

# Blessed are the Pure in Heart

January 30, 2013

Scripture:  
[Matthew 5:8](#)

Series: [Momentum](#),  
[Volume 2 \(3/8\)](#)

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*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. **Matthew 5:8***

I have prepared the message today with a sense of awe that I hope you will feel as we immerse ourselves in these words of Jesus together.

God speaks to us today from his Word about seeing him: “They shall see God!” You will see him face-to-face. You will stand before him. You will behold the eternal living God before whom angels veil their faces.

God speaks to us today about being pure in heart: A heart that thinks what is right, loves what is good, and desires what is best.

## **Purity of heart**

When I read this sixth beatitude, my first reaction is to say, “This looks impossible.” I would be very surprised if there is a single person in the congregation who would say, “That’s me!”

When Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” blessed are those who know that they don’t have what it takes before God, it’s not very hard to say, “That’s me.” And when Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn,” it’s easy for us to think of our sins and shortcomings and say, “That’s me.”

But when Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart,” I don’t find myself saying “That’s me” at all, and I don’t expect you do either.

## **Seeing God**

Then Jesus ties “Blessed are the pure in heart,” to a second thing that seems equally impossible: “for they shall see God!”

In the Old Testament, Moses wanted to see the glory of God, so God told him to hide in a rock. God’s presence would pass by, but Moses would only be allowed to see the after burn of God’s glory.

God said, “You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). Yet here Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

The apparent impossibility of these two things: Seeing God and purity of heart, show us how great a savior Jesus Christ is. Christ does not give us the Beatitudes to mock us. He comes as the great Redeemer, the Rescuer, the Savior, holding this wonderful promise in his hands:

In Christ, a sinner with all the baggage that sinful habits leave in your thoughts, your feelings and your desires, can become pure in heart!

In Christ, a sinner who is forgiven, washed, cleansed and renewed should see God and, instead of shrinking back into an everlasting hell, should move forward into the embrace of everlasting love!

This is what Christ is able to do for sinners. This is what Christ is able to do for you: He can purify your heart. He can shine into your heart “to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

When I read this Beatitude, my first thought is, “That looks impossible,” and my second thought is, “If I could lay hold of all that Christ promises here and make it my own, I would be greatly blessed.”

Again, we have two weekends to reflect on and seek to immerse ourselves in all that Christ says to us here. Following our usual pattern, we will focus today on grasping what Christ says, and then look next week at how we can pursue this calling, so that in this life and in the life to come, we might be someone who truly sees God.

## **What purity of heart is not**

Purity of heart does **not** mean that you never have a bad thought. The apostle John says to believers, “If we say we are without sin we deceive ourselves...” (1 John 1:8).

Christians in this life are always sinners in the process of recovery. So if purity of heart meant that you never have a bad thought, it would be beyond the range of Christian experience...

Purity of heart is not sinlessness of life.

## *Purity in the Bible*

The Bible speaks about purity or holiness in different ways, and it is important for our understanding of the Christian life to distinguish between them.

## **There is the purity or holiness that belongs to God alone**

In the presence of God, the holy angels, who have *never* sinned, cover their faces and cry out “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3).

It isn't enough, in the immediate presence of the Almighty, for the angels to say "God is holy." Why do they say it three times? The angels are holy, but God is incomparable in his purity. His holiness is the source of theirs.

Like the angels, we will reflect the holiness of God forever, as the moon reflects the light of the sun. But the light of holiness is God's alone, and any holiness in you or I comes from him.

## **There is a purity or holiness that will be ours in heaven**

*When he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2*

In the presence of Jesus, you will have a purity that is like pure gold, a holiness that is unmixed. There will not be a trace of sin in you, on you or around you.

## **There is a purity or holiness that God calls us to pursue now**

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. **Matthew 5:8**

Thomas Watson describes this as "Purity in a gospel sense" The Christian's purity in this life is like gold mixed with dross...

**This mixture, God calls purity in a gospel sense, as a face may be said to be fair which has some freckles in it.**

There is a real purity in the heart of a believer, but it is mixed. It is real gold, but it is mixed with dross. Where there is a longing for purity and a loathing of our impurity, there is purity of heart.

## **What is Purity of Heart?**

Purity of heart does not mean sinlessness of life. What does it mean? Two things: 1. A heart that is undivided, 2. A heart that is clean.

## **The blessing of an undivided heart**

*"Blessed are the pure in heart..." Matthew 5:8*

Blessed is the man or woman whose heart is undivided. Our Lord returns to this theme later on in the Sermon on the Mount:

*"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Matthew 6:22 KJV*

The ESV says, “If your eye be healthy...” The NIV says, “If your eye is good.” The sense of the word has to do with wholeness, but the word “single” is really helpful. It has the idea of going after one thing.

The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, is often quoted on this. He wrote a book on purity called...

**“Purity of heart is to will one thing”** Soren Kierkegaard

This is very helpful, and it tells us that the opposite of a pure heart is a divided heart. Remember Elijah standing on Mount Carmel, challenging the people: “How long will you go on limping between two opinions?”

In other words: How long will you go on trying to embrace Christ and the world at the same time? How long will you continue toying with the same sins: Never giving yourself to them wholly, but never giving yourself to Christ wholly either? Purity of heart is to will one thing...

*Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* **James 4:8**

In the book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan has a character called, “Mr. Facing Both Ways.” We know immediately what that is. Paul gives us a commentary on purity of heart:

*One thing I do: Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* **Philippians 3:13-14**

Philippians 3 is an exposition on purity of heart: Purity of heart is not perfection: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect...”

Purity of heart is to will one thing: “One thing I do... I press on to take hold of the high calling for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

When Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart,” he is saying, “Blessed is the person whose heart is undivided.”

There’s a great prayer for purity in the book of Psalms: “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name” (Psalms 86:11).

Here’s this heart and it is all over the place, and I’m asking you to make it one, unite my heart, to make me a person who pursues one thing. That’s the blessing of purity.

## **The blessing of a clean heart**

In the Bible's terms, when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith forms the bond of a living union in which Christ becomes yours and you become his. You are "in Christ" and Christ is in you.

### **3 Gifts that Become Yours through Faith in Christ**

#### **Justification (legal):**

*In Christ, God drops all charges against you*

Justification means that God drops all charges against you. The reason, Christian, that you will enter heaven, is *not* that you are without sin, because none of us ever is. The reason that Christians enter heaven is that God does not charge their sins against them. Why?

God charges our sins to the account of Jesus, in whom these sins were judged, punished, and atoned for through his sacrifice as our sin bearer on the cross: "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

In Christ your debts have been paid in full, so that they will not and cannot be charged to you on the last day. That is the spectacular truth of justification: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Christians enter heaven on the basis of mercy, but also on the basis of justice! A just God cannot demand payment for sins that have been atoned for! A just God will not call in a debt that has already been paid.

John says "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins..." (1 John 1:9). Why does John bring in the word "just," because he is thinking about the atonement. The hymn writer wrote beautifully:

**Payment God cannot twice demand,**

**First from my wounded Savior's hand,**

**and then again from mine.**

Justification is a marvelous legal gift—our confidence before God in life, death and on entering into heaven: My salvation rests on the character of God who is just, and it is sealed by the blood of Christ, my Savior!

#### **Forgiveness (relational):**

*In Christ, God reconciles you to himself*

When God justifies, he also forgives, and reconciles us to himself in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). He never does one without the other. This is a spectacular blessing. Think about it... You were an enemy of God; now he makes you his friend!

**Your blood has washed away my sins, Jesus, thank you!**  
**The Father's wrath completely satisfied, Jesus, thank you!**  
**Once your enemy, now seated at your table, Jesus, thank you!**

We looked at this marvelous subject of forgiveness in the last Beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful," and we saw that God forgives when repentance begins. Why? Forgiveness is relational—it is both given and received.

Love can be one sided. You can love a person who does not love you back. When Jesus says, "Love your enemies," it is a one-sided thing.

Your enemies certainly don't love you!

Love can be one directional, but forgiveness is always relational. Two parties are involved. One forgives; the other is forgiven, and out of this a relationship is restored.

This is the grace of God to you in Jesus Christ: He forgives all your sins.

He puts them out of mind, out of sight. To all who are in Christ, he says, "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17).

The prophet Micah puts it this way: "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). And as an old preacher once said about this: "God casts our sins into the depth of the sea, and he puts up a sign that says, 'No Fishing!'"

### **iii. Cleansing (personal):**

*In Christ, God washes your heart and your life*

Right now, my car is filthy and needs to be washed. I'll get to the carwash on Monday, but by next weekend, the same car will need washing again.

The car picks up dirt from the road, and it needs to be washed on a regular basis. I have never seen a car of which this is not true. Even if your car is a super expensive one, it still needs to be washed.

It's the same with clothes. You can buy clothes that don't need to be ironed. But have you ever seen clothes that don't need to be washed? No! Every week a new pile of dirty clothes are ready to be thrown in the wash.

Every morning I get in the shower. Why do I do that? I haven't been wading through a swamp or rolling in the mud. I've just been asleep for the night, but when I wake up, I'm aware of my need to be washed.

Justification happens once. It is a legal standing before God. Forgiveness or reconciliation with God happens once. It does not need to be repeated. What happens when I sin? In Christ, I am a friend of God, and I do not become his enemy every time I sin.

But cleansing is different. I need this on a continuing basis. However much I progress in the Christian life, I never get beyond the need of it.

Now, I want to remind you of a well-known verse of the Bible that brings together the three priceless gifts of justification, forgiveness and cleansing:

*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*

In Christ, God justifies. In Christ, he forgives. In Christ, he cleanses.

I want us to grasp the power of Christ to cleanse. He is faithful to cleanse. You can *trust* him to cleanse. He has the ability to purify your heart and your life. Faith in Christ is confidence in his ability to justify, forgive and cleanse through the power of his shed blood. That's what faith is.

Christ is able to cancel all the charges that would otherwise condemn us to an eternal hell. He is able, as the God-man to reconcile us to the Father. He is able to cleanse the heart that's become captive to greed and lust and pride and any other sin of habit or compulsion that you may care to name.

I've met many people over the years who would say that they are Christians. They believe in a Christ who forgives, but they do not believe in a Christ who is able to wash and to cleanse.

They say "I have baggage. I have seen things I should not have seen. I've done things I should not have done, creating habits and appetites in my soul. My thinking, feeling and desiring are all messed up."

There are patterns of twisted thinking, and there are patterns of compulsive behavior. They would tell you, "These things are *in* me, and I cannot imagine them ever being changed."

Here's my challenge to you: I want you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You will say, "Oh, I do!" And I will say to you, "No you do not."

As long as you persist in believing nothing can be done about the baggage in your mind and heart, you do not yet believe in the Christ of the Bible.

You may say that you believe in a Jesus who forgives, but you do not yet know the Christ of the Bible, the Son of God, who washes, cleanses, and purifies messed up human minds and hearts.

### ***Christ offers more than forgiveness!***

You shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins!

He came to deal with habits, compulsions, engrained patterns of thought and behavior.

Christ came not only to justify but also to sanctify a people for himself. He came, not only to forgive your sins, but to make you holy, because without holiness no one will see the Lord. .

The Bible says that God saves us through the “washing of regeneration” “He saved us... according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5).

Christ is able to wash your mind. He is able to regenerate your heart. That means he is able to give you new inclinations, a new disposition, a new interest, new affections, new energy, new life!

When Christ washes your heart, here’s what you will begin to experience over time—you will begin to hate what you used to love and love what you used to hate. You never had a prayer life, an interest in reading the Bible. You came to worship, but it was all outside of you.

## ***A Stepping Stone to Faith***

I want to speak especially to the person who feels that the baggage they carry is so great, the mind and the heart has become so twisted, that you cannot really imagine ever being whole again.

Trusting Christ to cleanse you seems further way than you are able to stretch right now. You may believe that he could forgive you, but deep in your heart you can’t ever see yourself being different. The desires of your heart are all messed up and you can’t imagine your own heart being clean.

I want to give you a stepping stone to faith. Actually, what I am going to describe is where faith begins. The beginning of faith is to say: “If I was in Christ, and he was in me, I believe he could make this heart clean.” I’m inviting you to take your stand there today.

If you feel that you cannot yet trust Christ to cleanse you, I invite you to take this first step today. Believe that he *could* make your heart clean.



It would be a miracle. But he changed the hearts of other people. God changed the apostle Paul's blasphemous and murderous heart.

Believe this: If the power by which Jesus was raised from the dead were to work in you, your heart could be made clean. Settle that in your mind. Write it down: "My heart could be made clean. I believe that *if* I was in Christ, and he was in me, *he* could make me clean."

Then write down some Scriptures that give you reason for this confidence.

Titus 3:5 should be one of them: God saves by washing of regeneration.

If that should happen to me, I would be clean.

Matthew 1:21 would be another: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

1 John 1:9 will be another: "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I believe that if *he* cleansed me, I would be clean.

Settle this conviction, this conclusion, in your mind and in your heart, and then when it is settled that you believe he could do it, take the next step and ask him to do it *for you*.

*Lord Jesus, I have come to believe that if I was in you and you were in me, you could wash this heart and make me clean. Now come to this twisted mind, this divided heart, and do your redeeming work in me. Wash me, cleanse me, and purify my heart—through Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. Amen.*

[1] A. W. Pink, *"The Beatitudes & the Lord's Prayer,"* p. 44, Baker, 1995

[2] Thomas Watson, from the sermon *"Heart Purity,"* 1660, see also: <http://www.gracegems.org/Watson/beatitudes7.htm>

[3] John Bunyan, *"Pilgrim's Progress,"* p. 142, Crossway, 2009

[4] Augustus Topolady, from the hymn: *"From Whence This Fear and Unbelief,"* 1776

[5] Pat Sczebel, *"Jesus, Thank You,"* Sovereign Grace Music, 2003

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