



Blessed Are The Pure In Heart Because They Will See God

Matthew 5:8

One of the times in my life where I experienced immense spiritual re-awakening was in my teen years. I began a Bible Study with Tracy (who, of course, at the time was my girlfriend). This study was on the names of God – which means that we were studying about God’s character. As I went through more of the study, my heart became more and more filled with awe of the Lord, and I had an insatiable craving to spend more time with him. I’d get up early in the morning to pray and commune with the Lord before getting ready to go to school. I’d spend time in the Word and prayer at night before bed. Then I began to listen to sermons while driving around in my car. But something began to change. I was listening to a particular sermon over and over again. It was a sermon about how we ought to be willing to give up everything for Jesus. And, the evangelist was essentially asking the listeners, “Are you willing to give up what you love most?” This sermon continued to resonate in my mind, and I began to get nervous. Did I love God *that* much? Did I love God *enough*?

I began to feel stressed and anxious, but I still wanted to pursue the Lord. But I felt like maybe God wasn’t as pleased with me because I wasn’t doing enough for him. Eventually I went off to college, and while not all the preaching and teaching was like this, a lot of it was. Questions like, “Are you sure you love Jesus?” Or, “If you love Jesus, you’ll do ‘x.’” Then, while being engaged to Tracy, we found a church that helped to refocus me. Every sermon emphasized our need for God’s grace and also God’s free giving of this grace in Jesus. At the time, I couldn’t articulate how I could walk away from those sermons refreshed. And while at times, I would feel convicted, it was a different sort of conviction.

As I look back on those years, I see what happened. I went from focusing my attention on God and his glory to then focusing my attention on me and what I was or wasn’t doing for God. What I’ve discovered through the years is that when my attention is bent on myself, my anxiety and even depression increases. But when I am able to focus primarily on God and what he promises to me, I am encouraged in how to grow in praise, worship and obedience to the Lord.

The reason I bring this up is because of the Beatitude we’re focusing on this morning. This Beatitude might be one that makes you feel discouraged or condemned. You might read it with a tinge of guilt or shame: Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. And so, I could preach this sermon saying, “Are you pure in your heart? Are you pure enough? Do you detect any sin whatsoever? Only the pure in heart will see God!” And truly, if Jesus’ statement is talking about perfection and being *pure enough*, we’re all condemned, right? Psalm 130 says, “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”¹ To stand means to be able to endure God’s judgment. If God labeled all of our sins, not one of us would be able to stand before him because all of us are sinful!

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 130:3.

So, what is Jesus saying here in this Beatitude? Is he saying that God requires purity and he commands us to try, but no one will make it and we'll all be condemned someday? That's what the 16th century Reformer, Martin Luther used to think. He thought God put a carrot on a stick for humanity. In essence, God called us to himself, but would never fully forgive us. But Luther came to realize that wasn't God at all. And, by the way, that's *not* what Jesus is saying here in this Beatitude. So, what *is* Jesus saying?

Well, let's look at it again: **The pure in heart are blessed because they will see God.** Again, we will look at the first part of this statement, and try to define the terms. Then we'll go into the second part. Finally, I'll end the sermon with some application questions for all of us to consider.

1. What does "pure in heart" mean?

This statement of blessing corresponds with Psalm 24:3-5, which says, "**Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. . . He will receive blessing from the LORD. . .**"² Who can be in the presence of God? Who is blessed by God? Those with clean hands and a pure heart.

It is extremely important that we correctly answer the question of what "pure in heart" means. This is life or death. Eternity is on the line. Only those who are pure in heart *see* God. Think on that. If you're not pure in heart, the opposite *is* true. You will *not* see God. What then does "pure in heart" mean?

Within Judaism, many have translated this idea to being morally upright in your actions, and in the first century (when Jesus was speaking), this included religious purity practices. There would be practices of washing your cup to ensure that when you drink, you are drinking in purity. You had to wash your hands a certain way so that you were symbolically eating and drinking in purity. There's a story of one Jewish Rabbi who was arrested by the Romans. He was given only a couple pieces of bread and a cup of water. Before eating, he used the water to wash his hands. He said that he would rather die than go against tradition (see Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, p. 73). People took their idea of purity seriously. But what if their idea, their tradition, was wrong?

In Proverbs, we read a rhetorical question: **Who can say, "I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin?"**³ What's the assumed answer to this question? No one. Who can say they have? This is further emphasized when we read God's words in Jeremiah 17:9, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?**"⁴ This is God's assessment of human beings who are left to themselves. So, let me ask you a question. Can people just try a little harder to spruce themselves up? No. The proverb makes it clear. You cannot do enough to make your heart clean.

This leads us to conclude that the traditions of the religious Pharisees in Jesus' day were wrong in their definition. And, of course, even Jesus confronts them on their purity rituals. We hear Jesus say, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the

² The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 24:3-5.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 20:9.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Je 17:9.

plate, that the outside also may be clean.”⁵ Jesus goes on to say, “So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”⁶

Jesus says that they’re missing it! Purity of heart isn’t a focus on what you can do externally. Purity of heart is internal. And, while I think most here would know that reality, I think we’re still tempted to believe purity of heart can be addressed by simple will-power. Or, instead of really acknowledging our own sin, we blame-shift. We say, “Well, I wouldn’t have done this if this thing wouldn’t have happened.” Or, we might say of our children, “They have really good hearts. They just rebel once in a while.” Whoa. All this is wrong. Blame-shifting takes our focus off of the problem, and therefore, the solution. Saying we are essentially good, but we just sin once in a while, lightens the problem, and therefore, doesn’t drive us or others to Jesus. And, will-power ignores the problem, and therefore, ignores God. In the end, all of these views focus on us and not the Lord. And, practically speaking, they end up either filling our selfish pride, where we look down on others who aren’t as good as us. Or, they lead us to despair because we realize we can’t attain. Either way, if human beings are not focused on Jesus, they’re doomed. Literally.

So, what is purity of heart? Well, let’s start with defining the word “pure,” and then defining the word “heart.” Then we will put the two together. The word for “pure” has the idea of being **unmixed, without wrinkle, clean**. This idea is brought up in Ezekiel 36. God is prophesying about what is going to take place someday. He is speaking to people who have hardened their hearts towards God in rebellion, but he says: **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**⁷ God says that God must be the one to clean us and purify our hearts. He must remove the heart of stone and give the heart of flesh. If God does this work, then our hearts will be unmixed. We won’t simply do external actions to prove ourselves. Instead, we’ll live obedient lives because God has given us love for him! In other words, our hearts won’t be hardened towards God. They will be softened towards him. This is *purity*.

What about the word “heart?” What does this mean? We might immediately think that heart refers to the emotions. In English, that’s what it means. But that’s not the biblical idea of the word. The biblical idea of heart refers to **the entirety of your being**. Your emotions, your mind, your will, all flow from your heart. It is the wellspring that flows out to your emotions, mind and will. In Matthew 15:19, we see the heart affects the mind: ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”⁸

Let’s now put “pure” and “heart” together. Who is the only One who can make us pure? The proverbs says we can’t. But Ezekiel says God can (and will) make people pure. Their hearts will beat again with a desire to not simply do mechanical rote actions, but to obey and honor God. But this purity of heart doesn’t mean we’re necessarily perfect because Ezekiel also adds that God will give us people his Spirit so that we can be taught to obey his rules.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 23:25–26.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 23:28.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eze 36:24–27.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 15:19–20.

So, think of purity of heart like a God giving life back. It doesn't mean the heart is perfect, but it is beating again. And it's beating to God's heart. But how can this be? Maybe you're here and wondering, "How can you have a pure heart?" Or, maybe you're a Christian and you're discouraged by how you feel your heart has hardened. You long for renewal. Let me read to you from Ephesians 5. Paul is actually talking about how husbands are to love their wives, but he focuses his attention on Jesus how Jesus' love should motivate a husband's love. Listen to how he describes what Jesus does for those who trust him: **Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**⁹

How can we have pure hearts? Only by God. And Ephesians adds, it's by God the Son. Jesus gave himself up for people. He took our impurities on himself. He became unclean. He became sin – even though he was sinless. And he welcomed the punishment that sin deserved. He took God's just punishment in himself, and because he is God the Son, he satisfied justice. But he didn't stop there. Anyone who turns from their sins and turns to Jesus for forgiveness becomes part of God's people. That's the idea of "the church" here in Ephesians. And then Jesus promises to cleanse us and wash us until someday we will be without any spots. We will be without any wrinkle. We will have no blemish. Do you see this? Jesus makes us pure when we trust him, and he continues to make us pure until we are completely pure when we see him face-to-face! What a Savior! It's true that the pure in heart are blessed because we have an amazing Savior. And that leads us to the second part of this Beatitude.

2. What does "they will see God" mean?

Is this really a blessing to see God? I imagine Adam and Eve weren't thrilled when God was calling them out of hiding, right? What about the demons, whom James says they tremble at the thought of God? Is seeing God a blessing? Well, not if you are still in your sins. But let's go back to Psalm 130, the psalm I read at the beginning of this message. If God marks iniquity, who could stand? No one, right? Then the psalmist says, "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."¹⁰ To be feared is not to be terrified of God. It refers to complete and utter awe and respect and honor. So, if you're listening to this message and seeing God doesn't thrill you, it may very well be because you are still in your sins. You haven't trusted Jesus. Seeing God doesn't compel you, and I can't make that be the case. That's something the Spirit must work in you.

But for those of you who know God, seeing him is your longing, isn't it? Honestly, I actually believe that this phrase "they will see God" has a present reality to it as well as an eternal one. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul wrote, "**For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.**"¹¹ Someday, we will be face to face with God. We will have no restrictions in seeing God and knowing him. No limitations of sin whatsoever and we, with restful zeal, will live in eternal glory and worship of our God! But now, we still see. Even though dimly, God makes himself known to us. That's a difference amongst Christians and those who don't trust Jesus. God enables us to perceive God ways. We can read the Bible and rejoice in who he is. We can behold God's glory as we read of Jesus and ponder his grace and mercy towards us! We see. But someday, there will be no dimness. We will see fully.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 5:25–27.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 130:4.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 13:12.

This reminds me of the tear-jerker videos that you can find on YouTube or Facebook at times. Those videos that show a military mom or dad surprising their child at a graduation or birthday party. Maybe the child received letters or even FaceTimed their parents, but when their parent shows up, the child is overwhelmed in emotion. They don't care who's around. They jump into their dad's arms and weep. Or, I think of those videos of children who were born with limited hearing or eyesight and then the doctors give them devices to be able to see or hear their parents for the first time. Those little children light up when they finally see and hear.

Can you imagine what it will be like when you see your God? The God who has pursued you even in your rebellion. The God who made you and set his love on you. The God who changed your heart and has washed you over and over, making you clean. The God who has provided for you and carried you along the ups and downs of life. The God who has committed himself to your eternal God. Someday, he will *welcome you home*, and you will see him! As Revelation states, **“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face. . .”**¹²

The pure in heart are blessed because they will see God. Let's now move to some application questions.

- 1. Has Jesus purified my heart?** There's nothing good you can do to make your heart clean. Only Jesus can. And he says, “Come to me, all who are weary. . .and I will give you rest” (see Matt. 11:28-30). He will accept you as you are. He will forgive you of your sins. He then promises to work in and through you to love God and to pursue following him. Have you turned to him? If not, why not today. And, if you have questions, please talk to a Christian about what this means.
- 2. Am I living as one who is pure in heart?** Maybe you are a Christian. You've trusted in Jesus, but your heart as grown cold. What do you do? Run back to Jesus and be reminded of his love and grace and power and goodness. Don't say, “I promise I'll never do this again. Will you forgive me?” No, that's trusting you and what you can do. That's focusing on works. Jesus doesn't need your works. He wants you. And you need *him*. Commune with him! Run to his arms. Then, third question:
- 3. Do I rejoice in Jesus' promises to purify me?** Are you putting all the weight of your obedience on you or do you know that Jesus' commands aren't burdensome because he promises to give you strength? Do you spend your time fearing temptations more than trusting his power? Live in the promises of Jesus' grace towards you. Live in the promises of God that the Spirit is in you to empower you to obey, and then rejoice when you do obey! He's working in you.
- 4. Am I looking forward to seeing my Savior?** The apostle John in 1 John 3 says, “. . .we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”¹³ Jesus purifies you, and you grow in your desire for pure living as you focus on seeing Jesus. But if you're not in the Word, meditating on Jesus. Or, if you're not communing with the Lord regularly in prayer. Or, if you're not with other believers who encourage you in the faith, you're probably filling your mind with *only* the things around you in this life. And, while it's not wrong to think about the things around us. It's actually right to be good

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 22:3–4.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 3:2–3.

stewards of the here and now. But if you're not focused on your Savior, you'll lose sight of the purity you have in Jesus. Don't lose sight of Jesus.

Ventura, listen carefully. There will be a day when you will see your Savior. To this day, one of my favorites songs we sing is "Nothing That My Hands Can Do." One of the reasons I love this song is because, as most of you know, I live with chronic pain in my hip and leg. I used to be able to run. I ought not to run any longer (or else I'll pay for it in pain). What does this have to do with the song? Listen to these words, "My life is but a fleeting sigh/A tear within the sea/But You are everlasting, Lord/And You've predestined me/To leave this fading world behind/Not fearing death will come/**For then I'll look on Jesus Christ/And to His arms I'll run/And when I see Him face to face/What glory that will be/To look upon my Savior's scars/And know they were for me**" (*Nothing That My Hands Can Do*, Sovereign Grace Music). No, I probably won't even be thinking, "I'm running!" But I can only imagine how quickly and resolutely I'll run when I see him. His arms open wide for me and I will always be welcomed in his arms, and I will live forever in his Kingdom. The same is true for you, Christian!

The pure in heart are blessed because they will see God. What a Savior, amen?! Now, let's move to communion to ponder more of our Savior's goodness.