

The Importance of Purity of Heart

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Date: 10 June 2020

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[0 : 0 0] eight, one of the verses here from the Beatitude, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Now as we know the Beatitudes are all linked together. The poverty of spirit and the mourning is very much linked to the purity of heart. And the Christian is somebody who is at the one hand is pure in heart, but is also mourning because of the great sense of impurity that they experience and know about within their heart. So there's this strange mixture of on the one hand through the ministry of the spirit, there is a purity of heart, but there is also an overwhelming sense of impurity because of the continued sin that exists within us. Now of course purity of heart is far greater than simply honesty and sincerity, although we would expect that those who are pure in heart would display in their lives honesty and sincerity and integrity. But people can have a very, as it were, an outward display in life of where they might appear very morally upright and very correct in all that they're about and in all that they do, and yet have very impure hearts, that their hearts are not in any way pure at all. I think probably a frightening example of that would be the Pharisees, because in the times of Jesus, if you looked around and you were to try and see people who lived as close to the law as possible, and indeed for many of the Pharisees, they tried to go beyond the law so that their lives could not be found fault within any way. You couldn't find any blemish or fault in their outward conduct.

And yet, the Lord who sees every heart, his statement over them was that they were really like whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones. That's basically what they were like, that they were utterly corrupt with inside, dead, dying corruption. And so the Lord knows what their heart is really like.

And it's, it can be quite devastating when we realise the Lord's verdict of us, as we were seeing that recently of what it tells us in, back in Genesis, before the flood, that the, sorry, that's the phone going here, that it tells us of how the Lord, the time of the flood, that he saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And that's a fearful statement, really. But it shows us how God is seeing right into our heart, and seeing what we think, and our attitude to everything.

And sometimes when we read the like of what it says here in Genesis, one part of us is saying, that is terrible. But there are moments where we also say, you know, that's a description of my heart. That seems to be the way that I am too. And it's, it's only through the ministry of the Spirit that we can come to, to that kind of discovery. Now, as we said, a, a person can appear outwardly, to be the possessor of a pure heart, but might not be, they might not have any spiritual life in them at all. I read once, and I don't know if this is true, but I, I take it, it's true, because I, I read about it, about a tree that was struck by lightning. It was just, just before autumn time, before the leaves start falling from the trees.

[4 : 1 5] This tree was struck by lightning, and the tree became dead. There was no life in it. But something quite remarkable happened in that all the trees round about lost their leaves at the normal time.

But the tree that had been struck by lightning and was dead, retained its leaves for a good while, after all the other trees had lost their leaves. It was a strange thing. And if you walked around, you'd say, what tree there is living? You would say, well, there's only one tree that has life in it.

It's the one with the, with the leaves on it. And yet that was the tree that was dead. And all the others that had lost their leaves were still living. And it can, that can be true spiritually as well, because outwardly people can appear to have all the right traits and characteristics and such like, and yet not have that spiritual life within them. But the pure in heart have life in them.

And they know of that life in two particular ways. The first is that there is a desire within their heart, a desire within their life to have purity of heart. Every true believer has this desire within them. And

they're saying, Lord, please give me a pure heart. And side by side with that, there is a mourning within their life, within their heart, about the impurity of their heart. So there's these two aspects to it. There's the desire for the pure heart. And there is a mourning because of the impurity within the heart. And the Lord always shows us that impurity through the work of his spirit.

You remember how David, when after he had sinned greatly, he was in a backslidden condition. He didn't really, he wasn't aware of the magnitude of his sin because he was obviously in a backslidden condition at that time until he was convicted. And then there was this incredible acknowledgement that God desires truth in the inward part. And he then begins to pray and say, Lord, create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me. David was so conscious that the problem that was all, everything that had happened to him had really happened because his heart was wrong. And so often when we go wrong in life and we, and we should, we review our lives and we think about what, what we've done and why we've gone wrong. It is often as we trace back, we see the problem all began in there. But those who are pure in heart, there is an openness about them. There is a transparency in their life.

[7 : 12] They live lives where there are no kind of hidden agendas. There is, they are in all the relationship, it's not a relationship of deceit and with, as we say, with hidden agendas and trying to wrong foot people and trying to get one over people. There is, although we said honesty and integrity, don't reveal a pure heart, yet those who have a pure heart ought to live lives that have this integrity and honesty about them. And so that they're trying to, they're not in any way trying to live in a deceitful way. And as we journey through life, those who are pure in heart are seeking to be more and more careful in how they live, that they're seeking to avoid sin, because they know that, that sin is such a blight within their life. And so there's, there is a growing desire for holiness, for Christlikeness. Of course, this comes about again through the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us.

And so there is a desire, as we said, for this holiness. Now, the pure in heart, when, when the Lord says, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. We don't just want the purity of heart, because there is a command in Scripture to be holy and to be pure. Yes, of course, that is the number one reason why we should, because we're told that. But another reason is because of the deep experiences that we've had as we go along in the Christian life. Because when you think back to times where the Lord has really blessed you, where he has come really close to you, and you're conscious of, of living with him, it's as if you've gone up another level. And the things in this world have lost their magnetism, they've lost their hold on you. There's a growing sense of peace and unity in the Lord.

And you want this to go on forever. You feel that you're bathed in his love. And you have a sense of his presence, of his closeness, of his nearness, of his love. And faith is such that you see him. And you're saying to yourself, I want to live like this all the time. I don't want to go back. I don't want anything else in life. There is a complete satisfaction in God at these times.

But it doesn't last. You want it to last. And it doesn't last. And it's amazing how quickly we can, we can lose where we were, and go back from where we were. And go back to, to, just as it were, maybe a more normal Christian life. But we always say, I want to get back there. I want to be able to see God.

[10 : 26] And the, it's very, very important for us to have this, this desire and longing in our heart. Because it does, as we say, it doesn't take much to lose where we are.

See, the Holy Spirit is very easily grieved. The Holy Spirit is tender. And we can very, very, very easily grieve God's Spirit. Remember how in the, before the fall, it tells us of how God walked, how he came to the garden. And in a sense, the believer's heart is like a garden.

And the closer we live with the Lord, the more we desire to be like our Lord. And the more that we are seeking to put to death all that is wrong within us, the more we will be aware of the Lord's presence within us.

It's as if he has come to walk in the garden of our heart with us again. He is always there, of course, through the Holy Spirit is always there. But this consciousness, this awareness of his being there. So it tells us that the pure in heart will see God. So there's to be no compromise, because compromise is the enemy of the purity of heart.

[11 : 54] So we mustn't let anything get in the way. However, so many things do get in the way. And you could be, for instance, you could be looking at a magnificent view of just a wonderful landscape.

And you're standing there looking at it and you say, that is absolutely beautiful. You're admiring the scene. Somebody comes up behind you, you're not aware of them.

And they put their hand, maybe about six inches from your face over your eyes. And all of a sudden, you can barely see anything. You can only see a wee bit down there and a bit down the corner of your eyes.

But that beautiful view you were looking on is gone. It hasn't gone. It's still there in all its beauty. But because this big dirty hand is coming the way, it's blocking the view.

And our sin is like that big dirty hand that comes in and blocks all of a sudden our view of the Lord.

[12:58] The view that we had, the blessing that we had, the sense of fellowship and communion that we had, how quickly it can fade because of sin. Remember what it tells us, if we nourish or cherish sin in our heart, the Lord will not hear us.

If we fondle it. And we've got to remember that our DNA is sinful. That's what we're made up of. Our whole being is sinful. And we side with sin naturally.

And so this is part of the ongoing battle where we're seeking that we will become pure in heart. And of course, when we talk about being pure in heart and we talk about sin, we so often think of impurity purely in the lines of maybe the lust of the flesh.

And we think of us, it's just lust. But we can be impure in every aspect. You go through all the commandments and impurity is attached to every single one of them.

And it branches right out. And very often we think of impurity only with regard to, say, for instance, the seventh commandment. But it covers every single aspect of the commands.

[14:14] Where it's if we think ill of anybody. If we have a murderous intent within our heart. If we have impure thoughts. Going through any of the commandments are in so many different ways.

We are again showing that impurity. So, we've got to remember it's a massive obstacle to seeing God. But it's a price worth paying when we do come to see God.

I believe that the Apostle Paul, who saw the Lord and ways that few others, he counted everything else but dumb. He just, all these things that people put so much to it by.

He said, they mean nothing. That I might know him. And the power of his resurrection. The fellowship of his sufferings. Paul, having seen the Lord in the way he did.

Nothing else could or would satisfy him in this world. So, how do we see the Lord? Well, we see him in various ways. Very briefly in conclusion. We see him, for instance, in his dealings with us.

[15:18] We are able to recognize his hand at work in our lives. We look back and we see what he has done. And we marvel at his goodness and his mercy. You know, there are times that we can go through life and we just take the blessings of God for granted.

And we don't stop and we don't think and we don't realize just what we have. Because even in the midst of all the difficulties, God's goodness and mercy is still following all the days of our life.

And it's great to be able to see God's hand in everything. And when we see God, we can see him in his providence.

We see him in the way that he opens doors and closes doors. We see him in the afflictions and trials that come into our life. But we also see him in the joys and the blessings that come into our life.

We see him in all these different things. It all speaks to us of him. And when we are pure in heart or when we're warring against that sin and seeking to be pure in heart, we see God at work.

[16:27] We see so much. We see him in his word. And we come to his word more and more and it opens up to us. You see, when we're pure in heart, God's word, it's like it takes on, it's like wings of a dove rising up and we're carried along with it.

We're brought up to see new things. As the psalmist said, open thou mine eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law. And that's what God does because the Holy Spirit will open our minds.

And very often we cannot share with anybody, but it's what we experience. And the experience goes in deep into our soul and we say, ah, that's really wonderful.

But as is often the case or as is always the case with the kingdom blessings, there is the present and there is the future. There is the now and the not yet.

And when we begin to see, when we begin to experience the purity of heart here, it is a foretaste of what that purity of heart would be really like in glory.

[17 : 38] Because there we will see the Lord unhindered. There will be no dirty hand of sin covering our eyes.

We will see him as he is and we shall be like him. The impurities will all be gone. Our vision will be clear. And that's why we're told in 1 John, as the apostle writes in chapter 3, And he says there, Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared.

But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself as he is pure.

So this is part of the ongoing work. As we wait our Lord and as we long for our Lord, we're seeking that we might have this purity of heart.

The promise in it is wonderful. Because there's not one of us here tonight, but would want above everything else to see God. I want to see more of the Lord.

[18 : 51] I want to see him. I want the eye of faith to be so keen that I will sense his presence, that I will be conscious of his being with me.

That I might be lifted up to behold him in his word, to see the beauty of Christ, his wonderful beauty and wonder to me. Because so often we can lose it, as we say, of that dirty hand of sin, the DNA of sin, so often spoils and mars.

But the battle is worth it because of what we receive. May God grant us the grace then to seek him with all our heart that we may indeed come to know him more and more.

Lord, we're going to conclude our meeting singing from Psalm 63. And we're going to sing verses 1 to 5. And this is Psalm 63, verses 1 to 5.

And we're singing from the Scottish Psalter. And Roddy Martin is going to lead us in the singing tonight, Psalm 63.

[20 : 03] Lord, thee my God, I lairly seek my sword, a thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land wherein no waters be.

That I thy power may behold and brightness of thy face. As I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place. Since better is thy love than life, my lips thee praise shall give.

I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live. Verses 1 to 5. Lord, thee my God, I lairly seek my sword. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.