

**Matthew 5: 8 – “A True View of Purity of Heart”; Sermon # 9 in a series entitled –
“These Sayings of Mine”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
February 9th, 2020, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Last Sunday I preached to you the first sermon on purity of heart where I opened up to you the truth about what you must do to obtain it. To have purity of heart you must have Christ. You must purify your soul by obeying the truth of the gospel, through the Holy Spirit's power. God the Spirit must show you that you are impure first, and then He will show you the purity of Christ. He will take the things of Christ and reveal them to you in connection with the preaching of the word so that you will be saved. When you believe in Christ's righteousness you are justified by faith. You are declared righteous by the Father's imputing Christ's righteousness to your legal account. When you believe in Christ, you also come to know that you have been born again by the Spirit of God, because after you believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

These acts of God at the time of your conversion to Christ set the stage for your pursuing holiness in progressive sanctification which is also the ongoing work of the Spirit in your heart and life. Now, at this hour I want to speak to you about the true view of purity of heart. The reason that I say the true view is that there are some views of purity of heart that even true Christians may hold to, which are not true, and they will be detrimental to your really making consistent established progress in holiness if they are believed. Many Christians even, do not even seem to understand initial or definitive sanctification; that when you believe in Christ, your heart has been circumcised, and you experience a real death to sin where the dominion and power of sin is broken.

And so I want to build upon that truth today by trying to clarify for you, 1st of all – The important distinction between sin and sins. 2nd – The important distinction between being perfect and being mature. And 3rd – The important distinction between purifying ourselves day by day and God's permanently purifying us. I am hoping that by clarifying these distinctions that the errors which some Christians hold to, in regard to purity of heart, will cease to be propagated, and that Christian unity and true love for others who do not yet understand these truths will bring us to the place see ourselves correctly and understand better the work that Christ is doing in our hearts, and that He is the touchstone of all true purity of heart.

1st of all – Let's take a look at the important distinction between sin and sins in relation to living our Christian life before God and men.

Turn with me over to 1st John chapter 1, verses 5-10, and I will add verses 1 and 2 of chapter 2 because they will also help us to understand this subject better. “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” “If we confess our sin sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.” “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Light and darkness are word pictures which we must understand in order to make progress in purity. Light is a word picture for what God is in His essential nature. He is perfect and pure righteousness and holiness in His Essence. He is infinitely wise in the most absolute sense; He is the only wise God. Light is a word picture related to His infinite glory; He who shines in the darkness. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the radiance of the Father's glory, the Sunshine of His Father's face. God the Father dwells in unapproachable light who no man has seen or can see, it says in 1st Timothy 6:16. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk

in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. Here the word “walk” is the key to understanding. If we say that we are having holy interaction, holy fellowship with this pure and perfect God, and we walk in darkness, that is, that we living our life in sin; walking according to the flesh, and we do not see any problem with the way that we are thinking about sin, refusing to deal with it, and refusing to repent of it, we are living a lie. We are not practicing the truth.

But if we walk in the light of God’s truth, His written word, if walk in the Spirit and according to His good motions and guidance and teaching to our mind and heart, He will lead us into all of the truth and teach us over time to be pure in heart. If we walk in the light as He, the Triune God is in the light, we will have fellowship with all the Persons of the Divine Trinity. We will have fellowship and communion with God and derive real comfort from it. Why? Because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. I want you to notice the tense of the verb cleanses there. It is an ongoing cleansing from all sin during whole the course of our life from the time that we become a Christian. When we came to Christ, when God sought us out and gave us the experience of the New Birth, we knew definitive sanctification. We knew the reality of the circumcision of our heart.

We who have believed in Christ know, if we are reading our Bibles correctly, that we experienced spiritually, when we were saved, the cutting away of the foreskin of the flesh of our heart and the taking away of the heart of stone. We came to know the reality of God’s having given us a heart of flesh; that is a tender heart toward God and truth and spiritual things. Now let’s go on to verse 8. “If we should say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Look at the tenses of the words have and sin. If we say that we have (present tense) no sin, as a Christian, we deceive ourselves. And also, if we say that we have no sin (singular), not sins plural, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

There is a reason for this very particular wording by John. He is saying, that if we say, after we have become a Christian, that we no longer think that we have any sinful nature left in our being; that we believe that God removed the Old Nature entirely, we deceive ourselves if we think that. It is such an important truth in relation to purity of heart that John adds these words – the truth is not in us. Now, when John says that the truth is not in us, I believe that we can take these words in one of two senses. One, that we may not really know the Lord because we never did understand the truth rightly, that we had any sin in us in the past or at the present. But yet we have professed to be a Christian even so. And thus we are an Antinomian because we believe as a Christian that we can live without confessing our sins or repenting of them. We really do not see obedience to God’s word and His law as a fundamentally important issue. John is saying that if we think this way, the truth is not in us.

The other sense of the words is that you are a Christian who professes that after you were converted, saved and justified by God through Christ, that you now have no remaining corrupt nature within you, or that you believe that you can attain to that state of Christian Perfection in your experience by an act of faith. This was the teaching of John and Charles Wesley during the time of the first great awakening. That, just as you received Christ by faith, that you can also be sanctified by faith also, in a moment of time, and believe that you have then come to “full salvation” or “full sanctification”, and “the root of sin” is taken away. In this sense, I believe that we need to understand that the truth is not in them; that it is an error, and we need to pray for them as brothers in the Lord, that they will come to see their error and fall in line with what the clear teaching of the word of God is. For it is a deceiving truth.

One of the reasons that we can know that it is an error is verse 9. John says – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Once again, John is not speaking to unbelievers, he is speaking to believers who he is assuming will sin at a number of points in their Christian experience because they still have indwelling remaining corruption within them, And so he is encouraging them with this wonderful truth that their mind, and heart, their soul and their conscience will all be cleansed of all such sins. He is not saying that their sinful nature, the flesh, will ever be removed until death. He is saying that all sins which

proceed from the sinful nature (whose dominion has been taken away) will be forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Glorious truth! “All sins and blasphemies will be forgiven men,” says the Lord Jesus in Matthew 12: 31. That is, if they confess them and sincerely make efforts to completely forsake them; not by their own power, but by the Spirit’s power. “If you by the Spirit are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live,” Paul says in Romans 8: 13. He follows it up in verse 10 of 1st John with refuting the idea that we have not sinned in the past, and he says – if we say that, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. He then goes on to talk gently to tender hearted believers and says in verse 1 of chapter 2 – “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.” These are incentives for you not to sin, but rather to pursue righteousness and holiness. But he follows it up by saying – “And if anyone sins, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

What could be more encouraging than this? All of our past sins are forgiven when we come to Christ for salvation. All of the present sins which we find that we have committed or which we find in our heart, Christ has made propitiation for them, and He will be our defense attorney with the Father to mediate and intercede on our behalf so that God will continue to work with us and teach us His holy way, no matter how many mistakes we make, or sins we may commit. If we will confess them with a view to forsaking them, we shall find mercy, as it says in Proverbs 28: 13. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”

2nd – Let us consider the important distinction between being perfect and being mature.

What does it mean to be perfect as a Christian? Well, look with me over at 1st John 2, verses 3-6. “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.” “By this we know that we are in Him.” “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” So, John is saying that if we keep God’s commandments we can know that we know Him; we can have true assurance of salvation. If we do not go about to keep His commandments, having made profession of being a Christian, John says, that that profession of ours is a lie; the truth is not in us. But whoever keeps God’s word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him. This means that when the Christian goes about to keep God’s word, the love of God is perfected in Him. It does not say that the love of God is perfect in him. It says that it is perfected, or it is being perfected in him.

Once again, the Bible in many place places describes this as a life-long process following conversion; the process of becoming more righteous and holy people in living the Christian life. We do not keep the commandments of God from a legal obedience. We do not think that we can do and keep God’s commandments perfectly in a legal sense; keeping every jot and title of God’s holy law, keeping it in an absolutely perfect sense as Christ alone could do; but we go about to do what is right as perfectly as we can; as perfectly as God’s grace will show us how to keep it, and enable us to keep it. We will do this as a response of love to God for what He did in sending Christ to fulfill the law absolutely and perfectly on our behalf. He is the only One who has ever done this, and He is the only One who ever will do it perfectly in the absolute sense. But we do strive to keep all of God’s commands in a way that will please Him; striving to do what is commanded of us, by faith working by means of love to Him and to people around us.

In other words the obedience of a Christian is a gracious, sincere, obedience to God and to His word. We are learning how to please Him, in the way that we go about to keep His commandments. Our walk before God and with Christ is a life of faith working by means of love. We walk by faith and not by sight. We walk by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. If we abide in Christ we are walking just as He walked. How did He walk? Well think with me about Ephesians 5: 1 and 2. “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.” “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us

and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Here we see that we are to imitate God in thinking of what Christ did for us. We are to walk in love to God and man. We are to give ourselves to His service in doing right things even as Christ went about doing good out of His love for His Father.

This can only come from having been cleansed from our old sins, and in our learning to grow in purity of heart. Think of Titus chapter 1, verses 15 and 16. “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but their mind and conscience are defiled.” “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” You can see here that to the pure, those who have been cleansed from all of their sins in their initial salvation, having had their hearts purified by faith in Christ, they are called pure by God, even though He knows that there is much work that the Holy Spirit will need to do in relation to them each and every day until they die and all their indwelling remaining corruption of sin is purged from their spirit.

All things that they go about to do in their service to God are pure because both they and their works are sanctified by the grace of Christ. The Spirit is working in their hearts (and therefore, the imperfections and sins connected to these works are being cleansed when they need to be, and these works are accepted as good works because of Christ’s righteousness imputed to them, and His grace working in them to purify them) in their every service to God. Unbelievers cannot do this because they are defiled and unbelieving, and so for them, nothing of their service to God can be acceptable to Him. They are abominable and disobedient and thus disqualified for every good work. Christ is the touchstone of the Christian’s purity of heart. It is therefore only those who walk with Christ, being in love with Him, who are able to be perfected in their purity of heart by their work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. For these lead to a Spirit-filled service being rendered to God which is pleasing to Him. What is the standard then for the Christian in terms of love and purity of heart? If you will turn over to Matthew chapter 5, verses 43-48 and you will find it.

These are the words of Jesus. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?” “Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” “And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others.” “Do not even the tax collectors do so?” “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

We should not think of this command for us to be perfect, as our striving to obtain absolute perfection in this life; thinking that we can think attain to this somehow in this life by our works, or even our having this righteousness and holiness given to us by faith. Rather, it means that by faith and obedience we pursue perfection of the same kind as God exercises in His works, in terms of what we are doing for others. We are to love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us. We are to do good to those who hate us. We are to pray for those who spitefully use us, that it might be understood by others that we are sons of our Father in heaven.

Not that salvation is by these good works; it is not. But these good works of love and mercy that we will engage in, that are commanded here, are done so that it might be seen by those who do not love us, as being done for them, because we are sons and daughters of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Now there is a problem with the view of holiness that is taken by those who would follow John Wesley’s view of Christian perfection. In his view, a person can be justified and forgiven of all of their sins because of Christ’s work on the cross. But he also believes that full and complete sanctification is something that can be received as a gift in an instant. And it also may be lost later if it is not carefully and consciously held on to through pure devotion to God.

Listen to his own words on P. 224 of the 2nd Volume of his Sermons on Several Occasions. (1840), in a sermon on James 1: 4, “Let patience have her perfect work”, He says – “Sanctification too is “not of works, lest any man should boast” “It is the gift of God, and is to be received by plain, simple faith.”

“Suppose you are now laboring to ‘Abstain from all appearance of evil’, ‘zealous for good works’, and walking diligently and carefully in all the ordinances of God; there is then only one point remaining: the voice of God to your soul is, ‘Believe, and be saved.’ “First believe that God has promised to save you all sin and fill you with all holiness: secondly, believe that he is able thus ‘to save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him: ‘Thirdly, believe that he is willing, as well as able to save you to the uttermost; to purify you from all sin, and fill up all your heart with love.”

“Believe fourthly, that he is not only able, but willing to do it now!” “Not when you come to die, not at any distant time; not tomorrow, but today.” “He will then enable you to believe, it is done, according to His word: and then ‘Patience shall have it perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” “You shall then be perfect.” “The apostle seems to mean by this expression, τελειοι, you shall be wholly delivered from every evil work; from every evil word; from every sinful thought; yea, from every evil desire, passion, temper; from all inbred corruption, from all remains of the carnal mind, from the body of sin; and you shall be renewed in the spirit of your mind, in every right temper, after the image of him that created you, in righteousness and true holiness.”

This was John Wesley’s view of Christian holiness. In some ways you have to admire him and others who hold to this same view. They not only desire to pursue holiness but they want to find out the ultimate extent to which they can go in this life in their experience of holiness. They greatly desire to live on this higher plain of being completely liberated from the motions of sin in their hearts and they believe that the Scriptures teach that this is possible. This is certainly commendable. But I would suggest to you that these expressions that I just read to you are not being understood in their Biblical context of simple straightforward understanding.

Sanctification is directly related to our work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope as I have already shown you. It is not something which is to be received in a moment and then perhaps lost sometime later unless it is jealously guarded. No, the truth is, that we cannot completely eradicate from our hearts the motions of sin which come from our carnal sinful nature, the flesh. It is true, as it says in Colossians 3: 9 and 10, that we do consciously put off the Old Man with his deeds and put on the New in our conversion to Christ in our mind. But we must die physically to take leave of the Old Man forever.

Until we die, the flesh continues on continually to lust against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. And these things, we are told by the apostle Paul are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” That is, so that you will not do the carnal things that you in your Old Self might wish to do. And Galatians 5: 16 – “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” This statement does not imply that you can ever get above and beyond the spiritual battle that takes place between these two laws in your heart; the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and the law of sin and death which is in your members. The Bible itself is saying that holiness does not take place by receiving it as you do justification, by faith.

Holiness is something that you pursue and work at diligently to make progress in relation to it. But it is nowhere promised in the word of God that you receive it instantaneously. Therefore if a person really believes that he has gotten beyond this battle of the flesh and the Spirit, he is in the dangerous position of being proud of himself for somehow having supposedly attained a kind of perfection which is really non-existent. He may think that he is a more righteous or holy person than other persons who have not experienced this deliverance from all motions of sin in his heart. He will recommend it to them and feel sorry for them if they cannot find it.

But in the process, he will have deceived himself into thinking that he has attained something which he will not attain to, until he dies. The Old Man is simply being very still and quiet, subdued for a time by the peace and joy which come from having given themselves entirely to the Lord, and then believing that they have received the ability to love the Lord with all of their heart, having supposedly completely rid themselves of every sin, according to their own evaluation of themselves, they have been delivered from all their sins. They are in a perfect state. But let me bring you one more distinction to consider.

3rd - The important distinction between purifying ourselves day by day and God's permanently purifying us.

Turn over to 1st John chapter 3, verses 1-3. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" "Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." "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." "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." So here you see the process and the progress of sanctification. The Christian knows that Christ is perfectly pure, and He purifies himself. He knows that his greatest hope is to attain to the greatest purity of heart that he or she can while here upon the earth.

How am I to go about to best purify my heart? It is a question which can be answered by considering Romans 8: 12-14. It says. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh." "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." That is purifying our heart in progressive sanctification. That is pursuing holiness. You must realize that because flesh continues on after you are converted to Christ, that you must continue to mortify his deeds by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You must by the power of the Spirit put to death the deeds of the flesh; his motions to your renewed mind to think wrong thoughts and to do wrong deeds.

And you must replace those sinful thoughts and motions of your heart with the exercise of a supreme love to God to keep His commandments and a sincere love of the brethren so that you will do all that you do to the glory of God. By this means you will make progress in holiness in accordance with how serious and prayerful you are in regard to dealing with these sins of the heart which lead to sins in your actions if you do not take steps to cut off making provision for the flesh. You now have the power in Christ to do this, and God expects that you will strive for greater purity of heart, so that He will be glorified in you.

David was a man after God's own heart, and he fell into grievous sins in relation to Bathsheba. Contrary to what John Wesley has said, he did have the Holy Spirit with him, for he prayed, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me". He remembered that God had taken His Spirit away from Saul when he sinned. But David prayed – "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." He prayed – "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." He had fallen under the discipline of the Lord and so he prayed – "Make me hear joy and gladness, that bones You have broken may rejoice."

But he did not pray – Create in me a New Heart. No, he prayed – "Create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me." He already had a New Heart. But the Lord was pleased with David's confession of his sin and mourning over it. And so He restored to David the joy of his salvation, and He upheld him with His generous spirit. He did not lose his salvation, but was restored and renewed to once again experience the faithful Spirit's working in his heart to bring him back to purity of heart.

In Psalm 18, verses 21-32 it says – "For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God." "For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me." "I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity." "Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His sight." "With the merciful You will show Yourself blameless; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd." "For you will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks." "For You will light my lamp; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." "For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall." "As for God His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him." "For who is God, except the Lord?" "And who is a rock, except our God?" "It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect."

God does all of these wondrous things in progressive sanctification.” Someday, when we have finished our course here upon the earth, we will move up higher, to heaven. And as we enter the presence of God we shall become the spirits of righteous men made perfect. That is the Christian perfection that each of us should be working toward and looking forward to. To be pure and sinless in His presence.