

The Great Reversal: The Pure in Heart

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Our spiritual clarity is directly linked to our inward purity. In order to see God as we need to, we must embrace the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Matthew 5:8

INTRO

Over the past year, we've studied the Beatitudes as the opportunity has arisen. These beatitudes describe what life under the authority of Jesus is marked by; the characteristics and internal nature of the person who has embraced the way of Christ's kingdom.

- Many have seen the Beatitudes as a progressing process. Charles Spurgeon called these statements of Jesus, "***The ladder of light.***"
- The idea is each proceeds from the other and builds on top of the previous.
- It's interesting to me that the beatitudes are bookended with the promise and blessing of inheriting the kingdom of heaven "for theirs is the kingdom." The poor in Spirit and the persecuted for righteousness sake.

INSERT: My wife was telling me that these beatitudes may even have prophetic significance for the times we live in as we go through them at the church. It makes me wonder where we might be when we get to the final beatitude "***Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake...***"

- They begin with how we look at ourselves (Blessed are the poor in spirit) and end with how we respond when we are treated a certain way by others (Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake).
- Another observation of The Beatitudes is that they indicate what happens within us dictates how we respond to what is happening around us or to us.
 - We start by having a proper view of ourselves – **poor in spirit**
 - When we are brought to the end of ourselves, we **mourn** the sin within us and the sin that's around us, and are filled and **comforted** by the Holy Spirit.
 - It is in that place of being satisfied with God that we **gain meekness**, the ability to have strength, courage and boldness that is submitted to God's control. We don't need to assert control out of insecurity or selfish ambition, but we can courageously selflessly embark on God's mission with meekness of spirit.
 - AS we mourn sin and submit to God's control, our appetites change... we begin to long for the things that matter to God. The things he loves, we love, the things he hates we hate. We no longer seek to fill our spiritual hunger and thirst with things that can't satisfy, but we find fulfillment and contentment **AS WE HUNGER AND THIRST** for the righteousness of God.

- But a true hunger and thirst for righteousness should never lead to self-righteousness. NO, in fact, that more we see how righteous God is, the more we become aware of how wretched we can be. And that humility demonstrates itself by the **extension of mercy** to those around us. To the merciful, he shows himself merciful. In the same way, we long for mercy from God for our sins, so we are called to extend the mercy of God to those around us. We recognize that we are not the ultimate Judge, but if the ultimate judge extended great mercy to us, can we withhold mercy to those around us who are merely are fellow servants?

Today we come to verse 8 where Jesus says, **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."**

PRAY

INTRO:

This evening we will look at both bookends of this statement. It must start with us defining what a pure heart is, what it isn't, and how it is obtained. It ends with one of the most incredible statements ever uttered... that this person will see God.

- We might underestimate the power of that statement today, but to the Jewish mind, this was a statement that would make you speechless.
 - Moses, the one whom God imparted the law to, the holiest, most revered figure in the 1st-century Jewish mind, couldn't even handle the fullness of seeing God. No man could see God and live. Then Jesus makes this statement that would have caused everyone to gasp.

BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER, I want to explore this correlation by asking a very simple question that might not have a simple answer.

QUOTE

What do you want to see?

APPLICATION

Huh?

We'll start with the first part of that question:

What do you want?

That reflects the state of your heart.

What's in your heart directly affects your perspective; that is what you will and won't be able to see or perceive.

BACKSTORY

Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve saw God. They walked with Him in the cool of the day. They spoke directly to Him and knew the fullness of His presence.

Then Eve SAW the forbidden fruit. The serpent tempted her and she SAW that it was good for food, pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise. Her heart wanted that which God forbid. She acted on it. Adam followed suit.

The next thing they both SAW was not God, but their nakedness. For the first time, they saw shame, sin, and fear. They hid from God.

From that time, mankind saw God no more the way it was originally intended.

Throughout the ages, God continued to provide glimpses.

- *He revealed the reality of His presence through the created elements.*
- *He revealed a fading glory through the giving of the law.*
- *He revealed His plan by calling out a chosen people, Israel, for his glory.*
- *He revealed His Word and prophetic plan through the prophets of old.*
- *But even then, there were very few who perceived and saw it.*

True was the prophetic words of Isaiah, “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”

Hebrews tells us that in these last days God has now spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

- This is the same Jesus who plainly said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” And again, “And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest (reveal) Myself to him.”
- Yet the blind continued to be blind, the hardness of their hearts obscuring the realities of God from their vision.

CUSTOM BLOCK

What do you want? What do you want to see?

King David knew the right answer:

[Psalm 27:4 ESV] 4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

QUOTE

Here and now, Jesus teaches us that there is a deep connection between inward purity and spiritual clarity. Your vision of God will be clouded when the affections of your heart are set on the wrong things.

1. The Pure heart

APPLICATION

As we look at what it means to be pure of heart, what it means to see God, and how to get there, we recognize that purity of heart is not something that can be faked or manufactured. You and I can often outwardly mask and cover our true intentions to other people, but you can't pretend to have a pure heart when it's not. God is never fooled by our appearance and always sees what's in the deeper recesses of the heart.

CULTURALLY:

- When we hear the word “heart” we think of our emotions. But in the Jewish thought, the emotions were in the bowels or the gut, the lowest or deepest part of your internal system. This is why the Bible says that Jesus had bowels of compassion for people. But today, it seems weird to us to say something like, “I love you with all my gut. This movie really moves my bowels.”
- We use the word “heart,” but the heart to the Jew was more than feeling, it was where you develop your thoughts and motives.
 - **BEFORE NOAH, “God saw mankind, that the THOUGHTS OF THEIR HEARTS was wicked continually.”**
- To have a pure heart is to have pure motives, pure thinking, pure intentions. *Your heart is the place where you dialogue with yourself... the things that only you and God hear. One commentator said it was really the Jewish word for the conscience.*
- This is why Jesus told us things like, *“out of the heart the mouth speaks,”* and, *“it’s not what goes into a man that defiles him (talking about foods and rituals), but what comes out of the heart of a man that defiles (what a person thinks about, meditates on, conspires within himself), for out of the heart proceeds every wicked thing .”*
- We know that the Bible teaches us in Jeremiah 17, that the natural heart of man is *deceitfully wicked above all things and that we can’t really even know the depths of our own impurity.*

APPLICATION

Purity of heart

KATHAROS – in the Greek – English word for catheter – to drain, to purify.

The Greek word has three uses:

1. Physically – it is something that is refined by fire to remove impurities.
2. Ethically – something free of deceit and corrupt desires.
3. Levitically – the word used to describe something that could be used by the priests in service to the Lord because it was free from impurity.

Biblically, to have a pure heart is to have a heart that is under the refinement of God, to have motives and thoughts that are free from corrupt and carnal desires, and to be in a place of readiness to be used by the Lord for His purposes.

QUOTE

A pure heart is a heart that has nothing to do with falsehood. It is painstakingly truthful and free from deceitfulness.

WHERE DOES PURITY REALLY BEGIN?

The heart represents the birth and dwelling place of our deepest desires, thoughts, and motives. Our heart is the purest revelation and representation of our true self. **AND THIS IS WHAT MATTERS THE MOST TO JESUS ABOUT US.**

The Pharisees were convinced that the thing that mattered the most to **God was their outward expressions of righteousness, according to their own invented standards.** They would see God because of how impressive their outward actions were.

Jesus makes it clear that outwardly you can appear close to God, but inwardly, in the heart, you can be far from him.

[Matthew 23:25-26 NKJV] 25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 “Blind Pharisee (interesting use of the word blind), first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Not only that but who you truly are inside will inevitably make it to the surface.

For every outward fruit, there is an inward root. For every outward deed, there is an inward seed.

For the Religious leaders of Jesus’ day, their hearts were exposed not in what they did, but what they didn’t do. Oh, their lives appeared squeaky clean; so clean in fact that they would never touch a leper, sit with a prostitute, or feed and clothe a homeless person. Their impurity of heart was revealed in what they neglected: mercy, compassion, and justice.

As we’ll see today, purity of heart is not about merely enacting external rules to govern our behaviors. Sure, rules can limit the effects and incidents of unrighteousness, but only Christ can deal with the source and wellspring of unrighteousness that stems from an unclean, impure heart.

- Sometimes we become too content when we make things squeaky clean on the outside, but what about the fact that our hearts still long for that which is impure?

THE OPPOSITE OF A PURE HEART

In the Bible, we never see the language “impure heart.” Impurities in the heart manifest themselves in various ways. This is not an all-inclusive list, but here are some observations from my own study. Impurities are manifested as:

1. **A Haughty Heart** – a heart that is lifted up with pride. This is “Nebuchadnezzar heart syndrome.” “Look at this kingdom that I have built.” The Lord set him straight real quick by putting him out to pasture... literally. He enjoyed seven years of madness, thinking he was a cow eating the grass of the field. Deuteronomy 8 warns us against becoming haughty and self-sufficient in our own hearts.
2. **A Hard Heart** – this is the heart that has become stiff and calloused against God over time. Paul refers to it as having “a conscience seared with a hot iron,” This heart hears God’s Word and is unmoved and unchanged. This heart refuses to budge or submit to God’s authority.
3. **An Unbelieving Heart – [Hebrews 3:12 NKJV] 12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**
 - A heart that no longer has a place for faith. This heart constantly doubts God. They no longer believe in God’s promises, God’s deliverance, or God’s greater purposes. They only believe what they can see and are shortsighted to their current, temporary circumstances.
4. **A Wicked Heart – Deuteronomy 15:9 – Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart...**
 - This is the heart that has thoughts and intentions that are continually contrary to God. The Bible says that the wicked continue in the wickedness because they say in their hearts, “God will not require an account.” They have cast God far from their thinking and willfully ignore the evidence for his assistance. *The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”*

A PURE HEART IS REFLECTED IN...

1. **A Humble Heart** – [Psalm 10:17 NKJV] 17 “LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear.”
 - Twice in the N.T. we are told that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
2. **A Tender Heart** – A heart that is sensitive to the correction, discipline, and instruction of God.
3. **A Believing Heart** – [James 2:23 NKJV] 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.
4. **An Honest Heart** – Psalm 51:6, 10-12 NKJV – 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. ... 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
 - When we are able to be honest with God and others about our true state, God will begin to reveal himself.

APPLICATION

So Jesus calls us into a new kind of purity... a purity that starts with our inmost desires. But why? Because He wants us to see God.

2. The Promise to See God

BIBLE VERSE

(also Psalm 15) – [Psalm 24:3-5 NKJV] 3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

CONTEXT

The promise starts with God. We might think that the promise attached to having a pure heart would be merely a practical outcome. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will expose corruption, be guiltless, live righteously... ALL TRUE, and ALL IMPORTANT. A person with a pure heart will make society a better place. But all those things are secondary rewards. *The primary reward is that the person with a pure heart wakes up in the morning and goes to bed at night with a clear vision of God; who He is, and what He is doing, and have the promise to see him forever in eternity.*

From an Old Testament perspective, the idea of seeing God was understood a certain way.

- Jesus told us that no man has seen God except the Son of God who has revealed Him.
- Paul tells us that God is, “...dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see...” 1 Timothy 6:15
 - For sinful, human flesh to see the unrestricted fullness of God’s glory would mean certain and immediate death. He is too holy, too glorious, and too awesome for us to handle.
- Yet in the O.T. we observe that Moses saw the passing glory of God, Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision seated on His throne exalted, Israel saw the Lord in a cloud.

So there is a sense that seeing God consists of two realities:

- **In the present** – represents a progressing spiritual clarity as our hearts are sanctified.
- **In the future** – that one day, because Christ has purified our heart through His sacrifice, we will see the fullness of God, free from our sin, face to face for all eternity.

[1 Corinthians 13:12 NKJV] 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

HOW WE SEE GOD

Here are 5 biblical ways that we see God:

A. See God - We gain His vision for others

BIBLE VERSE

[2 Corinthians 5:16-18 NKJV] 16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

Today, we don't see Christ physically, but we know Him spiritually. In a similar way, we are no longer to see people physically, but through the eyes and heart of God for them.

APPLICATION

As people, we tend to classify and divide others based on their physical traits class, or accomplishments:

- Racial divisions, socio-economic divisions, rich poor, educated, uneducated, upper class, middle class, lower class, etc.
- But God sees two categories of people: Those who are in Christ and those who are in need of Christ.
- When our hearts are pure, we look beyond the physical. We don't judge others by comparing them to ourselves. Rather, we begin to see God's heart as we see them for who they really are; lonely lost souls in need of Jesus.

This is why racially motivated politics or class motivated politics should not sway Christians. These are tactics used by men to emotionally sway people who are not secured in a Christ-centered identity.

B. See God - To experience intimate fellowship with Him

BIBLE VERSE

[Exodus 33:11 NKJV] 11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

APPLICATION

The pure in heart will be those who daily experience the presence of the Lord with them. They will hear the Lord's voice and enjoy sweet times with Him.

- **[Revelation 1:10 NKJV] 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day...**

Those who long to see God will be those who are in the Spirit; living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, fellowshiping with God in the Spirit.

IMPORTANT: IMPURITY DEFILES RELATIONSHIP

BIBLE VERSE

[1 John 1:6 NKJV] 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

C. To see God - Greater holiness in our lives

BIBLE VERSE

[3 John 1:11 NKJV] 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

APPLICATION

Again, remember that the goal is not merely doing good, but gaining a pure heart. Having said that, the one who is pursuing a pure heart will be marked by a love for what is good and a hatred for what is evil.

- The pure heart in which the Holy Spirit is working will be sanctified, or simply that a person's life will start looking more and more like Christ.

D. See God - To know His will

BIBLE VERSE

[John 5:19 NKJV] 19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

APPLICATION

A purity of heart exposes us to what God is doing around us and the part He wants us to play in that work.

- When a pure heart is being developed in you, you don't simply see yourself at a coffee shop, you see yourself in a place where God might be at work.
- You don't simply see that blown tire on your car that left you on the side of the road as a random accident, but as a divinely appointed moment that God is working something bigger.
- You don't merely see COVID, or FIRES, or ELECTIONS, you see spiritual battles raging, struggles against evil and righteousness, and God at work to accomplish His glorious purposes in the midst of it.

EXAMPLE: Traveling to the river as a kid and breaking down on the side of the road. My dad hitchhiking and being picked up by this guy hanging his foot out of his old beat-up car. Their entire conversation there and back was about Jesus.

E. See God - to be forever in His presence

APPLICATION

One day, we will literally and physically see God in the fullness of His glory. AS the hymn states, "Our faith will be our sight!"

Job prophesied of this.

APPLICATION

The other night I was praying with my seven-year-old son when he looked up at me, unprovoked, and said, “Dad, I can’t wait to see Jesus when He comes back for us.”

- Only a pure heart, undefiled by the cares, pleasures, and comforts of this world could say such a statement with complete sincerity.

BIBLE VERSE

[Job 19:25-27 NKJV] 25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; 26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, 27 whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

BIBLE VERSE

King David echoed this reality!

[Psalm 17:15 NKJV] 15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

BIBLE VERSE

[1 John 3:2 NKJV] 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

APPLICATION

Church, this is our great and blessed hope: Jesus is returning!

- There is coming a real moment in time, maybe even today, when we will be transformed from this lowly, corruptible body into a heavenly body created by God, and see our maker, our savior, our Father, face to face and forever be with the Lord!

So as we see, to see God is a promise and a blessing that none of us want to miss out on!

- *We want to see others as He sees them*
- *We want to experience intimate fellowship with Him*
- *We want to be sanctified*
- *We want to know His will*
- *We want to spend eternity in His presence*

3. The Path to Purity

BIBLE VERSE

Proverbs 20:9 (ESV)

9

Who can say, “I have made my heart pure;
I am clean from my sin”?

APPLICATION

It’s true, this is something God has to develop in us. So what are the steps we can take?

A. Invite the One who can purify

BIBLE VERSE

[Hebrews 9:13-14 NKJV] 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

APPLICATION

Symbolically, what the ceremonial sprinkling of blood was to the flesh, the blood of Jesus is to the heart/mind/conscience.

- What the ceremonial washing of water was to the impurities of the body, the water, and regeneration of the Holy Spirit is to the mind.

The desire to have a pure heart is a good sign, but one will not arrive at their goal without Jesus.

- Jesus makes us new, as those who are in Christ, we must choose to walk in the newness of life.
- There is still a battle over our hearts which means we must make daily decisions about where our hearts go.
- We have a choice of what we set our minds and affections on, and many times, our hearts follow.
- *“Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.”*

You see, none of us can make our own hearts pure; that is, we can't change the desires of our hearts, but we can change what we think about and meditate on.

B. Guard the garden of your heart

ILLUSTRATION

But the heart of man is like a garden.

- Yes, when we are young, the soil in our hearts is conducive to the growth of wickedness, but it's still fairly empty.
- The longer we live in this world, satanic, demonic, worldly ideas and value systems get planted in that soil, and impurity thrives.
- But when Jesus gives us a new heart and sends His Holy Spirit into a person's life, every part of the mind gets renewed and rebuilt. The weeds get cleared, the soil made ready for purity, and righteousness to be sown.
- **ACTS 15 tells us that our hearts have been purified through faith in Jesus Christ.**
- *Yet, if allowed in, seeds of impurity will still try to take root. The cares of this life will try to choke out the new growth of faith in our hearts.*

A pure heart is maintained by the pursuit of innocence and by the guarding of the gates of our hearts.

- We live in a culture that tells us that a little naughtiness is good, desirable and even beneficial.
- You need to experience some of the world to get a taste. You need to get exposed to some of the pleasures in life, have your time of fun.

- *You should live together a while before marriage and test the waters / it's your bachelor night and you only live once / It's just guy stuff and totally natural / girls talk, I wouldn't call it gossip / It's just a romantic novel, it's not like it's real!*
- I believe Jesus would say the opposite. The less impurity that you allow to be planted in the soil of your heart the better. The more innocence you can protect, the clearer your vision of God will become!

Solomon, a man who went out and tried everything the world has to offer just to see if it would fulfill him knew better. He tried education, status, power, money, sexuality... you name it, he tried it. At the end of his life, he simply declared, “[Ecclesiastes 12:13 NKJV] **13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.**”

In Proverbs 4:23 he wrote these wise words, “[Proverbs 4:23 NKJV] **23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.**”

BIBLE VERSE

James 4:8 (NKJV)

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

QUOTE

I can't change my heart, but I can change my mind.

God can change my heart, but He won't change my mind.

If I change my mind, God will change my heart.

APPLICATION

The desires of the heart are directly linked to the mind. The mind is the gateway of the heart.

- *Double-minded – to have divided affections between the world and God.*
- *In the book Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan has a character called, “Mr. Facing Both Ways.” We know immediately what that is.*
- Romans 12 – Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.
- Cleanse your heart by dealing with your mind and your affections.

CONCLUSION

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

I always like to end with an invitation into the path of Christ. If your heart has been burdened with impurity, if it is harboring bitterness, lustfully longing, full of self-seeking or jealousy, come to the Cleaner. Have your hearts purified by the One who is pure, Jesus.

As you allow Him access to your heart, you will be well on your way to seeing Him more clearly in every aspect of your life.

If you haven't come to Christ, your hope of seeing God, both now and in eternity, is to have your guilty conscience and sinful heart purified through faith in Christ. You can freely come to him today.