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The next Beatitude in our study is “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matt. 5:8). In the last lesson, we talked about the quality of mercy, which people experience and see externally. Purity of heart is internal.

Positionally, we are pure as believers because we are in Christ. This is *justification* – God declares us to be righteous. We “*are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:24).

But practical purity of heart is another matter. The Bible often uses the word heart to encompass our mind, our emotions, and our will. It is our inner self – the center of our personality. “*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7).

God is pleased when we diligently desire and pursue purity in our hearts. This includes purity of mind (our thoughts), purity regarding our emotions (our feelings), and purity in our wills (our decisions).

For example, sometimes the Bible uses the heart to indicate the intellect. “*The Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and the intent of the heart.*” Other times the heart refers to the emotions. “*Let not your heart be troubled...*” (John 14:1). Still other times the heart is used to describe the will. “*Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself,*” (Daniel 1:8.)

All together, the heart refers to our inner self, including its many functions. It serves as the “master control” of our life. We are to take heed and diligently guard it. “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life*” (Proverbs 4:23.)

The Greek word used in Matt. 5:8 (*katharos*) refers to integrity. It has been said that our integrity is revealed when no one is watching. (Of course, the Lord is always watching!) The word is also related to the Latin *castus*, which gives us our English word *chaste* (a word largely out of favor in today’s world).

All of us must decide what those things are that bring us our greatest delight and joy. Some people find their happiness in what they have, and they live for possessions. Some believe their happiness lies in what they do, and they live for experiences. But as we examine our hearts, we can find joy and contentment in something much more, something that will not pass away... what we really are. This should motivate us to pursue a pure heart and a life of godly character.

We experience salvation in our hearts. “*If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*” (Romans 10:9). It is not enough to simply honor God with what we say. Christ said of the Pharisees, “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me*” (Matt. 15:8). People can fool other people, but there is no fooling God as to whether we really believe Him and have saving faith or not - “*for man sees the outward appearance, but God sees the heart*” (1Samuel 16:7).

In our natural state, our heart is the source of our trouble. “*The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9). Without God, the depravity of man knows no boundaries. In the days of Noah, “*the Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time*” (Genesis 6:5). Christ said (in Matt. 15:18-19), “*for what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person, for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*”

Our first step toward seeing God is admitting that we have a sinful heart, and that we cannot see Him unless our hearts are changed. God can and will change our hearts if we will allow Him to do so. “*I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord*” (Jeremiah 24:7). “*I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (Hebrews 10:16-17).

People are not changed from the outside in. They must be changed from the inside out. Peter described this as being “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2Peter 1:4). Throughout this study, we have compared Israel’s first two kings, Saul and David. “*God changed Saul’s heart*” (1Samuel 10:9) when He first called Saul to be king, but Saul continually disobeyed God. He was not a partaker of God’s nature.

Because of Saul’s lack of a pure heart for God, he lost his kingdom. As his reign was announced to end, Samuel told him “*but now your kingdom will not endure, the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart*” (1Samuel 13:14).

David was given one of the greatest compliments in Scripture, being ‘a man after God’s own heart’. 2Chronicles 16:9 says “*For the eyes of the Lord are looking to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*” May we endeavor to be such men and women.

Matthew 5

The Sermon on the Mount

5 Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

The Beatitudes

2 And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you on My account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Memory Verse for the Week

*“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;
who can know it?”
(Jeremiah 17:9)*