

The Deadly Look

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon warns against the dangers of what we look at, emphasizing the need for spiritual discernment and keeping our focus on Jesus.

Duration: 39:07

Scripture: Psalm 119:37, Proverbs 4:25, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:30, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Pride"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of the eye gate and how easily it can be manipulated in today's technologically advanced world. He highlights the three spiritual atmospheres that the world consists of: the desires of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of material possessions. The preacher warns against the seductiveness of the advertising industry and its ability to deceive through visual stimuli. He uses the example of David's downfall, starting with just a look at Bathsheba, to illustrate the destructive consequences of giving in to lustful desires. The sermon concludes with a call to turn away from worthless things and fix one's gaze on God's word.

Transcript

John 2.15, this is not a passage that you hear too many sermons about or messages on the radio, but this is part of the Bible. Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

What's in the world? What is the world? For everything in the world, dash, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father, but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. I want you to notice, if I can shut the fan off, that what the world consists of is three things here, spiritually speaking.

Three atmospheres, three philosophies, three currents, if you will. Notice the desires or the cravings of sinful man, that's our fallen nature, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does. In other words, a vain display of life.

But notice the middle one, the lust of his eyes. Eyes have desires that here are likened to something almost separate from our consciousness. Of course, they're linked together with the soul.

The cravings of sinful man, yes, the boasting of what he has and does, the vain display of life, but also the cravings of sinful man. Now, there's two main passages into your soul. To get to who you are and to stir you one way or another, there's the ear gate and the eye gate.

People become Christians when they hear the gospel through their ear gate. Wives who have unbelieving husbands are told to witness to their husbands, who are not Christians, not by so much what they say, which would mean the ear gate, but by the way they behave themselves, that their sweet and chaste behavior would have an influence on them through the eye gate and the ear gate. But to reach a person and to be affected by the world around us, there are two main ways, and that is the ear gate and the eye gate.

And in the era that we live in, we're not living in the 1700s or the 1800s when people did not understand this and it wasn't sophisticated because of advancements and television and movies and the Internet, which we'll get to. Advertisers especially understand how easy it is to get to someone's attention and move their will by going through the eye gate. Now, the Bible tells us that there is a look that kills.

Not the way someone looks at us, but the way we look at something and then what happens once that spark is lit. The Bible tells us that there is a look that can deceive. You know the verse that you hear people say, seeing is believing? Well, not exactly.

Because in Genesis 13, we find out that Abraham was being so blessed that he and his nephew Lot could not live in the same land. The land could not sustain them. So Abraham said to Lot, pick where you want to go, even though you're the younger man and I have priority over you.

Pick where you want to go. And the Bible says that Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt towards Zor. In other words, he lifted up his eyes and he looked north and then he looked east and then he looked west and then he turned around and he looked south because Abraham had said, just choose what you want.

And the Bible tells us that Lot went by what he saw with his natural eyes and he gazed on something that attracted his attention. The only problem is about one verse later it says, and Lot lived among the cities of the plain and he pitched his tent near Sodom. Lot ended up in a homosexual hotbed.

Lot ended up going to a place that was going to cost him dearly, that he barely escaped from when God was going to destroy two cities, Sodom and... But how did Lot end up there? He ended up there by a look that deceives. He didn't pray, he didn't ask God's leading. He just went by what he saw and I want to tell you that there is a look that deceives.

Not everything that looks good is good. Not everything that looks lovely ends up lovely. There are a lot of situations and there are a lot of people and there are a lot of relationships that look wonderful, but if you and I don't pray and don't ask God's mind concerning it and look in the Scriptures to begin with to find out if they're verified by the Bible, we could get into a heap of trouble.

Now this look that deceived happened to deceive a righteous man, for the Bible in another place calls him righteous Lot. Righteous Lot, who was deceived by a look and you don't even want to know the story about when God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham knew that his deceived nephew was there, living there and he got to the place where angels were sent there to try to warn him and get him out. But the men of the city were so brutal and so aggressive that they wanted to sexually

molest the two men that they thought were men but were not angels and Lot had been so contaminated or twisted by his stay in that place that looked so nice.

I was stunned as I read it again recently that he said to the crowd that had gathered around the house wanting those men, send those men out, that Lot said to the crowd, I have two daughters that are virgins, please don't touch these men. He knew they were special. I'll send up my daughters, you can do what you want with them.

And it all began by him just looking and going by what looked good. There is a way that seems right to a person and looks right, but the end is destruction. There are relationships that look good, there are girls that look pretty, there are guys that look like their GQ, there are situations of all kind that look good to the natural eye, but I want to tell you something, they're not good, there is a look that deceives and you can stare at it and if you only see it in your natural eyes, physical vision doesn't always see the spiritual trap.

But there is an attraction in looking at something that looks good even though dangers and spiritual pollution follows. Don't tell me that this isn't powerful because Satan used it against Jesus. The Bible tells us in Matthew 4 verse 8 when he was tempted, he led Jesus up to a very high mountain and he let him see and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

He tried to appeal to that eye gate in Jesus and said, look what I'll give you, look at the glory, look at the glory of it. But Jesus was too wise, too righteous, perfect righteousness to fall for that trap that Lot fell for. So I want to tell you there's a look, young people, that deceives.

Don't tell me it looks good. You got to ask God if it is good. All in favor say Amen.

It's not only that, because of the power of the eye gate, there is a look that can detonate an explosion. There is a look that can detonate a sexual explosion. The Bible tells us in 2 Samuel that a man who had been chosen by God, who had a heart after God's heart.

So I want you to notice, not only righteous Lot, but now King David. You don't find many finer than that. In fact, Jesus wanted to be called and chose to be called Jesus son of David.

The Messiah was the son of David. But when his armies were out fighting, the Bible says that David went out for a walk on the roof when he couldn't sleep. And when you can't sleep and it's late at night, and with all the stuff that's around us today, I never realized the importance of a prayer that I heard prayed by that blind lady who wrote books a hundred years ago.

I can't think of her name right now. No, it's not the songwriter Fanny Crosby, it's somebody else. No, but she prayed this very spiritual woman, and I read in her diary, Lord, not only give me a safe night, but give me a pure night.

And David went out for a walk, and here's what the Bible says. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing, naked. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her.

Now, I don't have to elaborate that there's a wiring between our eyes and our sexual passions. That's one of the ways people can be, to use an expression in the street, be turned on. It doesn't matter how godly you are.

If you look long enough, you can be turned on. But you detonate something that you have no, we have no idea what it can do. The look at this woman, the eye gate being taken up by her, by David, must have then formed thoughts, which then led to fantasy.

In other words, when the eye doesn't see it any longer, it still has taken a picture of it. And the picture can be lodged and brought up at the will of the person, and that's what forms fantasy, where you play the pictures that your eyes have taken in. Now, how strong must be the power of the eye gate to detonate an explosion, when the king of Israel, anointed by Samuel the prophet, slayer of Goliath, psalmist of Israel, anointed of God, he sends a messenger to find out about her.

Now, he has his own family, but this eye stuff makes you get crazy. He not only sends a message and finds out that she is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, who is fighting for him at that moment, one of David's warriors, he sends another messenger. How crazy is this? He sends a messenger to get her to come to him to stay the night, so that he can have intercourse with her.

And it all began with a look. But you know the story doesn't end there. She becomes pregnant from a one night stand.

He calls home the husband to try to cover his tracks. The husband, who is not even a Jew, is too loyal to David to go and sleep with his wife, which David was hoping so that he would forget the days and everything and think the child was his. So David ends up with a situation where he has to send him back to the battle.

And now, because of this eye gate and the passion that it ignited, he sends a letter in writing and tells his general, attack this certain place, withdraw all the troops except Uriah. He puts this in writing that somebody else could see. But you see, the eye gate can trigger and detonate an explosion, which brings a kind of madness on a person.

Insane. And all of us are susceptible, because it's in the Bible that it happened to David, it could happen to you or me. And don't say I walk too close to God.

You need God's grace every day of your life, every hour of your life, because everyone is capable of anything. If we know anything from the Bible, we know that. The only looking, I'm only looking, I didn't do anything, I'm just looking.

It never stops there by necessity. And the eye gate is for certain sins, the detonating device, especially sexually, also with covering. The pictures stay in our mind.

The will is then won over as the fantasies take control of our inner person. And once the emotions are won over and the will is won over, now action is going to happen, what happened with David. David gets Uriah killed.

And that is what God has to chasten him for. And it all began, the whole series began with one look at a woman bathing, walking on your roof. And then the judgment that came on his house and the trouble that came in his house and his multiple wives, you don't want to know.

And it all started, brothers and sisters, with one look. No wonder the Bible says in Psalm 119 verse 37, Turn my eyes away from worthless things, preserve my life according to your word. No wonder Proverbs 4.25 says, Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.

Listen to what God says. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. My wife pointed out to me the other day, even if you're watching the news or something on an educational channel, you can't hardly watch now with your grandchildren, my grandchildren, because the advertisements would pollute you.

Doesn't have to be the story, the program. You can be watching the evening news. When the advertisements come out, it's Katie bar the door.

And why do you think, don't you understand the power that there is in the eye gate? The advertising industry has fine-tuned this, the seductiveness of it. But the godly man wrote, Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Now, David definitely gets out of control and starts with just a look.

And let's admit it before we move on and I close, the number one plague in our country today, we all know what it is, and that's pornography. A leader of two major denominations told me that they have pulpits empty at the highest rate ever because of pastors who have bit the dust, some by discouragement, some through marital problems. But they said, You don't want to know what this computer stuff has done.

The ministers are hooked on the internet. The ministers. I just was in Springfield, Ohio.

I mentioned earlier today a pastor who picked me up, said to me, Open your heart to me and tell me what I can pray for you and your church about. Tell me how I can pray for you. And I opened my heart.

I said, Brother, what are you facing in your church? What are you facing in the school? Because he was a kind of chaplain to the school. He said, The number one thing in the school, the internet. The kids looked all scrubbed clean, but that internet, it has a voice, it calls them.

And he said, In my own church, a guy running, a deacon running a bible study, a weekly bible study, 26 men. He just asked them the other day, Open up, men. Come on, it's totally confidential in terms of names and all of that.

How many of you in the last few weeks or months, I forget what it was, watched pornography on the internet? 24 out of 26 in the bible study. In the bible study. These are not the folks who have no appetite for God's Word.

These are the folks in the bible study. So, the eye has the ability to rivet our attention. And then, it has desires of its own and it has a wiring system with our emotions and our will and our inner soul.

And it pollutes the person, pollutes the family. And that's why in a certain proverb or psalm, I can't think of where the reference is, but I'll have it for you next Sunday. The writer says, I think it's in a psalm, he says, and I will set no evil thing before me.

The sign of our allegiance to God is I will set nothing evil before me. I will not look at something that's evil because that's the way I show that I love you because you're a holy God. Oh, how many want to live a life? Come on, all of us.

How many want to live a life where you set nothing evil before you? Come on, lift up your hand. Set nothing evil before you. And we live in a day now.

This is not the 1800s. This is not the 1900s. I was watching something on the History Channel about the turn of the century and when they first had moving film and all of this and I saw people going to the beach in 1910.

Are you kidding me? They were more covered now than the way people are walking on Fifth Avenue. Did you ever see those old bathing suits they wore? And, ladies and gentlemen, because it cuts both ways because there's sensual clothing for each gender. Women, if you wear clothes to attract the lust of the eye of a man, the Bible says that if he sins in his mind because he takes in through the eye gate what he sees, does the Bible indicate whether you are a participant with him? In other words, Jesus said, you heard it written, thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say that if you sin in your mind with a person, speaking of this eye gate and fantasy business, well, if the clothes were worn to be seductive, you could be fornicating and being an adulteress without even knowing it.

And I'm not saying that in a light way. And I'm saying, I hope you understand this is with tenderness, but we're talking about dynamite here. We're talking about dynamite for all of us.

Look at the scandals of the last 20 years in Christendom. Worldwide known preachers just thinking they could put sunglasses on and ride somewhere and not be found out. Imagine the drivenness, the risk from this eye gate business.

Let me close. There's not only a look that can deceive and a look that can detonate an explosion, there's a look that can discourage. Remember when Peter was called by Jesus, he was walking in the water and they said, Lord, if it's you, call us to be with you.

Jesus said to Peter in the boat, Come, Peter. And Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water. Now, Peter made a lot of boo-boos in his life, but we better be careful how we judge him because I don't see any of us walking on water.

But the Bible says in Matthew 14, listen, verse 30, When he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. And he cried out, Lord, save me. And Jesus said, You of little faith, why did you doubt? Why did he doubt? If I could reverently answer from Mr. Peter, he doubted because he looked at the wrong thing.

If he would have just kept his eyes on Jesus and not looked at that wave and the wind. You know, beside sexuality and all of that, there's looks. When you look at the situation and you look what people are doing, and you look what folks are doing, and you look what people are saying, and you look at people's attitudes.

If you don't keep your eyes on Jesus, you can want to quit running the race and even being a Christian. Why do you think in Hebrews 12, after the great chapter 11 on faith, the Bible says about running the race of faith, looking unto Jesus. What unto Jesus? Looking unto Jesus.

In other words, as we go through life, we got to keep our eyes on Jesus. Somebody say Amen. Got to keep our eyes on Jesus.

But Pastor Simba, you know what they're doing over there in that church? I know, but look, I've been that way. And when I look away, I get despondent. I get discouraged.

I got to keep my eyes on. Yeah, but you know, you got to know what's going on. I don't want to know what's going on if it's going to discourage me.

Let me be ignorant. Let me just keep my eyes on Jesus. I remember years ago visiting in Florida and I was staying at a home.

They were watching Christian television. This is one of the, before the PTL scandal. And I remember being in this home and the people just watching and I was surprised they were watching and so into it because it was so stupid.

And it was so ludicrous and it was so fake. It was so phony. But you know what? So I was polite because I was close to the family in a way.

So I sat and watched it one day with them and I couldn't take it. The acting, the using of the Lord's name in vain, the financial scams they were running. I got so discouraged that one, that first day that I jumped up out of my seat.

I said, I'm just going for a walk and God knows the exact street I walked down I can see myself in the blazing hot sun. And I just walked down by myself with tears running down my eyes and I said, God, if this is Christianity then what am I trying to do? I was much, much younger then and just struggling on Atlantic Avenue my wife and I trying to do the work of the Lord. I couldn't look at it.

And whenever they turned on I didn't want to look at it because, and it wasn't even because it was nasty. It's because some religious things are so fraudulent that if you look at it you get cynical and critical and you take your eyes off of Jesus. You know what they're doing over there? You know what they're doing over there? I'm telling you, I mean, we have to know certain things and God gives us a spirit of discernment but you can so major in ugly things that you take your eyes off the Lord.

I have to be careful when I do that traveling now because I run into things and I see things that if I just dwelt on it and looked at it too long I would really get discouraged. Boy, you've got to keep your eyes on Jesus. Come on, how many want to keep their eyes on Jesus? I want to keep my eyes on the Word of God and I want to keep my eyes on Jesus.

That's what I want to do. Carol, if you would just begin to play. Let's play that song we sang earlier today, Jonathan, whatever key that was in.

I'll teach it to them. Sweet Wonder. Let me close.

There's not only a look that deceives, a look that detonates, a look that discourages. Oh, let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12, 2. But there's a look that actually brings destruction.

Now listen to me as I close. Never could rhyme these things when I preached but all these words from D came to me today. Deceive, detonate, discourage, destruction.

Oh, they were so happy in the book of Joshua when God promised that if they just obeyed Him and marched around the walls of Jericho, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls but came tumbling down. It's a good song. Except that God said this.

This city is so polluted. This city is so given over to stuff that you don't want to know. Do what I tell you but you're not allowed to touch or possess any of the silver or any of the gold.

In other words, there are certain things that you can't be around and have if you're going to serve me. Look at me, everyone. Face me and look at me.

There are certain things that God says, Jim Simbala, you can't touch that. You can't have that. You can't go there.

It doesn't matter what the world says. In our walk with the Lord through the Bible and through the leading of the Holy Spirit, there are certain things that God just puts off limits. But the problem is, brothers and sisters, is that many of the things that God puts off limits, they are very attractive and let's admit it.

Things that God says you can't have sometimes have a tremendous appeal to the eye. So they fought the battle of Jericho. They obeyed God or they thought they did.

And everybody was high-fiving each other and everyone was happy that they were victorious because this was one of the first battles they fought when they came over the Jordan River to possess the land. Moses had died. Joshua was in charge.

Well, then they came to this little place, Ai. Strange word, strange town. Ai.

And they said, this is nothing. After Jericho and after what God did, we'll fight this battle. Just send a few men.

Send one little company of guys. Just, hey guys, take out that town. Remember the Lord is with us.

They fought the battle of Ai and they got whooped. They got beat and chased all the way back to where they came from. They had never experienced defeat.

They had never known defeat. Coming in, out of the wilderness, they had won every battle and coming across the Jordan River, they had won the battle of Jericho and God had told Joshua, nobody will be able to stand before you. But they got whooped bad.

Joshua, unlike him, one of the few faulty moments in his life, acted like a baby and started saying, why did we even come into this land? Why didn't we stay in the wilderness? Why didn't we stay this? And the Bible says, he laid down on his face a prostrate before God and he just lamented the whole situation and God rebuked Joshua. One of the few places where you see Joshua not on the right page. God said to Joshua, would you please get up? What are you doing on the floor? There's no mystery to this.

Somebody's played dirty. Somebody's kept something that I told them they can't have. That's why you lost.

Because when you keep dirty things, you can't have victory in me. Brothers and sisters, do you realize that? You know, I was preaching at a church in fact in Nashville one day and I was stunned by the fact that when I said that, like people have this idea of the good Lord and just everything is going to work out, doesn't matter how I live. Well, listen again.

You can't keep dirty things and have God supplying victory for you. You break fellowship with Him when you hide dirty things. Do you all get that? So that I won't be guilty for any of you on judgment day.

Do you all get it? The Lord is with you when you are with Him. That's what was told to King Asa. But to be with the Lord, I know what the Lord being with me is, but what's being with the Lord? It's being against what He's against and being for what He's for.

And I'll never forget as I was preaching, the audience was stunned like what? You mean I have to be against certain things because the Lord is? You mean I have to be for certain things even though it's not in my culture because the Lord is? Yeah, exactly. What do you think? The Lord is a master card that you just pull out and use whenever you feel like. This is a relationship we have with the Lord.

You've got to choose. Did you hear? You've got to choose. You've got to come over the line.

Who's going to be for the Lord? There's a line. Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said. Many will even say, we not cast out demons in your name and prophesy in your name? They had a spiritual ministry and the Lord will say, depart from me.

I never knew you because you were into dirty stuff. So God told Joshua, we'll straighten it out this way. Just get everybody lined up and we'll start drawing lots or however God decided to reveal who the culprit was.

And there was a man named Achan and he must have been shaking in his boots or maybe Achan thought they'll never find me out because that's what the eye gate does. It makes for secretiveness. When we sin with our eyes, most always there comes a secretiveness to it.

So his tribe was called then his clan, then his family and sure enough, Achan stands before Joshua and Joshua says, give glory to God, Achan, which was another way of saying, fess up. And Achan said, when I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold, I coveted them. See, the eyes not only triggers lust and sexuality, it triggers covetousness.

When we look at what other people have, it can trip us up and we start wanting what God never intended for us to have. I coveted them and I took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent.

A battle was lost. Israel got waylaid because somebody saw something that was just too beautiful to pass up. It was.

It was too beautiful. That's the symbol. You didn't see that robe.

You didn't see that silver and that wedge of gold. I won't tell you the rest of the story, but I have to. The days of the law, rough commands.

I don't understand all of it, but I got to tell it to you. Am I right, Pastor Bogstaff? Am I right, Pastor O'Neill? They took Achan and his family and everything he owned and brought them to the Valley of Achor. That word means trouble.

They destroyed the whole bunch. His family suffered. His wife, children, cattle, lost everything.

Just from one look at something that God said, you can't have that, so why look at it? But you know what, brothers and sisters? If we look long enough at something, it can get under our skin. You don't have to say amen. It's the truth.

If you look at something long enough, why don't you listen? Remember that program that was on TV? It was based on this. Lifestyles of the rich and famous. Now, what would that have to do with you and me? Nothing.

But they know. I know people who are even Christians who know more about the lives of movie stars than they do their Bible because there's a fascination. They know what they wore to the Oscars.

They know everything. They can tell you all the movies. Now, movies, that's a whole other thing.

That's simple. You're not legalistic. Listen, I'm not legalistic.

I don't have one law for you here. You have your Bible. You have God.

I'm not your savior. I'm not God. Just another guy.

But boy, you would think with this truth in front of us, we'd be thinking, wait a minute, I have to pay money to be tempted? You don't even have to pay. Just walk in the street if that's what you want. I wish I could end with an illustration, but the ones I have, they're too convoluted and they're too heartbreaking.

You know, my father-in-law, he died with a secret he never told anyone. Right, Carol? He never told me. He never told his wife.

He never told Carol. He told me. He said, I go to this with my grave.

He said, I was traveling in the Midwest and I stayed in Illinois somewhere, some out-of-the-way town at a motel. Remember when he used to tell us that? And he said, I just thought, let me, way out of the way. And there, this was in the 50s, he walked into where the pool area was.

And there was one of the most famous ministers that he knew of that area in the country sitting and cavorting with a woman that was not his wife. And he turned red, blue, told my father-in-law, could I see you in your room later? He knew he had been caught. He wasn't even going to try to make a story.

So he went to my father-in-law's room. My father-in-law told me, he said, Jim, God restored him. And I've never spoken his name and I never will.

I'll take it all the way to heaven with me. Because that's the way God is. Oh, aren't you glad God is merciful? God isn't like, oh, did you know who I saw? So if I remember correctly, the guy said, you know, my wife hasn't been feeling so good.

Affected our sex life. And this sister in the church, she's just so nice. She's really sweet.

And it didn't start with like, a wink and something physical. But that's the danger of even being thrown together for a long period of time with someone. Anything you fasten on for too long, watch it.

Because it can detonate. If you're here and you would like to pray and talk to the Lord about anything, but you feel your need, God, you know the situation I'm in, I need protection. I need to have victory over a look that could discourage me because I'm in a situation where I could easily be discouraged.

Lord, I don't want to look at things and not see it the way you do. I don't want to be deceived. God, I certainly don't want to be detonated.

And God, I want you to keep me from coveting things and following my eyes down a road that leads to big time trouble, shaming you. Before I give further orders about how we should pray or direction, I should say, if anybody here would like me to pray for them, I'll stay as long as you need to. Just get out of your seat as we sing it again.

Just come down here and stand here, and we'll pray together.

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