

# A Call to Pure Devotion

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The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:9 in a verse that is stuck in between a couple of familiar verses, but in 2 Corinthians 5:9, the Apostle Paul said that we "have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." He's talking about what the central motivating desire of his heart was. He said, "My ambition is to please Christ." Ambition, the earnest desire for some kind of distinction, some kind of achievement, some kind of benefit. Ambition is the unifying desire in life that influences everything else that you do. You may not consciously think about it but you have something in your heart that motivates you to do what you do, that is the fundamental motivating factor of your life. It is your ambition. Paul says, "My ambition is to please Christ."

Some people have noble ambitions, even if they wouldn't articulate them just like what Paul said here in 2 Corinthians 5:9. Some of you have worldly ambitions, if the truth would be known and your heart was opened up for all of us to see. And some of you have sinful ambitions that shouldn't even be mentioned. The point here is not to talk about those things in detail but simply to highlight the idea of ambition because ambition acts like, your ambition acts like a compass in your life and points you in a particular direction. It either points you in the direction of obedience to Christ or it points you away from him and our text this morning would gather up all of your different desires and different realms of life and put them on a single track that would be honoring to Christ.

We're going to turn to the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 5:8, and so I invite you to turn there in the middle of the Beatitudes. I have been thinking about this verse for the past couple of weeks and so I'm just really excited to be able to let some of that out here before you this morning. In Matthew 5:8, this is an astonishing verse, this is a great verse of Scripture. Matthew 5:8 says, in the middle of Jesus' Beatitudes he says,

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

Now when Jesus says "Blessed" on these people, when he pronounces blessing on the pure of heart, what he is saying is that the people who are pure in heart are the privileged recipients of divine favor. God has blessed the people who are manifested by a pure heart. Not only has he blessed them, he will bless them in the future and so we are talking about a kind of person here, Jesus is talking about a kind of person that God has blessed and that he will bless and what Jesus does here is nothing less than setting forth the

ambition of all of spiritual life; the ambition of spiritual life is set here before you when he says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It's not just the ambition for life on this earth, beloved, this verse addresses the consummation of what it means to be a Christian. This addresses the final goal, the final destination where God is moving all of his children into one great glorious climax around his throne. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Now, I understand that it only takes a few seconds to read this verse and if you've read through on a daily Bible plan or something like that, you've read through that verse and passed over it and hardly given it a thought. That's the nature of reading the Bible in large chunks, but in the Sermon on the Mount and particularly in the Beatitudes, the depth of what Jesus says requires us to put the brakes on, to stop and think and consider because he is speaking without exception in every verse of the Sermon on the Mount, he is speaking at such a great profound level that our normal superficial approach to life simply will not do. We have to stop and consider what it is that he is saying and as we do that with Matthew 5:8, I say without fear of contradiction, we will be greatly last because this statement off the lips of the divine Lord Jesus is stupendous in its promise, it is searching in its requirements, and I say again without fear of contradiction, that it makes all of your efforts at pursuing a godly walk with Christ worthwhile. This verse gives you direction in the depths of sorrow, it gives you direction in the depths of temptation when you are sorely tempted to turn away and to pursue a sinful path, in the midst of just day to day life, this orients your thoughts, orients your desires into one single, pure, undefiled ambition that gives you the promise of seeing God himself face-to-face. So that's why we're considering it today. I can't get enough of this verse, to be honest with you, and the unexpected opportunity to preach it again is just great.

There are five things that we're going to look at about this verse and, first of all, we're going to look at the requirement of a pure heart. The requirement of a pure heart that Jesus lays out here before us. And each of these points, frankly, could be its own separate message but unless John MacArthur is gone for the next five weeks, that would never work.

Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The first thing you need to understand about this is that Jesus is making an exclusive statement here. An exclusive statement. When he says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," he uses an emphatic form and an emphatic construction there to say that these people, the pure in heart, these people and these people alone are the ones who are going to see God, to see God in a realm of blessing with him as their heavenly Father rather than as their eternal judge. These are the people alone that are going to see God. Everyone else, the people who do not have a pure heart, everyone who is not pure in heart as Jesus describes here, all of the ones outside the realm of this particular narrow statement will be lost in their sins to face an eternal destruction in hell.

Jesus is laying forth two paths in the Sermon on the Mount, he says in Matthew 7, he says, "Enter through the narrow gate," Matthew 7:13, he says, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are

many who enter through it." Verse 14, "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus lays forth two paths: one broad path, one narrow path. And on the narrow path, the only path that leads to eternal life, the only people that are found on that narrow path that leads to eternal life are those people who are pure in heart and so what it means to be pure in heart is a matter of supreme importance for your eternal soul and you need to know whether you are a person of pure heart or not because the alternative is just unthinkable. So we want to know what it means to be pure in heart but we want to see, first of all, the necessity or the requirement of a pure heart. Jesus says this is absolutely essential.

Now, purity in heart is a common theme in the Bible and all we're setting forth here in this first point is the fact that it is utterly necessary to have a pure heart; that there is no salvation apart from what Jesus talks about here. For example, in Psalm 24:3-5, you don't need to turn there, I'll just read it, but jot the note down so that you can review these things later. Psalm 24:3-5 says this, it says, "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?" The psalmist answers his question, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation." Who can be in the presence of the Lord? The psalmist says one kind of person, the one with clean hands and a pure heart.

Psalm 73:1 says that, "Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart!" The goodness of God, the blessing of God is limited to those who are pure in heart, and when I say the goodness of God, the blessings of his salvation. Obviously God is good to the righteous and the unrighteous in his common grace, he sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous, he lets the unrighteous enjoy a measure of blessing in this life that comes from his good hand, but in terms of the ultimate blessing of salvation, it is limited to those who are pure in heart.

Hebrews 12:14 says, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." Pure in heart, sanctification necessary to see the Lord. Without it, no one will see the Lord.

So our only point here in point 1, the requirement of a pure heart, is for you to understand that purity of heart is required to see God. You must have a pure heart if you are going to see God. It is fundamental to fellowship with him. God is holy, righteous in all utter perfection and only those who share in that righteousness and holiness can be in his presence. It is absolutely necessary. Without it you will never see God. Ever. So it's required. It's necessary.

Now, if it's so important, if it's so necessary, we need to spend some time considering the second point which is the meaning of a pure heart. What does it mean to have a pure heart in the sense that Jesus uses it here? I want to know the answer to that question, don't you? I want to see God. I want to know his blessing on my life. I want to be a privileged recipient of divine favor and if Jesus says that it's only those who have a pure heart who receive this divine favor, then I want to know what that means. I want to know what that

means so that I can pursue it, so that I can eliminate anything in my life that is contrary to it so that there would be no barrier to the reception of this blessing that Jesus describes. I not only want that for myself, I want it for all of you. I want you to understand these things. I want you to pursue these things. I want you to know the blessing that Jesus describes here so I'm glad you're here this morning so that we can consider these things together. What does it mean to have a pure heart? This is our second point.

Now, in many Christian circles, probably even within some circles of Grace Church, when you speak about purity of heart some people, especially those who maybe come out of student ministries in the recent past, some people will immediately think about matters pertaining to sexual purity. We tend to associate purity with that kind of sensual purity and separation from sexual immorality. Well, that's important, you won't find me arguing against that point, and that idea would be included in what Jesus is talking about here, but what I want you to understand is that that is only a small subsection of the totality of what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus is talking on a much more fundamental level, a much broader level than any matter of a particular kind of purity at a particular time of life. He's speaking much more broadly than that. He is speaking in a manner that is absolutely comprehensive, reigning over the totality of your eternal soul. He's talking about everything in life here and I'm going to show you that right now.

This word that Jesus uses for purity, "the pure in heart," it's also translated elsewhere in the Bible as the word "clean, clean or pure," what it refers to is something, it's used as an adjective to describe something that is unmixed, something that is free from contaminants, something that is free from defilement. Jesus refers to a clean cup, for example, in Matthew 23:26. Jesus was buried in a clean linen cloth, an undefiled, a clean linen cloth, Matthew 27:59. Hebrews 10:22 refers to pure water, water that is uncontaminated. Revelation 21:18 describes pure gold, gold without mixture of foreign elements, contaminants of that nature. So it's the absence of contaminants, the absence of defilement, the purity, the simplicity, the single-mindedness of heart that Jesus is describing.

Now, what does that mean in the spiritual realm? I have illustrated this from the physical realm. We have talked about metals and water and things like that, what is Jesus talking about when he takes a word used in those realms and applies it to the spiritual realm to talk about your heart? That's the question. Stay with me here. This will be worth your effort to listen and pay attention today. When Jesus says that you must have a pure heart, here's what he's saying: he's saying that at the center of your affections, at the core of your thinking, at the base level, at Ground Zero of what motivates you in life and what influences your emotions and your will, here's what he's saying, at that fundamental spiritual level, you cannot have anything at all that conflicts with the supreme priority of loving and obeying God. You cannot tolerate anything in your core being, in your core motivations, at the depth roots of your heart, the fundamental single thing that must motivate you in all of life, in all of your approach to the way that you approach living, the core central requirement at that fundamental base level that determines everything that you do, your supreme priority must be loving and obeying God without any rival anywhere tolerated in your realm of thought.

That's what it means to be pure in heart. No contaminants. No defilement. To drop the metaphor, no competing priorities. No competing affections. If you are a Christian, you must approach life and you must sit back and reflect upon yourself and say, "The fundamental driving force in my life is this one thing, is that I want to love Jesus Christ and obey him with every fiber of my being and nothing will ever compete with that affection. No enemy, no competition is allowed. My heart is," you say to yourself, "my heart is pure. It shall be pure. I am devoted to Christ exclusively and anything that competes with him, anything that would attract me from devotion to him, I declare war on because there must be purity in my heart. I want my heart to be a sterile environment, as it were, sterile in the sense that there are no germs affecting, detracting from my pursuit of Christ." You reflect on your priorities and your motivations and you say the most important thing in my life, and there is no second, third, fourth or fifth place on that list, is my love for Christ and pursuing him. That's what it means to be pure in heart. No contamination allowed.

Now we can see this illustrated with different words that Jesus used in several different passages and I want to just lay out a few of these to help you kind of flesh out what Jesus meant when he said this. Jesus spoke these challenging words in Matthew 10:37-39, and you'll see the fleshing out of what I just explained to you. Matthew 10:37-39 Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." Jesus says, "My disciples cannot love anyone more than they love me. Father, mother, the closest earthly relationships cannot compete with your affection and loyalty to me."

I had to learn the fleshing out of that in the most painful way when my father died, when my father died without Christ and I was so crushed that he by all appearances did not know Christ and is now enduring eternal judgment for his sins. That was an awful thing to think because I loved my dad. And for the longest period of time, not the longest period of time but for an extended period of time, I deeply wrestled with the question, "Do I want to follow a God who would allow that to happen? Who orchestrated that? Who didn't intervene to keep that from happening?" I mean, this was my dad and when I was thinking that way, I was thinking all wrong. It was all wrong. That's the wrong way to think because the thing that I should have been saying, "Yeah, that was my dad but this is my God, and whatever happens with my dad is not going to detract me or separate me or cause me to stop following Christ. What kind of foolish thinking is that?"

The supreme priority is always loving Christ and following God and obeying him and loving him from the depths of your heart with no competing priorities. So if that means that I follow him without my dad being in heaven with me throughout all of eternity, that's okay. That's okay because my father, my earthly father, is not second, third, fourth or fifth on the list of priorities. Those spots are blank and that's the way it should be for you too. And those of you that have lost loved ones who have died and gone into an eternal judgment and you don't have any assurance of their salvation, listen, I speak from

experience, I speak from the sting of similar loss when I tell you this, you have to put that in the context of saying, "Do you know what? I'm still going to follow Christ and love him because whatever else I say about the dealings of Christ with anyone else, he's been good to me. And because he's been good to me, I am going to be loyal and devoted to him with an exclusivity that will tolerate no rivals."

That's the way you have to think about it, beloved. That is where this takes you. No earthly relationship should ever be in competition for the supreme affections of your heart for Christ and no earthly relationship should ever draw you away from him, no earthly relationship is worth pursuing sin over. You just love Christ supremely and you let the consequences of that fall where they may. A pure heart. No competing affections or loyalties to Christ. That's what he calls for.

In Matthew 22, beginning at verse 35, we find a passage that expresses a similar theme. There was a lawyer who came up and asked Jesus a question, testing him, saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment." It is a stunning assertion of the prerogative of God to call upon that kind of loyalty, undivided loyalty from our hearts. All your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind, all devoted to loving God and honoring him and glorifying him and obeying him. That is foundational and we have to think at this level, we have to let the word of God probe us at this level because, again, whatever your core ambition is, whatever your central motivating desire is, that is going to influence everything that you do, and so when we think clearly about this, then a lot of the things that cause you confusion and make you wonder should I do this or that, a lot of those things can be clarified if you step back from the decision and simply say, "Okay, my priority is loving Christ here, what is the best way for me to express love for Christ in this situation?" That's why we think about these things. This is what God requires of his disciples. We are a people under privilege and people under command, people under responsibility to give him our full undivided affections without exception.

If you're still in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, you can turn over a page to Matthew 6:24, again seeing this similar principle fleshed out with slightly different wording. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." An absolute purity of devotion that says, "My heart has only one Master and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the ruling, reigning, supreme love and affection and authority in my heart, bar none." I'll say it again, nothing is in second, third, fourth or fifth place on that list. He has an exclusive place in the heart of believers that tolerates no opposition, no conflict, and we need to be clear on that in our mind.

So what do we mean? Let me give you a definition here. The meaning of a pure heart, when we talk about purity of heart, here is what we mean: purity of heart is that undistracted devotion to God that begins at salvation and flows into a single-minded sincere following of Jesus Christ as the supreme priority of life. I'll say it one more time because I know some of you like to write those definitions down. Purity of heart is that

undistracted devotion to God that begins at salvation and flows into a single-minded sincere following of Christ as the supreme priority of life. If you have a pure heart, you fundamentally recognize the supremacy of Christ and you fundamentally disallow any affections, desires, relationships or temptations to compete with that love, to supersede that love. Christ is all and in all, so to speak.

We could put it this way: Matthew 5:8, what Jesus says here, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," that expresses a basic biblical theme that works itself out in daily life. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Being a Christian means that Christ is reigning over the totality of your life, and not only is he reigning over the totality of life but you want it that way. There is no resentment against the authority of Christ. You love him for who he is and you want his purposes to be expressed through your life no matter what life may bring to you. You love that because you love the one who offered his life on a cross to rescue you from eternal damnation.

What could be more right or obvious or appropriate in response to Christ's death on the cross than a heart that is purely devoted to him? That's just right. There is no argument to raise up against that. Can you imagine the folly of saying, "No, but in this area of my life, I want to do it my way." Well, what kind of thinking is that? I mean, that's just goofy to think that way. It's more than goofy, it's sinful to think that way. You're missing the reality of Christianity when you think that way. You're missing the reality of Christianity when you say, "I'm going to have this one area of my life where I do it my way. I'm going to tolerate this one area of sin. This one place of sin, this one sinful relationship will be okay. This one sinful pattern in my life is acceptable and I'll let Christ have everything else." No! No! Don't think that way. Don't live that way. That's wrong and it reflects someone who is not pure in heart because when you allow those competing affections, when you tolerate sin in your life in that way, you are letting contamination come where the Lord says there must be purity, there must be single-mindedness, there must be no defilement. So in the depths of your heart you have it settled in your mind. And you young people, especially settle this now in your heart because this sets the course of life for you. Settle it in your hearts now. Now, I say, that, "That's what I'm going to do. That's what I want. I want to pursue that pure heart."

Now, so far the way we've stated this principle, it sounds rather simple and in concept it is simple, it's not difficult to grasp, but we have to deal with a serious problem here. Each one of us has a major problem that stands in the way of the pursuit of that pure heart. Point 3 here: the obstacle to a pure heart. The obstacle to a pure heart. We've talked about the necessity of a pure heart, the meaning of a pure heart, and now the obstacle to a pure heart and I want you to understand where the real obstacle is, okay? The real obstacle, the primary fundamental obstacle to you pursuing a pure heart is not the world in which you live, it's not the environment in which we live, it's not that kind of stuff, although those things make it more difficult, the real problem, the real obstacle to you pursuing a pure heart is you. It's you. The real problem to pursuing this purity of heart that Jesus describes is found inside you. You were born with a corrupt heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand

it?" Romans 3:23 says that we all "sin and fall short of the glory of God," and in the context there, Paul is clearly speaking of believers when he talks about those who fall short of the glory of God. And you know by your own sad experience that you are so easily led astray. You know by sad experience that you can be led into temptation, that you are susceptible to that, and you see in the reality of your own life that there are impurities in your heart. Jesus calls you to a pure heart and yet your own heart is plagued with sin. The Apostle Paul described that, he said, "I find that the principle of evil is within me, the one who desires to do good." And your pride, your evil thoughts, your lies, your slander, your other sins, reflect the sinful desires and attitudes that are still resident in your heart even as a believer.

The problem is you. My main problem with purity of heart is me, it's not anyone around me. I'm the problem. And even worse the obstacle to a pure heart, even worse is the reality that you can't fix your own heart on your own. Proverbs 20:9 says, "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?" As if I had done this, I had pursued this, who can say that? And the answer is no one can say that because we have all miserably fallen short of the glory of God. We don't have the intrinsic spiritual power of our own nature to cleanse and purify our own heart. So as we just walk through biblical teaching on these matters and we need to think through it sequentially here, while we have this glorious call from the Lord Jesus Christ to a pure heart, the truth of the matter is that we don't have a pure heart to offer in return. We are sinners who fall short of the glory of God.

Now, does that mean that none of us will ever see God? Stated differently, we could state the question this way: in light of Matthew 5:8, how do we deal with the lingering hypocrisy in our lives, the lingering sin in our lives, that hangs like barnacles to your soul? Where do you go with that in light of what Jesus said here? You know the reality of your own spiritual experience, you know that you can identify with Paul when he talks about the conflict within, and if you don't know that by experience, ask someone who knows you well, they'll help you out, they'll explain to you where you fall short. If you want to know about me, you can talk to my wife, except she wouldn't tell you. She knows but she won't tell you. We look at ourselves in light of these truths from Scripture and we say, "I don't have that to give. I can't make this happen by myself." And what it does, my Christian friends, what it does is this: is that high and exalted standard that Jesus sets out, the purity in heart that he is alone entitled to, that sincerity of undivided undistracted devotion for all of time, and yet when you look at your life you say, "I want that but I fall short. I fall miserably short," you say. Where does that leave you? It leads you to this point, it should lead you to this point where you are left – follow me here closely, every word is important – you are left to look in utter dependence for a purity that is outside of you. You have to look outside of yourself for this kind of purity that Jesus is talking about when you realize that you can't produce it on your own. You haven't lived that way up until now, you still have remaining sin within you, you can't just by the sheer force of willpower bring that about, the kind of purity that Jesus talks about. You need help. You need help. You are utterly dependent on something outside of you to provide that because you cannot do it on your own.



We have to look outside of ourselves and that brings us to our fourth blessed point. The fourth point of today's message is: the provision for a pure heart. The provision for a pure heart. What you cannot manufacture on your own, God will give as a gift. God is a gracious compassionate God who will give this purity of heart as a gift. Now, at the risk of being simplistic before an audience that is well taught biblically, understand that at a basic foundational level the solution to this problem of not having a pure heart is found in biblical salvation, in the glorious message of the Gospel. Jesus Christ came to earth to save sinners and that encompasses all of you. You're all sinners. The only hope of satisfying what Jesus calls for in Matthew 5:8 is found in biblical salvation.

The Bible describes his work of salvation as a purifying work. His work of salvation was a purifying work. Listen to Titus 2:14 where the Apostle Paul said, Christ Jesus "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify," verbal form of the same adjective that we've been looking at, "to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." His own possession. We belong to Christ. Looking at it from Christ's perspective, that's another way of expressing this idea of single-minded devotion. We belong to him and to him alone. The goal that Christ had was to purify for himself a people for his own possession. To purify them, and his death on the cross was the means by which the guilt of your impurities could be taken away. God placed your guilt on Christ and punished Christ on the cross as your substitute for all of your sin and guilt so that the guilt and the shame and the stain of that could be removed from your account and the perfect righteousness of Christ could be credited to you. In a positional sense, when someone comes to faith in Christ they have a perfect righteousness credited to their account. Christ rescues those who repent and put their faith in him from all their lawlessness and impurity. That's the provision for a pure heart.

Now, that's foundational without which nothing else that I'm about to say can happen. Here's what I want you to see though, beloved: while that is foundational what I just said, the implications of Matthew 5:8 go beyond that positional standing before God and go into the practical outworking of your daily life while you're here on earth. The implications go beyond that. Jesus is addressing more than positional purity, positional forgiveness, positional righteousness before God in Matthew 5:8. The purity in heart of which Jesus describes must work itself out in your life or your salvation was never genuine to begin with. If God has truly made you a new creation and given you a new heart, then these things that I'm talking about are going to be the pursuit of the way that you live your life. There is no such thing as being saved and not loving Christ. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone doesn't love the Lord, let him be accursed." So we're still left with the fundamental question about loving Christ and what does that mean and how do I pursue that with single-minded devotion?

Now, understand this most important point because as convicting as everything that Jesus says is here, we want to be very clear and very precise about what he's talking about. Precision here will guard us from needless despair. Understand this, beloved, purity in heart does not mean the absence of sin. Purity of heart does not refer to the absence of sin. It does not mean that you have reached a level of spiritual perfection by which you never sin again. We know that that's the case. The Apostle John, for example, says in 1

John 1:8, he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Go back to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and I can show you this in the immediate context as well. Understand that the purity in heart that we are talking about is not referring to an absence of sin in your life. That is really fundamental. We see this first of all in Matthew 5:3 where Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," those who realize that they are spiritually bankrupt and have no spiritual resources of their own. Verse 4, "Blessed are those who mourn," talking about a spiritual mourning over sin; when you sin, you regret it, you mourn over it to the point of pursuing repentance. Verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." You don't hunger and thirst for something that you already have. If you already have something, you don't want it anymore. When Jesus says in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," he is acknowledging that his disciples desire a righteousness and an expression of righteousness in their life that goes beyond what their present experience is. So even leading up to this Beatitude in Matthew 5:8, we see Jesus talking about themes of spiritual bankruptcy, mourning over sin, hungering and thirsting for righteousness that which you do not have. So this is so very important. Understand that it is not the absence of sin that Jesus is talking about when he addresses the matter of purity of heart.

What is it then? What is he talking about? If we follow the Apostle Paul and understand that there is evil within us and in me, the one who wishes to do good, what is he talking about then? This will help you. Purity of heart does not refer to the absence of sin but it refers to a settled refusal to tolerate sin in your life. It's a settled refusal to tolerate sin in your life. The pure in heart realize that they have sin in their heart that they continue to need to put to death, but they hate that sin. Paul said in Romans 7 as he is describing the indwelling sin within him, he said, "The good that I wish I do not, but I do the very thing that I hate." He hates it. The pure in heart hates their sin. They recognize it. With the Apostle John they say, "I can't deny what is so evident but understand that I am going to resist it." The pure in heart are those who strive after righteousness even though they have a hostile enemy within, that says, "I love Christ. There is this opposition within me but I never want to give in to it. That is my foe, not my friend. I don't tolerate sin in my life even though I see it there. It's not a welcome guest, it's an enemy that needs to be driven out." That is the purity of heart, that is the single-mindedness that says, "I love Christ. I want holiness in my life. I see this sin within me but I'm driving it out. I'm opposing it. I'm resisting it. I'm not welcoming it and tolerating it and nurturing it." That's the difference. That is so fundamental.

So as a result of that commitment, the pure in heart rather than nurturing and cultivating their sins, instead they repent of sin and they confess their sins to the Lord and they trust the atoning work of Christ to cleanse them from the remaining impurities in their lives. That's the idea that John had in 1 John 1:7 when he said, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Continually cleanses us. 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to cleanse us from our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness." We recognize as those who are pure in heart who have a single-minded devotion to Christ, we realize that there is still sin within us. We don't welcome it. We

confess it. We resist it and we renew our trust day by day and moment by moment. "Lord, cleanse me from that as well. Give me that which comes from you that I could never generate on my own apart from you. Purify me from this guilt and this sin that is within me."

That's the sense in which we as New Testament believers can look at the words of David in Psalm 51:6. He says, "Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being." There is that purity of heart again as David prays to God. He says, "You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." "God, since the last time I was before you, praying to you and seeking you, sin has crept into my life and, Lord, it grieves me because I want to be that man who is pure in heart, and I love you and I want to pursue you with a single-minded devotion. And yet, Lord, here I am with this sin, with this impurity that has manifested and cropped itself up in my life again. God, cleanse me from that. I avail myself of the provision that Christ Jesus has made and I ask you to purify me from this sin of which I am conscious and set my mind again on that pure and undistracted path that you call me to."

That's the provision for you as you pursue purity of heart. It's not that the pure in heart have no sin. Oh, let me say it again. It is not that the pure in heart have no sin, it's that they freely and unconditionally acknowledge their sin, they turn from sin when they see it in their lives, and they appeal to Christ to cleanse them from it. That's the idea. I don't know how to make it any clearer than that. It is the purity in heart that drives us to a continual trust and repose in the purifying work of the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. It comes from outside us and yet within our own heart we say, "Even though I need help from outside, I'm not tolerating this in my life. I'm opposed to it. I'm going to resist it and no person will ever supersede the supremacy of affection that I have for the Lord Jesus in my heart. Nothing can happen in life around me that would turn me away from following Christ." That's the heart commitment of the pure in heart.

Fifth point, final point: the reward for a pure heart. The reward for a pure heart. We've seen the necessity and the meaning of a pure heart, the obstacle to a pure heart, the provision for a pure heart, and now the reward for a pure heart. Why would we even bother? You know, I mean, the things that we're talking about require a lot of self-examination and it makes you so that you can't just flippantly go through life. Why would we bother? Well, look at verse 8. I beg you to put your eyes on verse 8 in Matthew 5, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for," here comes the reward, "for they shall see God." They shall see God. We are going to see God and you say, "Don, what does that mean?" I don't know. I have no idea what that's going to be like. How can the finite see the infinite? What is it going to be like to see inexpressible glory? What is it going to be like to see Christ in visual presence when all this time we have been walking by faith? What is the fullness of that going to be like? I have no idea but I know one thing for certain: I'm not going to be disappointed when it comes. It is going to so transcend anything that I could ask or imagine that it is going to be so glorious that I can't wait for it to happen.

This is the promise of God to those who love Christ. It is a staggering truth that takes us to a heavenly realm that is reserved for the children of God and for them alone. Jesus Christ is going to appear one day with great power and glory. When he comes, we are going to see him and be transformed into his likeness. The Bible says that we will share in his holiness and his resurrected glory. Not only will he be unveiled but we will be unhindered by sin. The perfection of that moment is going to be indescribable and the Bible talks about it repeatedly. In John 17:24 Jesus prayed to his Father, he said, "I desire that they also," meaning the disciples, "whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me." Jesus prayed that one day we would see his glory.

Do you know what? The Father answers Jesus' prayer. This is going to come to pass. For those of us that love Christ, we are going to see his glory. We're going to see it. Wow. Wow. Revelation 22:4 says, "they shall see His face." Job said in Job 19:26, "In my flesh I shall see God." 1 John 3:2, "We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We're going to see Christ. We're going to see Christ! We are going to see him and everything of this world is going to be forgotten by the glorious vision, the transcendent vision of being in his presence and seeing him in undiminished glory. That is our birthright. That is the promise of God to those who are pure in heart. And if you are a Christian here today, this is your destiny. The promised reward from God for a single desire, a single ambition, "Lord, you are the sole affection of my heart and I'm going to pursue that until I die." And God says, "Amen. You're going to see me in glory. You're going to see me face-to-face." Is it a noble glorious thing to be a Christian?

Let's pray

*Father, give us grace to apprehend these things. Give us grace and purify our affections so that we would be clearly focused and single-minded in loving you and pursuing you even as your word calls us to do. Some of us, Lord, came in with sin in our minds and distracted and grumbling and unhappy and forgetful of the glory that it means to be a Christian. Father, cleanse us from all of that by the purifying work of Jesus Christ. Cleanse us from that and set our heart affections where they belong. And Father, give us the joy and the clarity that comes from realizing what a great position we are in as Christians. And Father, we say that the great goal of our lives here on earth, as Paul said, our ambition is to please you and we know and we trust, Father, that the outcome of that is going to be in your presence. Somehow we are going to see you. We are going to see Christ. We are going to see the wounds that purchased our salvation. We are going to be around the throne casting our crowns, as it were, at the feet of Jesus. And what a glorious day that is going to be, Father. What a glorious day that is going to be. The reward for being pure in heart in this life, the gift of God to those who trust Christ, so far opposite of what our sins have deserved. Lord, you are so good to your children. We believe your promise. We love you now and pray that you would help us pursue you with a pure and undistracted heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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