

The Sermon on the Mount

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 5:8 **Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.**

We're getting up on the mount where Jesus sat:

1. We've seen our total poverty of spirit. We are spiritually bankrupt; we are spiritual beggars. *But it is on that basis that entrance may be had into the kingdom of Heaven!* We are saved by grace, through faith.
2. A spiritual beggar, even after being saved, mourns over his or her pitiable condition; and mourns over others in that same condition. In the mourning we find we are comforted by the Comforter Whom Jesus has sent.
3. A spiritual beggar, mourning over his or her sin, cannot help but remain meek by having a proper assessment of themselves. It's the meek person who receives, both now and later, every spiritual resource promised by the Father and necessary for their every spiritual need.
4. We also find within ourselves a desire to know God more fully – a spiritual appetite akin to the physical appetites of hunger and thirst. It is to be right with God that we desire; and to do right for God.
5. As we understand more about God, we cannot help but show mercy – just as He is abundant in mercy. We go on obtaining mercy when needed; and we will obtain a reward one day for the merciful deeds we perform for others.

Next we are told we are **blessed** as the **pure in heart**. We remember that **blessed** means something like, *O how happy and to be envied*. You are happy and to be envied to be **pure in heart**.

Let's start by talking about the **heart**. It's a word used to talk about your essential being. We might substitute the word *mind*, as long as we understand it includes our thoughts, our will, and our emotions. It is the center of your personality; it is who you really are. It is the source from which your words and dreams and decisions flow.

Christianity 'works' at the level of the heart. It works from within; it then works its way out.

This was a radical concept to the Jews of the first century. All of Scripture, including the Old Testament, was about the heart. But by the first century, the religious leaders had twisted the Scriptures to the point they were only concerned about outward actions.

Later in this Sermon Jesus will more plainly discuss matters of the heart. He'll say, for instance, that even if you've never murdered anyone, you have if, in your heart you've been angry at them.

Truth is, the Christian standard of living is an impossible standard to attain or to maintain without the filling of the Holy Spirit. The standard is perfection – and everyone (except Jesus) falls short.

Your heart, then, is a problem for you. Billy Graham is the first person I ever heard say, *The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart*. Jeremiah records God telling us that the heart is wicked and deceitful. Jesus said that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies.

This is why, by the way, that a person cannot simply be reformed in their behavior to any eternal good. We must be transformed, from within.

It also means that environment is not the critical issue. You can't change a persons surroundings enough to transform their heart!

That brings us to the descriptive word, **pure**. **Blessed are the pure in heart**. It describes a heart that is cleansed and without the defilement that is characteristic of our human nature.

How do our hearts become **pure**? There are only two ways it might be possible: by works, or by grace.

If it is by works... Then I must become a monk and segregate myself from the world. I must work hard at cleansing myself. Not only is this ultimately impossible; it is clear from Scripture we, as believers, are not to slip-off into some monastery somewhere to work only on ourselves! We are to reach out to, and reach, others with the Gospel.

It must, then, be by grace that my heart is made **pure**. This is why the apostle Paul could be confident that God, Who had begun a good work in us, would perform it until the day we stand before the Lord. Jesus Himself said He will present us faultless, spotless, without any blemish, to His Father in Heaven.

God is at work in me to cleanse me and to make my heart pure. He will finish what He has begun. Jesus will beam with joy when we stand together before the Father.

Though it is a work of grace upon my heart that God must perform and will complete, what (if anything) am I to do? Jesus tells us when He says, **for they shall see God**.

First let me explain what this does not mean. This does not mean that only if I am **pure in heart** – pure enough, that is – can I ever hope to **see God**. No, at the end of my life, as long as I am in this body of flesh, I will still have a wicked and deceitful **heart**. I will not achieve a level of sinlessness in this lifetime. If anything, I become more aware of how deeply affected by sin I am in my flesh.

Salvation is by grace through faith. My sanctification – my becoming more like Jesus – is a life-long process that God has begun and promises to complete.

Do I therefore “let go and let God?” No.

I would be a fool to not put myself in a position for God to be working on my sanctification! To the extent I **see God**, in this life by faith, coming soon, I am in a position for His work to progress.

The apostle James put our response to the process of sanctification like this:

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

Draw near to God and you are in position for Him to be cleansing your hands; draw near to God you are in a place where He can be purifying your hearts. His Word exposes and reveals, then empowers, the day-to-day changes that make me more like Jesus.

The apostle John put a future spin on things:

1 John 3:2 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.

1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

In the future, when I see Jesus face-to-face, I will be finally, fully **pure in heart**. God will have completed the good work He has begun in me.

Living backward, from that future moment, it makes sense that I would live right now, every day, for that glorious meeting and review. It stands to reason I would draw as close to God as I can now, in the short years of my pilgrim journey, so He can be working upon my heart by His Spirit.

What I am saying is this: To be fully Christian, to be like Jesus Christ, is to be finally **pure in heart**. As I live backward, looking forward to that moment when I **will** see God, I draw near to Him so I might be more in a place where His work can progress.

When we talked about being merciful, we saw that we will obtain reward for the merciful acts we perform toward others. We will receive those rewards when we stand at the Bema of Jesus to be judged as believers. So, being merciful raised my awareness of that future day.

It is in that glorious future day that we will also be fully **pure in heart**.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Not everyone, but many of us feel the pressure of the rapid approach of that day. Advertisers tell us how many shopping days, or hours, are left. We're counting down, getting to the wire. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be done, and ready, for our various celebrations.

Well, we are counting down to a glorious spiritual appearance before Jesus. Only there is far more urgency because we are told His coming for us is imminent! We don't want to be wasting time on things that will have no value in preparing us to meet the Lord. We most certainly don't want to engage in things that will cause us to be ashamed when He comes!

You and I **are** the **pure in heart**. God sees us that way already, because He knows He will complete the work. We have, as a privilege, the ability to cooperate in His work of grace.

We will cooperate as we consider how soon we **shall see God**. We cooperate by drawing near to see Him now, spiritually, by faith, as we make choices and decisions consistent with the things we read in His Word.



Calvary Hanford
- being changed to bring change -

