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Pure Hearts in the Capitol (The Sermon on the Mount) Matthew 5:1-12

We are all concerned about the health of our hearts. We try to watch what we eat and exercise. We find ways to deal with the stress of the high-pressure atmosphere in the statehouse. Some of us regularly visit doctors, monitor our blood pressure, and take medications to keep our hearts healthy.

Jesus tells us that one who would be right with God must have a healthy heart – a pure heart. Of course, He is speaking in spiritual terms. We should be more concerned with our spiritual health than our physical health. That is why it is so important to consider what Jesus means when He calls on us to be “Pure in Heart”.

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

Matthew 5:8

This beatitude is considered by many to be one of the most profound statements found anywhere in Scripture. One pastor describes it as “*One of those realities that seem like bottomless pits, wells whose depths are immeasurable, truths the breadths of which are impossible to encompass*”. In his classic work on the Sermon on the Mount, Martin Lloyd-Jones considers it “*What is undoubtedly one of the greatest utterances to be found anywhere in the whole realm of Holy Scripture... One can only approach with a sense of awe and complete inadequacy*” He goes on to call it “*One of the most solemn and searching statements...the very essence of Christian teaching*”. So, it is with humble and open hearts we approach Jesus’ sixth Beatitude:

As we continue our study of the Beatitudes, we should once again consider the order of the statements and their relationships with each other. Jesus does not just list the qualities in a haphazard fashion. While none is of any greater importance than another, the order is significant. The first three lead up to the fourth. You begin with a beggarly spirit, out of which comes genuine mourning over sin. This leads you to be humble and meek before God, which will then drive you to hunger for righteousness. At this point, God shows us His mercy, and we in turn demonstrate mercy, purity, and peacemaking. These last three Beatitudes flow out of the fourth, after the first three lead up to it.

Some also notice another interesting relationship among the beatitudes. It appears the first and the fifth, the second and the sixth, and the third and the seventh seem to fit together. It is the poor in spirit who recognize their own spiritual poverty who will then reach out in mercy to others. It is those who mourn over sin who are going to know purity of heart. It is those who are meek who are going to be peacemakers. As we consider the relationships of each of these character qualities, we must

remember that Jesus intended them all to describe the character of those who belong to His kingdom and follow Him.

As with each of the other beatitudes, we find a basis for purity of heart in the Old Testament. Jesus could well have been referring to the importance of a pure heart expressed in **Psalm 24:3-4: “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.”** This promise is also reflected in Psalm 73:1: **“Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!”** As we consider the tremendous promise found as a result possessing this quality, (seeing God), we must ask two vital questions, what does it mean to be pure in heart, and how do we become pure in heart?

What Does It Mean to Be “Pure in Heart”?

When the Bible talks about the heart, it speaks of our inner most person. It refers to our mind, emotions, and our will as our thinking, feeling, and acting all spring from our heart. Scripture makes it clear that purity of heart is so vital is because it is from the heart that all our problems come. Jeremiah described the heart as **“deceitful above all things and desperately wicked”**. (Jeremiah 17:9) Jesus taught that **“out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders...”** (Matthew 15:19) He taught further **“There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man...”** **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things**

proceed from within and defile the man.” (Mark 7:15, 21-23)

We see the importance of the heart, but what does it mean to be “pure” in heart? Pure simply means “clean or cleansed” It is the word from which we get “cathartic” and “catharsis”. It has two different ideas as it is used in the New Testament.

Moral Purity. When most think of purity, they think of being free from moral corruption and purity of mind regarding sensual kinds of sin. In this sense it carries the idea of being free from every taint of evil, especially in the desires and attitudes of our hearts. But purity of heart has much deeper, profound meaning each of us needs to grasp.

Purity of Devotion. The word also speaks of something being unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed, and free from any foreign element. In this sense purity deals with the attitude, integrity, and the singleness of our hearts in our devotion to God. It is a heart that does not bring mixed motives and divided loyalties in its relationship with God. This is the kind of heart of which the Psalmist longs:

Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name. (Psalm 86:11)

Jeremiah writes of how God “...**Will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always**” and Ezekiel writes of God giving the people of Israel “**one heart**” (Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 11:19). Paul wants to encourage believers to have “**undistracted devotion to the Lord**”.

(1 Corinthians 7:35). And Jesus further made this clear when He taught in Matthew 6: “**...Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth**”. (Matthew 6:21, 25)

How Can We become “Pure in heart”?

Proverbs 20:9 asks a vital question: “**Who can say, “I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin”?**” The answer is no one! The only way to have our hearts cleansed and made pure is by faith in the sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross. There, our sins were placed upon Him. When we accept that sacrifice and place our faith in Him, then His goodness and righteousness – His purity – is placed upon us, and we are cleansed. “**When we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin**”. (1 John 1:7)

We gain positional purity through faith in Christ. Someday, those who have trusted Christ will receive ultimate purity when they see God (see next point). Our challenge today is to grow in practical purity as we grow in our relationship with Christ. The Word of God is essential to maintaining and growing in this practical purity of heart. “**How shall a young man keep his way pure?**” asks the Psalmist. “**By keeping it according to your Word**” is the reply. (Psalm 119:9)

The Promise of Seeing God

With this Beatitude comes a promise, “**They shall see God.**” Again, as with the other Beatitudes, the pronoun is emphatic meaning “They, and they alone, shall see God”. What does this promise mean? It certainly has a complete literal meaning that those who are pure in heart are the only ones who will reach the Heavenly kingdom. We are promised that those who have placed their faith in Christ will one day see Him “**face to face**” (1 Corinthians 13:12) and John assures us some day we will be like Christ “**because we will see Him just as He is**” (1 John 3:2). But there is also a tremendous sense in which the pure in heart will see God today. In a very real sense, those who are pure in heart can see God in our daily lives.

We Can See God in His Word. There may be many who read God’s Word and have great knowledge of the Scriptures. But one must have a pure heart and a right relationship with God before they can understand the Bible and genuinely see God in its pages.

We Can See God in His creation. Those who have a pure heart will see God in the wonderful world He has made. In Psalm 19 David writes of how “**The heavens are telling the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands**”. (Psalm 19:1) Those who do not have a right relationship with God or do not have a heart of devotion to Him fail to see God in the wondrous design of creation. They attribute what they see to mere chance and miss much of the glory of the beauty in the world around us.

We Can See God in the events and circumstances of life. We can see God in the many blessings He has given us, but those who are pure in their love and devotion for Him will also see Him in the trials and difficulties of life. In Psalm 119 the writer speaks of how affliction can bring our attention to God and His Word (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75)

Conclusion

We can only become pure in heart by having our sins forgiven and Christ’s purity credited to us when we place our faith in Him

As believers we grow in purity of heart by pursuing moral purity and sincere, undivided loyalty to Christ in our daily lives.

As we close this important study, may we all share the prayer of David:

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and
renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10**

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays

8:00 AM Government Org. Conference Room (East Wing)
12:00 PM Senate President’s Conference Room