

# **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: (Read)  
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 a real change of heart. Religion for the most part is about external appearances but true Christianity is about transforming a person's heart and purifying their life. In fact, people will go to great lengths to try and change their behavior and even seem to become genuinely changed people. But then, out of the blue, they revert to their old ways -sometimes just for a moment, but it's enough to reveal a heart that is really unchanged. All the outward appearances are simply a show of the human will.

Only God knows your true motives. And the truth is - the cost of a pure heart is too high a price for many to pay. The human heart cannot be changed, reformed, or improved to become like God's heart. The human heart is utterly corrupt and any attempt at "renovating" it is a waste of time. "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (*Jeremiah 17:9*). "...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*).

Most people are able to be quite successful at cultivating an outward spiritual and pious attitude. We can even change our habits and thought patterns to such an extent that not only do other people believe that we have changed – we can start to believe it ourselves.

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. The only way our human heart can change is for God to give us a new one! So what we're really talking about today is a heart transplant! The old one has to be removed and a new heart must take its place, because the old one cannot be reformed, converted or improved. So real change can only happen when the old heart is replaced with a brand new one.

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*)

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

The first thing we learn from this beatitude is that Jesus is concerned with our heart. 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 of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean." (Matthew 23:25-26) The goal of Jesus Christ is not to reform the manners of society, but to change the hearts of sinners.

The heart is who you are. It's 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 it's not to God! Everything about you is visible to God. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). From the heart flow all the issues of life. What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart . . . For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man. (Matthew 15:18-19) Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit . . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:33-34) So the heart is utterly crucial to Jesus.

What we are in the deep, private recesses of our lives is what he cares about most. Jesus did not come into the world simply because we have some bad habits that need to be broken. He came into the world because we have such dirty and evil hearts that without His help we would be eternally lost. So what did Jesus really mean when he used the phrase 'pure in heart'? He's not talking about the physical organ that pumps blood through your body. Some scholars refer to the heart as the source of our emotions and affections.

The Hebrew Torah describes the heart in the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." – and then defines what it means by heart – "thy soul, thy mind and thy strength."

- 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.

So the commandment was to love God with your whole being – spiritually, mentally and physically.

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 believed the soul was 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.

While all of these terms were often used interchangeably and even the Greek and Hebrew concepts are mingled throughout the New Testament, we can still have an idea of what Jesus taught. In essence what Jesus teaches is that every person has a will that can decide between doing what honors God in the spiritual realm or doing what exalts man in the physical realm.

According to Jesus, it is a person own decision and choice that will ultimately determine where they will go and what they will do. And any information that comes from our emotional or rational parts of the mind will be considered and accepted or rejected by the decision of our will based upon an inner motivation.

You will decide your own eternal destiny. Unfortunately, most of us are very inconsistent in making up our minds and actually following through on our decisions. While we have made gods of education and knowledge, human reasoning is as best truly limited. How many times have you made a decision completely convinced that it was the best one based on the best information you have only to cancel it a little later in favor of something more convenient?

No wonder fewer than five percent of people who claim to give their lives to Christ actually follow-through on their commitment. Their emotions may be touched or their mind challenged but their heart has not changed. Their inner motivation remains the same.

The pure in heart come to God through genuine repentance. It becomes their will to do what God wills. Jesus sets the example for us. He said it over and over, “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, no doublmindedness, no unstableness or deception about the person who is committed in will to the inner motivation of their life.

And for the believer, that inner motivation comes from the life in Christ through the breath of the Holy Spirit. The pure in heart have listened to James who writes, “Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts you double-minded.” (James 4:8) When we choose to let the breath of God breathe upon us His Spirit begins to breathe the life of Christ within us. Being near or far has nothing to do with physical distance; it is a matter of being in agreement with Christ and coming into harmony with the

Holy Spirit. Only Christ can purify the 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." The cleansing and purifying of your life is more than a soft, sentimental wish. It is a complete transformation of your desires and inner motivation. It is giving up a life fixed upon self-centered desires to embrace a life dedicating to living the Christ life.

This person – Christ promises will see God!

## **II. Seeing God**

To see God means to be allowed into to his presence. After the plague of darkness on Egypt, Pharaoh exploded to Moses with these words, "Get away from me; take heed to yourself; never see my face again; for in the day you see my face you shall die." Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again." (Exodus 10:28-29) When a king says, "You will never see my face again," he means, "I will never grant you admission again into my presence again." When you call the doctor and say, "Can I see Doctor today?" We don't mean, Can I get a look at him. Or, Can I see a picture of him? We mean, Can I have an appointment with him? So the first thing seeing God means is 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 had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Virtually all 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 reverberations of his voice. But there will come a day when God himself will dwell among us. His glory will no longer be inferred from lightning and mountains and roaring seas and constellations of stars. Instead our experience of him will be direct. His glory will be the very light in which we move (Revelation 21:23) and the beauty of his holiness will be tasted directly like honey on the tongue.

So seeing God means not only being admitted to his presence, but also being awestruck by a direct experience of his glory. Seeing God also means being comforted by his grace. Again and again the psalmists cry out to God that he not hide his face from them. For example in Psalm 27 (verses 7-9) David says, Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! . . . Hide not thy face from me. "Hide not thy face from me," is the same as saying, "Be gracious to me!" This means that seeing the face of God is considered to be a sweet and comforting experience. If God shows his face, we are helped. If he turns his face away, we are dismayed.

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

The pure in heart also see Christ as work in others. We begin to see the potential Christ sees in them. And the pure in heart see Jesus as much more than a historical figure or creed or doctrine or religious experience. The pure in heart see Jesus as their savior, and living Lord, and personal friend. They also see the Holy Spirit as Comforter and Counselor and constant Companion. The pure in heart see God in all the Earth. They see as David did, "The earth is the lords and the fullness thereof, the world and all they that dwell therein...The heavens declare the glory of God and the earth shows forth his handiwork." And the pure in heart see God in His word – both spoken and written. Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The pure in heart see Jesus as the living word of God, the spiritual manna from heaven. – The Bread of Life!

So when Jesus promises the reward of "seeing God" it is the beginning of a whole new perspective and view of life. It is a view that is expanded beyond the material world to the eternal world.

Which gives us an eternal sense of blessing.

### **III. The Blessing**

In true blessedness there is a joy in what the soul possesses. It is not just being good or doing good that makes a person blessed. It must be the supreme good, and that is God. 'Happy is that people whose God is the Lord' (Psalm 144: 15). God is the soul's rest (Psalm 116: 7). When your soul meets God that's when you are truly blessed! The blessing of God makes you a better person. Better than you could ever be even with your very best efforts. The blessing God is like the icing on the cake. There is a delicious and sweet taste and your soul delights in the blessing of God. Augustine wrote, 'In God the soul is delighted with such sweetness as even transports it.' The love of God is a honeycomb which drops such infinite sweetness and satisfaction into the soul as is 'unspeakable and full of glory.' (1 Peter 1:8). The blessing of God is always in abundance. It quenches 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.

True blessedness assures variety. Plenty without variety becomes boring. 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 sun, a shield, a portion, a fountain, a rock of strength, a horn of salvation. In God there is a blessing and goodness that delights the soul even in the midst of trial.

The joy in God's blessing is perfect. There are no defects to destroy or disillusion it. The blessing of God has eternity stamped on it. It is fixed. It needs no changes or alterations. God says of every child of his, 'I have blessed him and he shall be blessed.'

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

## **Conclusion**

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

Who are the pure in heart? Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Only those who have surrendered their hearts completely to Jesus that he may reign in them alone. Only those whose hearts are undefiled by their own evil—and by their own virtues too." (*Dietrich Bonhoeffer The Cost of Discipleship*)

Clarence Jordan wrote in his book 'Sermon on the Mount', "...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, 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. It has no rival.

There is an interaction between seeing and being. 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*)

What do we need to search for when God is right before our very eyes? What would satisfy a person who will not be satisfied with God? The pure in heart are blessed because they see God.

To see God in terms of the Beatitude's promise is to recognize God and be able to stand before him, knowing you have been accepted into his presence.

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