

## The Mind of Christ

# A MIND OF PURITY

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## I. Introduction

What do you think of when you think about the *Beatitudes*? Sadly, most people probably would not even know what you are talking about if you mentioned them. If they did, they would say something about the *meek inheriting the earth*. Even then, comments made are usually snide remarks about a “weak” person being victimized. The *Beatitudes* are much more than that . . . They are the “preamble” of the *Sermon on the Mount*. In a few short verses (Matthew 5:3–12), Jesus outlines what it means to be a member of God’s kingdom. The sixth *Beatitude* has to do with personal purity. It states . . .

***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”***

When you read these words, what does it mean to you? Some might think of a Christian – the model of living a life of purity and holiness. Others might think of their parents. Still others might think of a loving spouse. In this lesson the goal is to see ourselves as *pure in heart* and to learn how we can see God. Most people will think, “With my behavior, how can I *possibly* see myself as pure in heart?” Well, first – nobody starts out as pure. Striving for purity is a life-long process. It does not happen overnight. It is a tough job!

## II. Purity: What Is It?

In the Bible, *pure* or *purity* has several meanings. One meaning is that something is physically clean as opposed to being dirty. Another meaning is that a person has completed certain ritualistic practices so that he or she is ritually clean. A third meaning is that of a person who follows a high moral and ethical standard. The basic idea of purity is that of something that is undefiled or uncontaminated. For example, sin takes away our purity by contaminating our lives. Sin separates us from a pure and holy God. However, if we allow Jesus to remove our sin, we are purified and have a relationship with God. In His conflicts with the Pharisees, Jesus told them that they were seeking only . . .

***an outward appearance of purity and not the inward purity of their hearts.***

The Pharisees believed that following rituals was more important than believing truth. They would go to great lengths to make sure that they washed their hands before a meal, and they avoided any contact with sinful persons or social outcasts. Jesus told them that it was more important that they appreciate that God provided them with food and to thank Him for it, than it was for their hands to be washed before eating. He told them that it is more important to help physically or spiritually sick people than to avoid or condemn them. Jesus told them that their

idea of outward and ritual purity had separated them from God. If they wanted to be truly pure, they would have to make their *hearts* clean.

#### A. **God's View of Purity**

As we read the Bible we see that God attaches purity to many things. One of these is His Word. David declared in Psalm 12:6 that “the words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the hearth, refined seven times.” In order to make silver pure, it must be heated until it is liquid and the *dross* (waste or non-silver materials in the raw silver) is removed. The more times this is done, the purer the silver. “Seven” is the figurative number of *perfection*. So, the thought of refining silver *seven* times is that it becomes absolutely pure – no imperfection or foreign material in it. David says that God’s Word is like solid, pure silver. It is perfect. There is nothing – not even a speck of evil – in God’s Word. Because it is perfect, God’s Word will save man from the evils and wickedness that surround him in the world. Again, Psalm 19:1-14 uses the symbol of God’s Word being pure. This time man plays an active role in reacting to God’s Word. Because God’s Word is pure, righteous, and true – the man who believes it and follows God will love and obey it. When a man or woman compares himself or herself to GOD, they will see how truly insignificant and evil he or she is . . . It is only when we become servants of God that we become pure and significant. Solomon builds on this idea in Proverbs 15:26 . . .

***“Evil plans are an abomination to the Lord,  
but pleasant words are pure.”***

Once a man or woman becomes pure and significant to God, their words are also pure and pleasing to God. Man no longer lives a life cursed by God. Man is now in a vital relationship with God. In Titus 2:11-14, Paul tells us that becoming pure is not something that we can do for ourselves. Purity comes when we allow Jesus Christ to refine us (back to getting all the evil and wickedness out) so that we can become His people. We are so overwhelmed by the cares and wickedness of the world that we can never do it ourselves. We can only accept the redemption, salvation, and cleansing that He gives us. Once we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, He will cleanse and purify us from all our sins. Then we can be His people. Although Jesus purifies us, we still have a part to play in being pure. In Philippians 4:4-8, Paul tells us that because Christ guards our hearts and minds, we are to think on whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise (saying something good). In Christianity, thinking is not isolated from action. So if we think about these things, we will live a life filled with truth, honesty, rightness, purity, kindness, looking out for the good for others, and speaking good of others. When we think and do what is pleasing to God, we are His people. While Paul is fairly abstract in his talking about purity, James points out some practical aspects of it. In James 1:27, he tells us that as far as God is concerned, “pure and undefiled religion is helping the weak, the helpless, the outcast, and keeping ourselves unstained by the world.” In other words, we are to behave as Jesus did during His life in the flesh. Jesus did not just preach the coming of the Kingdom of God. He showed God’s love for man. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, and gave comfort to those in need. All the time He was preaching and doing these great deeds, He never allowed sin to enter His life. Jesus showed us how to live. If we are to follow Him, then we must be transformed (remade) in His image.

#### B. **Becoming Pure in Heart**

It sounds almost flippant to talk about becoming pure and being transformed into the image of Christ. It is not. Without becoming transformed into His image, we remain lost in sin, slaves to the devil. When we *do* become pure, what effect does it have on us? The writer of

Hebrews wrote that we are to . . . “pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). The Christian is to be a person who attempts to have a peaceful, gentle, kind, nonviolent relationship with all men. This does not mean that the Christian is to be a doormat. It means that the Christian is to follow Jesus’ *Golden Rule* of “treating others as you want them to treat you.” Although most people will react to kindness by being kind in return - some will not. There are some just mean and evil people in the world that, regardless of how we treat them, are going to treat us badly. However, as Christians, we are still obligated to treat *them* as Jesus would. In other words, we are not to repay evil with evil. As we treat all people kindly, we are living part of the life that God calls holy. Peter tells us that the reason we are to be holy is that God is holy (First Peter 1:12-21). We do not become holy by ourselves. We allow God to work within our lives. As He works within our lives, we exhibit or behave in a holy manner. When we live holy lives, we transform our lives into the image of Christ and in eternity, we will see God.

John says that another effect of being pure is that we have hope . . .

***“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared yet what we shall be. We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”***

[First John 3:2-3]

Today, most people consider the word – *hope* – to mean something like “wishful thinking.” It is something we would like to have or do but, the odds are millions to one. It is rather like winning the lottery or being struck by lightning. In the Bible, hope means we can be sure something will happen because God has promised it. It has not happened yet and it might not happen in our lifetime but, it *will* happen. John tells us that when Jesus returns, we will be transformed into totally spiritual beings like Christ. Also, he tells us that we have this hope of being with Christ in eternity because we are pure. A third effect of being pure is that a Christian is obedient to God. Because of this he loves others, especially other Christians (First Peter 1:22). For us to start walking the road of purity, we must initially obey Jesus’ call for us to repent (change our way of life) and be baptized into His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11). When we do this, our old life dies, and we are pure and holy again. Like the new born baby, we are free of all sin. Unfortunately, as we continue to live, sin sneaks back into our lives. Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross will keep us clean from these new sins also as long as we continue to try to live for Him. When we are obedient to God, we try to live a life that follows His commands, but because we live in a fallen world, we do not always do it. Yes, the Christian does commit sin but, the Christian does not live a sinful life. When a Christian sins, he will seek to bring his life back into harmony with God’s law. This is different from a non-believer who does not care about what God thinks or wants us to do. The non-believer’s life is one of sin, even though not everything he does is sinful. But because he has not obeyed Jesus, he does not try to please God. He tries to please himself. Part of obeying God is to love others, especially fellow Christians. John records that during the *Last Supper*, Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment. We are to love each other, just as He loved us. This love is to be so great that it is one of the identifying characteristics of Christians (John 13:33-35). Jesus loved us by leaving Heaven and becoming a man. He loved us by dying a horrible and cruel death so that we might escape from being enemies of God. His love gave us the chance to become reconciled – reunite with God. This is the love we are to express to others. It is rather frightening but that is what true love does.

**LOVE IS NOT SOMETHING WE JUST FEEL. IT IS A GOAL THAT WE PURSUE.  
IN HIS FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY, PAUL TOLD HIM THAT THE REASON**

**HE WAS WRITING AND SENDING DIRECTIONS FOR HIM WAS THAT  
HE LOVED HIM AND WANTED ONLY THE BEST FOR HIM.**

True love is not some warm, mushy feeling. It is an overwhelming desire to want the best for someone else. It is being ready and willing to die for the person we love. True love is not easy. It is hard on both the person who is loving and the person loved. In the end, the difficulty of true love transports us to new heights of reality, intimacy, and being. It opens a whole new world for us. Another effect of being pure is that to a person who is pure, everything he does or thinks will be pure (Titus 1:15). The person who is transforming his life into the image of Christ will focus his behavior, his thoughts, and his words on those things that are pure and holy. The person who lives a life of worldliness, will focus his behavior, his thoughts, and his words on the things of the world. God's purity, and holiness will not even enter his way of life except for maybe an occasional passing thought. Then, it is back to the old life of sin. Long ago, David wrote . . .

***“The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making the wise simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eye. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”***

[Psalm 19:8-11]

David saw his entire life controlled by his desire to be pure. It led him to obey God's commands. To David, God's commands and laws were not something harsh and stern which forced him to live for god. David saw them as God's guidelines for helping him love a more enjoyable, rewarding, and purposeful life. David saw God as not some great evil deity who is only waiting for us to make a mistake so that He can punish us. Instead, David saw God as a loving, kind, caring Father who wants only the best for us. The fear David says we have for God is not a terrifying horror, but one of awe! God is far beyond us, we can only look to Him with respect and reverence, adoration and awe, fear and trembling. It is the same type of fear that Solomon says is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). When men scorn and detest this fear, they are fools. True wisdom, knowledge, purity, holiness, reverence, and fear come from God. Anything else is corrupt and worldly.

**C. What Do We Do with Our Pure Heart?**

In the sixth *Beatitude* that we are studying, Jesus says that the pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 5:8). People have interpreted this verse in various ways. One thing we can be sure of is that the *Beatitudes* tell us what kind of people will live within God's kingdom. They are people who have turned their backs on the devil and his control over the world. They are people who have turned their backs on living in sin and rebellion against god. They are people who have turned to Christ and have been reconciled to God. Will we see God *in the flesh*? No, because God is not flesh and blood but spirit. As long as we are living in this physical world, we will not see God physically but, we will see His power and wisdom proclaimed in nature. We can look at nature and declare that there is a God (Romans 1:18-23). While we are living in this physical world, we can only see God as if we are looking through a tinted car window. We know that someone is there but all we see is an outline. It is only when we escape our earthly bonds and live with Him in eternity that we can see Him as He is.

***Another way we see God is in Christ. Often we forget that God is not just the Father, but it is also Jesus Christ (our Brother) and the Holy Spirit. When we see one of them, we see them all. At the Last Supper, Philip asked Jesus to***

***show them the Father. Jesus' reply was . . . "When you see Me, you see the Father. The Father and I are one"***

[John 14:8-21]

A third way we can see God is in the sinner. This does not mean that a sinner is acceptable to God or that the Holy Spirit indwells him. It means that all men have been created in the image of God and that when we see each other, we see a reflection of God (Matthew 25:34-35). Regardless of how bright or dim that reflection is, it is still the image of God. God wants all men to come to an understanding of Him, to accept Jesus as the Christ, and be reconciled to Him. God does not want His reflection – man – to be eternally separated from Him in Hell (but that is the only other choice). We will spend eternity either with God in Heaven or with Satan in Hell. God wants us to be with Him. But, He will not *force* us. It is our choice. Another way we see God is in other Christians. When we become a new creature in Christ (Second Corinthians 5:17), the change is so radical that it is called a rebirth. As we continue our walk with Christ, we are being transformed into His image. The more we are transformed into His image, the more we look like God. The more we look like God, the more we continue our walk with Christ and the greater is our transformation into His image. Eventually, when our walk on earth with Him is completed, we will be like Him and live with Him forever in Heaven. Does this mean that the Christian never sins? NO! It does mean that the Christian attempts to avoid sinning. It means that the Christian's lifestyle is one of holiness and purity. It means that the Christian has left behind a lifestyle of sin and worldliness. The longer and stronger the Christian's walk with Christ and the greater his transformation into the image of Christ is – the less he sins. This is the great paradox (a concept or idea that seems to contradict itself but, is true) that John wrote about in First John. In one place John wrote that a Christian does not sin. In another, he wrote that if we say we do not sin, we are liars. Was John contradicting himself? No, it refers to the idea that a Christian does not live in a sinful lifestyle (consider the Samaritan woman in John 4). He lives a lifestyle of purity and holiness. Yes, he sins but, because he is wanting to please God, he will seek and receive God's forgiveness of that sin. Because of that forgiveness, John can write that the Christian does not sin. This places a great responsibility upon us. We have to decide how we are going to live. Is it going to be a life of purity and holiness or a life of sin and worldliness? I cannot decide for you. You cannot decide for me. Each of us must decide for ourselves. *What is your decision?*

#### D. **Why See God**>

- To confirm our faith and security in Christ
- To encourage us to grow as Christians
- To inspire us to draw near to God and become like Him
- As biological children, we "see" our parents in us. As *spiritual* children, we "see" God in ourselves.
- So that we will see people as individuals, not just a mass or crowd of humanity

### III. Conclusion

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." We are pure in heart when we are reconciled to God, devote our lives to serving Him, and live a life of holiness. While we live in this world, we see God in Jesus Christ and His Gospel, in others – both the sinner and the saint – and in nature. If we are pure in heart, in eternity we will see God in Heaven.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. The 6<sup>th</sup> "Beatitude" is: *Blessed are the pure in*  
(a) *food* (b) *spirits and ale*  
(c) *heart* (d) *sugar content*
2. The process of becoming pure is a  
(a) lifelong process (b) snap  
(c) result of 30 prayers in 30 days (d) none of these
3. Purity means following a high standard of ethics and  
(a) murals (b) immorality  
(c) morals (d) all of these
4. The One who purifies and cleanses us is  
(a) Simon Peter (b) Jesus Christ  
(c) Herod (d) Pharaoh
5. A Christian seeks to have a peaceful, gentle relationship with  
(a) most people (b) employers  
(c) parents and spouse (d) all mankind
6. We can be sure a thing will happen when God promises it. This is called  
(a) hope (b) a gamble  
(c) a fair probability (d) none of these.
7. "Love" is not something we *feel* – it is  
(a) a signed license we hold (b) a goal we pursue  
(c) totally insensitive (d) all of these
8. If one is pure, what he thinks or does will be  
(a) unpredictable (b) inconceivable  
(c) pure (d) insincere
9. The stronger a Christian becomes in his walk with Jesus, he less he  
(a) rests (b) eats  
(c) listens (d) sins
10. In this world, we see God in Jesus, others and in  
(a) the news (b) nature  
(c) Texas mostly (d) none of these