

Blessed Are The Pure In Heart

Matthew 5:8

Our text this morning is among the most exciting in the Bible for Believers. Christians live in expectation of being with God at some point. That thought is very powerful for a Christian because as we draw closer to God, we also grow closer to leaving this life. When Jesus tells us to be Pure in Heart, He also promises us that we *“shall see God.”*

Being pure in heart is about thinking what is right, loving what is good, and desiring the best of this life. As we read this sixth beatitude, I would be very surprised if there is a single person in this assembly who would say, “That’s me!”

When Jesus says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,”* blessed are those who know that they don’t have what it takes before God, it’s not very hard to say, “That’s me.” And when Jesus says, *“Blessed are those who mourn,”* it’s easy for us to think of our sins and shortcomings and say, “That’s me.” But when Jesus says, *“Blessed are the pure in heart,”* I don’t find myself saying “That’s me” at all, and I suspect you don’t either.

purity of heart is not...

Purity of heart does not mean that you never have a bad thought. The apostle John says to believers, *“If we say we are without sin we deceive ourselves...”* (1 John 1:8). Christians in this life are always sinners in the process of recovery. So, if purity of heart meant that you never have a bad thought, it would be beyond the range of Christian experience...

Purity in the Bible

The Bible speaks about purity or holiness in different ways, and it is important for our understanding of the Christian life to distinguish between them.

First, there is the purity or holiness that belongs to God alone

In the presence of God, the holy angels, who have never sinned, cover their faces and cry out “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:3).

It isn't enough, in the presence of God, for the angels to just say “God is holy,” they say it three times! The angels are holy, but God is unrivaled in his purity. God's holiness is the source of the angel's holiness. The angels simply reflect the holiness of God like the moon reflects the light of the sun. But absolute holiness is God's alone, and any holiness in you or I is only a reflection of the holiness of God.

There is a purity or holiness that will be ours in heaven

1 John 3:2 ***“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”***

In the presence of Jesus, we will have a purity that is like pure gold, a holiness that is unmixed. There will **not** be a trace of sin in you, on you or around you.

There is a purity or holiness that God calls us to pursue now

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

This as purity in a gospel sense. By that I mean that the Christian's purity in this life is like gold mixed with trash. There is a real purity in the heart of a believer, but it is mixed. It is real gold, but it is mixed with trash. Where there is a longing for purity and a loathing of our impurity, there is purity of heart.

What is Purity of Heart?

As I said earlier, Purity of heart does not mean sinlessness. Purity of heart means two things: 1. A heart that is undivided, 2. A heart that is clean.

The blessing of an undivided heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart...” Matthew 5:8 is speaking of a Christian whose heart is dedicated to the singleness of pursuing God. Jesus returns to this theme later in the Sermon on the Mount:

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.” Matthew 6:22

The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, is often quoted on this. He wrote a book on purity called...“Purity of heart is to will one thing”

“This is very helpful, and it tells us that the opposite of a pure heart is a divided heart. Remember Elijah standing on Mount Carmel, challenging the people: “How long will you go on limping between two opinions?”

In other words: How long will we go on trying to embrace Christ and the world at the same time? How long will we continue toying with the same sins: Never giving ourselves to them wholly, but never giving ourselves to Christ wholly either? **Purity of heart is to will one thing...**

In the book Pilgrim’s Progress John Bunyan has a character called, **“Mr. Facing Both Ways.”** We know immediately what that is. Paul gives us a commentary on purity of heart:

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14

What a great exposition on purity of heart: Purity of heart is not perfection: ***“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect...”***

Purity of heart is to will one thing: ***“One thing I do... I press on to take hold of the high calling for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”***

When Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart,” he is saying, “Blessed is the person whose heart is undivided.”

There’s a great prayer for purity in the book of Psalms: ***“Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.”*** Psalms 86:11.

Our human side includes a heart that can be all over the place. What Jesus wants is for us to take that heart and pursue one thing...purity.

The blessing of a clean heart

In the Bible's terms, when we obey Lord Jesus Christ, faith forms the bond of a living union in which Christ becomes yours and you become His. You are "in Christ" and Christ is in you.

3 Gifts that Become Yours through Faith in Christ

1. Justification (legal): In Christ, God drops all charges against you

Justification means that God drops all charges against you. The reason that we will enter heaven, is not that we are without sin, because none of us ever is. The reason that Christians enter heaven is that God does not charge our sins against us. Why? *"The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). In Christ our debts have been paid in full, so that they will not and cannot be charged to us on the last day. That is the spectacular truth of justification: *"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1).

Christians enter heaven on the basis of mercy, but also on the basis of justice! A just God cannot demand payment for sins that have been atoned for! A just God will not call in a debt that has already been paid.

2. Forgiveness (relational): In Christ, God reconciles you to himself

When God justifies, he also forgives, and reconciles us to himself in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). He never does one without the other. This is a spectacular blessing. Think about it... we were an enemy of God; now he makes you his friend!

We looked at this marvelous subject of forgiveness in the last Beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful," and we saw that God forgives when repentance begins. Why? Forgiveness is relational—it is both given and received. Love can be in one direction, but forgiveness is always relational. Two parties are involved. One forgives; the other is forgiven, and out of this a **relationship is restored**.

3. Cleansing (personal): In Christ, God washes our heart and life

Right now, my car is filthy and needs to be cleaned. I'll get to the carwash, but by next weekend, the same car will need washing again. The car picks up dirt from the road, and it needs to be washed on a regular basis. I have never seen a car of which this is not true. Even if your car is a super expensive one, it still needs to be washed.

Justification happens once. It is a legal standing before God. Forgiveness or reconciliation with God happens once. It does not need to be repeated. What happens when I sin? In Christ, I am a friend of God, and I do not become his enemy every time I sin. But cleansing is different. I need this on a continuing basis. However much I progress in the Christian life, I never get beyond the need of it. I want to remind you of a verse that brings together the three priceless gifts of justification, forgiveness and cleansing: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1:9

We will See God

Then Jesus ties *“Blessed are the pure in heart,”* to a second thing that seems equally impossible: *“for they shall see God!”*

In the Old Testament, Moses wanted to see the glory of God, so God told him to hide in the cleft of a rock. God's presence would pass by, but Moses would only be allowed to see a tiny part of God's glory. God said, *“You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live”* Ex 33:20. Yet Jesus says, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

The apparent impossibility of these two things: Seeing God and purity of heart, show us how great a savior Jesus is. Jesus does not give us the Beatitudes to mock us. Jesus is the great Redeemer, the Rescuer, the Savior, holding this wonderful promise in his hands.

In Christ, a sinner with all the baggage that sinful habits leave in our thoughts, our feelings and our desires, can become pure in heart!

In Christ, a sinner who is forgiven, washed, cleansed and renewed should see God and, instead of shrinking back into an everlasting hell, should move forward into the embrace of a loving Father!

This is what Jesus can do for sinners. This is what Jesus can do for us: He can purify our heart. He can shine into our heart *“to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

When I read this Beatitude, my first thought is, “That looks impossible,” and my second thought is, “If I could lay hold of all that Jesus promises here and make it my own, I would be greatly blessed.”

We can pursue this calling, so that in this life and in the life to come, we will be someone who truly sees God.