

## **The Teachings of Jesus**

### **Blessed Are the Pure in Heart**

#### **Matthew 5:8**

### **Introduction**

Let's begin by reading the blessings once again from Matthew Chapter 5, "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.  
Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.  
Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.  
Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.  
Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God.  
(Matthew 5:1-8NKJV)

Today, our lesson comes from verse 8 – Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. It is relatively easy to change the way we appear on the outside without any real change of heart. The Christian religion, for the most part, is about external appearances, but authentic Christianity is about transforming a person's heart and purifying their life. Some go to great lengths to try and change their behavior and outwardly seem to become genuinely changed people. But outward appearances are simply a show of the human will. Only God knows a person's true motives. And the truth is no amount of human effort can change, reform, or improve our hearts to become like God's.

"The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?  
(Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV)

Genesis 6:5 says, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually."  
(Genesis 6:5 NKJV)

Some people are pretty successful at demonstrating an outward spiritual and pious attitude. It's possible to change your habits and thought patterns to such an extent that not only do other people believe that you've changed, but you start to believe it yourself. The bookstores are full of self-help books that claim to help people change. Every religion in the world is about people changing themselves. But the reality is that no amount of self-help can change the human heart.

What we're talking about today is a heart transplant! The only way the human heart can change is for God to give us a new one! In Ezekiel 11, God said: " Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My

statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11:19-20 NKJV)

## **I. The Pure in Heart**

The first thing we learn from this beatitude is that Jesus is concerned with our hearts. It is not enough to clean up your act on the outside. Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also." (Matthew 23:25-26 NKJV)

The goal of Heaven is to change the hearts of sinners. The heart describes the person you are in the secrecy of your thoughts and feelings when no one knows but God. What you are at the core may be invisible to others but not to God! Everything about you is visible to God. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, "For man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Matthew 15:18-19 NKJV)

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:33-34 NKJV)

The heart is pretty important to God. Who we are in the deep, private recesses of our lives is what he cares about most. Jesus did not come into the world because we have some bad habits we need to break. He came into the world because we have such sinful and evil hearts that, without His help, we would be eternally lost.

Let's take a look at what Jesus meant when he used the phrase 'pure in heart.' He's not talking about the physical organ that pumps blood through your body. Biblical scholars refer to the heart as the source of our emotions and affections. The Hebrew Torah describes the heart in Deuteronomy 6 as the great commandment, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:4-6 NKJV)

- The soul was understood to be the spiritual part of a person.
- The mind was considered to be the mental part of a person.
- The strength was taken to be the physical part of a person.

The commandment was to love God with your whole being – spiritually, mentally, and physically. The New Testament Greek used these same concepts but described them a bit differently. To the Greek:

- The soul was the "psyche," which meant 'breath of life'. They saw the soul as what animated or gave life and movement to the body. It was the source of the mind, will, and emotions.
- The spirit or "pneuma" meant 'breath of God.' The spirit is what connects us spiritually to God.
- The body was the physical flesh.

These terms were often used interchangeably. Even the Greek and Hebrew concepts are mingled at times. But we still have an idea of what Jesus taught. He taught that every person has a will that can decide between doing what honors God in the spiritual realm or what exalts man in the physical realm. According to Jesus, a person's decisions and choices will ultimately determine their eternal future.

Information that comes through the emotional or rational parts of the mind is accepted or rejected by a decision of our will. Your decisions and choices now will decide your eternal destiny. Sadly, many people are inconsistent in making up their minds and following through on decisions.

How many times have you made a decision completely convinced that it was the best one based on the best information, only to cancel it a little later in favor of something more convenient? No wonder fewer than five percent of people claiming to give their lives to Christ follow through on their commitment. Their emotions may be touched or their minds challenged, but their hearts have not changed.

The pure in heart come to God through genuine repentance. Their will is to do what God wills. Jesus sets the example for us. He said things like, "I am come to do the will of Him that sent me. My meat is to do the will of my Father. Not my will, but thine be done."

There is no hesitation, double-mindedness, instability, or deception about the person who is committed in will to the inner motivation of their life. For the believer, that inner motivation comes from the life in Christ through the breath of the Holy Spirit. The pure in heart listen to James, who writes, " Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded." (James 4:8 NKJV)

When we choose to let the breath of God breathe upon us, His Spirit begins to impart the life of Christ within us. James is not talking about physical distance; he's talking about agreeing with Christ and listening to the Holy Spirit. Only Christ can purify your heart and cause you to do the right things for the right reasons. David prays the prayer of the pure in heart in Psalm 51 when he cries out, "Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me."

This person – Christ promises will see God!

## II. Seeing God

To see God means to be allowed into his presence. After the plague of darkness in Egypt, Pharaoh exploded on Moses with these words, "Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face, you shall die!" So Moses said, "You have spoken well. I will never see your face again." (Exodus 10:28-29 NKJV)

When a king says, "You will never see my face again," he means, "I will never grant you admission into my presence again." Seeing God means first being admitted to his presence. Seeing God also means being awestruck by his glory by a direct experience of his holiness. After God confronted Job in the whirlwind, Job said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes."

(Job 42:5-6 NKJV)

Most of our spiritual sight in this life comes to us through the Word of God or the work of God in providence. We "see" images and reflections of his glory. We hear echoes and sounds of his voice. But a day is coming when God himself will dwell among us. His glory will no longer be inferred by lightning and mountains and roaring seas and constellations of stars. Instead, our experience of God will be direct. His glory will be the very light in which we move (Revelation 21:23).

Seeing God means being admitted into his presence and awestruck by a direct experience of his glory. Seeing God also means being comforted by his grace. Again and again, the psalmist cries out to God not to hide His face from them. Seeing the face of God is a glorious and majestic experience. When God shows his face, we are comforted. If he turns his face away, we are dismayed.

The pure in heart are able to see God at work in their own lives. There is a definite shift in the direction of our priorities. God's interests become our interests. Our former worldly lifestyle loses its fascination, and we gain a sensitivity to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We acquire an acute sense of spiritual purpose.

It is the pure in heart who see the work of Christ in others. The pure in heart see the potential Christ sees in others. The pure in heart see Jesus as much more than a historical figure, creed, doctrine, or religious experience. The pure in heart know Jesus as their savior, their living Lord, and their personal friend. The Holy Spirit is their Comforter, Counselor, and constant Companion.

The pure in heart see God in all the Earth. They see as David did in Psalm 24, "The earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein." (Psalms 24:1 NKJV) Or in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalms 19:1 NKJV)

The pure in heart also see God in His spoken and written word. Jesus said in John 6, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63 NKJV)

The pure in heart see Jesus as the living word of God, the spiritual manna from heaven. – The Bread of Life! When Jesus promises the reward of "seeing God," it begins a whole new perspective and view of life. This view expands beyond the material world to the eternal world.

It is a view that gives us an eternal sense of blessing.

### **III. The Blessing**

The Blessing is the joy the soul possesses. The Blessing is not just being good or doing good. It is being connected to the supreme goodness of God. Psalm 144 says, "Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!" (Psalms 144:15 NKJV) Psalm 116:7 says, "God is the soul's rest."

When your soul meets God, you are truly blessed. The blessing of God makes you a better person. There's always an abundance of God's blessings. God's blessings quench the thirst of the soul. 'Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures' (Psalm 36: 8); not drops but rivers! The soul bathes itself in the water of life. Plenty without variety becomes boring. God's blessing assures variety. But in God, there is 'a fullness' that satisfies the soul. (Colossians 1:19).

God is 'the good in all good things.' He is a shield, a portion, a fountain, a rock of strength, and a horn of salvation. In God, there is a blessing and goodness that delights the soul even when enduring a trial. The joy of God's blessing is perfect. It has eternity stamped upon it. It is fixed. It needs no changes or alterations. When God says to His children, 'I have blessed them, how many of you know we are blessed!

'Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.'

### **Conclusion**

Who are the pure in heart?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "Only those who have surrendered their hearts completely to Jesus that he may reign in them alone." (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer The Cost of Discipleship*)

In his book 'Sermon on the Mount' Clarence Jordan wrote, "...when [people] attempt to live a double life spiritually, that is, to appear pure on the outside but are not pure in the heart, they are anything but blessed. Their conflicting loyalties make them wretched, confused, and tense. And having to keep their eyes on two masters at once makes them cross-eyed, and their vision is so blurred that neither image is clear.

Jim Forest wrote in 'The Ladder of the Beatitudes,' "Opposing purity of heart is lust of any kind—for wealth, for recognition, for vengeance, for sexual access to others—whether indulged through action or imagination.

A pure heart loves God with the whole heart - your soul, mind, and strength. Our love is not divided and has no rival. The kind of person you are affects the kind of world that you see. And conversely, what you see affects what you are. (*Simon Tugwell, The Beatitudes*)

The pure in heart are blessed because they see God. Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."