

## Eyes: Mirrors of the Soul

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by Wayne Walker

Most of the time when the Scriptures mention the “eyes,” they are speaking of the eye of spiritual discernment (e.g., Matthew 13:13-15, Luke 11:34, Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:18, etc.). Yet somewhat is said also about the physical eyes. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had forbidden to Adam and Eve, was food pleasant to the eyes (Genesis 3:6). If an Israelite damaged the eye of his neighbor, the judge was to sentence “*an eye for an eye*” (Exodus 21:24, Matthew 5:38). In Luke 4:20, it is said, as Jesus sat down in the synagogue after having read a passage from Isaiah, that “*the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him.*” A great deal can be told an individual and his attitude from his eyes. This is especially true when a preacher stands up to preach. He has an excellent opportunity to look into the eyes of his listeners and determine something of what is going on inside their minds.

For instance, sometimes when I look out over my audience during a sermon, I see **sleepy eyes**. Now we all realize that there are certain emergency situations that might arise to keep one up too late on Saturday night against his will. It is an act of faith for him to be assembled with the saints on the following day even though he may not feel exactly his best. But most of the time, sleepy eyes mean that a person did not have enough respect for the worship of God to prepare properly for it the night before with adequate rest. It is distracting enough for someone to be nodding in a constant fight to stay awake during services. But what about those who snore and even fall out of their seats? Both have happened, you know. The only record in Scripture of anyone who went to sleep in church is Eutychus in Acts 20:7-12, and he fell out of a window and died. That may just be an indication of what could happen spiritually to those who habitually sleep through worship. Many should be thankful that most churches today do not meet in third stories with seats near large open windows!

Another kind of eye which I notice while preaching is the **blank eye**. This tells me that the person is bored with what is happening. Of course, we preachers need to make our sermons as interesting as possible without using unscriptural gimmicks and appeals. But whenever the gospel of Christ is proclaimed, regardless of who preaches it or how it is delivered, every Christian has the obligation to listen attentively (Matthew 13:9, Revelation 2:7). What goes on behind the blank eye is anyone’s guess. It might be thoughts of dinner, a ball game, company coming, an afternoon drive, a television show, tomorrow’s test, what sister Jones is wearing, or a host of other mundane, worldly things which have no connection with worshipping God or studying His word whatever. In addition, some eyes may be directed towards the physical arrangement of the auditorium, a baby playing, or something outside a window. Each hearer should seek to develop sufficient control over his mind so that he will be able to concentrate on and make spiritual application of what is being taught in the assembly.

A preacher may also encounter **angry eyes** among those who sit before him. At least in this instance, the speaker knows that he has produced some response. This is far better than sleepy nods and blank stares. Yet, I must feel sorry for those who react to the preaching of the gospel with anger, unless their initial anger motivates them to change. Paul asked the Galatians, “*Am I therefore your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*” (Galatians 4:16). When a person consistently responds angrily to truth, I know that he is unwilling to face facts, is prejudiced, or desires to remain willfully ignorant. Some of Jesus’ followers went away when He told them things which they did not like. One of Paul’s audiences demanded that he be taken away, saying that he was not fit to live. Stephen’s listeners actually stuck their fingers in their ears because He preached the truth — and then promptly killed him! Angry eyes are indicative of a like attitude.

There are other kinds of eyes also: **stubborn eyes** (“I don’t care what you say, I’m not going to do it”); **self-righteous eyes** (“You tell them, preacher”); **admiring eyes** (“I’ll believe anything you say” —preachers need to combat this); and even **flirting eyes** (oops, better watch out for these). But the kind of eyes that I like to see is **eager eyes**. “*But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*” (Matthew 13:16). Like those in the synagogue when Jesus read, these eyes are fastened on the preacher with the intent to learn. They indicate an interest in spiritual matters, a search for truth, a desire to hear the word of God and obey it. They may glance down now and then to compare what is said with the Scripture, but basically they look at the speaker and say, “I’m listening; preach on!” What do your eyes reveal? What do they tell about you?

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