

# The Beatitudes: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

Purity of heart has more to do with "living with nothing to hide," than it does with trying to keep myself pure by avoiding sin.

Matthew 5:8

July 14, 2019

## TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 5:8**

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

## FIRST THOUGHTS

To be pure in heart seems to be an elusive ideal. How can I be pure in heart when my thoughts aren't pure, and too often my actions are not pure? If God knew what I was thinking right now (uh oh – He does) then purity isn't even on the radar. Does being pure in heart mean that I go around singing hymns, or that I join a monastery, or memorize the Bible?

Too often we have an ALL or NOTHING approach to Scripture, and in the context of purity, we think that since my heart is not always pure, I'll never be blessed and never get a glimpse of God's glory.

### A Collection of Thoughts on the Beatitudes:

- G.K. Chesterton – *a saint is one who exaggerates what the world neglects*
- Jews in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine got Jesus instead of Rambo or Schwarzkopf – to a downtrodden people yearning for emancipation from Roman rule, Jesus gave startling and unwelcome advice. If an enemy soldier slaps you, turn the other cheek. Rejoice in persecution. Be grateful for your poverty.
- In the Beatitudes – Jesus honored people who may not enjoy many privileges in this life... C.S. Lewis wrote, "Indeed if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea."
- The Beatitudes reveal that what succeeds in the kingdom of heaven also benefits us most in this life here and now.
- Henry Nouwen – *what makes us human is not our mind but our heart, not our ability to think, but our ability to love.* There is no more effective healer than a wounded healer.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In the context of Jesus' world, the emphasis He affirmed here is striking. The Psalms do affirm the need for interior purity – purity of the heart.

*Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? 4 The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not set his mind on what is false, and who has not sworn deceitfully.* Psalm 24:3-4 (HCSB)

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

Let's focus on the heart. The greatest commandment is to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength*. Often the Bible refers to the word *heart* to indicate emotions. "Let not your *heart* be troubled," (John 14:1). The *heart* can also refer to the intellect, "the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the *heart*." (Hebrews 4:12). The *heart* also has a volitional aspect, "Daniel purposed in his *heart* . . ." (Daniel 1:8). Putting this together indicates that the *heart* is like the control center of your being – *Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life.* (Proverbs 4:23)

The Pharisees ignored the *heart* and focused almost entirely on outward actions and observances. God looks at the heart - <sup>7</sup>For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)

Jesus admonished them: *You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* Matthew 15:7-9 (ESV)

What is required is a new *heart*, not a perfect heart, but a new one that seeks continuously after God. *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.* Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV)

The word **pure** has basically two meanings: clean and undivided.

A pure heart is a **clean** heart:

- A clean heart comes by faith in Jesus - *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,<sup>9</sup> and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.* Acts 15:8-9 (ESV)
- The blood of Jesus keeps our heart clean as we confess our sins - *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 (KJV)
- Only God can clean our hearts. It is His cleansing that we are to seek. *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Psalm 51:10 (ESV)

A pure heart is an **undivided** heart.

- James address the issue of a divided heart in calling us to keep our hearts pure: *Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.* James 4:8 (NLT2)
- If the apostle Paul was anything, he was focused. His path clear, his journey certain. Consider this statement (no ambiguity here): *No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,<sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.* Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT2)
- A divided heart leads to a lifestyle that is divided, hypocritical, full of fear and doubt: *But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.<sup>7</sup>Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.<sup>8</sup>Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.* James 1:6-8 (NLT2)

**Seven Practices that promote purity of heart**

1. Believe – trust that God is at work in your life. He is in process of making you more like Christ.
2. Confess – address sin in your life immediately. Do not let it get a foothold.
3. Listen – allow God's Word to draw you to constant fellowship with Jesus
4. Worship – worship has a transforming effect on following Jesus
5. Ask – pray for God to create a clean heart within you... ask God to check your motives
6. Persevere – learn about yourself, what tempts you, when you are tempted, ask yourself the tough questions (why did I go there in the first place?, at what times am I tempted the most? What Word from God can help me overcome?)
7. Anticipate – be thankful and rejoice in the continuing cleansing God gives through His word and His Holy Spirit

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

Simplicity and purity go together. A life of simple faith and purity of heart go hand in hand. The pure in heart live transparently. What you see in their public life is what they are in their private life. They have no guile, no hidden motives. If you were to watch them at home, at work, at play... there would be no contradiction. The life of the pure in heart is a life without masks. And what is their blessing? They see God at work. They see Him in their lives . . . they sense His presence. The pure in heart expect God to show up in everyday events and relationships. They see God.

**Questions:**

1. What part does repentance and confession play in having a pure heart?
2. How do you maintain an undivided heart for God when there are so many distractions in today's world, so many attractions, desires, going after your heart?
3. Where are you seeing God at work? Where are you seeing the manifestation of his Presence, His Power?
4. Who can you point to and say, "I see God at work in your life?"
5. When I sense that my heart is divided, distracted, what helps you return to a God-focused heart?
6. In the OT – in a general sense – Saul is described as having no heart for God, David is described as having a whole heart for God, and Solomon is described as having a half-heart for God. Obviously from the life of David, having a whole heart for God is not a perfect heart. So what was it about David that brought about the description of him as having a heart after God? *And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'*<sup>23</sup> *Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.* Acts 13:22-23 (ESV)

## READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

**14th** – Isaiah 19-21; Hebrews 11 | **15th** – Isaiah 22-24; Hebrews 12 | **16th** – Isaiah 25-28; Hebrews 13 | **17th** – Isaiah 29-31; James 1 | **18th** – Isaiah 32-35; James 2 | **19th** – 2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 28; Psalm 46; James 3 | **20th** – 2 Chronicles 29-31; James 4