

It's all in the eyes!

Written in 2002 as an encouragement to farmers during the Zimbabwe farm invasions

Mat 6:22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

6:23 “If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness.”

I know that many of you have lost your whole livelihood, and I feel terribly sorry for you. I have been helping my family move off their farm which was confiscated by government - the farm on which I grew up. I went to see my brother's grave, with the gravestone which I had carefully engraved for him, quietly lying under the huge *Muchakata* trees. It might be the last time - at least for a long time - that I see this, and I pray that his grave will not be desecrated as so many other things have been. As I drove away, I saw the many huts, and the piles of wood from the trees which have indiscriminately been chopped down - the whole beautiful countryside has been desecrated! Some young people angrily waved their fists at me as I drove by. At such a time it is very easy to get bitter and angry.

However, as I meet many others who have also lost everything, I see some who still have bright clear eyes, renewed vision, and a clear purpose for living! One farmer I know of has started an export business, selling farm produce across the border, and doing well. Though he lost everything,

he did not allow his will to live to be stolen, and he continues to be a blessing to the community as a whole. I salute him!

What is it that makes the difference? What causes one man to give up in bitter anger, and another to spring up like a resurrection plant after the first rains? *I believe it's all in the eyes!*

The King James version puts the verse slightly differently. It says:

Mat 6:22 “... If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light ...”

What does this old English expression, “*single*” mean? Possibly we can gain a better understanding of this meaning if we look at a Scripture which speaks about the exact opposite:

James 1:8 “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

These verses obviously speak of *decision making*, and patterns of thought or opinion regarding one’s future direction. *Double-mindedness* causes instability. Note, it’s not the war veterans or the situation around us which cause instability, it is our own *double-mindedness*. I see this in the international community’s way of handling the Zimbabwean crises. No one wants to make a decision. Everyone hopes that by some kind miracle the problem will just quietly go away. However, problems never do just quietly go away. They are overcome by decisive men and women who have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong, and because of that understanding, daring to make definite and bold decisions, and unwaveringly follow the path of those decisions, come what may. That is what changes things.

May I also say, with respect, I think the outside world is generally far too diplomatic and watered down by many years of compromise to be able to stand up for right or wrong. If any change is going to happen, it is going to happen from the inside out, and we Zimbabweans and South Africans (black and white alike) are going to have to personally make those personal bold stands for righteousness and justice.

To do that, we will need to be single-minded. We will need to have clear thought of what needs to be accomplished both personally and nationally, and put our heads down and make it work - by God's grace and mercy! I believe the situation has challenged each person to rethink his or her *personal* goals and ambitions. It is clear that those who have had ambitions or life goals based on personal amassing of wealth and comforts, are crumbling fast, and all the worldly riches which have been stored up are disappearing like quicksand. For those who have thought only of wealth and comfort, this is an absolutely terrible time, and the following passage of Scripture rings so true:

Luke 12:16 “And He told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man was very productive.

12:17 “And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’”

12:18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

12:19 ““And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’”

12:20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

12:21 "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

This Scripture is not against riches. However, it speaks to me loudly of *focus*. It speaks to me of the eye. Our opening verse about the singleness of our eye follows immediately after Jesus' teaching about treasure:

Mat 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth or rust destroy, and where thieves break in or steal.

6:20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

What is the focus of our heart? If it has been distracted with wealth and comfort, then we are on slippery ground, and this will be a terrible time. However, if it is set on our calling and purpose for living - that of being a blessing to the community around us, then we have entered our greatest field of opportunity, because the needs around us are like insurmountable mountain ranges.

We are going to need God's miracle-working power to get through this one! We have been plunged into a crisis of massive proportions, and each one of us have the ability to make a difference to lives immediately within our reach. If you can only plant a 1-hectare patch of corn, then plant it and get

the very best yield that you possibly can. That hectare will save the lives of a few hundred people! If you can export some industrial produce, for goodness' sake, don't keep all the money outside the country in some foreign account - bring it back in, in the form of something which can benefit the country. You might have lost your farm, but it does not mean you have lost your life or your ability to think. The country and its people need you. It needs your farming skills. Don't curl up and die. Get up, shake yourself from the dust, find your direction again, and keep going!

Isa 51:21 "Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine:

51:22 "Thus says your Lord, YHWH, even your God Who contends for His people, 'Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling, The chalice of My anger; You will never drink it again.

51:23 "I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, Who have said to you, 'Lie down that we may walk over you.'" You have even made your back like the ground and like the street for those who walk over it."

Isa 52:1 "Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no longer come into you.

52:2 "Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem; loose yourself from the chains around your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

52:3 “For thus says YHWH, ‘You were sold for nothing, and you will be redeemed without money.’

I know many of you will identify with this Scripture - you might have felt like your face has been rubbed in the dirt and your back has been like the street for people to walk roughshod over you. But that is not the end of the story. Allow your experience to bring you closer to the merciful hand of God rather than to curl up into a ball of hatred and bitterness.

Listen to the sound of the birds who really are still singing out there. Let your eyes still notice the beauty of the minutest of flowers, hidden in the grass. See the mercy of God in each little thing that you experience. Train your eyes to be single - to see the things which really matter - to see the plight of the orphans and widows around you, and the poor and distraught. And be a messenger of life to them.

I promise you this: *you will be truly happy, and your life will have meaning!*

With special love to you all,

Henry D Jackson