

**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

## **The Only Way to Happiness: Be Pure in Heart**

Scripture: Matthew 5:8

Code: 90-194

Tonight we return to our study of the Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5 and I want to draw your attention to chapter 5, Matthew's gospel, and verse 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

With this statement of our Lord we face one of the greatest utterances in the whole of Scripture. And, of course, we could never exhaust this one verse, it stretches in to so many themes and so many realities. We're only going to try tonight to discover its central meaning, a long way from exhausting the riches that are here. I would commend to you a further study of this great statement.

As we have done all the way through the study of the Beatitudes, we're asking and answering key questions which allow us to get at the heart of what our Lord is saying. Whenever you have a very simple statement like this, it really is unnecessary to develop a complicated outline. Whenever I study the Bible I always go through a series of questions and I find in this kind of context where you're dealing with a very simple and straight forward statement, the best way to get at it is to ask and answer some questions.

The first question that always comes to mind of the Bible student is this: what is the context for these words? Words like this are not created out of a vacuum, they are not dropped obtusely from any existing circumstances on to the scene. But rather they emerge out of a setting historically and religiously and spiritually. That is precisely the case in these words which our Lord spoke that day on the mountain in Israel.

Let me give you a little bit of the background, a little of the context for these very important words. First of all, at the time of Jesus Christ's coming into the world Israel was in a desperate condition. Politically Israel had lost its freedom and was under the bondage of the Roman Empire. Economically Israel was struggling because the Romans exacted exorbitant, actually criminal taxes from the people so that the people were having to give up much of what they worked hard to earn in unfair taxation. Spiritually, however, Israel was also in great trouble. We want to focus here on the spiritual element because that's what the beatitude addresses.

From the spiritual side the people of Israel were burdened by the oppressive authority of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the dominating religionists of the time. They were ones who had misinterpreted the law of Moses as something that was in itself a legal code which could attain

salvation. They had in addition to the law of Moses added a myriad of other laws and rules and ordinances that really composed and then imposed a relentless, rigid system of duties on the people which really were impossible to perform. Consequently the people were unable to live up to the existing religious requirements of their time. That left them feeling oppressed. It left them feeling frustrated. And it left them feeling guilty.

Perhaps the reason that John the Baptist had such a wide and phenomenal response to his ministry, you remember that all of Israel was going out to the Jordan River to hear him. He didn't have a press agent. He didn't have a press release process. He didn't do radio or television advertising. And yet the whole nation went out to hear John the Baptist. And in part it may well have been due to the fact that he was preaching about sin. He was preaching repentance. And people who were feeling guilty over their inability to keep the law system that had been imposed on them were a fear...were afraid and fearful that because of their inability to keep the law, they were therefore liable to be shut out of the Kingdom of God. They feared being excluded from God's kingdom. And that may well have contributed to their eagerness to hear this man who was preaching about sin and repentance. Certainly there is no doubt that they were anxious and very excited in looking for a redeemer, in looking for a deliverer who would not only be a political deliverer and deliver them from Rome, certainly many of them sought that, not only would be economic deliverer who would deliver them from their poverty, that they also expected of Jesus, especially after He had fed so many thousands of them and creating food for them, but they also, I think, wanted one who would be a deliverer in the spiritual sense and bring them some peace and some soul satisfaction and would alleviate their guilt and their shame and the remorse they had, the lack of peace that seemed to trouble their souls. They were crying for a redeemer in every one of those areas.

And God had long before promised them a redeemer. The hope was treasured up in their hearts that that redeemer would come. Finally John the Baptist, who was the forerunner to the Messiah, the prophet, the last of the Old Testament prophets came and started preaching that the Messiah was coming and it was time to get your heart ready so that you would not be shut out of His kingdom. Messiah was coming and it was time to acknowledge your sin and repent of your sin and receive an available forgiveness and ready your heart for the Redeemer and for His kingdom. The people didn't want to miss out on the kingdom. They didn't want to miss out on eternal life. They didn't want to miss out on that God had prepared for His people through the Messiah. And so they were looking for one who could help them deal with their guilt and their sin.

In fact, this becomes evident. As you study the gospels that though there was a concern about political liberation from Rome and there was a concern about economic stability and prosperity, there was also a key issue that was just holding the hearts of the Jewish people and it was this spiritual issue.

For example, Nicodemus who was THE teacher in Israel, according to John chapter 3 this man, a Pharisee, also was a ruler of the Jews, a man of high stature, came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher for no one can do these things that You do unless God is with Him." Jesus answered and said to him, and it's interesting Jesus answered but he hadn't asked a question, Jesus said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Why did He say that to him? Because He could read his heart. And what was Nicodemus' question? Nicodemus' question must have been...how do I make sure I don't miss the kingdom? How do I make sure that I get into the kingdom?

Nicodemus came to Jesus conscious of his sin, conscious of his guilt, conscious of his unworthiness and fearing that he might miss the kingdom. And that nagging question of the heart of Nicodemus is...what is the righteous standard for salvation? What must I do to be saved?...to put it in the language borrowed from another. How can I be right with God? How can I be accepted by God? That was what was on this man's heart. I don't think he was alone. I think a lot of the Jewish people were asking that.

Later on Jesus was addressing a crowd in the sixth chapter, that crowd that He fed. And it says in verse 28 that the crowd said to Him, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" There again was that same nagging reality that something is wrong in our lives, there is sin, there is guilt, there is a striking wound that our conscious lays on us. We fear that our sin may separate us from God. We fear that we may not be working the works of God, that somehow we may not make it into the Kingdom.

In Luke chapter 10 we find this same concern again surfacing. A certain lawyer stood up, spoke to Jesus attempting to test Him. He said, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Very important question. How can I be right with God? How can I know God? How can I receive eternal life?

In Luke chapter 18 and verse 18 we read the same thing again. A certain ruler questioned Jesus saying, "Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Here is this same basic question. Several different scenarios but the same question.

God is holy, they knew that. God is righteous. God has established a righteous standard, His law. And we violate it. And try as we do we cannot keep it. What is the condition that we must attain in order to enter into the presence of holy God? How are we to be saved from our sin? How are we to be assured of eternal life? How are we to make it into God's kingdom?

And, believe me, this is the question that would be most in the minds of the crowd on the Galilean hillside as Jesus taught these Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. This would be the nagging question in the minds of His listeners. He had gone about all Galilee now, by

this time teaching in the synagogues. He had gone about preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He had gone about preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. He had gone about healing all manner of diseases. His fame had spread everywhere. And finally this massive crowd gathers and their hearts are basically burdened with this one great question...what kind of righteousness must we have in order to be accepted into God's kingdom? What kind of righteousness must we attain in order to be in God's eternal heaven? That was on their hearts. What does God require of us?

And it is that question of the heart that Jesus answers in the beatitude. How good does a man have to be? What is required? What is the standard? Here it is in verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." What is necessary in order to see God which is really another way of saying to enter into His kingdom? What is necessary is a pure heart.

That was powerful stuff. That was frankly a shocking statement. You see, people then like people now tend to measure themselves by their fellow men. And especially the Pharisees loved to do this, to compare themselves with others and thus assess themselves to be better than others and therefore hopefully acceptable to God. Typically when somebody desires to test his character and see his own virtue, when someone desires to test his ethics and to test his morals to build up his pride and feel good about himself and feel confident, he inevitably measures himself by some inferior human being. It's inevitable. He can always find someone lower than he is, or she is which means, if you think about it, that the ultimate standard of character and the ultimate standard of morality is finally and at last the most vile and worthless person alive.

It kind of works like this. You feel better than someone below you. And the one below you will find someone below him so he can feel better about himself. And the one below him will find someone below him to compare himself with so he can feel better about himself. And it just keeps descending until finally the standard is the most sinful person in the world. He's the ultimate standard. And if you're better than him, you might be okay.

So if you do it on the human level then, the highest standard is the worst person. And when you measure yourself against that standard you can survive with your pride and your self esteem intact. But the fact of the matter is, it's not the lowest person in the world that is the standard, it's God, the highest being in the universe, the highest, the holiest, the sinless God of the ages is the standard. When God sets the standard for righteous character, He sets it at His own level.

So the Lord answers the question of the people by saying that only the pure in heart will see God's kingdom. Only the pure in heart will know God. Only the pure in heart will inherit eternal life. Only the pure in heart will be saved. For they alone attain God's standard.

Really this is the key beatitude. Somebody might say, "Well if this is the key one why doesn't it come first? Why do we have all these preliminary beatitudes starting there in verse 3?" Because this is

sort of the pinnacle. This is sort of the centerpiece. This is the main jewel and you work your way to it. You start out, as you notice in verse 3, with poor in spirit, recognizing your spiritual bankruptcy. And then you mourn over your condition. And then you are gentle, or better translated meek and humble because of that condition. And then you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. And then you are granted mercy so that you can become pure in heart which is to then have received the righteousness that God requires.

And, you see, the Pharisees, the worst of them, the legalists among them thought it was enough to maintain some external purity, some external religion. But here Jesus shreds that false assumption and says the only ones who will ever see God are the pure hearted. You know, initially this would not relieve the burden, this would just compound it because typically the Pharisees and the other Jews who might feel some guilt would be feeling guilt about their inability to perform at the level of God's law, they would be feeling guilt about the fact that they hadn't lived up to God's standard, they were feeling guilt about the fact that they couldn't live up to God's standard, that they couldn't achieve perfect obedience to His law and consequently they felt guilt and fear and anxiety about missing the kingdom. Instead of relieving that kind of pressure the Lord adds more pressure by saying, "Well, to say nothing of what you're doing on the outside, let's talk about this, you will never see God unless you're absolutely pure on the inside." Which compounds at least initially the fear.

So the word of the Lord really does fit into the flow of the Beatitudes. It is the pure in heart then that become the peacemakers in verse 9. It is the pure in heart then in verse 10 who are persecuted. It is the pure in heart, verse 11, who are insulted, persecuted and against whom all kinds of evil is spoken falsely. It is the pure in heart, verse 13, who are the salt of the earth. It is the pure in heart, verse 14, who are the light of the world. So really we work our way up to this magnificent statement.

Now the word "blessed" here we've been translating it as the word happy, or joyful. But we want to define what we mean by that. We're not talking about something that is superficial. Perhaps a good translation of blessed to add to the other ones I've given you is to say it is a condition of well being, spiritual well being resulting from salvation. Well being is a good way to translate it, spiritual prosperity, prosperous are the pure in heart.

And, of course, I think the Jewish legalists standing there that day, the Pharisaical legalists and all those who followed their line, were the direct target of Jesus' words because, you know, they were working hard and trying to answer the question of...what do I do with some external act? And Jesus just tore the whole system down to the ground with that one statement. He just dismantled any external approach to God by saying that the only people who will ever enter God's kingdom, the only people who will ever experience eternal life, who will ever see God are those who are pure on the inside. That must have just struck like a sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, as the writer of Hebrews put it.

Had the Jews even themselves failed to realize the implications and the facts of the Old Testament, such as Psalm 51:6, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts?" Or as I quoted this morning, Hosea 6:6, "I delight not in sacrifice but in loyalty, or obedience." Or, "Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart."

They were having an impossible time on the external and couldn't do anything about the inside. In Psalm 24 you have a wonderful picture of this struggle. David is the psalmist and he pictures himself as a pilgrim and he's going to a feast at Jerusalem. This is a great event. His heart is thrilled as he approaches the great city, as he approaches the great temple ground. But as he approaches in all the euphoria of the experience of feasting at Jerusalem and being in the temple, he is smitten with a reality that strikes him. Verse 1, Psalm 24, "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." Then he asks this question, "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place?" As he moves toward Jerusalem and as he anticipates entering the temple he is stopped, as it were, mentally in his tracks and he poses the question...how am I going to be worthy to step into the presence of God? Who's going to go in there?

And he answers the question because he knows the answer. Not somebody who has kept the law of God perfectly or somebody who has fulfilled all the ceremonial requirements, but rather, verse 4, "He who has clean hands and...what?...a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing." There's the beatitude right there, a blessing from the Lord. "And righteousness from the God of his salvation." There is imputation. There is justification, the granting of divine righteousness to the sinner. He receives righteousness. He receives blessing. His hands are clean and he is given a clean heart. You have there justification and you have there conversion, transformation.

Who's going to see God? Who has a right to ascend His holy hill? Who has a right to go into His presence? Those who have been given His righteousness and been cleansed on the inside by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Spirit of God.

I think Isaiah saw the same reality. In Isaiah chapter 59, just a few verses out of the chapter, verse 1, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not short that it cannot save, neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear." God is a saving God. God is willing to save. The problem is not God, verse 2, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." And then he goes on to talk about those sins in the following verses starting in verse 3. Go down to verse 12, "Our transgressions are multiplied before Thee and our sins testify against us, for our transgressions are with us and we know our iniquities." Verse 16, "And when He saw that there was no man and was astonished that there was no one to intercede, then His own arm brought salvation to him and His righteousness upheld him." And he put on righteousness like a

breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped himself with zeal as a mantle.

God saw the sinner's plight. And God saw that there was no man to deliver the sinner. So God armed Himself with salvation to come and save.

Verse 20, "And He came and a redeemer will come to Zion," that redeemer will be God Himself, He will come to those who turn from transgression. Isaiah saw the issue. What was required was repentance. What was required was imputed righteousness. What was required was transformation of the heart, new creation, regeneration. And apart from that no man can see God no matter how much external religion that man may indulge himself in.

The prophet Ezekiel wrote it this way, Ezekiel 36:25, God speaking, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean." God has to wash your heart. "I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols, moreover I'll go even beyond that, I will give you a new heart and I will put a new spirit within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." That is a promise of new covenant regeneration. That's new birth. That's transformation. That's sanctification. "I'll put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you'll be careful to observe My ordinances and you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers, so you will be My people and I'll be your God. Moreover I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and multiply it. I will not bring a famine on you." No more judgment.

You see, the kingdom has always belonged to the hearts that are pure. It has always belonged to those who have been cleansed. And even in Christianity in our time it's not any different. We have those people who have a head religion. We have those people, and you heard their testimonies in baptism tonight, who have been raised in a ceremonial religion, who had nagging guilt, shame, fear, doubt, anxiety. You heard their testimonies, didn't you? They went to their various churches, they went through their various motions. They wanted to know how to get into the kingdom. They wanted to know what was required. They thought they perhaps could attain it and they lived with a guilt of falling short until finally in God's mercy and grace He broke them under the weight of their own sin and they cried out to Him, poor in spirit and mourning and meek, they told Him of their hunger and thirst for righteousness. He poured out mercy upon them and purified their hearts so that they could see Him. God calls for a heart religion.

A sinner in the condition he is in naturally is totally unacceptable to God...totally unfit for His kingdom no matter how religious he is, no matter how philanthropic he is, no matter how much of the milk of human kindness he dispenses, no matter how moral he is, no matter how humanly good he is, no matter how kind he is. Until he has a clean heart, a purged heart and has been covered with the garment of righteousness, he will never see God. God requires holiness.

First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy for I am holy." That's the standard. Nobody meets the standard. What do you do about it? First Peter 1 again, you have a problem, you need a redeemer, you need a righteousness not your own, you need a purity not your own, you need a God who will grant you righteousness that belongs to Him and then give you a new heart. And so 1 Peter 1:18 says that's what God has done, "You were redeemed, you were bought back out of sin with not perishable things like silver or gold, but...verse 19...with the precious blood as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." And verse 22, "You have in obedience to the truth of Christ, the gospel, purified your souls." You've been born again through the imperishable living and abiding Word of God.

That's what it takes. Cates B. Padgett(?) wrote a little poem that became a song some years ago and put it this way: "So dear, so very dear to God, dearer I could not be; for in the person of His Son I'm just as dear as He. So near, so very near to God, nearer I could not be; for in the person of His Son I am as near as He." That's what it means to have received the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. That's what it means to have been transformed, regenerated, given new life, the very life of God and have Christ Himself take up residence in our hearts.

Now let's further define our terms. What is really involved in being pure of heart? We asked a little about the context, now let's ask a second question...what's involved in being pure in heart?

Well, let's talk about the heart for a moment, kardia, from which we get our English word cardiac. The Greek word kardias simply means the heart. The Lord goes right for the issue here. In most religions in Israel, and the most religious today as far as society is concerned, are those who make the most religious effort externally. And the Pharisees led the parade in their time, they were always washing their hands and washing their pots and their pans. And they were always working on the outside and ignoring the inside. They were tithing everything down to the smallest seed possible. They were going through their ritualistic prayers but they ignored love and justice and truth, as the Lord pointed out. They had substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God. And Jesus said this is not all about what you do on the outside, this goes right to the heart, the center of your person.

What is the heart? Well obviously it's a muscle. We look at it physiologically. But we see it as more than that. We talk about loving someone with all your heart, that's sort of a strange thing to say. We don't say we love someone with all our kidneys or liver, or thyroid or spleen. I don't know sort of how we landed on that except we've inherited this sort of Hebrew idea. The heart is the source of life cause it pumps the fluid of life through our bodies. The heart is used in Scripture really most commonly to refer to the mind, the thinking part of us. It does involve emotion which is a part of thought, but it's the source of personhood. It's sort of a symbol of our...of our inner person. As we think in our heart...the Bible says...so are we. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence



for out of it are the issues of life." That's the best Old Testament definition of the heart. The heart is that part of us from which all the issues of life arise. Doing the will of God from the heart, that's from the inner person, the inner being. The heart is the source of all the best and worst of us because the heart is really the inside person. The heart, therefore, is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it...said the prophet Jeremiah. In Genesis God said every imagination of the thoughts of his heart...speaking of man...was only evil continually. So the heart is what thinks and feels. The heart is our person, our inner person.

And so what the Lord is saying in this beatitude is before you ever see Me there's going to have to be a substantial change at the core of your being. It's not all about religion. It's not all about the outside. It's all about the inside. It's all about a total dramatic change of the inner person. The problem is right at the heart.

We understand that because that's what we say. We'll talk about a problem and we'll say...Well the heart of the issue is...and what we mean is the very core, the very essence where everything is contained that defines us. That's why David after his great sin, Psalm 51:10 said, "Create in me a clean...what?...heart, O God." I want a clean heart. And David and Saul certainly illustrate that truth. When God called Saul to be king, 1 Samuel 10:9, the Bible says God gave him another heart. It didn't mean he had a transplant, it meant God changed him in the inside, at the very core of his being. And the beginning of his reign was good but then he disobeyed God by acting as if he could function like a priest, and he couldn't. It was forbidden. And Samuel said, "The Lord says the kingdom shall not continue for the Lord has sought him a man after His own heart."

God did give him another disposition. God did give him another heart, another sort of direction from the inside to be king. But it wasn't a heart after God's own heart. First Samuel 13:14 says God was looking for a man after His own heart. Who was that man? David...David was that man after God's own heart. Psalm 9, Psalm 19, Psalm 26, Psalm 27, Psalm 28 you see it there.

What was David's secret? Psalm 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." You've given me a new heart and it's set on You. Psalm 16, "I've set the Lord always before me, therefore my heart is glad." You see, the Jews were missing this all together. They were all about the outside and nothing about the heart. And you know down deep I think they knew it and all that legalism and all that effort to get there left them short and that's why they had the guilt and that's why the question kept coming up, this nagging fear that I might not get into the kingdom and how can I be sure I'll make it.

Well what about the word "pure," what is pure talking about? It's the word katharos, katharos. I suppose in our culture purity could...could be vague. Sometimes we might think of purity as some kind of puritanical, out-moded, narrow minded, restrictive kind of life. Purity might seem a little bit insipid or pedestrian or flat...sort of dull. You know, like if it was all purity you'd really be a bland

person and who would want to be around you anyway? You'd be so intimidating and so dull and so uninteresting. I mean, wouldn't just a little mixture of wickedness kind of spice up your life?

One poet in America years ago said, "Wouldn't somebody give me some advice on how to be naughty and a little nice?"

The word katharos comes from the Greek verb katharizo which means to cleanse from filthy and impurity. That's what it means. It means, in a moral sense, to be free from the defilement of sin. It is akin to the Latin castus, which is the root of the English chaste. And when we talk about something being cathartic, you've heard that word? People go through a catharsis. A catharsis is a cleansing, look it up in the dictionary. It's from katharizo. Something that is cathartic is a medicine that is an agent used for purifying, for cleansing.

So what we're talking about here is people who have been cleansed. Those who have had their insides cleansed. And that's exactly what salvation does, doesn't it?

So what is God looking for? He's looking for people who have had their heart cleaned, who have the core of their nature regenerated. Who have had that old stony heart taken out, that old sinful, rebellious core taken out and placed in a new heart. They've been washed. Jeremiah 32, God says I'll give them one heart and they'll fear Me forever.

That's what God is after, pure hearts. And you know that, you know that. Jesus preached this. Jesus preached that a man needed to have a single heart, a pure heart in the same sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. He says, verse 21 of Matthew 6, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Where is your heart? You can't serve God and money. Singleness of heart was what He had in mind. And this is all through the New Testament. The apostle Paul talks about integrity. James talks about it, James 4:4, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God, therefore draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts."

That's what salvation is. This is where we come in the Beatitudes really to the pinnacle here, where God comes in mercy and cleans the heart. And it's only then that we will see God, when the heart has been cleaned.

No wonder David said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And that really should be the prayer of every penitent. And then, you know, life goes on that way. As you live your Christian life you continue to cry out, as David did, that God would keep that heart clean and pure.

Let's...let's ask another question. When we talk about purity in the heart what are we really talking about? How many kinds of purity are there?

Well there are a number that we can talk about. First of all, let's call the first one primitive purity, and we'll address this briefly...primitive purity. That...theologians might use that to express that purity which is in God originally. In other words, it is that purity that is essential to the nature of God as light is to the sun, as wet is to water. That is not innate to us. We do not have primitive purity, we have primitive impurity. But primitive purity refers to that purity which is in God originally.

Secondly, there is created purity. And created purity would be that purity which God places in His creature and certainly did in the creation of angels and men. Originally the angels were created as pure and so were Adam and Eve. We participate in neither of those. We who have been born of Adam after the Fall know only impurity in our natural state.

Thirdly, there is what we could call ultimate purity. That is that purity which will belong to the saints in glorification. There is coming a time when we will be glorified and then we will bear an essential kind of purity. We will, in fact, be like Christ. We will be conformed to His own image. We will share His holiness.

But fourthly, there is imputed purity...there is imputed purity. This is purity granted to every believer at the point of salvation. This is what we mean by imputed righteousness or justification where God imputes to us the very righteousness of Christ. We become the righteousness of God in Him. Paul in Philippians 3 says, "I don't have a righteousness of my own, but that which is of God given to me through faith in Christ."

Now to see God does not require primitive purity, or none of us would ever see God for we were born in sin. It does not require created purity because we who are born of Adam after the Fall have no created purity. It does not require ultimate and perfect purity personally that equals that of Christ because that is unattainable to us. But it does require imputed purity by faith in Christ and God granting us that purity.

But then there is another purity and that we could call regenerational purity. That is the purity which is worked in us through the new birth. It shows up in holy longings and holy aspirations and the love of the law of God and the love of worship and the love of Christians and the love of the service of God and the hope of glory. "Blessed are those," blessed meaning happy, content, fulfilled, satisfied, joyful and in a state of spiritual well being and prosperity are those who are pure in heart. We have been given the purity imputed to us in justification. We have been given the purity imparted to us in regeneration. And we await the purity which will become essential to us in glorification.

This is great. In the meantime we work on another kind of purity, we'll throw another one, practical purity, don't we? Cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Corinthians 7:1. We separate ourselves from sin as we endeavor to live out a practical purity.

And so, the pure in heart are addressed. That leads me to a third question. First question, what is the context for these words? Second question, basically, what do they mean? Third question, what is this purity? And fourth question, what is the promise attached to this purity?

Answer: verse 8, "They shall see God"...opsontai, I love that. Continuous reality, all our own, for us, it's reflexive. They themselves perennially and continually shall be seeing God.

Now you've got to grasp this...I mean, I say that to you and it has a certain significance, much less I'm afraid than it would to a Jew. First of all, seeing God was a frightening thing, wasn't it? You know anybody in the Old Testament that saw God and lived? Only one, or two, or three maybe and they didn't see the full glory or they would never have survived. Moses saw the veiled glory. Isaiah saw a portion of it. Ezekiel saw some. But to see God was life threatening and deadly. Even to see a king was quite remarkable. In the Oriental courts of ancient times kings lived in great seclusion for the sake of security and the illusion of deity, or very special character. It was very rare, it was a very rare and distinct privilege to be admitted to the monarch. You might see him somehow passing by but to be admitted to the monarch and to perennially be in his presence and see him face to face was just something that didn't happen. The Queen of Sheba wanted such a privilege and was granted that to see Solomon, but only very special people were ever allowed to be face to face with the king.

And again I think this was directed at the hearts of the people. The question in the hearts was...what are we going to do to be sure we see God? What are we going to be...what do we need to do to be sure we'll see the King in His kingdom? Moses said, "I beg You, show me Your glory." "As the deer pants for the waterbrooks, so pants my soul after Thee, O God, my soul thirsts for God for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" I mean, it was the great longing of the hearts of God's people to see God. Even the disciples said, "Show us the Father." Seeing God was very important, and very remote.

But it really was the heart cry to be in the kingdom and see the King. And God says you will see Me if you've had your heart cleansed. And you know something, when your heart was cleansed, the sight was immediate. We see God, don't we, through the eye of faith. We see God in all His glory through the revelation of Scripture. Some day we'll see the blazing glory of the light of God in eternal splendor. Some day we'll see Jesus face to face in His glorified form. But until that time we see Him with the eye of faith. We see God in history. We see God in circumstances. We see God in creation. We see God in providence. We see God most clearly in revelation in the Scripture. And the verb here is used figuratively, seeing God in the sense of knowing God, of being aware of His presence and power.

When the disciples said to Jesus, "Show us the Father," He answered them by saying, "Have I been so long with you and you still don't know?" You've been seeing the Father. You see, purifying the soul cleanses the vision of the soul so that we see God.

Isn't it amazing each Sunday night when you hear these testimonies of the tremendous transformation that takes place and how all of a sudden God becomes clear and known to people? As in your case as well? What happens is the darkness is turned to light and the blindness is turned to sight. And the purifying of the heart cleanses the vision of the soul. And all of a sudden you see God, you see Him in His creation, you see Him in providence, you see Him in circumstances, you see Him in the Scriptures, you see Him working in the lives of people around you. But some day you will see Him face to face in all His glory. "When I in righteousness at last Thy glorious face shall see, when all the weary night is passed and I awake with Thee to view the glories that abide. Then, then shall I be satisfied." That's what David meant he said I'll be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness. Only the pure in heart know God, see God, fellowship with God now and forever.

Just in closing. What are the signs of a pure heart? What are the signs?

I'll just give them to you, you can think them through yourself. One, integrity and sincerity...integrity and sincerity. One in whose spirit there is no deceit. In other words, there's a real longing for righteousness, a real love for Christ and for God.

Secondly, a hunger for greater purity. If you have a pure heart it is dissatisfied with present sin because it's against the grain of your new nature.

Thirdly, a hatred of sin. Psalm 119:104 the psalmist said, "I hate every false way."

Fourthly, a love for others who know the Lord...a love for other believers. Love out of a pure heart, 1 Timothy says.

And I think just one other thought, being preoccupied with God. Living in awe of God, living a worshiping life, longing for His will to be fulfilled, for His glory to come.

That's it. It's not hard to define the indications of a pure heart...integrity or sincerity, a hunger for greater purity, a hatred of sin, a love for other believers and a preoccupation with God's glory and God's honor. This is what it is to be pure in heart and these are they who see God. And we'll see next time these are the ones who become the peacemakers. Well, let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for a wonderful evening. Thank You for these dear friends who have come to sit and hear Your Word. Work in each heart Your perfect will for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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