



The Pure in Heart

Matthew 5:8, Colossians 3:16-17

In Old Testament days it was known that no one could go into the holy places of God unless he had clean hands and a pure heart. David realized the importance of a pure heart when he prayed "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10) Sometimes we do good deeds through a sense of duty and consider that enough. But God can create such a heart within us that every intention

of our heart is good. When we have the word of God in our heart and obey it our hearts desire is toward good actions and a right relationship with God.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8) Jesus emphasizes an inward purity rather than an outward respectability. It is a heart righteousness rather than a rule righteousness. Jesus indicated that he is not impressed with outward "purity" when he told the Pharisees "on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." (Matthew 23:28)

Sin clouds the vision so that sinners cannot see the reality of God. It is not the intellect that grasps the reality of God but it is the pure heart that sees God clearly. The pure in heart are those who are free of hypocrisy and self-deception. The spiritual reward of seeing God should be the sincere goal of every Christian. If we earnestly work toward that goal then it becomes the intent of all our activities. We will desire to place each thing that we do or say in the light of God's purpose not in the light of our own desires.

Purity of heart manifests itself as sincerity and transparency. The whole life of a person of pure heart, both public and private, is open to both God and others. When a person's heart is pure, it is undivided. If a person does good deeds only out of a sense of duty and does not have pure intentions in her heart then she is a divided individual. Her relationships may suffer because her motives and actions do not agree. The person who possesses a pure heart does not wear a different mask to suit each occasion or situation.

The pure in heart see God now through the eyes of faith and will see the reality of God's glory in the hereafter. Only the pure can bear to be seen in the light of God which exposes all darkness and deceit. When our hearts are not pure, we tend to try and hide in a shadow hoping that God does not notice us.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:16-17) If we are to live with the label of Christ upon us (Christian) then we must have God's Word in our hearts because it contains the

wealth of God's wisdom which must guide each of us in our journey of faith. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)

As Christians we are called to a great responsibility of teaching and admonishing others. Christians are living examples of what God's grace does in human lives. We can only know how we should live if we have God's Word alive in our hearts. God's Word contains all the commands, promises and support that we need in order to fulfill that calling. When God's Word is in our hearts, we will be instructed by it every day.

Our praise and worship are to be done with the knowledge and consciousness of what God desires. In community worship as well as individual worship it is God who is to be extolled. We are not worshiping God if we demand praise for the talents we use in our singing, speaking, and praying. In worship we are to use our talents but always with God as their center. Romans 12:1 tells us that our "spiritual act of worship" is to be "holy and pleasing to God."

Some would say that we are trying to live in a "dream world" when we always have Christ on our minds and hearts. They believe that thinking of God constantly makes a person weak and otherworldly. But they are uninformed about how God's Word in the heart makes his children strong enough to live in a sinful world without taking part in the sin. It is God's strength in us that enables us to go through any criticism, hardship, or disaster and still remain thankful to God for God's goodness. The Christian of pure heart knows that God is relevant to all aspects of life.

Heart-to-Heart Activities:

1. Supply each participant with a pencil and paper. Ask each to list three rules their parents required them to live by when they were growing up. After they have done this then allow them time to consider each of these rules and then ask the following: (a) How did each of these rules express your parent's love for you? (b) How did these rules result in more freedom for you?

Discuss with a neighbor how this example relates to how God's command to obey, shows God's love for us and results in freedom for us.

2. On a blackboard or paper chart list (as a group) hymns and worship songs which are sung commonly in your worship service. Then list beside each how many times the song contains the word "I" and how many time it contains the word "God", "Lord" or "Jesus". After looking at your list then ask the question: Which ones are more God centered and truly worshipful? Do you think some are more pleasing to God? (You may want to provide hymnals for the participants to use in this activity)

Reflection Questions:

♥ With a partner discuss ways in which you "see God" in your everyday life.

- ♥ Explain how it is possible (or not possible) to have a pure heart if we are not respectable in the eyes of the world.
- ♥ List a typical day's activity from waking to going to bed (draw a chart or timeline if that helps), marking off the day in 30 minute intervals. Place a (!) beside those activities which you think are pleasing to God. Place a (?) beside those that you are not sure about. Place a (X) beside those that you think displease God. Share with a neighbor or the rest of the class as you are comfortable.
- ♥ When we attend worship services are we obeying God if we *observe* all the activities of worship (singing, prayers, preaching, etc.) or must we *participate* in some way? If so, how?
- ♥ When you have erred or made a mistake what do you usually do? Read again what David did in Psalm 51:10. What can you learn from David's example?

Prayer:

God of purity,

In the busyness of our daily activities we sometimes forget that we need to consider whether this particular activity honors You. Forgive us for getting so caught up in our activities that we fail to filter everything through Your light which exposes all darkness and deceit. We thank you for the freedom we experience when we allow Your Word to guide every thought and action. Show us where we have failed and allow each of us all to continue to grow in Your grace. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.