

Happy Are the Holy

Scripture: Matthew 5:8

Code: 2203

INTRODUCTION

Some of the truths found in the Bible are readily understood and communicated. Others are like bottomless pits--their breadth and scope are difficult to encompass. Matthew 5:8 is one such truth: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"--one of the greatest utterances in the Bible. It stretches over everything else revealed in Scripture. Purity of heart is a theme that runs from the beginning of the Bible to the end.

LESSON

I. WHAT IS THE CONTEXT FOR BEING PURE IN HEART?

A. The Historical Context

At the time of Christ's entrance into the world, Israel was in a desperate condition economically, politically, and spiritually. The Jewish people anticipated the coming of a Messiah who would bring an end to Roman oppression and establish a political kingdom. But in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord dealt with spiritual realities.

1. The spiritual condition of the Jewish people

a) Their domination by the Pharisees Israel was burdened by the oppressive legalism of the Pharisees. They were the dominant religious influence on the common people. Legalistic systems are commonly a dominating influence wherever they exist. They tend to draw absolute parameters around what is spiritually acceptable. Their authoritarian character oppresses those within their sphere of influence. Because of their inability to keep the law of Moses, the Pharisees invented new laws that could be kept. That pacified their consciences, but their misinterpretation of Mosaic law and their additions to it formed a relentless and imposing system of legalistic duty on the people. It eventually became a religious system that was itself impossible to live by. The religious leaders got to the point of agreeing that if only a few of God's laws were kept, He would understand. When they realized that even that was too high a standard for them to keep, they decided that if a person did their best to keep just one law, God would understand. That's why the lawyer in Mark 12 asked Jesus, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (v. 28). The Pharisaic religious system produced tremendous guilt and frustration among the people of Israel. That's ironic because the Jewish people were committed to the reality of God and the fact that He had revealed Himself in the law. In the end the religious system of the Pharisees didn't work--which is true of all such systems. b) Their desperation for release The guilt produced by the Pharisaic system may have contributed to the power of John the Baptist's ministry. He had a ready audience because people wanted to be freed from the burden of sin. When John the Baptist preached in the wilderness multitudes flocked to him (Matt. 3:1-5). Even the Pharisees and Sadducees showed up (v. 7). Matthew 3:5 says, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about the Jordan." The hearts of people in Israel were aching for a sense of forgiveness and tranquility. They weren't crying for a rabbi with another rule but a Savior who would forgive them. (1) The promise of a Savior The Jewish people knew that God had promised a redeemer. They knew someone would come who would forgive their sins. He would find the remnant of true worshippers and cleanse them. Ezekiel said God would sprinkle the redeemed with water that would make them clean (Ezek. 36:25). God was going to take out their stony hearts and put in them hearts of flesh (v. 26). He would purge them from their sins.

They knew David had sensed God's forgiveness because he wrote, "[Happy] is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2). They knew forgiveness was available but many had not experienced it. (2) The pleas of specific individuals When John the Baptist announced that a Savior was coming and said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2), many people were ready to unload their burdens and seek the forgiveness that only the Messiah could give. They longed for release from the oppressive religious systems of their leaders. (a) A Pharisee John 3:1 introduces us to "a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." I think he was an honest man because he was drawn to Christ. He knew he was in trouble if what Jesus said was true. The Greek text of John 3:10 indicates he was the teacher of the Jews. He was a top man but he was also frustrated and anxious. Nicodemus went to Jesus during the night and said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). He wanted to find out what God had to say about what was troubling him, but John 3:3 indicates he never had the chance to ask his question. Jesus read his mind and answered what had not been asked: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus wanted to ask how he could enter God's kingdom and the Lord answered, "By being born again." Many Jewish people at the time of Christ's earthly ministry had the same question. Even though Nicodemus was a Pharisee--a teacher of the law and a ruler in the land--he was honest enough to admit his sinfulness. (b) A multitude of followers John 6 tells us Jesus miraculously fed a total of about twenty-five thousand people (vv. 1-15). In verse 28 they ask Him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Our Lord answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (v. 29). Those people had the same question Nicodemus did. They knew the religious rituals and ceremonies, and followed all the traditions. But they wanted to know the reality behind them. They wanted to know how a person got into the kingdom because they knew that no one could enter it by trying to keep the law. (c) A lawyer Luke 10:25 says, "A certain lawyer stood up, and tested [Jesus], saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" That's the same question Nicodemus and the multitude in John 6 asked. People everywhere wanted to know the standards for getting into God's kingdom. (d) A young ruler Luke 18:18 says, "A certain ruler asked [Jesus], saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" People from all levels of Jewish society wanted to know how to be forgiven. The Jewish people had no sense of security. They were under a religious system they couldn't keep and wanted to know how they could have the security of citizenship in the kingdom. The timing of Christ's presence in the world was perfect--He had the answer to their dilemma. God is holy and righteous--there is no sin in Him. Yet He offers salvation to sinful man. The honest man says to himself, How can a holy God give salvation to a sinful man? An honest and devout Jew would wonder, How can I enter God's Kingdom when I can't keep His laws? Those are questions Jesus answered in the Beatitudes. They are questions that those who sat on the Galilean hillside in Matthew 5 certainly wondered about. Jesus had gone throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues about the kingdom and healing people of their diseases (Matt. 4:23). As His fame spread, great crowds went to see Him (v. 25). Those people came to Jesus with questions.

2. The spiritual standard of Jesus

Of all the Beatitudes Matthew 5:8 is the clearest statement on how to enter the kingdom. When Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), He meant that only the pure in heart would see God in His kingdom--not those who merely participate in external religious ceremonies. Those depending on a religion based on human achievement won't make it into the kingdom. The Greek text of Jesus' statement contains the emphatic word *autoi*--"they alone." Only those with purified hearts will see God. (a) Man's criterion Man tends to measure himself by his fellow man. Second Corinthians 11 speaks of false apostles who measured their spirituality by comparing themselves with others. The Pharisees were good at that kind of comparison. And the way such people test their character is by finding someone worse than themselves as the criterion for

comparison. Generally it's not difficult to find someone worse than yourself, so you probably won't fail such a test. One Pharisee prayed, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector" (Luke 18:11). His standard was someone lower than himself. For those who set their standards lower than themselves, the ultimate human standard ends up being the most rotten person alive. That's because when everyone bases his personal evaluation of himself on a person lower than himself, the standard spirals down from person to person until it can go no lower--the dregs of humanity. b) God's criterion God's standard for acceptable character is not whether a person is better than a tax collector, liar, thief, or cheat. His call was not for us to be better than child abusers or murderers. His standard is that we be 100 percent pure. In 1 Peter 1:16 He says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Jesus stated that same standard in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be ye ... perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Mankind sets the standard of "goodness" as the worst human being alive; God's standard is Himself: the absolutely holy and righteous God of the universe. Only those who are pure in heart will enter Christ's kingdom, go to heaven, and enter God's presence. Christ's words must have surprised His audience because they were so concerned with externals. The Pharisees got upset if certain rituals--such as handwashing--weren't done correctly. Our Lord said they were great at tithing mint, cumin, and anise (Matt. 23:23). But while they made sure that they gave 10 percent of various tiny herbal leaves, they paid no attention to love, truth, mercy, and justice. Jesus said of them, "Ye are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (v. 27). Everything they did was external and our Lord revealed their cloak of hypocrisy and shredded it in one statement.

B. The Literary Context

Every single Beatitude is critical. Each forms a part of a magnificent sequence. They are in perfect order according to the mind of God and each forms a part of one great reality. So any one Beatitude can't be isolated from the whole.

1. The Beatitudes form a sequential pattern

You can't pick and choose which Beatitudes you want to apply. Kingdom citizens fulfill all the Beatitudes. When you become poor in spirit the rest of the Beatitudes will show themselves in your life as a wonderful outworking of the Spirit of God. You will understand yourself spiritually as a cowering beggar, totally without power to earn anything spiritually, and you will reach out to God with a tremendous sense of inadequacy. Then you will mourn over the sin that has put you where you are and become meek before the absolute holiness of God. In your humility you will hunger and thirst for the righteousness you know you can't attain on your own. As a result you will cry out to God to be filled and He will hear you and give you His mercy, thus making you a merciful person. That results in purity of heart and a desire to make peace. As a result you will be persecuted and slandered by the world. Yet though you fulfill the Beatitudes and are persecuted, Matthew 5:12 holds out the promise of joy because God will reward you. Matthew 5:8 appears where it does among the Beatitudes because that's where it fits in the natural flow. Purity of heart comes after you've hungered and thirsted for righteousness and after God has dispensed His mercy to you. It is His mercy that cleanses your evil heart. Purity is not something that you earn--it comes from God's mercy and allows you to see God.

2. The Beatitudes form a flowing pattern

The first seven Beatitudes fit together in a pattern. The first three lead up to the fourth, and then the next three flow out from that one. A person with a beggarly spirit mourns over sin. That makes him meek before God and leads him to cry out for righteousness. God responds by showing him mercy, purifying his heart, and giving him the ability to make peace. The first three lead up to hungering and thirsting for righteousness and the next three flow out of that desire for righteousness.

3. The Beatitudes form a matching pattern

There is another intricate pattern in the Beatitudes: the first and fifth, the second and sixth, and the

third and seventh beatitudes match each other. The poor in spirit know that everything they have is a gift of mercy, so they reach out and are merciful to others. Those who mourn over their sins will have pure hearts. A person's heart cannot be cleansed of sin unless he mourns over it. And it is the meek who are peacemakers. You can't be a peacemaker unless you are humble (Phil. 2:1-4). How Many Religions Are There in the World? Some of the people in the crowd that Jesus taught in Matthew 5-7 were legalistic Pharisees. There are people like them in every religious crowd. They think they will go to heaven because of their own achievements, saying to themselves, I'm all right. The Lord certainly wouldn't send me to hell. I don't kick cats. When my neighbor needs to borrow something, I loan it to him. I've never killed anyone or ran out on my wife. I help provide for my children's needs. I've done the best I can in this life. That's the religion of human achievement. There are only two kinds of religion in the world. One is the religion of human achievement, which comes under every name imaginable. It teaches that you can earn your way to heaven. The other is the religion of divine accomplishment, which affirms that God brings salvation through faith in Christ alone and that people can't make it to heaven on their own. The many forms of the religion of human achievement all serve to propagate Satan's lies.

1. The Rejection of Human Achievement

In every crowd there are legalists--people trying to earn their way into heaven. Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of such people right away by affirming that God is looking for those who are pure in heart. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had no excuse for relying on external ceremonialism and works. They of all people would have been familiar with God's standard in the Old Testament. a) Psalm 51:6--"Thou [God] desirest truth in the inward parts." b) Psalm 24:1-5--"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they who dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He who hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Matthew 5:8 is a condensation of that psalm. Those with clean hands and a pure heart are the ones who receive salvation. c) Isaiah 59:1-5, 12--"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth; they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web.... For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them." d) Isaiah 59:16-17--The Lord "saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." That is a picture of Christ. He looked and saw people lost in sin. Many of the Jewish people living during Jesus' ministry were crying out for an intercessor. In verse 17 we see Christ Himself putting on the garments of salvation. Verse 20 then says, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion." From those passages the Jewish leaders should have known how to get into the kingdom. Ezekiel told them that the Messiah would come and wash them clean (Ezek. 36:25-29). God has always sought purity of heart. There are three approaches to religion: the religion of the head, which trusts in a creed or a system; the religion of the hand, which trusts in good deeds; and the religion of the heart, which is based on purity given by God. First Samuel 16:7 says, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

2. The Requirement for Divine Accomplishment

Without a pure heart you will never see God or His kingdom. Only a pure heart experiences God's

forgiveness, knows the Redeemer who came to Zion, and drinks from the well of salvation. The impure will die frustrated in their sins. The wonder of salvation in Jesus Christ is that He came to earth to purify our hearts. He took our sin upon Himself and paid the penalty for it. Then He imputed His own righteousness to us (Rom. 4:24). What a fantastic exchange! He makes us pure in God's eyes! Because Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24), His righteousness is given to us. It is by faith that God makes us pure--not by personal achievement.

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PURE IN HEART?

A. The Meaning of "Heart"

1. The interpretation

The Greek word translated "heart" in Matthew 5:8 is *kardia*, from which we get the word *cardiac*. The Bible always refers to the heart as the internal part of man--the seat of a man's personality. Predominantly it refers to the thinking processes--not the emotions. When the Bible talks about emotion it refers to the bowels of compassion, the feelings we get in the stomach or midsection. The Bible even talks about the liver as an organ of emotion (Lam. 2:11). That's because the Jewish writers expressed emotions such as love and hate by the effect those emotions produce in the abdominal area. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he." We can think of the word heart as referring to the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If my mind is really committed to something, it will affect my will, which in turn will affect my emotions. The will is like a flywheel: the mind gets it moving and once it is moving, it moves the emotions. When our Lord spoke of the pure in heart He was talking about a pure mind that in turn controls a person's emotions. That was a direct shot at the Pharisees and legalists who told people that all they needed to do were external religious activities. Similarly in Mark 7:1-23 Christ affirms the importance of what's in the heart as opposed to external traditions.

2. The instruction

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Our thoughts, feelings, and actions all flow out of the heart. a) Ephesians 6:6--"[Do] the will of God from the heart." The heart is where our thoughts and actions are generated. b) Jeremiah 17:9--"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" c) Genesis 6:5--"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." d) Matthew 15:19-20--"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man." Jesus was saying to the Pharisees, "You make such a big deal out of ceremonial washing, but God is concerned about the heart." In verse 18 He says, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." e) James 4:8--"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts." God wants changed hearts. f) Psalm 51:10--David said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." g) Psalm 73:1--"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." God is concerned about the inside of a person. If you go to church every day of the week, carry a Bible around and recite verses, but your heart isn't clean, you haven't met God's standard. It doesn't matter how religious you are on the outside.

3. The illustration

When God called Saul to be king, he was tall, dark, and handsome--but not much else. So God gave him another heart (1 Sam. 10:9). He changed him on the inside. But Saul eventually started disobeying God and even took upon himself the duties only a priest was authorized to carry out (1 Sam. 13:8-13). Therefore the prophet Samuel told Saul, "Thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart" (v. 14). First Samuel 16:7 says, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." God selected David because his heart was right. We see that from David's writings in the psalms. a) Psalm 9:1--"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart." b) Psalm 19:14--"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be

acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."c) Psalm 26:2--"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; test my heart and my mind."d) Psalm 27:8--"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek." David was governed by a pure heart.e) Psalm 28:7--"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him."f) Psalm 57:7--"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." That sums up where David's heart was: it was locked in on God. That's the kind of worship God wants. David may have failed at times but his heart was set toward God. The legalists and Pharisees in Jesus' audience in Matthew 5-7 may have done righteous deeds, but their hearts were not directed toward God.

B. The Meaning of "Pure"

It isn't popular to talk about purity nowadays. Many think purity is an insipid, unattractive commodity that belongs to strange, long-robed people in monasteries.

1. Clarifications about purity

a) It refers to cleansingThe Greek word translated "pure" in Matthew 5:8 (katharos) is a noun form of katharizo, which means "to cleanse." In a moral sense it speaks of being free from the filth of sin. Katharos is akin to the Latin word castus, which is the root of the English word chaste. In Matthew 5:8 it refers to a cleansed heart.b) It refers to integrityKatharos can also refer to something that is unmixed, unalloyed, or unadulterated. In Matthew 5:8 it would refer to a heart unmixed in its devotion and motives. In that sense "pure in heart" would refer to spiritual integrity and singleness of heart as opposed to doublemindedness.(1) Jeremiah 32:39--God said of Israel, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever." Here God speaks of single minded devotion and pure motives.(2) Matthew 6:21-23--Christ said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be healthy, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Christ was saying that the way you view things effects your whole life. If your motives are pure your life will be pure. If they are corrupt your life will be, too. Believers are to have singleness of heart. Jesus summed that up when He said, "No man can serve two masters" (v. 24).(3) James 4:4, 8--"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.... Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded." God wants our motives to be pure.(4) Romans 7:15, 24-25--Paul said, "That which I do I understand not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.... Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin." Paul wanted to do what was right. He was saying, "I have pure motives, even when I can't override my sinful flesh."If you are truly a Christian you will have purity of heart and motive. If you don't, you need to question whether you really know God.

2. Examples of purity

When David sinned it was because his motives were corrupt. When he wrote, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed" (Ps. 57:7), he had recently been in Gath, an area controlled by the Philistines. He was afraid the Philistines would kill him, so instead of trusting God he pretended to be a madman. He made marks on the doors and drooled all over his beard (1 Sam. 21:13). The king of Gath got rid of him and David went and hid in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1). I picture him saying, You acted like an idiot because you wanted to protect yourself when you should have glorified God. You dishonored the Lord. Soon after he penned Psalm 57. He affirmed to God that he would no longer be doubleminded. Similarly, all believers are to seek to have pure motives before God. It is said that when a friend remarked to John Bunyan on the excellence of the sermon he just preached, "Bunyan begged him not to say such a thing, for the devil had already whispered it to him before he left the pulpit" (Henri Talon, John Bunyan: The Man and His Works [Cambridge, Mass.: Howard, 1951], pp. 53-54).

3. The product of purity

The Greek word *katharos* speaks of more than a person's motives. There are many sincere people whose motives are pure who never come to God. The worshipers of Baal in Elijah's day were sincere when they started cutting themselves with knives (1 Kings 18:28). Truly pure motives always produce holy deeds. Thomas Watson said, "Morality may damn as well as vice. A vessel may be sunk with gold, as well as with dung" (The Beatitudes [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975 reprint], p. 175). A person may think his motives are pure and say he is religious, but if his deeds aren't in accord with God's Word, his heart isn't focused on God.

4. Categories of purity

a) Primitive purity Primitive purity exists only in God. It is as integral to the character of God as light is to the sun and wet is to water. b) Created purity Pure beings can be created. God created the angels and man in purity, but man fell and some of the angels rebelled. c) Ultimate purity Ultimately we who are in Christ will be completely pure. No more will we experience sin. We will dwell with God in heaven forever and experience ultimate purity. First John 3:2 says, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." d) Positional purity Christians are positionally pure because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to them by God (Rom. 3:21-26). When God looks at the believer He says, "You are absolutely pure in Christ." Christ's righteousness is applied to the believer through faith in Him. Believers are justified and made pure by His work alone (Rom. 5:1, 17-21; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16). Ephesians 5:25-26 says, "Christ ... loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The church will be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin (2 Cor. 11:2). e) Practical purity Only God knows primitive purity. Only He can bestow created purity. In the future He will bestow on every saint ultimate purity, and right now every believer has positional purity. Practical purity is what gives us trouble now. It is hard to live out the positional purity we have now. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul says, "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." He meant we are to be living pure lives. At best in this life practical purity is gold mixed with some iron or a white cloak with some black threads. But God wants us to be pure and has empowered us to be so. Those who are positionally pure in Jesus Christ will see God and be in His kingdom. Even now they manifest a pure life and pure motives. If that's not true of your life then either you aren't a Christian or you are a Christian living in disobedience. Christians do fail at times and are tempted to think, say, and do impure things. But the Bible tells us how to deal with failure and temptation. Ephesians chapter 6 speaks about the believer's armor, which helps and protects us. And if we fail we have the promise of 1 John 1:9, which says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Every time you fail you are to face it and repent of what caused you to fail. God will cleanse you and you will move on to a greater level of purity.

III. HOW CAN I BE PURE IN HEART?

Some think purity can be attained only in monastery or some other place far removed from everyday life. "See no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil" is their approach. Others say that we need a second work of grace. They teach that after a person has been saved for a time, God eradicates his sin nature and he never sins again for as long as he lives. I once confronted a man who said he had experienced that second work of grace. He told me he never sinned at all. I asked him if he ever made mistakes and he said, "Yes, but that's different." But eradication of sin does not take place in this life, nor will entering a monastery make a person pure.

A. Admit You Can't Purify Your Heart on Your Own

Proverbs 20:9 says, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Jeremiah 13:23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" No one can purify themselves on their own because no one has the power to do so.

B. Put Your Faith in God

Good works will not make a heart pure but faith can. Acts 15:9 says our hearts are purified by faith.

But for faith to be valid it must be in the right object. First John 1:7 says, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." If you want to be pure in heart you must by faith accept the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Zechariah 13:1 describes the faith that brings purity of heart as "a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness."

C. Read God's Word and Pray

In John 15:3 Jesus tells those who have already given their hearts to Him how to be pure in practice: "Now ye are clean through the word." If you are a Christian, it is important for you to read the Word of God and also to pray.

Job asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). Only God can. If you wonder how you can be clean you need to realize that you can't do it by good works. You can know purity only by putting your faith in the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to remove sin. If you are a Christian and are fighting against impurity in your life, commit yourself to God's Word and prayer.

IV. WHAT PROMISE IS MADE TO THE PURE IN HEART?

Matthew 5:8 says that those who are pure in heart "shall see God." The Greek text expresses continuous action and could be translated, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall be continuously seeing God for themselves." The verb translated "to see" indicates an action that the pure in heart direct back upon themselves.

When your heart is purified at salvation you begin living in the presence of God. You don't see Him with physical eyes but with spiritual ones. You begin to comprehend Him and become aware of His presence. Just as Moses saw God's glory (Ex. 34), the person whose heart is purified by Jesus Christ repeatedly sees the glory of God.

To see God was the greatest thing an Old Testament saint could dream of. In John 14:8 Philip says to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." When your heart is purified by Christ you will see God. And the purer your heart is the more of God you will see.

Job, after being addressed by God, said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). Job saw God in the midst of his trials. The psalmist saw God in creation (Ps. 19). Some people see Him in their circumstances and others see Him in the hearts of His people. God is alive in this world but you won't be aware of that unless your heart has been purified. Purity of heart cleanses the eyes of the soul, making God visible.

Conclusion

If you want to see God your heart must be purified. First John 3:2 says, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." A day is coming when we will see Christ face to face. What a day that will be!

Focusing on the Facts

1. By whom was Israel burdened at the time of Christ's earthly ministry? How were the people burdened? What did that oppression produce within them?
2. Why did people flock to John the Baptist? What promises would his ministry have brought to mind?
3. Who was Nicodemus (John 3:1, 10)? What was his opinion of Christ (John 3:2)?
4. What did Nicodemus want to know? What was Christ's answer?
5. What basic question was going through the minds of those who listened to Jesus while He taught the Sermon on the Mount?
6. Whom did Jesus say would see God?
7. How does man usually measure his goodness? What is wrong with that standard?
8. What standard does God set for acceptable character? Use Scripture to support your answer.

9. Describe the sequential flow of the Beatitudes. Why does Matthew 5:8 appear where it does?
10. What noticeable pattern appears in the first seven Beatitudes?
11. Describe how some of the Beatitudes match up to others?
12. What two kinds of religions exist in the world? What do they teach?
13. What were the legalists of Christ's time content with?
14. Show from Scripture that external righteousness isn't all that God wants from man.
15. What is the Bible referring to when it speaks of the heart?
16. When our Lord spoke of the pure in heart He was talking about a pure _____ that in turn controls a person's _____.
17. What kind of heart did David have? Use Scripture to support your answer.
18. What two meanings can be attached to the Greek word translated "pure" in Matthew 5:8?
19. What was Christ saying in Matthew 6:21-24?
20. Are pure motives all a person needs to come to God? Explain.
21. Name and define the purity that all believers will experience in the future.
22. How does a person become positionally pure?
23. What is practical purity? What should we do when we fail in matters of practical purity?
24. How do some people think purity is obtained? What does Proverbs 20:9 say about having a pure heart?
25. How is a heart made pure? How can we be pure in practice?
26. What promise is made to the pure in heart?
27. In what way do we see God now? How did Job and the psalmist see God? How will we see God in the future (1 John 3:2)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Jerry Bridges wrote, "So often when we sin we are more vexed at the lowering of our self-esteem than we are grieved at God's dishonor. We are irritated at our lack of self-control in subjecting ourselves to some unworthy habit.... God does not honor these self-centered desires. This is one reason we do not experience more of his enabling power in our day-to-day struggles with so-called besetting sins. God does not give us power so that we can feel good about ourselves; he gives us his power so that we can obey him for his sake, for his glory" (The Practice of Godliness [Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1983], p. 158). Are you suffering defeat in your struggles with sin? Perhaps it's because you are striving more to satisfy yourself than bring glory to God. Take time now to examine your motives for fighting spiritual battles and resolve to focus on pleasing and glorifying God alone.
2. Many in our day think they can live at peace with sin while still identifying themselves as Christians. The Puritan Samuel Bolton said, "When sin is beaten out of the field, yet a long time it will be before it is beaten out of the strongholds. When sin in practice is overcome and conquered, yet sin in affection is hard to be overcome. That contrariness that is between God and your heart is hard to be conquered. It will cost you a battle, many an assault, before you can conquer sin in its strongholds, overcome sin in the heart" (The Puritans on Conversion, Din Kistler, ed. [Ligonier, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, pp. 9-10). Jesus affirmed that only the pure in heart will see God (Matt. 5:8). A pure heart declares itself by its constant struggle against sin and temptation. Is that the state of your heart?

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