**Blinded Minds**

**2 Corinthians 4:1-6 KJV** Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; **[2]** But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. **[3]** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: **[4]** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. **[5]** For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. **[6]** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1. **INTRODUCTION—THE HOLY WAR**

John Bunyan wrote another classic besides *Pilgrim’s Progress*. It was a book called *The Holy War*. The focus of the story was the capture of a city called Mansoul. In it Diabolus (the devil) has taken it and the battle rages as the Prince Emmanuel works to recapture it. The way it was overcome was because the gates of the city had been compromised. Diabolus and his wicked imps had traversed it by taking advantage of the Eye Gate and Ear Gate which are symbolic of the use of the senses to cause the capture of the city.

1. **The Council of War**

Early in the book, Bunyan introduces us to what he terms the Council of War. At this council, there is a conglomerate of devils that all are sitting down trying to make a determination of how they are going to get into the city of Mansoul to destroy it. There are four schemes that they consider prior to the attack of the city.

* Whether or not all of the wicked hordes should attack the city or should they send just a single soldier in to gain access to the city?
* Whether or not they should go as they are, which would be easily recognizable to the citizens as intruders, or should they go in disguise?
* Whether or not to show their real intentions at the start of why they have come into the city or to assault the city with words and ways of deceit?
* Whether or not they should determine which of the citizens were the most prominent and influential and then destroy them before attacking?

This council of devils finally made a decision that they will go in by subtlety and deceit. Giant Diabolus will go in as a Dragon (Rev. 20:1-2) but by clever disguise in the role of the serpent. A decision is also made that they will kill Mr. Resistance who is the greatest man of Mansoul because he has such a godly influence over the people who are living there.

-Times haven’t changed too much in our day either. The devil is still a very subtle enemy that seeks to destroy anything that remotely is devoted to God.

-In that old classic work by William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armor*, Gurnall tells us about the way the devil works.

* He will choose the most proper and advantageous seasons for temptation. (After conversion, during affliction, working for God, after great victory.)
* He will come in the disguise of friends, on the pretense of Christian liberty, and he will approach us in great modesty (you are such a great man of God, etc.).
* He will use carnal reason, pride, and perhaps chiefly will blind us to the ambitions of our own heart!

-Be careful when you find yourself surrounded by Balaam, Ahithophel, Haman, and Sanballat. Men who are admired for their counsel and great plans are the men that the devil likes to put in our near vicinity.

1. **Attacking the Gates of the Eyes and Ears**

So once all of these decisions are made, Giant Diabolus in the form of a serpent ascends up close to the Gates—primarily the Eye Gate and the Ear Gate—and sets up the ambush. The Eye Gate is described by Bunyan as the place of Perspection.

We might call it our perspective, perception, mindset, attitude, aspect, or our viewpoint. The Ear Gate was the place where the entire Town gathered to hear any information that would be applicable to them for direction of life. What Bunyan was hitting at was the thought that what we see and hear has a huge amount of influence into how we think.

Giant Diabolus begin presenting his spiel of things and when his great swelling words began to capture the residents of Mansoul, they started moving closer to him so they could *see* him. This was the great mistake because when Captain Resistance moved out of his place of protection and stood on top of the Gate, one of the cruel archers shot him in the head and killed him. Shortly after the death of Captain Resistance, Lord Innocency dies from an unclear reason. Bunyan says that he died either by a “sinking qualm” that came over him or from the “stinking breath of that treacherous Villain old Ill-pause.”

Once all of this happens, Giant Diabolus and his hordes move into the city and before long, the fruit that had been off-limits has been taken and the gates, Eye-Gate and Ear-Gate, are opened. Bunyan then uses the interesting analogy of the Bramble King coming to reign in this once great city. This is the beginning of the story that is very rich in symbols that paints the fall and recovery of man through the work of the Cross.

1. **THE GATES OF THE MIND**

-It is imperative that a man guard the gates of his mind. He is constantly under the assault and duress of the devil and because of this, our mind must be worked on very diligently to prevent the capture of it.

-Don’t be surprised at the tares which may loom among the wheat because this is the way it has to be. In fact Paul cautioned the ever vigilant servant when he expressed the fact that there must be heresies to grow like clover in a pasture. The reason is for the church to be approved by God (1 Cor. 11:19).

-Vigilance and soberness of mind is necessary in our days as never before!

-Twelve times in the New Testament we find the word, sober, meaning that we are to be temperate, aware, and not have our senses jaded in our walk with the Lord. Of those twelve times in the NT, it is mentioned three times in 1st Peter.

* **1 Peter 1:13**—Keep your mind sober! Because of the grace that has been extended to us!
* **1 Peter 4:7**—Keep your prayer sober! Because we are living in the last days!
* **1 Peter 5:8**—Keep your watch sober! Because the devil is as a roaring lion!

-Guard your gates!

-Only twice in the New Testament do we find the word, vigilant. It is used by Paul when he is telling Timothy about the qualifications of a bishop (1 Tim 3:2) and it is used by Peter when he uses it with the command to be sober (1 Peter 5:8). However, the root word in the Greek translates that same word in multiple other places as “watch” or “watchful.”

-We guard our eyes by being sober and watchful!

**Luke 11:34 NASB** The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

**Luke 11:34-35 MSG** Your eye is a lamp, lighting up your whole body. If you live wide-eyed in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. **[35]** Keep your eyes open, your lamp burning, so you don't get musty and murky.

**Luke 11:34 Moffatt NT** Your eye is the lamp of the body: when your eye is sound, then the whole of your body has light, but if your eye is diseased, then your body is darkened.

1. **2 CORINTHIANS 4—THE BLINDED MIND**

**2 Corinthians 4:3-5 KJV** But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: **[4]** In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. **[5]** For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

-2 Corinthians 4:4 speaks of blindness but it has nothing to do with the eyes but rather the mind. Ask anyone on the street to describe what blind means and they will respond that it means that they cannot see.

-I have never heard anyone describe a state of blindness by something that takes place in the mind. But Paul comes along and describes this state of man that has a blinded mind. Somewhere along the way, the eyes caught on to a perception that blinded the mind.

-There are four terrible consequences to a mind that is blinded by Giant Diabolus.

1. **1st Consequence—A Spiritual Evil Engulfs Them**

-A spiritual evil engulfs them. This is the worst kind of evil to be taken into. Spiritual evil works in the beginning with an attempt to isolate you with humanistic but so-called logical reasoning. That isolation can take place in a number of ways.

-Probably foremost is the effort to make you begin to miss church so that you are not around the presence of the Lord, the fellowship of other saints, and away from the steady teaching of the Scriptures.

-Spiritual evil engulfs us so that it can weaken and neutralize us in the Kingdom of God.

-Oddly enough the mind that is blinded will have to contend with alternating elements of worldliness and godliness. One moment there is the whole-hearted pursuit of God and the things of God. The next moment, there is a maddening pursuit of the world and its trinkets.

-When this spiritual evil engulfs a man he only has forms of godliness but no power!

**2 Timothy 3:1-5 KJV** This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. **[2]** For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, **[3]** Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, **[4]** Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; **[5]** ***Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.***

-There are some who once had a strong desire to grow in the Lord but as the years have passed that has waned and now you no longer have the desire to really serve the Lord, you are just going through the motions.

Recently at the Men’s Conference (Feb 3-4, 2012), I happened to notice that a book Brother Bernard wrote over twenty-five years ago had been rewritten. His book, *In Search of Holiness*, is a very valuable book that helped define a lot of our holiness principles with solid Scriptural references back in the late ‘70’s. I would recommend the volume to this whole church to read it if you never have and re-read it if you haven’t in a long time. We must have holiness in our lives if we are going to be pleasing to God.

So I have some questions for you, your response might show whether or not a creeping spiritual evil has engulfed you. Consider all of these matters to ponder in your heart.

-Attitudes are the most important elements of holiness. We have to be on guard against things that will destroy us!

* Resentments, Bitterness, Wrath, Anger, Clamor (noisy shouting, outcry, etc.), Evil Speaking (Talebearing, Gossip, Reviling), Malice, Envy, Jealousy, a root of Bitterness, Murmuring, Complaining, Attitude when we are corrected, Busybodies, Pride, Sowing Discord, Taking God’s Name in Vain, Slang, Filthy Communication, Cursing, and Careless Words.

-What we allow our eyes to be exposed to. . . We have just about lost the fight with Hollywood because of the rapid growth of technology in the last few years. Now most Smart-Phones are created in such a manner that you can watch anything you want to without any real difficulty. All the while what we let pass across our minds, gets into our souls!

-The greatest dilemma that I have to battle with in this generation is preaching to people who have watched television to such an extent that it is hard for them to even contemplate listening to a fifty-minute sermon. . .

-Whether we want to admit it or not, a lot of our spiritual growth is orchestrated by the content of the preaching that we hear! The world has a tendency to think that when a preacher stands up against this kind of thing that they are hillbilly rednecks, so be it! But I can tell you one thing, what you put in your mind greatly affects your spiritual life!

-What about apparel and adornment? It should be motivated by modesty! It should be motivated by moderation in cost. Deuteronomy 22:5 still applies to this generation because God has ordained that there be a distinction between the sexes. Colored make-up and tattoos needs to be off-limits to those of us who have received the Holy Ghost. . . For those who have tattoos prior to your receiving the Holy Ghost, we ought to have enough grace not to make an issue of it! Ornamental jewelry falls into the same category; necklaces, bracelets, and ear-rings are off-limits for both sides of the aisle—meaning men and women!

-Our world is a mass of sexual confusion, anything that pushes us to the boundary lines of lust leading to the ungodly behavior of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and other deviant behavior has to be brought to the Cross!

-Other areas: Theft, Fraud, Work Ethics, Paying your bills in a timely manner, Honesty and Integrity. . .

-The devil is so subtle in telling us that none of these things really matter but the fact remains that God is going to judge my actions and attitudes.

1. **2nd Consequence—A Spirit of Blindness**

-There is something spiritual about this kind of blindness. This means that it is spirit-driven and that one has been given over to a *spirit* of blindness and not an injury that caused the blindness.

-You see that in operation in Genesis (19:1-12) when the men of Sodom are stumbling about in their blindness attempting to accomplish their sinful deeds. This is the *spirit* of blindness and it is evil!

*They wearied themselves to find the door. . .*

-This takes place when the *spirit* of blindness moves into your life.

**Ephesians 4:18-19 KJV** Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: **[19]** Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

* A spirit of blindness leads to spiritual ignorance.
* A spirit of blindness separates and estranges men from the principles of God.
* A spirit of blindness is not just intellectual darkness but moral darkness.
* A spirit of blindness moves you to the place that you are past feeling—no longer can the voice of God reach you through conviction.
* A spirit of blindness no longer allows you to be under the influence of truth.
* A spirit of blindness erases honesty, kindness, and purity.
* A spirit of blindness opens you up to lying, injustice, cruelty, and sensual sins.
* A spirit of blindness silences the conscience so you can participate in everything wrong without the penalty of inner guilt.
* A spirit of blindness causes men to lose their sense of personal dignity.
* A spirit of blindness leads you to indulge in the foulest and most disgraceful activities.

-Just those things ought to be horrifying enough to cause us to want to desire holiness, godliness, and righteousness in our lives.

1. **3rd Consequence—An Opening To Darker Sins**

-Spiritual blindness opens up men to even more perverse and greater evils. A man who is struck with this blindness will be far more open to the grossest errors, strong delusions, and unreasonable conquests that will defile him even more than before.

-Even the truth that they once knew will vanish from them.

**2 Thessalonians 2:11 KJV** And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

-Let me help you with a very scary theological truth—you don’t choose your delusion, God does!

* God hardened Pharoah’s heart!
* God turned Nebuchadnezzar into a babbling fool!
* God sent an angel to destroy Sennacherib and his hordes!
* God let Saul be deceived by the witch of Endor!
* God allowed Absalom to feel like he had undertaken a righteous cause!
* God let Balaam think he was really prophesying to help Israel!
* God let Ahab listen to his prophets for hire and reject Micaiah’s true message!

-Spiritual blindness opens us up to darker sins. You may wonder how that God does such things as to allow men to fall off into deeper and darker sins. It can happen in several ways.

* When God withdraws his influence from our understanding. That inner voice no longer speaks as clearly and directly as it once did.
* When God sends a spirit of falsehood (1 Kings 22:22—a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets, etc.).
* When God puts you in the company of people and/or circumstances that cause delusion to take place.
* When God allows lying wonders to influence you.

-Be sober, be vigilant, guard your mind!

1. **4th Consequence—It Will Resist the Truth**

-Spiritual blindness causes us to dismiss any unwelcome fact or truth that causes us to have to adjust the way that we are living. This is a state of spiritual delusion that refuses to see the real and necessary emphasis on conversion, experiencing the New Birth, and real transformation that will take place when we submit to God.

**Bishop Hall**—Many a one is hardened by the good Word of God, and, instead of receiving the counsel, rages at the messenger; when men are grown to that pass, that they are no whit better by afflictions, and worse with admonitions, God finds it time to strike.

-Giant Diabolus is still attacking the Eye-Gate in our world today and it will only be when a solid commitment is made to protecting our eyes that we will begin to find victory in our spiritual lives. Job 31:1 tells us that Job made a covenant with his eyes.

-Obviously the context of the passage has to do with moral purity and overcoming lust because he said he made a covenant with his eyes that he would not look on a young woman with devious intentions in his heart.

-However, a true spiritual man will make a covenant with his eyes that covers far more than just this area of life. I conclude with a list of things that I hope will provoke you to make a covenant with your eyes (and heart) so that you will not fall to spiritual blindness.

* Make a covenant with your eyes to hold to a sense of doctrinal clarity.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to know that spiritual discernment is greatly connected to biblical truth.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to think biblically and to search the Scriptures so it directs your walk.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to test everything so that you will discern truth from error.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to love the truth.
* Make a covenant with your eyes avoid questions only create doubt and disdain for godly things.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to have strong convictions even when they may be disparaged and mocked.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to turn from evil and do good (1 Peter 3:11).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7-8).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to reject the broad way of the human mind (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to follow the narrow way no matter how unpopular or who opposes you in the pursuit of it (Matthew 7:13-14).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to know that much of what God thinks is diametrically opposed to the direction that the world is going in (Isaiah 55:8).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to protect the truth and reject the lies of Giant Diabolus (Romans 1:25).
* Make a covenant with your eyes and understand that friendship with the world makes us enemies of God (James 4:4).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to do the hard work of confronting error.
* Make a covenant with your eyes so that you will not integrate error into your life or church.
* Make a covenant with your eyes and discover the worldliness is still considered by God to be a sin (1 John 2:15-17; Romans 8:7; James 4:4).
* Make a covenant with your eyes to become more biblically literate.
* Make a covenant with your eyes so you will not be lazy, careless, and foolish in the way you handle Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15).
* Make a covenant with your eyes not to tolerate sin but to elevate holiness.
* Make a covenant with your eyes to do things that will lead to spiritual maturity.
1. **CONCLUSION—SHARA MCKEE ON WHITNEY HOUSTON’S DEATH**

Last night (2/18/12), Shara McKee, the wife of Pastor Rob McKee, who pastors a United Pentecostal Church in Houston, put this on her Facebook wall. I am not sure if you are aware of it or not but she is a very gifted, talented, and anointed singer. She has been invited to sing with people such as Hezekiah Walker and a few others because of her abilities. I thought what she wrote fit very well with what it means to have associations in the world that can potentially blind a godly mind:

*I want to thank Whitney Houston for my first "self set" boundary or conviction regarding music. I was, like most girls my age, mesmerized by the angelic and powerful vocals of Whitney and tried to mimic everything she did! I was young, single, windows down, driving along in my car singing my heart out to "Saving all my love for you" when the lyrics actually "clicked" and I realized I was singing about adultery. It's like time stood still and I comprehended that I had just lifted up my voice to sing about something I know is sin and does not please the Lord. I wanted to wash my mouth out with soap. I realized that just because it was "pretty" and fun to sing, it was not OK. Conviction hit me. Not someone just "telling" me, it knocked on MY door. I was created to praise Him, to submit my gifts to HIM. From that moment on I have been a lyric inspector, careful to celebrate with my voice only that which agrees with my values.*

-Various other comments were posted in response to what she wrote. One such post, from an evangelist, stood out and I share it with you also:

*The power of music and the lyrics are often underrated as to the effect they have on us. I remember singing Rocket Man along with Elton John and not realizing until much later in life that the song was about his struggles with homosexuality. I have preached to so many young people to guard their minds because the music they listen to has a message that is diametrically opposed to what pleases God. Romans 12:2 tells us that in order to be transformed into what is pleasing to God we have to renew our minds.*

-Some of the old saints used to be prone to say, “They need to get their mind right!” I am encouraging that very thing to take place in this sanctuary . . . Let’s get our minds right before the Lord!