

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Seeing The Unseen

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the men of old gained approval. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible... ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark..., ⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Hebrews 11:1-3,7,8

“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

II Corinthians 4:16-18

Walking in faith is all about living based upon unseen realities. Some people have trouble with that. They think that this means that faith is based upon *imaginary* or *fictional* things, ...things that are *not true* or are *foolish*. Nothing could be further from actuality. In fact, **we all live trusting in things that are imperceptible to our physical senses, and we often rely upon things we do not understand.** The truth is that we *all*, whether we are Christians or secular materialists, live each day trusting in things that we do not see or comprehend. **So-called “people of faith” just have a larger perception of “unseen things” that they rely upon than materialistic-minded people do.**

We know there is much more to reality than what we can see. The radiant energy produced by the vibrations or oscillations of electric and magnetic fields is called **electromagnetic radiation**. Gamma rays, x-rays, ultraviolet rays, visible light, infrared radiation, microwaves and radiowaves are classifications of an entire spectrum of radiant energy which is around us, impinging on us every day, ...yet we are typically aware of only a very small portion of this spectrum. **Our eyes are only able to detect about 0.0035% of this electromagnetic spectrum of radiant energy.** In Western science, a specialized field of study regarding visible light did not even really *begin* until the 1700's, when Sir Isaac Newton published a book on this subject, called Optiks. The discovery and classification of all these other forms of electromagnetic radiant energy have occurred only within the past 150 years, or so, ...yet, they have been touching our lives in *imperceptible* or *unrecognized* ways throughout human history. **In the past 100 years, not only have we discovered what was there all along, ...but we also learned how to detect, measure, artificially produce, harness, direct, focus, transmit, receive and utilize all of these forms of electromagnetic energy that are ‘unseen’ to our human eyes.** Those scientists who invested study in learning about these unseen phenomena were “people of faith” who “*trusted in* what was unseen” enough to *inquire* and *investigate* more, and those inventors and developers “*believed in* what was unseen” enough to *devise* and *utilize* products and appliances that implement these “unseen realities” in very practical and beneficial ways, ...ways almost all of us have benefited from.

This is just one area of inquiry. Multiplied examples could be cited of other areas of human discovery, inquiry and practical utilization of “unseen things” to benefit our existence, many of which we take for granted today. Another great example is our discovery of the “germ theory of disease”. **Before the 1850's, the commonly accepted theory to explain the spread of disease was “miasma” or “pollution”. It was thought to be conveyed by “bad air”, or “night air” or “fog”.** (I occasionally still hear someone say that they got sick because of the night air!) In fact, the word, “malaria” is the transliteration for the Latin word for “bad” (“*mal*”) “air” (“*aria*”). This was consistent with certain observations, that often disease was, in fact, accompanied by bad smells (the smell of death, infection, the smell of sewage, polluted or fetid water, etc.). It was thought that little particles of decomposing flesh, or sewage, or even the waste of insects filled the air, and *this* was the cause of disease. **The idea of “contagion”, ...the idea that disease could be passed on by touch, or by touching infected objects or by drinking infected water..., was scoffed at, however.** (Even Florence Nightengale was a firm believer in miasma, and worked very hard to make things “smell good” and eliminate the “bad air”. Unwittingly, her cleaning efforts to make things smell better also had the benefit of removing the spread of infection, although she herself ridiculed the idea of contagion.) **Nevertheless, the miasma theory did not seem to adequately explain all of the aspects of disease. Some scientists began to “believe” there must be some other “unseen” explanation.** (Again, these micro-organisms and particles existed *all along*. No one was “believing them into existence”.) Through persistent study, insights, and through carefully designed indirect experiments certain scientists became “convinced” they were there, even though they couldn't be directly observed. **They “trusted in” their conclusions enough to implement practices of sanitation and quarantine that proved to be dramatically more effective than the methods of their contemporaries.** In spite of their obvious success, the “establishment” ridiculed them for their “foolish beliefs”. They were unwilling to “repent”, to “change their minds”, but kept pursuing their ineffective, but less inconvenient,

methods. **Eventually, the “faith” of the proponents of “germ theory” was vindicated.** With technology, the “unseen” became visible, and the proponents of miasma had to abandon their inadequate explanation of reality. In the mid-1800’s, bacteria were able to be observed by microscopes, and the “germ theory of disease” began to be commonly accepted. The existence of viruses was not proven until 1932, when the electron microscope was invented. Through this new technology, scientists could finally “see” these particles that were 100 times smaller than bacteria.

The Bible claims to be a unique revelation from God. It is “God-breathed” or “inspired” by God’s Spirit (II Tim. 3:16,17). Peter tells us that **no prophetic revelation from God was initiated by people, but God moved people by the Holy Spirit to speak for Him** (II Pet. 1:20,21). Paul tells us that he also received the insights he had by means of revelation from God, not through the teachings of other men (Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:2-4). **Jesus Himself came to make known to us the “unseen God”** (Jn. 1:18). The Bible says that God “dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see...” (I Tim. 6:16). In fact, He is invisible. Jesus is the image and likeness of Him, so that if we study Jesus, we will know about the Father (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3, Jn. 1:14; 14:7-10; I Jn. 4:9,10). **So, the first, and most important “unseen reality” that we must deal with is about God Himself.**

As we saw above, **just because something is not visible to us does not mean that it is not real.** There have been many skeptics, ...many who have mocked at the existence of God..., just as there were skeptics who doubted the existence of micro-organisms, or who limit their thinking only to their own perceived experiences. How foolish! How narrow-minded! **If history can teach us anything, it is that we can’t assume we have a complete understanding of things. We should be humble, and be open to investigate, study and examine truth claims.** Furthermore, **God welcomes your examination!!** He purposely expressed Himself in history, coming as a virgin-born human being, living among us, ministering in public, preaching to crowds, dying before the throngs of pilgrims and eyewitnesses, ...so it was clear that He was, in fact, DEAD..., rising from the dead and appearing to over 500 eyewitnesses on numerous occasions, so that you could examine the historical evidence and conclude that Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose on your behalf. As the apostle Paul said, “This has not been done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). **God was unashamedly PUBLIC about revealing Himself to those who are willing to search for answers.** True enough, you and I were not there to be eyewitnesses, but the testimony of eyewitnesses was faithfully recorded for us, so that we could know the reliability of the historical record (Lk. 1:1-4), ...so that we might know and believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing and taking Him we might receive life in His name (Jn. 20:30,31; Jn. 1:12,13). If the Bible is true, our relationship to God is THE most important issue to correctly perceive.

As we saw above, **an inaccurate perception of reality can have horrendous consequences.** Countless thousands became needlessly sick and died, all because their understanding of “unseen realities” was misguided. **Misunderstanding the unseen reality gives birth to ineffective responses to problems.** One example we have been dialing up over the past few months is that the Bible clearly indicates that there are evil spiritual beings who are set against us, who wish to harass, block, and hurt us, if they can. If we do not recognize this, we may partially address some surface issues, but we will be unable to resolve the actual underlying problems, when they are spiritual in nature.

There are two other important lessons for which a clear perception of the unseen reality is crucial. These are reflected in the passages at the top of this study. In Hebrews 11, we have a description of faith, and a listing of how **people of faith are motivated to action by a clear perception of unseen possibilities that God is calling them to.** **Faith is based upon a specific hope, promise or expectation. This possibility is not yet seen, because it is in the future, not in the present. Faith is confidence, ...a trust that translates into commitment and action toward the calling of God** in that person’s life. When you move down this chapter, you see how **faith produces action.** *Because* people confidently trust God, ...they perceive that God made what we see out of what is invisible. (Sometimes, we get this backward! We try to convince people of creation, before they even know the Creator!) “By faith Noah being warned by God about things not seen prepared an ark...” – **Noah received a revelation.** This revelation was about the future. Because Noah had a regard for God, he obediently made preparations in response to what God had revealed to him. We see a similar example with David. **David also received a revelation.** In his case, the revelation was about the temple that was to be built for God. He, too, *made preparations.* He accumulated resources and materials to complete this work. He wrote down blueprints and plans. His faith propelled him to action. **God has a purpose for you, as well. Faith will motivate you to seek out that purpose, to do what it takes to prepare for that calling, and the “go to it” drive to get started and stay with it!**

The Second Corinthian passage describes how **a clear awareness of God’s working enables us to not be discouraged when we face opposition or hardship.** We can be confident that God will bring something good out of even the difficulties we experience as we press on to fulfill the Lord’s calling in our lives. **This world is only temporary, but we are serving a God who is eternal. No matter what we face, our faith can remain steadfast, if we can keep our eyes on eternity.** “Only one life, twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.” – CT Studd.