

NIGHT VISION

PRESENTED TO:
Ekklesia Christian Life Fellowship
PASTOR DAVID W. MCCOWAN
OCTOBER 12, 2024



SCRIPTURE

- ❖ Blow the trumpet in **Zion**; sound the **alarm** on my **holy hill**.
- ❖ Let **all** who live in the land tremble, for the **day of the LORD** is coming.
- ❖ It is close at hand (Joel 2:1)— a day of **darkness** and **gloom**, a day of clouds and blackness. (Joel 2:2a)
- ❖ Like **dawn** spreading across the mountains, a large and mighty **army** comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come. (Joel 2:2b)

SCRIPTURE

- ❖ Before them, **fire** devours; behind them, a **flame blazes**. (Joel 2:3a)
- ❖ Before them, the land is like the **garden of Eden**; behind them, a **desert waste** — nothing escapes them. (Joel 2:3b)
- ❖ They have the appearance of **horses**; they gallop along like cavalry. (Joel 2:4)
- ❖ With a **noise** like that of chariots, they leap over the **mountaintops**, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a **mighty army** drawn up for battle. (Joel 2:5)

SCRIPTURE

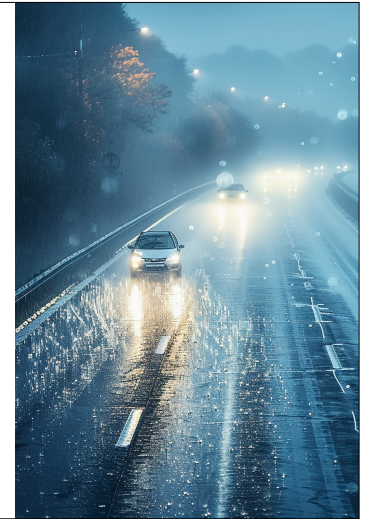
- ❖ At the sight of them, **nations** are in anguish; every face turns **pale**. (Joel 2:6)
- ❖ They charge like **warriors**; they scale walls like **soldiers**. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. (Joel 2:7)
- ❖ They do not **jostle** each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through **defenses** without breaking ranks. (Joel 2:8)
- ❖ They rush upon the **city**; they run along the **wall**. They climb into the **houses**; like thieves, they enter through the **windows**. (Joel 2:9)

SCRIPTURE

- ❖ Before them, the **earth shakes**, the **sky trembles**, the **sun** and **moon** are darkened, and the **stars** no longer shine. (Joel 2:10)
- ❖ The **LORD** thunders at the head of his **army**; his **forces** are beyond number, and mighty are **those** who obey his command. (Joel 2:11a)
- ❖ The **day of the LORD** is great; it is dreadful. (Joel 2:11b)
- ❖ Who can endure it? (Joel 2:11c)

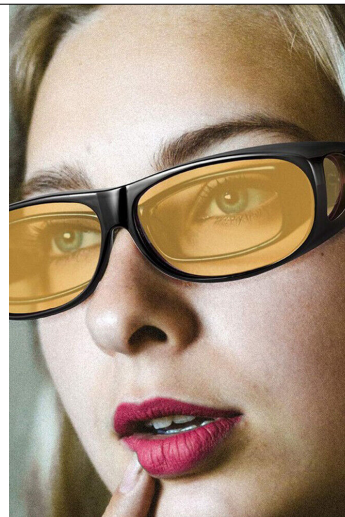
INTRODUCTION

- ❖ It's not **uncommon** for those north of their **60s** to confess an aversion to **driving at night**.
- ❖ The usual **complaint** is that the glare of oncoming headlights makes it difficult to see the **road** (or runway), especially if it is **raining**.
- ❖ This **phenomenon** is a sure sign of **cataracts**, which is an easily treatable yet expensive condition.



INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Even after **cataract surgery**, however, many of the **elderly** dislike **nighttime driving**.
- ❖ This is why they might be interested in so-called **night driving glasses**.
- ❖ These **spectacles** are usually non-prescription glasses with **yellow-tinted lenses**.
- ❖ They often include some **anti-reflective** coating.
- ❖ This helps prevent **reflections** from streetlights and oncoming headlights that cause **eyeglass glare**.



INTRODUCTION

- ❖ But there's a **catch**: They don't work very well.
- ❖ According to a **study** published by the Journal of the American Medical Association, the data suggests ...
 - ▶ "that wearing **yellow-lens glasses** when driving at night does not improve performance.
 - ▶ Particularly in the most **critical task**: detection of **pedestrians**."



INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Those affected might try another option: **night vision goggles**.
- ❖ But these, too, have their drawbacks. **Night vision goggles** are expensive.
- ❖ The Banshee Dual Tube Articulating Night Vision Goggle will set you back **\$5,895**.
- ❖ For better quality, try a pair of the L3Harris Ground Panoramic Night Vision Goggles, which can be yours for the low price of **\$43,000**.



INTRODUCTION

- ❖ **Night vision goggles** are also impractical.
- ❖ Some must be **handheld**, which is difficult for an elderly person driving 55 mph at night thus making it quite dangerous.
- ❖ Some **models** can be strapped to the **head** using a system of mesh and straps,
 - but the **headgear** is difficult to manage with arthritic hands, and
 - if you are on oxygen, it can make it nearly impossible to wear.



SPIRITUAL DARKNESS

- ❖ While these advanced “**Night Vision**” devices may aid our physical sight in the dark, can they truly guide us through the **spiritual darkness**?
- ❖ Indeed, the answer to that question is a resounding **no**.
- ❖ Nevertheless, **spiritual darkness** is a real problem, and most **Christians** have great difficulty in their **spiritual discernment** because their **maturity level** is too low to help them.
- ❖ The reason why their **maturity level** is stunted is because their **model** of **spiritual growth** needs work.



SPIRITUAL DULLNESS

- ❖ The **spiritual man** (*pneumatikos*) makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: (1 Cor. 2:15)
 - “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” [Isaiah 40:13] (1 Cor. 2:16a)
- ❖ But we have the **mind of Christ**. (1 Cor. 2:16b)
- ❖ Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual (*pneumatikos*) but as worldly (*sarkikos*) — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not **solid food**, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. (1 Cor. 3:1-2)



SPIRITUAL DULLNESS

- ❖ We have much to say about this [Jesus as our new High Priest], but it is **hard to explain** because you are **slow** to learn. (Heb. 5:11)
- ❖ In fact, ...
 - ▶ though by this time, **you** ought to be **teachers**;
 - ▶ [unfortunately] **you** need someone to teach you the **elementary truths** of **God's word** all over again. (Heb. 5:12a)
 - ▶ You need **milk**, not **solid food**! (Heb. 5:12b)



SPIRITUAL DULLNESS

- ❖ Anyone who lives on **milk**, being still an **infant**, is not acquainted with the **teaching** about **righteousness** (right from wrong). (Heb. 5:13)
- ❖ But **solid food** is for the **mature**, who, by constant use, have **trained themselves** to distinguish **good** from **evil**. (Heb. 5:14)
- ❖ Therefore let us leave the **elementary teachings** about Christ and go on to **maturity**, ... (Heb. 6:1)
- ❖ And **God** permitting, we will do so. (Heb. 6:3)



SPIRITUAL DULLNESS

- ❖ It's **noteworthy** that the issue of **spiritual maturity** was a **common challenge** in both the **Corinthian** and **Hebrew** churches.
- ❖ Too many professing Christians in the church lacked the "**mind of Christ**" and the ability to **keep themselves** in God's good, pleasing, and perfect will, which is crucial for **maturity** and **spiritual growth**.
- ❖ This was a **significant problem** as ...
 - ▶ 1) the **saints** were slow to learn the "**deep things**" of God, and
 - ▶ 2) they were undiscerning in a world **full of darkness** and **spiritual dangers**.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ❖ When Sally and I were new Christians, we were taught a basic **Evangelical** model of **spiritual growth**.
 - ▶ If we, ...
 - Read our Bibles.
 - Prayed every day.
 - Went to church regularly.
 - Were a cheerful giver.
 - Shared our faith.
 - ▶ **Spiritual growth** would take place in our lives.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ❖ When we started **Ekklesia** in 1999, there was a **teaching** that went around like **wildfire** among some **charismatic circles**.
- ❖ It was based on the controversial **Latter-Day Rain** teachings of the 1940s, which taught that . . .
 - ▶ If we spend **significant quantities** of time and effort in ...
 - Worship,
 - Prayer, and
 - Fasting.
 - ▶ We would achieve a **critical mass** of **Holy Ghost** power, **transforming** us into **powerful Christians** capable of performing signs, wonders, and miracles.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ❖ My major problem with both approaches is that they leave out the **“Great Commandment”** or devalue its **importance** and **role** and don’t realize that it is the ultimate **means of grace**.
- ❖ The **Great Commandment** is as follows!
 - ▶ A **new command** I give you: **Love one another**. As I have loved you, so you **must** love one another. (John 13:34)
 - ▶ Concerning a question of the **greatest commandment**, Jesus replied:
 - **“Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matt. 22:37)
 - This is the **first** and **greatest** commandment. (Matt. 22:38)
 - And the **second** is like it: **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** (Matt. 22:39)
 - All the **Law** and the **Prophets** hang on these **two commandments.**” (Matt. 22:40)

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ❖ The **text** from my first sermon at a **Celebration Banquet** for Ekklesia was taken from the Book of **2nd Kings**.
- ❖ It was when **Hilkiah**, the high priest, said to Shaphan, the secretary, “I have found the **Book of the Law** in the temple of the LORD.” (2 Kings 22:8)
- ❖ When the **Book of the Law** was taken to **King Josiah**, the king said,
 - ▶ Great is the **LORD’s anger** that **burns against us** because
 - **our fathers** have **not obeyed** the words of this book;
 - they have **not acted** in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.” (2 Kings 22:13)



CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ❖ I used the story of finding the **“Book of the Law”** because **many things** in **God’s Word** need to be **rediscovered**—especially when they are **emphasized** over and over again in the Bible—especially the New Testament.
- ❖ For instance,
 - ▶ One-third to one-half of all the **epistles** written by the Apostle Paul emphasize the need to **perfect** our **near-neighbor, one-on-one personal relationships**, especially those in the **church**.
- ❖ In fact, Chapter 13 of 1st Corinthians says that **without love**, we are obnoxious and gain nothing in serving God—even if we become **martyrs**.



CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

- ❖ So then, what should we do?
 - ▶ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and **live** a life of **love**, just as **Christ** loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph. 5:1-2) **[See also, Ephesian 5:3-7]**
 - ▶ Dear friends, since **God** so loved us, we also ought to **love** one another. No one has ever seen God, but if we **love one another**, **God** lives in us, and his **love** is **made complete in us**. (1 John 4:11-12)
 - ▶ **God is love. Whoever** lives in **love** lives in **God**, and **God** in him.
 - In this way, **love** is made **complete** among us so that we will have **confidence** on the day of **judgment**
 - because in this **world** we are **like** him. (1 John 4:16-17)

SUMMARY

- ❖ When we walk with **"self-sacrificing" love**, we **imitate God** and attract the **transformational presence** of the **Holy Spirit** into our lives.
- ❖ This **presence** works **not** on the **outside** but on the innermost **regions** of our hearts.
- ❖ It's a **sanctifying process** that **starts from within**, radiating **outwards**, filling us with more **love** for people, **joy**, **peace**, and the rest of the **fruit of the Spirit**.
- ❖ So when we **call** upon the name of the Lord, God says **here am I**, as we **abide in Christ**, and **He abides in us**. [See John 15:1-17]



SUMMARY

- ❖ Again, when we walk in **love**, we **abide in Christ** and **mature** in the Lord.
- ❖ We also obtain the **"Mind of Christ"** and **discern** all things so that **we** can keep ourselves in **God's** **good**, **pleasing**, and **perfect** will.
- ❖ Why is **this** important?
- ❖ In the **"last days,"** there will be much **spiritual darkness**, leading to the emergence of **"false teachers"** and **"false prophets"** who will **exploit** the saints—especially those who do **not** obey **God's commandments**.



SUMMARY

- ❖ So then, **we** must keep ourselves in **God's love**.
- ❖ We then need to ensure that our **vision** is good and we can see well, even in the **darkness**.
- ❖ As the Apostle Paul says,
 - ▶ But you, **brothers**, are **not** in **darkness**, so this **day** should surprise you like a thief. You are all **sons** of the **light** and **sons** of the **day**. (1 Th. 5:4-5)
- ❖ In other words, if we walk in the light, as he is in the light (1 John 1:7), our **fellowship with God** will be a **lamp** for our feet no matter how **bad** things get.
- ❖ So, let us put on our **"Night Vision"** goggles so that the **darkness** of this present age will not **blind** us to the faithfulness and goodness of our God and Savior, **Jesus Christ**.



SUMMARY

- ❖ So, how do we **put on love** since it is a **means of grace** to **stand firm** in the Lord?
 - ▶ Do unto **others** what **you** would want others to **do** to you.
 - ▶ Pray for your **enemies**.
 - ▶ Let go of any **supposed rights** you may have for **revenge**.
 - ▶ Go out of your way to be **nice**, **considerate**, and **helpful** to **others** in need.
 - ▶ Be a generous and cheerful **giver**.
 - ▶ Overlook **offenses**.

FINAL WORD

- ❖ “And there will be **signs** in the **sun** and **moon** and **stars**, and on the **earth distress of nations in perplexity** because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, **people** fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the **powers** of the heavens will be shaken.” (Luke 21:25-26 ESVi)
- ❖ But you, brothers, are **not** in **darkness**, so this **day** should surprise you like a **thief**. (1 Th. 5:4)
- ❖ So then, let us **not** be like **others** who are asleep, but let us be **alert** and **self-controlled**. (1 Th. 5:6)
- ❖ For God did **not** appoint us to suffer **wrath** but to receive **salvation** through our **Lord Jesus Christ**. (1 Th. 5:9)



FINAL WORD

The **day of the Lord** is a day of **darkness** and **gloom**,
a day of **clouds** and **blackness**.
(Joel 2:2)

The **day of the LORD** is great; it is dreadful.
Who can endure it?
(Joel 2:11)