

“Eye Exam”

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Preacher: Justin Bryant

[0 : 00] We're going into chapter 4 today. A few weeks ago we started chapter 4 doing the first two verses. Now it is my pleasure and privilege to continue that before you.

You will find 2 Corinthians chapter 4 on page 1777 of your Pew Bibles. I'm going to give you an eye exam today.

I want you to know that if you never pass this eye exam, you will go to hell and suffer eternity.

Hopefully I have your attention.

I need you to know that this matters. What we're talking about today is an issue of life and death. And with stakes like this, you should know that it's not a normal eye exam. I'm not examining your physical eyes today.

[1 : 08] This is a test of your spiritual eyes. Physically, you may be wherever you are. But far more important is your spiritual sight.

Just as someone who is physically blind will have struggles understanding and interacting with the world around them, so to someone who is spiritually blind, if you yourself are spiritually blind, you will be unable to properly judge the world around you and to understand what is true.

Instead of water, you will drink poison if you are spiritually blind. If you are spiritually blind, you will do wrong instead of doing right.

And if you are spiritually blind and you die that way, you will end up in heaven, in hell instead of heaven. I test you today because it is so important.

You must know where you stand with these things because the answer to this test determines your eternity. If you are diseased and spiritually blind, you are deeply sick and you need treatment.

[2 : 37] And I want you to know that there is a cure. No one ever pursues treatment before they realize they have a sickness. I do not get radiation therapy when I don't know if I have cancer or not.

I wait until I am clear that there is a problem that needs to be addressed and then I seek out treatment. So too, if you are spiritually blind, the point of this exam is to help you know that so that you might then realize your need for the cure for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please read with me verses 3 and 4 of 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and we will dive deeper into this question of spiritual blindness. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Point number one. Blind people. Are you blind?

Yes. How could you tell? You know. One of the interesting things is if you are born blind, you do not automatically realize that that is the case.

[4 : 19] You do not realize that there is something you cannot do until you interact with other people and realize that they have an ability that you do not. In the same way, how do you know that you are spiritually blind?

How could you tell? Perhaps you have lived your whole life thinking that you saw everything that is going on, not realizing that there is a spiritual world, and not realizing that you are spiritually blind. The way that you learn this is the same way that a person who is born blind learns of their disability. You learn it by looking at other people or interacting with other people and realizing that they have something that you do not. The surefire test of spiritual blindness is you look at believers living the gospel, and you ask yourself, is there something there that I don't have?

And if the answer is yes, you are spiritually blind and you need treatment. Look at the people here. Look at the people who read this book and whose lives are shaped by it, and ask yourself, does your life look like that?

[5 : 52] Do they see something here that you don't see? This book is real, and it really changes lives.

And if you haven't experienced that, maybe if you've been coming here, but deep down you haven't really experienced that life change, I want you to know that you are spiritually blind and there is treatment.

This is what Paul speaks of in verse 3. Paul had just finished saying in the past two verses, 1 and 2, that he clearly teaches the gospel to people, that he presents it boldly before the world, so that everyone can understand.

Now Paul says that if someone doesn't understand the gospel he preaches, it isn't because it was unclear, or he didn't present it faithfully, but rather it is because they are blind and unable to see. Verse 3, But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the God of this age has blinded.

[7 : 15] If you cannot see the truth of this gospel, if it has not worked itself down into your life and changed you, it is not because this gospel is weak or unclear, it is because there is a sickness in your heart keeping you from seeing the truth.

Notice also in this verse the consequences of the blindness. Those who are blind are perishing. It is veiled, as verse 3 says, it is veiled to those who are perishing. If you cannot see the glory and truth of this gospel, there is something deeply wrong.

And you are in danger of perishing eternally. That is point number one, blind people. Point number two, the one who blinds.

Being blind can offer many new challenges to life. It can be difficult to make your way in the world. But imagine how much harder it would be to be blind and have someone actively trying to sabotage everything you do.

[8 : 48] Moving things when you aren't looking. Messing with your drinks. Tampering with your food. It is not hard to imagine the sort of damage that someone could cause in that situation.

Well, you need to know that if you are spiritually blind, there is someone actively trying to sabotage you.

And he wants you to be blind. To stay blind. And he wants to use that blindness to get you to drink deep of the poisonous sins and lies that he sells.

Verse four says, Whose minds the God of this age has blinded. You have an enemy of your soul. And one of his tools is to blind you to the gospel of the glory of God. One of his key strategies is to prevent you from being able to see the truths of Christ.

[10 : 02] This is not a neutral time. But you are actively being opposed. Someone is actively trying to swindle you and blind you to the goodness of God.

And so you must be vigilant and fight against it. We are all familiar with the shell game. You know, you have three shells on a table.

You put a pea in one of them. And the person moves it around. And tries to trick you. And get you to lose track of where the pea is. If I was playing that and I just put the pea in the middle one.

And I just sat there and I said, Which one is it in? You'd have an easy time. The challenge comes because someone is actively trying to prevent you from understanding what is going on.

All of their turns and their movements, if they're honest even, Are trying to trick you into thinking something happened that didn't.

[11 : 13] It is the same way with life. Life is not that easy example where the problem is clear and no one's opposing you. But there is someone who is actively trying to deceive you.

Who is constantly trying to sell you a false bill of goods. To bait and switch. To cover your eyes. To do whatever he can.

To blind you to what is good and what is true. If you are not vigilant. If you are not vigilant. He will succeed. And you will waste your life and perish. Satan is out there.

Paul has no question about it. And he is powerful. He is so powerful that he is called the God of this age.

This is not because he is God. But it's a poetic way of talking about the great power that he has in this world.

[12 : 23] Do not be deceived into thinking he's just some cartoon character in red with the pitchfork. You have a real enemy.

Who is trying to blind you so badly. That you perish because of it. He reigns over much of this world. And he tries with all of his might to destroy and to defile as much of God's creation as possible.

He is looking to destroy you. He wants you blind so that he can lead you away from God's glory and beauty.

You are an image bearer of God. He created you to reflect him. And that makes you the front lines for Satan's war of rebellion.

He wants to take the image bearers of God and corrupt them full of sin so that they are useless to bring God glory. He wants to wrap you up so deep in sin that you never even stop to realize that there is something greater going on.

[13 : 42] It's also important as we remember the reality of our adversary.

That when we are preaching the gospel, he will work against us to blind the people we are preaching to. We should not be surprised when people do not understand the truths we're teaching. We should not be surprised when the truth, the reality, the gospel that seems so real to us seems like a fabrication to the rest of the world.

Because there is one who is actively trying to blind them to the truth. And so when we evangelize, when we preach the gospel, when we speak about Christ as we should, as his ambassadors and his people, we should expect to find resistance.

And we should pray fervently, knowing that we need the power of God to unblind the people we are preaching to.

[14 : 56] I also want you to remember, in light of the enemy that we have, that there is a big difference between being lazy in the comfort of your home and being lazy on a battlefield.

It's one thing for me to go home and take a nap on my couch. It's another thing for a soldier to kick back in no man's land with a drink while bullets fly overhead.

There is an enemy taking aim at you. However you thought you could relax and be slack in your fight, in your training, in your vigilance against sin, you cannot be.

You must be dogged in your guard. You must always seek cover and shelter from sin.

You must always do whatever you can to take yourself out of the line of sight of your enemy. Things like being in church.

[16 : 15] Having open and honest conversations with other believers. Not doing things in secret just so that other people don't judge you for them.

Reading the word. These are all our spiritual weapons of warfare that keep us safe and on guard from the enemy. Take heed to yourselves, lest there be in you an evil, unbelieving heart causing you to fall away from the living God.

Hebrews. That's point number two. The one who blinds. Point number three.

How he blinds. If you're going to be on guard against this enemy, you must know how he plans to attack.

What strategies he uses. What types of guns are in his hands. He is trying to blind you to God's glorious gospel.

[17 : 22] And one of the ways he tries to do that is by flashing bright lights of fleeting pleasures at you. He wants to distract you from the steady radiant glory of God.

By bright flashes. Of fleeting pleasures. He tries to sell you lies.

He tries to make you think that the promises of God are worthless. He tries to trick you into thinking that you can get good things without obedience to God.

That there are shortcuts to the things that you want. That you can take a little scoot around God's rules and get to the good things faster.

And have the best life now. He says lies like, there is no need to wait till marriage. It's better to have what you want now.

[18 : 31] Or he says, it's a little lie. No one will ever know. And it'll make your life easier. So why not?

Or you can get away with taking that. No one's going to notice that you did it. It's not the store that needs it or the big businesses.

You're the needy one. Or so common these days. You're not the one who needs to change. It's all everyone else's fault.

You don't have anything you need to work on. You're perfect the way you are. And so on. He is always trying to get us.

Satan's offers are like, you know, you're going house shopping and suddenly you find one. It's the same price as the other houses, but it's twice as big.

[19 : 32] It looks like a great deal. So you move in. Then you find out that it's rotting from the inside. That it's a death trap.

That it might have polished outsides, but insides it's cold and miserable. He wants you to forget the future and live as easy as you can now.

Because when you look at the future, when you count the total cost, not just the immediate cost. Sin leads to death.

And obedience leads to life. Satan wants to try to appeal to appearances over substances.

He will much rather paint something up to look nice than ever do work to provide anything of true value. He knows that the really meaningful things all belong to God.

[20 : 38] That God has said, these are mine and they are for my people and no one else can have them. And so he settles for slipshod patch jobs that look nice but never last.

And he's trying to sell them to you every day in sin. In bitter complaints. In selfishness. In manipulation.

In lies. In entertainment. It's your time. It's your free time. Why not use it for yourself?

You know, there's, you don't have to pay attention to those problems out in the world. Do what makes you feel good in the moment. That's the way to happiness.

He tries to lure you in with deals that seem easy and better than what God has to offer. But they turn out to have great hidden costs.

[21 : 40] Like the cell phone company that advertises the super cheap deal. And then you get your bill and it's got all sorts of extra things tacked on.

And there's no real savings. His promises fall short. And he has no interest in being fair or reasonable. Do not buy what he is selling.

Do not listen to his lies. Do not believe. And take. Do not believe what he says.

And take the time to count the cost. And to look far enough down the road. To realize. That sin. Never off. Never delivers.

On what it promises. We are walking on the way of destruction.

[22 : 40] When we walk by the flesh. When we live without looking at spiritual realities. When we are functionally blind to the spiritual world.

We are on the path to death. You need to lift your head up from the busyness of life. So that you can realize someone has tampered with the signs on the road.

And you need to turn. And start heading the way of life. Please fight to look deeper. And realize that the simple things of God.

Though plain on the outside. Are deeper and more beautiful than the flashing lights of sin. Point number four.

A sight worth seeing. Let's take a deeper look. Into what spiritual light. Spiritual sight. Let's you see.

[23 : 41] Verse number four. Lest the gospel. Lest the light of the gospel. Of the glory of Christ. Who is the image of God.

Should shine on them. This is make it or break it. This is the prize of passing the exam.

If you can see him. You have everything. If this image is clear. Nothing else matters.

You have what you need. Come loss. Suffering. Sickness. Abandonment. Pain.

If you can see Christ. You have everything. But if you cannot see this.

[24 : 39] You must try. To look. You must fight. To be able to see this. Spiritual reality. Let's walk.

Through this. This site. Piece by piece. First. First. First. He says. Light. The light. Of the gospel. Of the glory. Of Christ.

It illuminates. It gives life. Think of the sun. How hard would it be. You know. Think of especially before electricity.

To live life. If there was no sun. Lighting everything up. But once that light is there. It illuminates. And suddenly everything becomes so much easier.

Think of how the sun gives life. And blessing to us. The plants grow. The fruit. The wheat.

[25 : 35] Everything that we eat. Is sustained by it. So too. What we are looking at here. Is the light of the gospel. That brings spiritual life.

And spiritual fruit. If you are blind to this. You are spiritually dead. But if your eyes are open to it. By God's grace.

And you stare at this light. You will grow and live. Just as the plants do. Then he calls it.

The gospel. Gospel is just a fancy older term. For good news. If you are blind.

And you let yourself stay that way. You miss out on the good news. Something great is coming. And you have to hear the call.

[26 : 30] To be ready to receive it. You know how sometimes. If you get a package delivered. You have to sign for it. Otherwise they won't drop it off. So you have to know it's coming.

To be ready for it. So too with the gospel. The good news. You have to know about it. To receive it. If you let yourself stay in blindness.

You will not get the prize of the good news. Forgiveness in Christ Jesus. It is the gospel of glory.

Glory is this wonderful quality of magnificence. Of something grand. Of something amazing. And truly this gospel is glorious.

What is grander. Than the God of the universe. Perfect and holy. Being so loving.

[27 : 34] So merciful. So gracious. That he would become. A man. And when he becomes a man.

He doesn't demand that everyone serves him. But he comes to serve them. Well maybe they're really great people. No. They're wretched sinners.

God shows his love for us. In that while we were still sinners. Christ died for us. What could be more grand. Than that God. Not just serving us.

But serving us. To the point of death. At our own hands. For our sins. So that. He gets our penalties. And we get his privileges.

What an amazing thing. What a. A. Awesome. Thing. It is the gospel. Of the glory. Of Jesus Christ.

[28 : 36] Look to Jesus. Who is like he is. Who dies. To save criminals. Who. Who. Who with the power.

To escape at any moment. Would willingly. Let themselves get beaten. Spit on. And crucified. I mean.

How often. Do we use. Everything we can. To get out of any difficulty. At any moment. He could have commanded. Legions of angels.

To free him. From his torment. And yet. He stays there. For you. That is Jesus Christ. He is gracious. And kind.

And loving. He is the savior. To all. Who look upon him. Isaiah 45. Verse 22. Look to me. And be saved.

[29 : 32] All you. Ends of the earth. For I am God. And there is no other. He is the image of God. He is the representative of God.

He is the reflection of God himself. Because he is God. And he is good. Look to him. And be saved.

Fight against any spiritual blindness. That gets in the way. Of you seeing. That Christ. That light.

The light of the gospel.

Of the glory. Of Jesus Christ. The image of God. Do not for a moment. Let it pass you by.

Do not. Refuse. Refuse. To settle. For missing out. On this.

[30 : 24] Site. There is no more beautiful sight. Than our savior. On the cross. In the stead of ruined sinners.

Point number five. The cure. The cure. An important question. Should be raised. By all this discussion. Of blindness.

Is how exactly. Do we treat. Spiritual blindness. Is there some sort of. Spiritual LASIK center. That I can. Go to. And get it all.

Cut away. You know. Just a. A quick trick. To the right doctor. And it'll. All be good. Well not exactly. But there is a cure. The cure. Is. Belief. Or faith.

[31 : 23] Faith. Is the way. Of spiritual sight. Look at verse four. Those. Who do not believe. Lest the gospel. The light of the gospel.

Of the glory of Christ. Should shine on them. Those who do not. Believe. Because they do not believe. They do not see the light.

But if you believe. You will see Christ. As sure as day. As sure as you see me.

And I see you. Spiritually. You will receive Christ. Belief is the key. By faith.

We draw near to God. And by faith. Our hearts. Are restored. When we believe. Our spiritual eyes.

[32 : 19] Are suddenly. Renewed. If you read the story. Of Paul. He's traveling. On the Damascus road. He sees Christ. And then he's blinded.

And then he goes. To see his brother. Believer. In the city. And. And. They lay hands on him. And scales fall away. From his eyes. And suddenly.

He can see. Or the blind man. Who calls out for Christ. For mercy. And Christ. Heals his blindness. And suddenly. He can see.

So too. Our spiritual eyes. Are blocked. Are blocked. Apart from Christ. Christ. Yet. When we turn. And believe. The scales fall away.

And we are able to see. So. Then. Is the answer. To just. Say you believe.

[33 : 14] And then everything is fixed. Like I sign a card. I walk an aisle. I get wet. And. And. I'm good.

I'm all set. Is that enough? What we're talking about here. Is real genuine faith. That is not just. External actions. You can come to church. Every Sunday. And not have this faith. Faith. So you must search your heart.

To test. Whether or not you have. Real true. Saving faith. In Christ. But if you realize. You don't have that faith.

How do you get it then? If you can't just. Walk an aisle. Or sign a card. Or say you believe. How do you. Actually get that. Real true. Saving faith.

[34 : 10] Where does it come from? Well it is a mystery. The wind blows. Where it wills. And so it is. With the spirit of God.

But God has given. Certain things. That he. Often works through. That if you wrestle. Through these things. Genuinely. He will bless you.

With the spirit. Giving you sight. Things like. Talking to believers. And listening to the things. They say. With an open heart. Reading the Bible.

And considering. Honestly. The things that it says. And considering. With an open mind. Its arguments.

And above all. Praying. Fervently. That God would give. His light in life. Through the Holy Spirit. If you realize. That you.

[35 : 07] Lack that saving faith. If you are spiritually blind. Pray. Get on your knees. In person. And in private. Asking that he would.

Give sight to you. That he would open up your eyes. This is the same thing. We talked about. In previous chapters. The end of chapter three.

Talks about. Veils that. That separate people. From the truth. Veils. Just like in this passage. Follow along with me.

As I read. The. The last section. Of chapter three. To remind us. About how the spirit. Takes the veil away. Second Corinthians. Chapter three. Starting in verse 14.

But their minds. Were blinded. For until this day. The same veil. Remains unlifted. In the reading. Of the Old Testament.

[36 : 03] Because the veil. Is taken away. In Christ. But even to this day. When Moses is read. A veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless.

When one. Turns to the Lord. The veil is taken away. Now the Lord. Is the spirit. Where the spirit. Of the Lord is.

There is freedom. But we all. With unveiled face. Beholding as in a mirror. The glory of the Lord. Are being transformed.

Into the same image. From glory to glory. Just as by the spirit. Of God. The spirit brings. Real freedom. Real sight.

As someone is. Is turning. To the Lord. The spirit is there. Taking a veil away. Taking blindness away. I beg you.

[37 : 02] If you haven't. Confronted your blindness. Please do. Look inside. And look without. And see. Whether or not. There is something missing.

Watch how you. Live out your life. And see whether or not. It looks like the people. Who really get. What this book is talking about. Make sure.

That you. Are. Really. Deeply. Truly. Changed. So that once you were blind. And now you see. Pull your focus off of.

The distractions of the devil. Off of the perishing things. Of this world. Cry out to the Savior. And you will not perish. But have everlasting life.

Earlier we read a section of Isaiah 55. Now I'm going to close. Close with another section. Of that. That wonderful chapter of scripture.

[38 : 03] Isaiah 55. Six through eleven. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him. While he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way.

And the unrighteous man. His thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. That he may have compassion on him. And to our God. For he will abundantly pardon.

For my ways are not your ways. Declares the Lord. Neither are my thoughts. Your thoughts. For as the heavens are higher than the earth. So too are my ways higher than your ways.

And my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven. And do not return there. But water the earth. Making it bring forth and sprout.

Giving seed to the sower. And bread to the eater. So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me void. But it shall accomplish the thing for which I purpose.

[39 : 05] And shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Amen. Lord. We ask that you would. Peel any remaining blindness off of our hearts.

By the presence of your Holy Spirit. That you would continue to witness your glory before us. That we would love and live and long for Christ. The beautiful perfect one.

And might we as a people given new sight. Be encouraged to preach to a blind world. So that they too might have the veil lifted.

The scales removed. And see the Savior. It is in his name we pray. Amen.