

An Israelite in Whom Is No Guile

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the significance of guilelessness and purity of heart as essential for recognizing and experiencing God.

Duration: 44:19

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Acts 6:8, Hebrews 1:9

Topics: "Nathaniel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of righteousness and its rarity in today's world. He encourages listeners to examine their own hearts and desires, asking if they truly love righteousness and if they would recognize it if they encountered it. The speaker highlights that those who know and pursue righteousness will experience joy, regardless of their circumstances. He also discusses the significance of having a pure heart and how it affects our perception of others, urging listeners to see people as God sees them. The sermon references the story of Stephen in Acts 7 as an example of someone who was guileless and unafraid to speak the truth, even in the face of opposition.

Transcript

We'll read to the gospel of John chapter 1, and we'll read one of the briefest statements of one of the most insignificant characters of the New Testament, who is on my heart tonight as being especially significant because of his insignificance, and that one is Nathanael. This is the only mention of Nathanael in his first encounter with Jesus, and there's, I think, one other mention of him toward the end of the gospel that just mentions him as being among those who saw the resurrected Christ, but you don't hear anything more about any accomplishment, any conspicuous role. He's a real low-profile character and just has this briefest interlude with Jesus, but my heart has become very engaged over that encounter and what I believe it expresses.

So in chapter 1 of John, where the Lord is collecting his disciples, in verse 40, one of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which is translated the Christ, the anointed one, and he brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, you are Simon, son of John. You are to be called Cephas, which is translated Peter, and the next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee.

He found Philip and said to him, follow me. Now Philip was from the side of the city of Andrew and Peter. Peter found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the

prophets wrote.

Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth. Nathanael said to him, can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, come and see. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit or no guile at all.

Nathanael asked him, where did you get to know me? How did you know me? Jesus answered, I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you. Nathanael replied, Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel. Jesus answered, do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.

And he said to him, truly, very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Amen. We're just a little brief cameo text of the recruiting of disciples and the one called Nathanael who receives a tribute from Jesus that was never made for any other one whom the Lord encountered in his entire earthly walk.

Behold, an Israelite in whom is no guile at all. It was so rare a phenomenon that Jesus was almost startled by the discovery and the proof of the truth of Jesus's observation is the way in which Nathanael replied. How do you know me? How did you know that I was without guile? Because to be guileless is to be utterly unselfconscious of oneself.

It's to be free from ulterior motives. It's to have no exaggerated notion of one's significance or even of calling. In fact, this is a disillusioned man who's very skeptical even about Nazareth.

Could any good thing come out of Nazareth? He doesn't phony it up. He doesn't doctor it up. He doesn't hype it up.

He sees the things, the thing as it is about himself, about Israel, about Nazareth, and is introduced to Jesus as the son of Joseph of Nazareth. Well, if anything would prevent the recognition of Jesus, it's that very introduction. But instead of being stalled or thwarted in the recognition of Jesus by the earthly human description of a son from Nazareth of a man named Joseph, Nathanael sees right through that earthly veil of identification, and he says, truly, thou art, Rabbi, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

In a matter of seconds, Nathanael was able to make an identification that the whole of Israel nationally was unable to make in three and a half years of seeing and hearing Jesus performing miracles, speaking the Sermon on the Mount, and so exhibiting himself and his credentials to give the nation every opportunity to recognize who, in fact, he was and is. And here's a man without seeing any miracle just and being introduced to Jesus from the earthly plane sees through it to make the ultimate identification which Israel was unable to make and to this day has not yet made. Thou art the Son of God.

Thou art the King of Israel. Well, what are you saying, cats? Here's what I'm saying. The pure in heart shall see God.

That's what I'm saying. To be free of deceit is to be free of ulterior motives, of cutting corners, of playing the angles, of allowing yourself to be known or recognized for certain attributes or spirituality or anything like that. An illustration that comes to mind is sitting in an audience that where I went out of my way to hear a man described as the prophet of the hour, the oracle of God for our time, and anyone who bears a description of that kind I'll come on my hands and knees to meet and hear a one so lauded of men.

And I've gone out of my way several times for the hearing of that particular man and have come away each time completely deflated and disappointed. I see no evidence either in how he speaks or reports himself that would suggest to me in fact that he's the oracle of the hour. There may be a gift of personal prophecy or something of that kind, but to be an oracle is to bear the oracles of God.

And the oracles of God are the weighty heft of God's statement appropriate to the church and the hour in which it is spoken, not just a homily out of scripture that anyone could speak in order to get the word out of the way and get to the thing for which people have come to hear personal prophecy. And I remember this particular occasion where the MC really did a job of introduction about the oracle of the hour and and God's prophet and and I thought that man ought to get up and and and put a halt on that and say, listen, I appreciate your enthusiasm, but I have to say that I'm not what you're describing. I can't allow that kind of remark to be made about me.

It's simply not so. And for me to be silent and allow those remarks to be made is to affirm a lie if that's not in fact my authentic calling. You see merely to whether you are pumping yourself up and being deceitful or exercising guile in order to win appreciation or admiration is very much the same as allowing someone else to pump you up when what is being said is not so and needs to be stopped in its tracks.

We have to be jealous for the truth and to be free of guile is to be sensitive to the issues of truth even about Nazareth and Jesus admired what he saw in this man. The Lord spoke a sermon on the mount blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. And here's the very instance where a man who is pure of heart was able to see through the barrier of flesh and natural identification God.

The issue of seeing is the issue of purity of heart and Jesus said you you're impressed that I saw you standing on the fig tree. I'll tell you a greater thing. You're going to see the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of God.

And so if you'll allow me to take this liberty I would interpret it in this way by that same means by which you have seen me because of your guilelessness and purity so also shall you see the heavens opened and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of God. You're going to see things that others cannot see. You're going to catch a glimpse of the consummation of the age.

You're going to understand the glorification of the church that that the eternal reward of obedience in this earth is not plucking a guitar on a cloud a harp but an involvement in the kingdom of God. We're receiving a glorified body not just to save us from the ills of old age but in order to ascend and descend to move from one realm of the heavenly to the earthly in cooperation and participation with the kingdom dynamics of God as his rule goes forth out of a redeemed Zion and out to the earth. And because you can see this ultimate consummation it's going to affect your present.

Because you can catch a glimpse and see what what is clouded for other men because they're there they have a prism that is clouded over with personal ambition even for aspiring ministry or whatever because you're free from that, because your heart is pure, because there's no guile in you, no deceit, no cutting of quarters, no angles, you're not playing anything. You're going to see God and the things of God and that seeing of things that are eternal and millennial and glorious has got to affect the present. In fact, it may well be the very enablement to bear whatever the present brings even if it means opposition persecution, martyrdom, and death.

That's what it meant for Stephen who was the only other one that I know in the New Testament who like Nathanael saw the heavens opened. He was also a man without guile. His face shone like an angel.

He was able to dispute with with the doctors of the law and to leave them confounded and flabbergasted. They could not gainsay the wisdom that proceeded from that man, and he was only a busboy. He was only a waiter on tables.

He had no distinction. But there was a purity of heart and an innocency that characterized both men who saw by virtue of their purity what is withheld from those whose hearts are compromised or deceitful or have some element of guile in their spirit. Who of us is free of guile? In fact, I may well be addressing a generation that has never even heard the word before.

Never used it. You don't know what it refers to and don't even know that the whole world is steeped in guile, steeped in deception, steeped in lies, steeped in manipulations, steeped in cutting corners. I once had to reprimand a young Christian girl on a bus.

We were touring somewhere. I forgot where it was. Who I felt was adjusting something on the rack in the bus, her clothing or her possessions, but in that posture all eyes were upon her, all male eyes, because it revealed contours of a kind that would otherwise have been concealed.

I sensed in my spirit that she found an occasion to adjust something on the rack that would show her bodily to advantage to men who would pant. That's guile. That's an illustration of guile.

No, who's going to accuse us? Who who is going to find this out? It gives every appearance of just putting something up on a rack, but what is the secret motive of the heart? Why are we showing ourselves to advantage in that way? Why do we want to be attractive to the opposite sex? What? This is guile. I don't know how to define it for you, but I sense and know what it is. And I believe that God is wanting, at the end of the age, a guileless generation, a people in whom is no guile at all.

Because if even you have a little bit, you're compromised. It's either guilelessness, no guile at all, or guile. You can't have a little bit.

A little bit corrupts the entire lump. There's got to be a complete purity of heart. Maybe a synonym for guilelessness would be innocence.

Well, we understand that babies could be innocent, but teenagers, come on, they watch too much TV. They've been at the pool hall. They played with drugs.

They've had little sexual encounters. They've tried this. They've tried that.

To be innocent in an age like ours is almost a requirement, an ultimate kind of desire. That's not to be expected. It's one thing to expect innocency in those that are infants and have not been exposed to a world of subterfuge and intrigue and deceit, but to find an adult who has passed through these realities and still is in a place of innocence is an ultimate statement of the profound sanctifying work of God that I believe is attainable and that God desires that we should seek and find as a highest value.

Innocent doesn't mean stupid. Innocent doesn't mean that you just don't know and you're walking through the world like a dreamwalker and is not aware that there are seductions and temptations and subtleties of every kind. Innocence of this kind is an ultimate spirituality because it's not as the result of ignorance.

It's an innocence in knowing. It's an innocence that is obtained yet being exposed. And where did I speak this message last? On the trip? Kansas City to Black Saints.

And if they don't know what's going on in the world, there's no one that does know. They've seen the seemiest of conditions of life to be found in urban centers. They've seen their own people suffering genocidal death from drugs and violence and every kind of thing.

They've come out of that background themselves. And yet I'm preaching to them and encouraging them to come to a place of innocency. I'd like to come to it myself.

And I've got a history in the world of a kind that will stand in comparison with any sinner. I'm the modern-day Saint Augustine. You can read Ben Israel and you'll know the affairs and the relationships and the things that I've touched in the world.

And to know that and to pass through that, to know those things and their reality, and yet to maintain an innocency, to obtain and to maintain a kind of innocency, a purity of heart, will be a key to your seeing. You need to see angels ascending and descending. You need to see those things that are future and ultimate because it will affect your present.

It's because you see and you expect to be glorified and ascending and descending in the pursuit of kingdom issues that you're able now to endure whatever will come upon you to oppose you. And the fact of the matter is that if you're guileless and innocent, you can be assured you're going to be a target for things to come against you. You know what they call the Anabaptists? I know you don't know what they are.

Sixteenth-century radical reformation that make the Lutherans and the Calvinists look pale by contrast. Radical, apostolic Christians. And they suffered for that.

They were burned at the stake. I've taken Swiss Christians on a tour of the places of martyrdom around Zurich of which they themselves were ignorant. I showed them where teenage girls were bound back to back and thrown into the river that flows through that city.

I showed them where the first martyrs were burned at the stake, where there was every kind of excruciating torture because of these believers and their insistence on an authentic, apostolic kind of faith that discredited mere infant baptism and required evidence of true conversion and adult baptism and the taking of communion without priests. Those are the Anabaptists. The word means second baptism.

It was a derisive term in the same way that the word Christian first came as a pejorative term of derision, not a compliment. You know what the Anabaptists were called in German? Die stillen im Lande. The quiet ones in the earth.

Maybe I'm getting old. You can pray for me. I'm getting soft now.

I'm losing my sharp edge. I'm not the vigorous, fearless, bombastic man who goes where angels fear to tread. And something is growing with my age.

A kind of disposition to appreciate what I probably before would either have ignored or scorned. Innocency. Purity of heart.

Guilelessness. Die stillen im Lande. The quiet ones.

That quiet is a spiritual statement. And if you do not appreciate quiet and do not appreciate silence, what then will be the quality of what issues from you when you do speak? Anyone who has a prophetic call avoids being drawn into superfluous conversations. I told some people at the lunch table today after the meeting who expected that I would be as brilliant at the lunch table as I was at the pulpit.

Forget it. I said, I'm a dull dud. I'm a nothing.

I'm not good company. I don't make easy conversation. I keep my mouth shut until the Lord opens it.

I don't like to be given to much speaking. I appreciate silence because I appreciate words. And I know that voluminous speaking destroys credibility and weakens the value of what is spoken.

It's something like inflation. It's something like some government running the printing presses and flooding their nation with cheap currency, degrading the pesos, degrading the dollar, bringing Argentina now to its present debacle of a bankrupt nation. The same thing is true with words as it is with currency.

Do you appreciate silence? You're not noted for that. Your generation is not noted for quiet, for contemplation, for esteeming silence in proportion to your esteeming speaking and words. There's much too much noise, much too much boisterousness.

So I'm just sharing my generational bias. Or is it that? Or is it God commending to your generation something for which your generation is not known, but that should distinguish you as being the stiller, imlander, the quiet ones of your generation? That when you speak, people want to hear. That when you have something to say, it's significant.

You're not given to cheap talk, trivial talk, loose talk, gossip, even religious talk. You don't have to be witty. You don't have to be amusing.

You don't have to endear yourself to others. That's guile, where you'll use conversation in order to make yourself attractive and acceptable. That's manipulation.

Guile is having yourself as an object that needs to be elevated. And so Nathaniel was so guileless, we never hear anything more about him. He's so guileless that he never complained that he was not significantly used.

He was quite content just for this brief mention. He was so free of guile, so free of ambition, so free of positing himself that he should have a more significant use, that his name and exploits would be recorded in the New Testament account. But he saw.

He saw God where other men could not see. And he saw the things of God that are not available to all but to the pure of heart. And he saw when you can see God and see the things of God by virtue of the purity of heart, all of your seeing is affected.

Then you'll see men differently. How are you seeing me now? How do I fit through your prism in the way in which you have been conditioned and prepared, or that your experience has shaped you? Are you seeing me or each other as God sees us? Or do you bring a subjective valence that alters and distorts the truth of the person that we're looking at? I can't think of anything more critical for the church that is to be the church, but that we should see each other as God sees us. And that seeing, I'm saying tonight, is relative to our purity.

Purity of heart. And I'll tell you this, you'll not attain to it unless you desire it. And I know, I just suspect, call me a suspicious old geezer, I suspect it's not at the top of your priorities.

Ministry is. Fame and exploit and significant accomplishment and turning the world upside down, that's high priority. But character, purity of heart, innocency, guilelessness, is not high on your list of desire or attributes.

And I'm commending it tonight that it should be. If you could exhibit that, because you can't play at that. You can't perform that.

It's not learning a new gimmick. It's coming into divine character of the kind that Jesus himself was. It took one to know one.

Jesus recognized Nathaniel right away. Nathaniel recognized Jesus. They were both of the same kind.

They were pure of heart. And I'll tell you what, to come to that condition is more a testimony and challenging witness to your generation than your greatest expertise on knowing how to convey the gospel and do you know Jesus and the various other kinds of things that you can say and do. To exhibit this, guilelessness, to exhibit an innocency in a world and a generation that is corrupted, that is so pseudo sophisticated, that knows everything, sees everything.

What kid is there who's 12 years old in our country who has not been before the TV so much that he's not seen 20 or 30,000 murders, sexual scenes, violence, every kind of... We're raising kids that are old before their time. They're not even entitled to a childhood. They come with a cheap pseudo adulthood before the time that is wise-alecky, cynical, corrupted, they've seen.

Jesus said, unless you come as a child. But even our... Where is there a child of our generation except nurtured in a Christian environment, but any child that's in the world already knows too much about the wrong things. Cynical.

Looking at their parents and sizing up dad and knowing that he's a dud and speaking perversely to him or about him. I don't often read Ann Landers and those other columns, but once in a while my eye falls on it and an older man, a grandfather, who was invited to live with his daughter and son-in-law, after several weeks he had to say, I can't continue. The way your daughter conducts herself, I can't bear to observe it anymore.

The way she speaks back to her mother, the way she addresses her father, the contempt that she has for her own parents. She's uncontrollable, fierce, ferocious, antagonistic child. He said, I've got to leave.

I would have loved to have stayed with my own children, but I can't bear to see that. He's a man of an older generation when children were seen and not heard. Now are they ever heard.

And what do they have to say? Vile language to their own parents. So where do you find a child that's a child? Pure. I love to take my grandchildren for walks in the woods in our place in Minnesota and show them the field and I say, what color do you see? Looking at that hay in the fall season.

Well, it's yellow. Really? Or green. Well, how about where the shade of the tree falls on it? Is it the same green as that other green? Well, no.

It's different. How would you describe it? I love to speak to them and raise questions that require them to see what would otherwise not be observed. The subtlety of things, the gradation of things, shadow, color, texture.

It's God's creation. I want to bring them to a place to give them the praise for the beauty that is yet to be seen even in fallen creation. Seeing needs to be nurtured, cultivated.

And the pure of heart shall see God, shall see the things of God, shall see the people of God, and in the end they shall see themselves differently if they have a purity of heart. Probably one of the greatest afflictions for Christians is their own self-condemnation, their own disappointment, their kicking of themselves, their failure to live up to their own expectations. They're seeing themselves through jaundiced eyes.

They're not seeing themselves as God sees them. Purity of heart affects all seeing. It opens the heavens.

So I'll just close with that same statement about Stephen in Acts 7. So guileless that when he's brought to a place of confrontation with his own Jewish kinsmen, instead of playing it safe and being politic in what he would say so as not to antagonize them or maybe to be more gentle in his critique, he just pulls out the stops. He just gives them an entire survey of the history of Israel and says, as your fathers did, so do you also. You do always grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

And if a man talks like that, he's going to catch it. So why didn't he play it safe? Because he's without guile. A man who is guileless does not figure the angles of what the consequence will be for his speaking.

He simply speaks what God gives him and lets the consequence fall of itself. That's guileless. And in this case, it cost him his life.

When they heard these things, they became enraged, it says in Acts 7.54, ground their teeth at Stephen. There's something about a man like that that the world cannot abide. Why did they leave those Anabaptists alone, of whom today we have the Mennonites, the Hutterites, a few of the ones that are the little left over, the survivors of the 16th century reform movement that were plagued, they were pursued, they were ousted, they were moved from country to country, they were stripped of their possessions, they were tormented.

I just came from Innsbruck, Austria, to the place where Jacob Hutter, the apostolic father of the Hutterite movement, who was only a Hutter, he was a tradesman, was burned at the stake under the golden Adach, the roof, where the king and the high priesthood of the Catholic church and other public officials gloated and delighted watching this man being burned alive, who was already tortured for two months, and the accounts of his imprisonment are that they so lacerated his body and poured brandy into the wounds and lit it. And he never once surrendered, never once gave them information, never once betrayed the faith, right through to the burning alive at the stake, a martyr, precious martyr, precious testimony, and that blood is still crying up from the earth, and God has a particular regard for those who die in that way, who could have saved themselves if they had played the angles, cut the corner, were not so insistent on their integrity, found some acceptance that would save them from the probable death, but they didn't know how to play that game. They were what they were, what you see is what you get, and the world hates seeing it.

Why did the Lutherans and the Catholics pursue those pitiful still ones, these quiet ones, and why couldn't they let them live in their communities? The quality of life that Luther was persuaded, that the only way to

understand it is that they were demonic, because they didn't curse, they didn't drink, they didn't whore, so there must be something wrong with them. It's a falsity that Satan is creating because he never saw that in Lutherans. He could not even understand their virtue, their sacrifice, and attributed it to the devil.

Why couldn't they let them live? They never did bother anyone, because their very presence was a contradiction of those who purported to be Christian. Their very presence blew the whistle on what was a fraudulent Christianity, and they could not bear to allow themselves to be exposed, even by the contrast of these people who were genuinely in an apostolic faith. Therefore, they had to be driven out or extinguished.

That's why Stephen got his. I'm surprised that Nathaniel, although I'm sure that he also suffered a violent death, for his own end, because anyone who lives in innocency, in the guilelessness of God, in the transparency that ought to characterize the church that is the church, is going to invite and provoke antagonism against them. The world can't bear to see that demonstration because it's the statement of very God and his character.

How do you obtain purity of heart like that, Art? Well, there are a few clues in Psalm 32 that was brought to our attention in a community discussion. I hope that you're reading the Psalms every day in your morning devotional time, where it begins, Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, happy or blessed. Blessed are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Hey, how did that get in there? It's a blessed condition, saints, to be guileless. It's a blessed condition to have your iniquity removed and covered. You know how that psalm ends? Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. Not shout for joy because you've been primed or pumped by an atmosphere or an environment or a worshipful thing that buoys you up, but leap for joy because of your righteousness. I don't know how to say this.

This could be my last night. I'm willing that it should. But I want to say that there's an enjoyment and a delight in being cleaned through the cookie, through and through, that is inexpressible.

There's something about purity of heart and innocence and having your transgressions forgiven and the deceit removed from your spirit that just makes... that joy rises up. Joy is the consequence of righteousness. And it's a joy that few of us have experienced.

So long as there's a little leaven in the lump, we'll have to turn the amplifiers up to produce a comparable kind of seeming joy. But when the time is over, we sag back again into what is the truth of our condition. I'm saying, according to the Word of God, that there's a joy that we ought to seek, and once we taste it, it will be the greatest incentive to maintain righteousness before God.

I double dare you to define what righteousness is. Take a stab at writing two or three sentences. What is righteousness? Jesus was the honored Son who hated iniquity and loved righteousness.

Have you ever drooled over righteousness? Have you ever panted over righteousness? Have you ever felt the moisture in your mouth as the Word is expressed or mentioned or cited? Do you love righteousness? Do you know what it is? If you bumped into it, would you recognize it? Whatever it is, it's real but rare. And one of the evidences of those who know it, who are upright in heart, whose hearts are without deceit,

without calculation, without design, without chicanery, without manipulation, is joy. Continual and constantly.

Not with regard to conditions, but something that issues when you're walking blamelessly before the Lord and with a conscience undefiled before God and before men. I guess I'm sounding a minor note. This isn't sweeping apostolic verity that makes you leap out of your seat.

This is a minor note. Or is it a major note? Is it an ultimate note? Is it an ultimate desire of God? Is this what it means to be a witness unto Him? I commend it to you. I invite you to make it a priority.

I invite you to seek the Lord and let His Spirit illumine and show those areas that are compromised, that are deceitful, that allow guile to linger and to be developed and to be expressed. But if you bring your known sins before the Lord and receive that precious cleansing and withhold nothing in the truth and painful truth about ourselves and our condition, according to Psalm 32, about those who are blessed because their transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, more than covered by the blood of the Lord, removed and happy or blessed are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity. I suspect, and I can't say thus saith the Lord, my brothers can correct me, but I suspect that if you bring the known conscious transgressions and iniquities before the Lord and receive in the condition of truth and righteousness that cleansing, your spirit is at the same time cleansed while your sins are being removed from all guile.

That the blood searches out and removes the subtlety of guile in the spirit that is so subtle we can't even identify it. So to stay clean through the cookie is to avail ourselves of the blood, is to be utterly truthful in all that we know about our own transgressions or failure or sin that we bring before God and before men in confessing our faults one to another. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says if your confession to another is a mere imposture, if it's a vain deceit, if it's not telling the whole truth of it, he says that's the worst prostitution.

If your confession itself is not a true confession, that's the worst spiritual prostitution that any believer can perform. There's got to be a certain ruthlessness about sin, about transgression, about deceit, about guile, a certain recognition that we are all susceptible. We're living in a world that makes its living, that promotes all of these things.

That we need frequently to come before the Lord and to have the subtlety of deceit removed from our spirits because we want to experience that joy, that shout for joy, all you upright in heart. And so while you're shouting for joy, you're going to be made conspicuous to those who are living in deceit and want to draw you into it that you should be one of the boys. And you'll invite an opposition to yourself of the kind that Stephen experienced in chapter 7 as God's first martyr whom men could not bear to look at the glory that issued from his face and the purity of his heart, the depth of his wisdom, his fearlessness and courage, his lack of any regard for his own preservation and who saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

He saw God. And when they heard that, that this Jesus whom they had crucified was now in the elevated and ultimate exalted place of being at the right hand of the Father, they put their fingers in their ears and ran upon him and gnashed upon him with their teeth and stoned him to death. His seeing, his purity of heart that enabled him to see a heaven opened and the Lord standing and having ascended to the place of exaltation brought his own death.

And that's what this kind of seeing is likely to bring you. The pure in heart shall see God. The pure in heart shall see the things about God.

The pure in heart shall see the people of God. The pure in heart shall see themselves as God sees them. The pure of heart shall see.

I love Nathanael. I don't know how he attained to a condition like that in the age of apostasy in which he lived, so different from his kinsmen. It must have been a conscious thing for him to desire that purity, able to maintain an innocence in the midst of such a sinful generation.

When Peter preached at Pentecost, his invitation to his hearers, come out from this untoward and perverse generation. Well, evidently Nathanael already had, and Jesus recognized it. So no condition that is in the world forbids purity of heart.

God invites us to seek it, to make it a high priority, if not a first priority, and to be ruthless against ourselves in any indulgence that we allow or compromise, to be blameless, conscience undefiled, before God and with men, quiet, unassuming, not forwarding ourselves or promoting ourselves. And if we're never used in a conspicuous way, it's all the same to us as being used. That's how guileless we are.

We have no concern for our own use, our own significance, our own fame. We're without any motive as it pertains to ourselves, pure in heart. So I want to pray that in this shoddy generation, this perverse, corrupt generation, this self-seeking generation, this litigious generation, where someone looks at you cockeyed or offends you, you have a court case by which you can obtain millions.

Lawyers are making money hand over fist in litigation over every kind of complaint and kinds of things that men will seize upon in order to obtain advantage. It's a corrupt, defiled age. And it everywhere seeks to influence and to affect us.

We don't have a standard. We don't see an example. We don't have a Nathaniel in our midst.

And if we did, would he make us uncomfortable? Or would we love his fellowship? So Lord, just as an older man praying for the younger, I pray blessing upon these children, blessing upon these young men and women, blessing upon those who have calling in God, that you will have birthed or ignited something tonight by this minor note, this low key, important to you but not something that has occupied us, that they will take it to heart, that they might know the joy that issues out of righteousness, that purity of heart, that makes that irrepressible joy just come forward for the very enjoyment of being clean all through the cookie because there's no guile or deceit anywhere. I bless these children, Lord. Bless them with this aspiration, this desire.

May they avail themselves more gratefully of your blood, knowing that even as their sins are washed away, so also is deceit removed from their spirit, that they might be to each other without guile. A generation of whom the world is not worthy, pure in the way they look and bear themselves and the way they speak. They don't speak for effect.

They don't fill the air with noise. Quiet. But when they speak, there's something to be heard, something to be considered.

Bless these children, Lord. And have for yourself a Nathaniel generation by which the age is concluded and the world is condemned, even though it invites the world's anger and antagonism because the very presence of such a people infuriated and show them an alternative they don't want to see. That's not just a Christian culture that's hyped up, but an exhibition of heavenliness in ordinary men who walk before them and through them without fear, without self-concern.

They're guileless. Thank you, Lord, for such privilege, such opportunity. Help us, my God, to obtain that joy and to maintain it in a fellowship, my God, that will receive correction, admonition, speaking the truth in love, welcoming, correction that comes when someone will say, you know that I've noticed your preaching is getting professional.

You're using certain stylistic devices. Your voice is no longer natural. You sound like a pro.

You're speaking so as to cause effect of a certain kind. It's calculating. It's guile.

You're not trusting the word of God by the spirit of God. You're seeking to bring an effect. It's a manipulation.

It's a deceit. It's contrary to the innocency and guilelessness that God would have especially in the sons and daughters of God who serve him. Help us to see that and to flee from that, Lord, we pray.

It's too costly a thing. In Jesus' name, bless us.

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