is a matter of life and death. When spouses quarrel, whoever dies first wins. It is not about who is right or who is wrong.

We soon discover that this is not easy to do. We have to remember that our lives now are different.

Our habits also must show this otherness. In the 40 years in the wilderness, God was changing the habits and daily living of the Israelites. That was so difficult.

Christians are saved by grace. Our habits are somewhat different. The more we love the Lord, the more we follow Him, the more we live in the life of the Lord, we see the change in our daily living habits.

In the Old Testament, it was but a type. Today, the Lord leads us. We know that we ought to be different in our daily habits.

There are also habits for the church as a whole. Many gatherings have different habits. The Lord means to change us.

Our language is also different. The scripture uses a different language from that of the world. I am not speaking of the letter of the world, but the spiritual essence of the Word.

Throughout the decades in the US, I have been often told that I need to use the language of the young people to speak to the young people. That I need to speak in the language they understand.

Spiritual matters have spiritual language. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul tells us that we use spiritual words to interpret spiritual matters. There are words in the Bible non-believers will not understand. For example, when Christians are saved by grace, we are born of the Spirit. When we tell non-believers that we need to be born of the Spirit, would they understand? It is a language we use and can understand.

In the Old Testament, in Nehemiah, we can see how he departed from Jerusalem back to Persia for a time. When he came back, he found that those who had returned from captivity had intermarried with the locals. The Bible records that their children were mixed and did not understand Hebrew. Nehemiah was extremely angry.

Brothers and sisters, after we are saved by grace, the words we use, even here speaking this message, are words that we can understand because we are saved by grace. When the Gentiles come in, they cannot understand. This is also otherness.

Today, when Paul sees the heavenly vision, he sees also that the government of the church is different. It is the Holy Spirit who rules over all in the church. Therefore Paul tells us to walk by the Spirit.

Even though there are arrangements in the church for elders and deacons, we know that these are not speaking of different worldly titles and hierarchies, but different functions. That this group of people can submit to the Holy Spirit, and according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to govern over the church.

We see great error in church history. In the second century, they came the clergy and the layman, creating different hierarchical levels in the church. They wanted it to be more organized. But the church needed to submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Once an older sister shared with me. She knew what it meant to abide in the Lord. I felt that that generation of saints knew about abiding. I wanted her to share with me more about abiding in the Lord. She asked me, "do you have too much responsibility? You have to learn to entrust that to the Holy Spirit."

Today, the responsible brothers are really responsible. For example, 8-10 of us gather for prayer meetings. We feel responsible in our heart as to why this sister or that brother doesn't pray. If no one prays, we will volunteer people to pray. After all, we are responsible for the meeting.

This sister shared that next time when we come into the meeting, we should lay everything down and let the spirit lead. Many times this is where we err. We need to know that it is the Holy Spirit who governs. The way He governs is different from that of the world. This is an otherness in the order of the church. This order comes from authority. This is a hardship the church has today.

We know that authority is an outflow of life. When you live in such a time, authority will flow out. There is an authority, a heavenly authority in the church, and the children of God need to learn to submit to such authority. Especially in this generation, dear brothers and sisters, all the more we need to learn to submit to the authority of the Lord. Each Christian should learn authority within our house. The best submission to authority is submit to the teaching of the anointing. This is the apostle John's teaching.

There are so many little children in the church. How do we teach the children to submit? John knows the Holy Spirit abides in each one of us, so the teaching is to submit to the authority of the Lord, the anointing. In the church, the younger submits to the older.

I remember when Brother Kaung was still with us, he shared that he was displeased with the attitude of some of the younger ones. Some of the young ones in the church would pat his back as they walked past, and say, "Hi Steve". He wasn't too happy about this attitude.

From a young age we are taught to submit in the church. Our teaching was to revere the older brothers and sisters. Today we no longer see such reverence. It is not to be afraid, but to learn submission.

This is also a difficulty in the governing of the church. In China, there is an extreme in the teaching of submission. A good side-effect is that things are very efficient. The moment the older brothers speak a word, no one objects. Today, when you speak, no one listens. So when there is something to be done in church it is difficult. So there are two extremes.

When I was a student, there was a deacon in the church. There was a visitation list that was very thick. I took it and felt the heavy burden, but I didn't dare say no. The brother told me that he was

giving me the whole list, and that I needed to give him an account next week. I had to find some way to visit everyone on the list. I returned the list next week, completing all the visitations.

Brothers and sisters, many times this is overdone in an outward manner. It may be good, but it is not as beautiful. Only when it is out of an outflow of submission to the Holy Spirit can it be beautiful.

The church is orderly, but every brother and sister must learn to submit. First, to submit to the authority of the Lord, then the younger to the elder, then submitting one to another. This is the teaching in the Bible. It is different from that in the world. In the church there is no need for titles or positions.

There is also an otherness in the way the church moves. The Lord tells us that the worship of the children of God is in spirit and in truth, not in a set format or system. Today, many churches emphasize the form. There is a set form that leads everyone in worship. Many delight in that.

Brothers and sisters, the Bible teaches us that worship is in spirit and in truth. It is not a set of rituals or an outward form. Our service is the service of the body, and every member of the body has a function. It is not for us to organize. Many members do not exercise their function and this creates hardship for the responsible brothers. Many arrangements need to be made.

Once, I was in a meeting place and I saw a big board. It was very complete and organized. I forgot what was on the bulletin board, but there were many departments and heads of departments. It was very systematic and organized. This is because the children of the Lord did not do their duty. If you are a member of the church, you must obey the command of the Lord. If we all serve, it is very simple. We don't need all these systems and organizations.

So the form and way of the church is different.

There is also an otherness in wisdom. We are told in 1 Corinthians that we know the matters of God not with the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of man cannot comprehend the things of God. So God gives us this new life, and it comes with His wisdom.

We know that the Bible is written with the mysterious wisdom of God. Only when we use this wisdom can we understand the Word.

Brothers and sisters, do you understand that you have this wisdom within? When I was young I did not understand. I used my own intellect and wisdom to serve the Lord. I found that it did not work. One day, the Holy Spirit enlightened me with this mystery of the wisdom. And now when I read the Bible it was totally different. I was able to understand the spirit of the Word behind the letter. Each time when I encountered difficulty in service and didn't know what to do, the Holy

Spirit would point out the mystery of this wisdom, and the Word of God would bring out the spiritual principle. And when we have the principle we will have the way. That is how we serve.

So do not use our natural wisdom. It is completely different.

Lastly, the end result is also otherness. We know that temporal things and eternal things are completely different. Everything is temporal. We thank the Lord that He has placed eternity in our hearts, so that we are able to see all this which I have shared about the heavenly vision that Paul has spoken about.

Today, our citizenship is in heaven. Paul tells us that our commonwealth is in the heavens. We cannot forget that. We are heavenly citizens. Our brothers have told us that the church and Christ are seated in the heavenlies. Do you realize that our spiritual seeing must be opened before we can see this? Because the church seated with Christ in the heavenlies is not in the future - it is now! So even on earth, our commonwealth is in the heavens. So we are to live in the heavenly realm. This must be understood by seeing.

So we must ask the Lord to open our eyes to see this heavenly vision which God saw.

Today in the new covenant, God also requires such otherness. Today, we find it unique. We see Christendom today using so much energy to pull the church into this world. They want the church to blend in and mix with this world. I know you can sense this - that it is completely contrary to God's heart.

The true testimony of the church speaks of the fact we are completely different from that which is earthly. Outwardly it seems we have the same life. Again I say that our Lord took on flesh. He ate, slept, still needed to eat, but within Him was an otherness. Brothers and sisters, this is the condition which the Lord desires of us today.

In 1 Timothy, great is the mystery of godliness that Christ was manifest in the flesh. I feel this not only speaks of our Lord, but also the church. Do we have that consecrated, separated life today? A life of otherness? Sometimes I see that our condition is down - that Christians are conforming to the world.

May the Lord be gracious and merciful. We are citizens of the heavenlies. In Hebrews, we are called "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling". May we read that verse again, so that today we may hear the calling of the Lord, and once again answer the calling to be separated from this world.

We have this heavenly calling - "Holy brethren". We are separated from this world. The calling calls us to be completely separated from this world. In the days ahead, let us pursue after such otherness. That we ought to be even more consecrated from earthly matters.

Brothers and sisters, the heavens have no ground, no place on earth. If we live in the life of the Lord and are led by the Spirit, we will naturally be unable to accept the things of the earth.

There is a great struggle in the church today. It is a warfare between heaven and earth. Because Satan continually wants to put the things of the earth into the church. He wants the heavenly people of God to be earthly. So in our lives there is great conflict.

There is also this great conflict in the church. It pains our heart that so many children of God would rather stand on the side of the earth, and rebel against God's guidance within.

May the Lord open our eyes. We must have spiritual seeing. When we have this heavenly vision we will be delivered. Dear brothers and sisters, today we must have a heavenly pursuit.

Paul tells us that the vision that he saw was a heavenly vision. While Paul was on earth, he was controlled by this heavenly vision just as our Lord was. While on earth Paul lived in the heavenlies. All the warfare and challenges were great. Even in his old age, at the end when he wrote 2 Timothy in prison in Rome, about to be judged, he wrote these words, "all of Asia has departed from me".

Brothers and sisters, these are not people of this earth. These are Christians. Because Paul held fast to this otherness, to that which is heavenly. He did not compromise with that which is earthly.

Paul loved the Lord, and he was such a gifted servant of God. He was willing to sacrifice and was so filled with love. Why did all of Asia depart from him? Wouldn't we be so joyful if he were in our midst? Why did they reject him? Paul doesn't give the reason.

Many church scholars speculate that Paul insisted and held fast and do all things to the desire of God's heart. He would not compromise. Some felt that they could not do it, and forsook him.

This is such a great warfare. This is the greatest impact we will have on these last days. We must hold our spiritual ground in the heavens. May the Lord open our eyes as He opened the eyes of Paul. That we may see that the church is heavenly, and we must have a great vast difference from the earth.

Let me share this last story with you. Some of you may have already heard it, but I feel it is a good reminder. This story left a deep impression on me.

There was a farmer who found a small eaglet, and he brought it home. In his farm were many chickens, so he raised this eaglet among the chicks. This eagle grew up with the chickens. The eagle grew, and always thought that he was a chicken.

One day, a scientist who studied animals came and saw this and wondered why there was an eagle among the chickens. The chickens were pecking on the ground eating, and the eagle was also pecking the ground.

This animal expert asked the farmer, "why is this eagle among your chickens?"

The farmer replied, "this is not an eagle, this is a chicken."

"No, this is an eagle!"

The farmer insisted that it was a chicken.

So the scientist wanted to test it out. He took up the eagle and said to the eagle, "Eagle, eagle, you are an eagle and not a chicken."

The eagle trembled in his hand, looked at the chickens on the ground, and jumped to the ground and continued pecking with the chickens.

The farmer laughed, "see, I told you that this is a chicken and not an eagle".

The expert wanted to run another test. He took the eagle up to the roof of the house and spoke to the eagle, "you are an eagle, you are not a chicken".

The eagle looked down and saw the chickens, and again jumped down to be with the chickens.

The farmer told the expert again, "see? This is a chicken and not an eagle."

The expert wanted to test it one last time, and brought the eagle to atop a hill. This time he did something different. He set the eagle to face the sun.

We know that in all of the animal kingdom, only the eagle can look at the sun.

Now the eagle started to shake in the arms of the expert. It then spread its wings and took flight.

The eagle returned to the life to which an eagle ought to have.

Brothers and sisters, this illustration is an impressive reminder.

We are eagles, we are not chickens. But we have been amongst the chickens for too long. We peck along like the other chickens, and run after the same things. We are not like eagles at all.

We have lost the otherness, the uniqueness of the new life He has given us. We can no longer take flight.

This is the condition many of the children of God are in. May we look to the Lord for mercy, that He may focus our eyes once again on the sun. Our sun is Christ. May our eyes once again see our Lord, our Christ, so we can mount up on our wings and take flight. That we may not longer be bound by the things of this earth.

These are the last days. The church needs the mercy of the Lord. We are those who have already been separated from the world. We should be different from the world. You must remember "otherness".

We need this heavenly vision.

In recent times, when my heart is turned upon heavenly matters, I feel this longing for the Lord to come quickly. We are too bound to the things of the world. There are so many things that bind us. Even many Christian things bind us. We look to the Lord for mercy.

While there still is time, may the Lord open our eyes. We need to pray urgently and fervently, lest the Lord returns and we regret. He is giving us more opportunity to gather - how precious this is! Do not let this time go by casually. We don't want to just say "how wonderful a message" and nothing else.

We want more than just to hear. We want to see. Open our eyes, that the reality of Your Word may come upon us!

In the little time that we have, may we faithfully follow you ahead, and be delivered from the things of this world. May our heart love the Lord all the more and long for Himself, that He may hasten His return.

May the Lord be merciful.

So the vision that Paul saw was a heavenly vision. May our eyes be opened, and likewise, that we may see heavenly matters.

Lord, we need your mercy. We confess that we are not worthy to speak of these things. But we are truly saved by grace, and we have a heavenly life within. For times past, we were unable to break free of the bondage of this world, and our lives may not have manifested this heavenly nature - may you forgive us.

Lord, you give us time today. May your Spirit work mightily within us. Open our eyes, that we may have a heavenly vision. In these last days, may your church be directed by your vision. Give us sufficient grace to lay down that which we ought to lay down, and pick up that which we ought to pick up. That in the little time we have in these last days, we would follow after your footsteps.

May your mercy come upon us. That you will not let us go. That none of us will be empty. That when your kingdom comes, we will enter into your kingdom. For the little while here, may you do your work among your people. May your Spirit of truth work in your people, that your Word may become reality.

*Hear our prayer, in Jesus' precious name we pray,
Amen*