

Heart Purity

by A.W. Pink

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a pure heart, which is a result of regeneration and the transformation of character, and promises that those who are pure in heart will see God.

Scripture: Psalm 17:15, Psalm 51:6, Ezekiel 36:26, Matthew 5:8, Acts 15:9, 1 Corinthians 13:9-12, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 10:22, 1 John 1:8

Topics: "Spiritual Discernment", "Heart Purity"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the significance of heart purity in his sermon, explaining that true purity does not equate to sinlessness but rather reflects a sincere and genuine relationship with God. He critiques the false notion of complete eradication of sin in believers, highlighting that even the greatest saints struggled with sin. Pink asserts that the 'pure in heart' are those who have undergone regeneration and possess a heart transformed by God's grace, allowing them to see God both now and in the future. He encourages self-examination of one's motives and affections, urging believers to seek a deeper communion with God. Ultimately, the sermon reveals that the promise of seeing God is both a present reality and a future hope for the pure in heart.

Transcript

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (MATTHEW 5:8).

This is another of the Beatitudes which has been grossly perverted by the enemies of the Lord; enemies who have, like their predecessors the Pharisees, posed as the champions of the truth and boasted of a superior sanctity to that confessed by the true people of God. All through this Christian era there have been poor deluded souls who have claimed an entire purification of the old man, or who have insisted that God has so completely renewed them that the carnal nature has been eradicated, and in consequence that they not only commit no sins but have no sinful desires or thoughts. But God tells us: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Of course such people appeal to the Scriptures in support of their vain delusion, applying to experience verses which describe the legal benefits of the Atonement. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" does not mean that our hearts have been washed from the corrupting defilements of evil, but that the sacrifice of Christ has availed for the judicial blotting out of sins. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17) refers not to our state in this world, but to the Christian's standing before God.

That purity of heart does not mean sinlessness of life is clear from the inspired record of the history of all of God's saints. Noah got drunk; Abraham equivocated; Moses disobeyed God; Job cursed the day of his birth; Elijah fled in terror from Jezebel; Peter denied Christ. Yes, perhaps someone will exclaim, But all these were before Christianity was established. True, but it has also been the same since then. Where shall we go to find a Christian of superior attainment to those of the apostle Paul? And what was his experience? Read Romans 7 and see. When he would do good, evil was present with him (v. 21); there was a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin (v. 23). He did, with the mind, serve the law of God; nevertheless, with the flesh he served the law of sin (v. 25). Ah, Christian reader, the truth is that one of the most conclusive evidences that we do possess a pure heart is the discovery and consciousness of the impurity of the old heart dwelling side by side within. But let us come closer to our text.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." In seeking an interpretation to any part of this Sermon on the Mount the first thing to bear in mind is that those whom our Lord was addressing had been reared in Judaism. As said one who was deeply taught of the Spirit: "I cannot help thinking that our Lord, in using the terms before us, had a tacit reference to that character of external sanctity or purity which belonged to the Jewish people, and to that privilege of intercourse with God which was connected with that character. They were a people separated from the nations polluted with idolatry; set apart as holy to Jehovah; and, as a holy people, they were permitted to draw near to their God, the only living and true God, in the ordinances of His worship". On the possession of this character, and on the enjoyment of this privilege, the Jewish people plumed themselves.

"A higher character, however, and a higher privilege, belonged to those who should be the subjects of the Messiah's reign. They should not only be externally holy, but, 'pure in heart'; and they should not merely be allowed to approach towards the holy place, where God's honour dwelt, but they should 'see God,' be introduced into the most intimate intercourse with Him. Thus viewed, as a description of the spiritual character and privileges of the subjects of the Messiah, in contrast with the external character and privileges of the Jewish people, the passage before us is full of the most important and interesting truth." (Dr. John Brown).

"Blessed are the pure in heart." Opinion is divided as to whether these words of Christ are to be understood literally or figuratively; whether the reference be to the new heart itself received at regeneration, or to the moral transformation of character which results from a Divine work of grace being wrought in the soul. Probably both aspects of the truth are combined here. In view of the late place which this Beatitude occupies in the series, it would appear that the purity of heart upon which our Saviour pronounced His blessing, is that internal cleansing which accompanies and follows the new birth. Yet, inasmuch as no heart purity exists in the natural man, what is here affirmed by Christ must be traced back to regeneration itself.

The Psalmist said, "Behold Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psa. 51:6). How far this goes beneath the outward renovation and reformation which comprises such a large part of the efforts now being put forth in Christendom! Much that we see around us is a hand religion-seeking salvation by works-or a head religion, which rests satisfied with an orthodox creed. But God looketh on the heart-an expression which appears to include the understanding, the affections and the will. It is because God looketh within that He gives a "new heart" (Ezek. 36:26) to His own people, and "blessed" indeed are they who have received such, for it is a "pure heart."

As intimated above, we believe this sixth Beatitude contemplates both the new heart received at regeneration and the transformation of character which follows God's work of grace in the soul. First, there is a "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5) by which we understand a cleansing of the affections, which are now set upon things above, instead of things below; this is parallel with "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Accompanying this is the cleansing of the conscious-"having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22), which refers to the removal of the burden of conscious guilt, the inward realization that being justified by faith we "have peace with God."

But the purity of heart commended here by Christ goes further than this. What is purity? Freedom from defilement, undivided affections, sincerity and genuineness. As a quality of Christian character, we would define it as godly simplicity. It is the opposite of subtlety and duplicity. Genuine Christianity lays aside not only malice, but guile and hypocrisy. It is not enough to be pure in words and in outward deportment; purity of desires, motives, intents, are what should, and do in the main, characterize the child of God. Here then is a most important test for every professing Christian to apply to himself: Are my affections set upon things above? Are my motives pure? Why do I assemble with the Lord's people?-to be seen of men, or to meet with the Lord and enjoy sweet communion with Him?

"For they shall see God." Once more we would point out how that the promises attached to these Beatitudes have both a present and a future fulfillment. The pure in heart possess spiritual discernment and with the eyes of their understanding they obtain clear views of the Divine character and perceive the excellency of His attributes. When the eye is single the whole body is full of light. In the truth, the faith of which purifies the heart, they 'see God'; for what is that truth but a manifestation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ-an illustrious display of the combined radiance of Divine holiness and Divine benignity!

And he not only obtains clear and satisfactory views of the Divine character, but he enjoys intimate and delightful communion with God. He is brought very near God; God's mind becomes his mind; God's will becomes his will; and his fellowship is truly with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

"They who are pure in heart 'see God' in this way, even in the present world; and in the future state their knowledge of God will become far more extensive and their fellowship with Him far more intimate; for though, when compared with the privileges of a former dispensation, even now 'as with open face we behold the glory of the Lord,' yet, in reference to the privileges of a higher economy, we yet see but 'through a glass darkly'-we 'know but in part'-we understand but in part, we enjoy but in part. But 'that which is in the part shall be done away,' and 'that which is perfect shall come.' We shall yet see face to face and know even as we are known (I Cor. 13:9-12); or to borrow the words of the Psalmist, we 'shall behold his face in righteousness, and shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness' (Psa. 17:15). Then, and not till then, will the full meaning of these words be understood 'the pure in heart shall see God.'" (Dr. John Brown).

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