

The Pure In Heart

Matthew 5:8

Introduction – Jesus is concerned with the heart, and this is the way it has always been. No one can be in the presence of the Lord whose heart is not pure (Psalm 24:4-5). Once again we see that this Beatitude comes from the teachings of the Old Testament, and once again we should notice the flow of the Beatitudes, for it is only those who are truly poor in spirit who can hope to have a pure heart. In fact, it is only those who realize that they have an impure heart who can say that their heart is pure.

The Heart of the Matter – This is not a contrast between ‘heart and head’, or ‘emotions and doctrine’ so common in our popular debates today. The heart here refers to the center of the personality, the conscience, the affections, the intellect, the mind, will, and emotions. This is a contrast between the inward and outward (Matt 23:25-26). Jesus will illustrate this in his comments on adultery (Matt 5:27-28).

The Place of All Troubles – Our problem is not lack of education, the environment, or anything else outside of ourselves. The problem with the world is with our hearts (Matt 15:1-20). How much we love outward religious flattery.

True Purity – What are the signs of an impure or pure heart?

An Impure Heart – sees no need for atonement, no need for regeneration, because it does not see its impurity (Rev 3:17).

A Pure Heart – involves understanding the gospel and having life from an incorruptible seed (1 Pet 1:16-25). Purity means undiluted, unpolluted, and single-mindedness (James 4:8), so there is no hypocrisy, and no second master. One who has a pure heart has a clean conscience (2 Tim 1:3). These are the qualities of those who are the true Israel, as God teaches, “Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart”. Psalm 73:1.

Sinless? – There has always been a temptation to take these versus and believe that we can be sinless, but then we make God a liar (1 John 1:8). But we must avoid the other ditch, thinking we don’t really need a new heart. But Jeremiah 17:9 says “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?” Only a pure heart understands how impure it really is. This should not lead to confusion and despondency, but to utter dependency and total devotion (Phil 3:9-14).

They Will See God – There is much here to consider. Chrysostom said that we would see God, but only ‘as much as a man is able’.

Moses Saw God – We are promised a vision, but we must remember the gravity of such a promise. Read and ponder Exodus 33:12-23.

Invisible – We are told in Col 1:15 that Christ is the image ‘of the invisible God’, and in Paul’s benediction at 1 Tim 1:17 we hear the same – “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible...” On the one hand we are told that we will never see God (1 Tim 6:16 – Thomas Watson writes “This wine is too strong for our weak heads”). On the other hand we are taught that Moses saw “Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). With eyes of faith we can see as Christ taught in John 14:9 “He who has seen Me has seen the Father”

In His Presence – To see Him is to be in His presence, like ‘seeing the doctor’. There will come a day when His glory will be the direct Light in our midst (Rev 21:23). To the extent that we see Him today, we are comforted with His grace (Psalm 27:7-9), and we are purified with this hope (1 John 3:1-3). And then the day will come, when with the vision, will come these wonderful Words “Enter into the joy of Your Lord”.

Conclusion – Of course ultimately, we will see God, in whatever sense a finite man can see the infinite and invisible, when we die. That is, if we are in Christ. The Shorter catechism teaches that ‘the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory’. This leads us to several applications:

Get into Christ – Have you been crucified with Christ? (Gal 2:20, Ex 33:19-23). You must be hid in the Rock when His glory passes by. No ceremony purifies, no outward resolutions purify, the work must be done by God’s Spirit.

Look Often to Christ – If you are dressed in His righteousness, you are invited and required to look with eyes of faith to Him all the days of your life (Ps 25:15).

Encouragement in Suffering – Are you in difficult trials? Remember Who you will see in a moment (Job 19:25-26). One martyr is recorded as saying to another as they went to be burned, “One half hour in glory we will forget our pain”.

Cultivate Heart Purity – It is obtained from the Word (John 15:3, 17:17, Ps 119:140), through prayer (Ps 51:10), and always by faith (Acts 15:9).