



# **“20/20 VISION”**

**A New Year Message  
for 2020  
based on Acts 20:20  
by  
R. Stanley**

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The term “20/20 Vision” is used to express normal visual clarity or sharpness of vision. This is the perfect sight especially measured by a standard test. This refers to good vision, that is, the ability to see without glasses. The number “20” is the distance of 20 feet between the one whose eyes are tested and the reading board.

The year that’s before us is AD 2020, and I believe that the greatest need of every believer in Christ is to have a perfect vision for this year and the years to come, as the days are getting darker and darker, till the Day of Christ. I base this write-up on **Acts 20:20**. This passage speaks of the clear vision Apostle Paul carried all through his life and ministry. His spiritual journey began with a “heavenly vision” he received on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6). He was consistently obeying this heavenly vision till his homecall (26:19). **Acts 20:20** is from his farewell address to the leaders of the Church in Ephesus (20:17-35). Read through the entire passage to imbibe the vision.

The Great Commission of Christ to everyone of His followers is to “preach” the Gospel to everyone and “teach” the Bible to those who respond to the Gospel. This is what exactly Paul testifies in **Acts 20:20**: I “proclaimed” and I “taught.” This he did both in public and in private: “publicly and from house to house.” Not everyone has access to public proclamation. Not every country permits public preaching either. But friendship evangelism on one-to-one basis or through house-to-house and such visitation ministries can be done by anyone, anywhere, anytime. The secret of the exponential growth of the early Church was personal soulwinning. Each one reached one! The ministry of the propagation of the Gospel was not confined to fulltime Christian workers.

If we work with this vision, the beneficiaries would be both “Jews” (nominal Christians) and “Greeks” (non-Christians) (Acts 20:21). In other words, through such an every-believer-involvement we can bless those inside the Church as well as those outside. This would mean Revival in the Church and Evangelism through the Church. In order that we may actualize this “20/20 Vision,” there are atleast seven principles with which we must work. These are outlined by Paul in his said address (Acts 20:17-35).

### **1. Transparency**

*v18, “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia,  
in what manner I always lived among you.”*

A life of transparency and truthfulness is where we need to start from. Otherwise there will be an unresolved conflict between our walk and talk. The devil rejoices over a Christian who witnesses for Christ through his lip and not his life. Neither mere life-testimony nor lip-witness will be fruitful. No doubt it is the Gospel that’s the power of God that saves those who believe. Nevertheless it is how we live that authenticates our message. What do you think of a bald man promoting hair oil? Because what we preach is the Word of “Life,” it cannot be divorced from our practical life (1 Jn 1:1). Christ promised His Holy Spirit so we would “be” His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

The transparency that Apostle Paul mentioned to the Ephesian elders teaches us our accountability to spiritual leadership. Whereas over-shepherding is unbiblical, healthy oversight of leaders is only for our safety. In this passage the Apostle speaks of savage wolves both from outside and inside against which the shepherds are to be watchful lest the sheep are devoured (Acts 20:29,30). The believers must ground themselves in the sound

doctrine of God's Word and stay watchful against any deviation. This is an age where folks fight for right to privacy. Submission and accountability is generally disliked. Each one wants to go his "own way." The Bible does not directly oppose privacy as long as it's not a cloak to live in sin. Walking in the light with God and one another promises continuous cleansing by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7).

## **2. Tenderness**

*v19a, "... serving the Lord with all humility ..."*

The heavenly vision Paul received crushed his arrogance. The light and the voice from Above pushed him to the ground, possibly from horseback (Acts 9:8; 22:7; 26:14). It stripped him of his pride of race, citizenship, education and religiosity (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:4-7). Whatever he had been boasting of earlier became rubbish for him (Phil 3:8). Humility does not come to any man naturally. It is "our" responsibility to become humble and stay broken (Js 4:10).

This is an age of haughtiness and over-independence. This has been already predicted (2 Tim 3:1-4). Religious circles are not exempt. In fact we witness more pride and haughtiness among Church-goers than among the unchurched. The very first of the eight Beatitudes of Jesus in His sermon on the mount is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5:3). And the third Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth" (v5). The poorness in spirit guarantees "Heaven" (v3). Meekness is the pathway by which we can bring heavenly rule to "earth" (v5). Gentleness, meekness and lowliness are what we are to primarily learn from Jesus our King (Mt 11:29; 21:5). Let's take a fresh decision, as we enter the year 2020, to walk humbly before God and man (Mic 6:8). The Lord hates proud eyes (Prov 6:17; 21:4).

Let's be soft with people in our dealings. We must be strict where necessary but not rude. Everyone is hurting. Don't break bruised reeds or quench smoking flaxes (Isa 42:3). As we begin the New Year, let's commit ourselves to heal people and never hurt them in word or deed. Don't judge or condemn anyone (Mt 7:1; 1 Cor 4:5).

## **3. Tearfulness**

*v19, "... serving the Lord with many tears ..."*

*v31, "For three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."*

Apostle Paul speaks here of serving the Lord as well as His people with tears. Tears both in the prayer closet and on the pulpit! As we trace the Bible history and the Church history, most of those whom God has used significantly in their generations have been men of brokenness. Tears wash our eyes to keep our vision clear. King Hezekiah's tears moved God (2 Ki 20:5). Nehemiah the Reformer was a man of tears (Neh 1:4). Job's tears kept his faith on God's goodness in tact amidst all trials (Job 16:20). David had the assurance that his tears were in God's bottle (Psa 56:8). Jeremiah's tears shed in secret were for the healing of the backslidden people of God (Jer 9:1). Jesus acknowledged Mary's tears as her gratitude for forgiveness of sins (Lk 7:38,47). Paul's tears were for materialistic ministers of the Gospel (Phil 3:18). Timothy, known for his tears, was commended by Paul for his genuineness of faith (2 Tim 1:4,5). Tears were common in the prayer life of Jesus (Heb 5:7). No wonder He said, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Mt 5:4).

Oh, for a revival of weeping! There are both tears of sorrow and of joy. Tears are expressions of deep emotions. May God grant us tears while pondering over His Word, while praying for ourselves and others, and while proclaiming His message to this hard-hearted and stiff-necked generation. An intercessory preacher told his congregation, "If you don't weep for

your souls, I will weep for you!” We need weeping prophets to bring the Church back from where it is to where it should be (Ezek 21:6). Singing may be exciting, but sighing will be excruciating. Jesus was known for His sighs (Mk 7:34; 8:12).

#### **4. Toughness**

*v19, “... serving the Lord ... with many trials  
which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews ...”  
vv22-24, Now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem,  
not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that Holy Spirit testifies in every city,  
saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me;  
not do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy,  
and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus,  
to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*

Christian life is not for those who seek a bed of roses. The supreme condition of discipleship is cross-bearing. It is through “many tribulations” that we enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22b). The very “desire” to live godly in Christ Jesus will attract persecution (2 Tim 3:12). The modern pulpits which offer too much for too little do not proclaim the pure Gospel. That’s another Gospel. That’s another Jesus. That’s another Spirit. The year 2020 brings us one year closer to the Return of Christ and the end of the age. The devil is becoming increasingly furious because he knows that he has only a little time left (Rev 12:12). Persecutions will abound in these years. Imprisonment and martyrdom will become commonplace. But God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power (2 Tim 1:7). We must not be intimidated by scientific and technological advancements and be ashamed to preach the simple Gospel. The Gospel is the only power to save religionists, philosophers or technocrats (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18-25).

#### **5. Totality/Thoroughness**

*v20, “I kept back nothing that was helpful.”  
v27, “I have not avoided declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”*

While so much of emphasis is laid on the first part of the Great Commission of Christ, the latter part is not sufficiently stressed (Mt 28:19,20). First part: “Enrolling disciples.” Part two: “Educating them in ALL that Christ has commanded us.” There’s so much of evangelistic preaching in Christendom, but sadly not enough of edification messages. Evangelism is for unbelievers, but edification is for believers. Christ Jesus and Apostle Paul balanced both (Mt 9:35; 1 Tim 2:7). Thank God for the scores of Evangelists God has raised for this generation. But without sufficient number of Bible Teachers the Church will be stunted in its growth. It’s sad that even the sermons in the Sunday morning worship services in many believers’ assemblies are more evangelistic than for the edification of believers. This may draw large crowds but God’s people will not be equipped. The call from the Sunday pulpits must not primarily be, “Come to Jesus!” Rather, “Follow Jesus!” More time should be spent in meditating on the life and teachings of Christ rather than on His power and miracles. Otherwise perpetual infancy would be the lot of Church members (Eph 4:13-15). Our relationship with Jesus would be utilitarian.

“All” Scripture is profitable (2 Tim 3:16). Just like Paul the pastors and preachers must teach the entire Bible to instruct God’s people on the “whole” counsel of God (Acts 20:20,27). This is how the people of God can grow to manhood and be equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:17). If the pulpiteers are to give solid teaching to the congregations, they must spend quality time in the meditation and study of the Bible. This is possible only if they say no to

other activities even if they are legitimate. The apostles refused to take up the responsibility of food distribution to widows, legitimate though, in order to “give themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer” (Acts 6:2-4). Because this apostolic principle is violated, we are left with overfed shepherds but underfed sheep (Ezek 34:2,3).

I urge each Christian to get hold of a Bible Reading Calendar and read through the entire Bible in one year or a two year period. The one I have published presents a plan to read through the Old Testament once, and the New Testament and Psalms twice, in two years’ time. Ask for a complimentary copy. A Study Bible will assist you in your meditation. My 36-page booklet, *Unless someone guides me*, is a guide to choose reliable study aids. Your copy is free for the asking. Let’s experience a revival through the Word of God in 2020 (Psa 119:25,107,154).

## 6. Time

*v31, “Watch, and remember that for three years  
I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”*

Our stewardship responsibility is primarily on three things: Time, Talent and Treasure. There are simply too many people who are highly talented and enviably affluent but do not accomplish much because of poor time management. God in His wisdom has found that 24 hours are sufficient for a day, and has given only that much to each man, educated or illiterate, rich or poor. We must do right things in the right time in the right way. This is the meaning of “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:15-17). Without such a discipline we cannot understand God’s specific will for us. Everybody need not do everything. Do not spread too thin. Each one should remain in his calling (1 Cor 7:20,24). As you enter the New Year 2020, prepare a daily schedule and stick to it unless you face an extraordinary situation. This is the way to productivity and fruitfulness.

In your daily timetable, give top priority to spend time with God. A day without the Bible is ill-spent. Early-risers enjoy a deeper devotional life than others. The world becomes too noisy afterwards. Honour God by switching off your mobilephone when you spend time with Him (Mt 6:6). Will you keep your mobile on when you have an appointment with the President or the Prime Minister? The mobilephone is the modern thief who steals our time. Let it be your servant and not your master. Beware of TV also! “Early to bed, Early to rise,” is still a golden rule. Diary-writing is a highly profitable exercise. Do not sacrifice family time for work. God rested not because He became tired and exhausted, but to teach us a principle (Gen 2:2,3; Ex 20:8-11; Isa 40:28).

Besides setting aside time daily to spend WITH God, plan to spend a few hours, atleast weekly, to work FOR Him in any ministerial activity of your choice. There’s always scarcity of labourers in God’s vineyard (Mt 9:37). It’s never too late to join His workforce (20:1-7). No work for Him is insignificant or too small (1 Cor 12:18-22). Tract distribution, children’s ministry, rural evangelism, visitation ministries, charity and relief work for the poor and underprivileged, etc., are ever-open doors. Jesus has promised, “If any man serves Me, him will My Father honour” (Jn 12:26).

## 7. Treasures

*vv33-35, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.  
Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities,  
and for those who were with me. I have shown you in everyway,  
by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus,  
‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

The last days, which the Apostle calls as “perilous times,” will be characterised by “love of money” (2 Tim 3:1,2). There’s no nation on earth which does not chase the mirage of materialism. This has plagued not only the secular world but also the religious sphere. This was prevalent in the times of Prophet Jeremiah itself. Hear his lamentation: “From the least of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely” (Jer 6:13). The days of Noah are on us as every area of the world has turned commercial (Mt 24:37). The TV advertisements enslave us.

Dear Friend, take a decision right at the beginning of this New Year 2020 that you would not under any circumstance allow love of money take root in your life. If it has already got into your mind and heart, do all that’s possible to flush it out from your bloodstream. Run away from anything that allures you to the curse of materialism (1 Tim 6:10). The antidote for materialmindedness is “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness” (v11). Cultivate these fruits of the Spirit by adhering strictly to spiritual disciplines. According to Jesus, materialism makes your eyes bad. That throws your entire life (“body”) into total darkness (Mt 6:19-24).

A word to those in Christian ministries: It should never be ministry for money, but money for ministry. Even for ministerial needs, learn to trust the Lord and not resort to commercial techniques. Concentrate on sowing spiritual blessings on people bountifully. Reaping material benefits would be a natural outcome (1 Cor 9:11). If you are a Pastor, lead your sheep regularly to “green pastures” and “still waters” (Psa 23:1,2). It’s the responsibility of the Chief Shepherd to take care of your physical and material needs. If you climb on the pulpit without elaborate and painstaking homework, you will only throw dry straw before your congregation. It will be like the blind leading the blind!

The eyes of Jesus were full of compassion, especially for the poor. His words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” are not recorded in any of the Gospels (Acts 20:35). The disciples had consistently noticed this philosophy at work in His deeds. Besides earning for his needs and those of his team mates, Apostle Paul “laboured” to support the weak. Beginning with the year 20-20, keep increasing your giving for the cause of the poor and the needy until you reach 50-50 (Lk 3:11; 19:8). This is the pathway to perfection (Lk 18:22). My plain understanding is that the Bible teaches equality, both by precept and practice (2 Cor 8:13,14; Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35). Do not discriminate between the good and the bad among the poor (Mt 5:45b,48). Overconsciousness in the choice of the beneficiaries robs charity of its fragrance.

## **Conclusion**

As you enter 2020, lay yourself on God’s operating table and get your cataract removed. Jesus the Ophthalmic Surgeon will apply His eye ointment so your vision be no more blurred (Rev 3:18). If necessary, He will give you a “second” or even a third touch to restore perfect vision (Mk 8:22-25). Wish you a “Bright” New Year!

*(Do forward this Message to all your Christian friends  
as your New Year greetings!)*

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