

“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART”

Matthew 5:8

Intro: When the Lord spoke of “the pure in heart,” He was commending a life of *holiness* to His disciples. But He was commending such a life, not as an option, but as that which is expected of all who are truly saved. Remember that with the Beatitudes we are building upon a foundation, or climbing the rungs of a ladder, leading ultimately to the joy expressed in verse 12 of our chapter, as well as the ministry indicated by verse 16. So verse 8 is really *a call to be holy*. *And holiness is the result of what we have in the first five Beatitudes.*

Right after we are saved, and often God, in preparing to save us, begins to show us how poor we are spiritually. We are in reality spiritually bankrupt! This is not an easy lesson to learn, and there is a sense in which we are always learning it in deeper and greater ways.

Then, by the work of the Holy Spirit we deplore our sins. This, too, is life-long. We know that we are forgiven, but we mourn because of the way we have grieved the Lord by our sins. And this is what we call repentance. This feeling of grief over the sins we have committed does not leave us. It becomes more intense the more we grow in the Lord. We are forgiven, and God forgets them, but we continue to remember them so that we will hate them and do everything possible in the future not to repeat them. The result of this is we begin to become meek. We are greatly humbled that God would love us sinners though we are.

Having seen our need, the Holy Spirit turns our hearts to the Word. We “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” The Holy Spirit begins to teach us about Christ, and we learn that it is God’s purpose in saving us to make us like His Son. And as the Holy Spirit continues His work in us, we begin to see that the mercy God has bestowed upon us in saving us, begins to change our attitude toward others. We show mercy. We look upon people as our Lord did, with compassion. We are less inclined to be hard and critical, and more inclined to be merciful and loving.

But our Beatitude for today shows us that this purity which we seek, this holiness of life, is not just a matter of outward behavior, but that to be true purity, it must come from the heart. We are learning that sin comes from the heart, but we are also beginning to learn that purity must come from our hearts. We have no argument with what our Lord said about being defiled by what comes out of our hearts. Do you remember His words? You have read them this past week if you are reading by our schedule! Listen to what the Lord said when His disciples were being criticized by the scribes and Pharisees because they did not ceremonially wash their hands before they ate. Here are our Lord’s words found in Mark 7:20-23:

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defi-

leth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

And so, if our outward behavior is to be pure, our hearts need to be pure, and the only one who can make our hearts pure, is the Lord. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Or, *happy are those who have pure hearts*. Sin does not produce happiness. Oh, even the Bible speaks of “the pleasures of sin.” But listen to what it has to say in Heb. 11:24-26:

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

But the pleasures are so brief and so unsatisfying, and the results are so lengthy and so miserable, that to have the pleasures of sin for such a brief time, is not worth it. *The only way that we can have purity of life is to have purity of heart, and only God can give us pure hearts.*

So when the Lord was speaking about “the pure in heart,” He was speaking of His people and to His people. This, like the other Beatitudes, is His word to us!

But let us examine the words.

I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD “PURE”?

The first time the word “pure” is used in the Bible, is in describing the gold that was to cover the ark of the covenant. The verse I am referring to is Ex. 25:11. This is what it says:

And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

Now I am sure that any of you could tell me that “pure gold” is *only gold*. There is nothing else mixed in it. It was *all gold*.

In the same way when we speak of *a pure heart*, we mean that there is nothing impure in it. There is nothing that would displease the Lord. A pure heart is a holy heart. As we heard in our Scripture reading, the Lord said to all of His people, to all of us who belong to Him, and He said it in both the OT and the NT, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” Such a statement leaves no room for sin. In fact, that verse means, “*Be ye perfectly holy*,

just as I the Lord your God am perfectly holy.” How holy is the Lord? He is perfectly holy! We would all agree, I am sure, that God is “glorious in holiness,” as Ex. 15:11 tells us. There is no mixture of sin and holiness in God; He is all holiness.

Are you as I to be as perfect as He is? Is such possible for us? Look at the last verse of Matthew 5. Matt. 5:48 says, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” And so some Christians say that it is possible for us in this life to be sinlessly perfect. Is that what we are talking about?

When the Apostle John was a very old man, he wrote the three epistles which bear his name in the NT: 1, 2, and 3 John. He was well into his eighties, and maybe even in his nineties. And he said this: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Now if anyone could have reached perfection in his life, I feel sure that it would have been the Apostle John. But by his own testimony, he was not perfect.

Let me give you another example.

King Solomon in the OT was a very godly man. His writings have been a great help to the people of God for about 3,000 years. In his book of Proverbs, he asked this question:

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?
(Prov. 20:9).

Evidently he wasn't ready to say that about himself, and his question implies that no one else could say it either.

Let me ask you a question: As you read through your Bible, except for our Lord Jesus Christ, do you know of a single person in all of Scripture who became sinless, perfectly sinless? I don't, and I feel sure that you don't either.

Well, what did the Lord mean then, “Blessed are the pure in heart”?

I believe He meant two things. First, He was telling us that perfect happiness comes with perfect holiness. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” So the holier we become, the happier we will be.

Second, He meant that this is the goal of our salvation, to be holy like He is. And we know that we are not going to be like Him until we see Him. The Apostle John told us that also: “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). So, as with all of the other Beatitudes they speak of growing in a realization of our spiritual needs, and of our grief for sins, and in meekness, and in our hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and in showing mercy, so until we see the Lord, we need to be

pressing on toward the mark, as Paul told the Philippians. And as the writer of the book of Hebrews said,

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14):

Purity of heart and life is our goal. As long as we live we are to be pursuing it. This is sanctification. This is what it means to be growing “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” By definition, purity of heart means two things:

- 1) Personal holiness.
- 2) A godly influence on others.

Perfect holiness will not be ours in this life. Ask the person who has known the Lord the longest, and, if he or she is honest, he or she will tell you that they are not perfect yet, but they will be when they see the Lord.

But let us look at a second word:

II. WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PAUL MEAN BY THE WORD “HEART”?

“Blessed are the pure in heart.” What did he mean by the “heart”? Well, just as our beating hearts are really center of our physical life, so this word is used in Scripture to speak of our inner man. It speaks of our soul. Paul was indicating that there are two parts to our being when he said,

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

We are not body, but we are body, soul, and spirit. Our bodies get older and older, and finally we die. But for the person who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, “the inward man is renewed day by day,” and so is getting stronger and stronger.

What you and I are in our hearts, is what we are. A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be something outwardly that is different from what he is in his heart. So to be “pure in heart” is to be genuinely pure. It doesn’t mean that you are perfectly pure, but that purity, holiness, is the dominant characteristics of your heart. We may be able to fool each other, but we can’t fool the Lord.

Recently in a message I referred to what the Lord told Samuel when Samuel was impressed with Jesse’s oldest son, and felt that because he was tall and handsome, he must be the next king of Israel. Here is what we read in 1 Sam. 16:7:

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Let us remember this, and deal immediately with any hypocrisy that we discover in our own hearts. Thomas Watson said that a pure heart is a suspicious heart. The hypocrite suspects others and has charitable thoughts of himself. The sincere Christian has charitable thought of others and suspects himself (*The Beatitudes*, p. 182).

It should continually be our prayer, as it was with David,

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psa. 139:23-24).

But again, as we come to the final point, we have:

III. THE PROMISE: “For they shall see God.”

What an amazing promise this is! “For they shall see God”! We are told in John 1:18:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

This is a very strong statement, and it means that no one has ever seen God. Thus, every appearance of God in the OT has to be an appearance of Christ before He came in the flesh. “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

But the promise of this Beatitude is that “the pure in heart...shall see God.” It is an absolute promise. I am one who believes that when we get to heaven we are going to see all Three Persons of the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. “They shall see God.” And perhaps this expression means that we will see all Three Persons. The verb “see” means *to gaze upon Him*. When we do, we will be ‘lost in wonder, love, and praise.’”

And one of the wonderful aspects of this truth is that when this happens, for us at the Rapture, then God’s purpose in our salvation will be complete because then “we shall be like Him.” And as the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers,

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49).

But perhaps there is another idea here which has to do with the present. And that has to do with the way we see the God in the Word. This is not physical sight, but, as we often say, with the eye of faith. We see Him as He is revealed in Christ. We see Him in the revelation of His glorious attributes. We see Him in His ways which are also revealed in Scripture. God is revealed in the Word of God which is a revelation of Him. We see God in the way He answers prayer, and in His providential dealings in our lives. And the more godly we become, the more we see God in His Word

and in “His wonderful works to the children of men.”

The Lord Jesus did not mean that some will see God, and others in His family will not see Him. We may differ in our purity of heart, but that is a term which describes all of the people of God.

How we should be looking forward to that day when our faith becomes sight, and we are permitted to gaze upon our heavenly Father, and enjoy a fellowship with Him then, and with each other, which we have never experienced here on earth.

Concl: King David, in Psalm 24 asked a couple of questions which have real bearing upon this Beatitude. Perhaps you will remember his words:

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob (Psa. 24:3-6).

Notice that “clean hands” are outward; “a pure heart” is inward. Lifting up the soul to vanity and pride, is inward; swearing deceitfully is outward.

We have the same inward-outward, or outward-inward combination in Psa. 19:14:

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. “The words of my mouth” are outward; “the meditation of my heart” is inward.”

Purity of heart includes both. As I have said, the outward without the inward, is hypocrisy.

When David sinned so grievously against the Lord in committing adultery with Bathsheba, and then having her husband, one of David’s faithful men killed, as a part of his confession to the Lord in Psalm 51, he made this confession:

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom (Psa. 51:6).

And then he said a few verses later:

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (Psa. 51:10).

Finally, he recognized this:

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psa. 51:16-17).

If we know the Lord, we want to please Him. I can't imagine anyone being truly saved with no desire to please God. But the question is, how pleasing are we to the Lord? Are we really trusting Him day by day? Do we judge sin before it gets started? Are we careful about what is going on in our hearts, the resentments we may hold, the desires we may have which are clearly sinful in God's sight? David's experience ought to be a warning to all of us. While he did not go into detail as far as his inner life was concerned, he clearly admitted that the truth of God, and his own personal faithfulness to the Lord, were not what he was concerned about in his heart. When our hearts are not right with the Lord, it will always follow that we will have trouble in our behavior. We may be able to conceal a needy heart for a while, but eventually others will know that we have not really been walking with the Lord.

May the Lord not let us forget this Beatitude, nor any of the others that has led us up to it. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is pureness of heart that leads to Christ-likeness in our lives, and causes us to long for that day when we will be pure in heart in a perfect way, so that we will never again displease the Lord.

There may be some here this morning who do not know the Lord, and yet you are struggling with sin in your life. The One you need is Christ, to cleanse your heart from the defilement and guilt of your sin. Only then can you ever hope to have a pure heart so that you can live a pure life. Come to Him today. Put your trust in Him. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." If you want to talk about your relationship with the Lord, let me know after the service.