



# Pure in Heart—Matthew 5:8

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# Introduction

Who doesn't like something that is pure? Purity is a favorable concept. Ex. Pure water, air, gold, hand soap, gasoline, even pure gin.

Two Greek words are translated as "pure" in the N.T.

A. **Hagnos** is a word (and concept) that has the same root as the word holy or sanctified. Holy denotes "pure or clean". It means to be free from contamination. Paul says in 1 Tim. 5:22 to "keep yourself pure".

B. The Greek word Jesus uses here in Matthew 5:8 is **Katharos**. It is used 27 times in the NT.

Fundamentally, it signifies that which is free from any contaminating substance.

# Definition of Pure

1. It described physical things (the cloth in which Jesus' body was wrapped – Mt. 27:59), and was often used to describe purified metals.
2. It was used in a ceremonial sense of purification of leprosy and the casting out of “unclean” spirits.
3. Also, spiritual entities that had been cleansed (ex. Conscience).

Ex. 2 Tim 1:3 – I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience...). 1 Peter 1:22 – Since you have purified (hagnos – sanctified) your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure (katharos – pure) heart.

# Definition of Heart

Physical heart is about the size of one's fist. Charged by a tiny electrical impulse, approximately every 8/10ths of a second.

It “beats” – about 100,000 times a day, pumping some 1,800 gallons of blood.

Physically, The heart is the life-center of the human body.

Linguistically, it is the heart of something as the central idea or most important element.



# Definition of Heart—**Inside a person**

The word, heart is also used figuratively in the Bible.

It describes a host of intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and moral qualities that we possess as those who are created in the image of God.

The heart in the Bible is the inner person, the seat of emotions, thoughts, attitudes and will. In Proverbs we are told, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov 23:7).

Jesus asked a group of scribes, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?” (Matt 9:4) The heart is the control center.

# Definition of Heart---Inside a person

Jesus said purity of the heart (inner person) represents the quality of His people. This is not a new concept.

- Proverbs 4:23 – 23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it springs the issues of life.
- God commanded Israel to love Him with all their heart....
- David recognized what God desired of him – Psalms 51:6

Vs. 6. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. vs.10 – Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

# Definition of Heart---**Inside a priority**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly tells the crowd that the inside has priority over the outside. God looks there first.

Ex. Our emotions, intentions, attitudes and will. There is interconnectedness.

You cannot be poor in spirit, mourn over your sins, be meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, be merciful , be a peacemaker, or be prepared to stand persecution for the name of Christ without having a pure heart.



# Definition of Heart---**Inside a priority**

Jesus provides a sharp rebuke for the outward and hypocritical religion of the Pharisee and says the righteousness of His people must exceed this (Matthew 5:20).

In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus says it is possible to commit murder and adultery in our hearts even before the outward act.

In Matthew 6 He challenges our hearts to be willing to give money to others, forgive others, submit ourselves to God in prayer, and do all that God commands.



# Definition of Heart---**Inside a priority**

The true character of the Christian can only be understood or described in reference to the heart or inner person.

The Pharisees considered themselves to be God's children because of their heritage. John said God could take stones and make them children of Abraham. (Matt. 3) Simon was a believer and was baptized for the remission of his sins.

But when he selfishly petitioned Peter for the power to impart miracles, the apostle told him that his heart was not right with God (Acts 8:21). There was more that needed to be purified. His conduct revealed a deeper problem.

# How to “get” a Pure Heart?

A pure heart can only be achieved through God. He cleanses our conscience through the blood of Jesus. But it is also a goal for which we should strive. **Let me suggest two characteristics.**

A. A “pure heart” lives to serve God. In 2 Tim. 2:22 Paul calls on Timothy to ‘Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.’ Notice that properly “calling on the name of the Lord” (seeking His help or access His power) requires a pure heart. In Paul’s admonition it included turning away from, not just the activity of the flesh, but the desires of the flesh (youthful lusts) and striving to be righteous (do the right thing).



# How to “get” a Pure Heart?

1. We must recognize that the law of God creates moral purity. The initial use of the word “pure” in the Bible was in the sense of “clean” as opposed to “unclean”.
  - a. What is pure is God’s arbitrary decision. Although we may suppose some logical reason (health, birds who eat flesh, etc.), the so-called logic is not consistent. God made the choice, and the Israelites were commanded to obey. If they did not, they were considered impure (unclean).
  - b. What was at one time considered unclean, God can declare clean at another time. Ex. Peter “Do not call



# How to “get” a Pure Heart?

2. God creates a pure heart in us, not only through forgiveness, but also by defining what is pure, and directing us toward it. **Therefore, a pure heart cannot be obtained apart from obedience to the rules of God.** In 119th Psalm, the “heart” is mentioned 15 times. This is interesting to note because all 175 verses of this Psalm deals exclusively with the value of God’s law, and the Psalmist desire to be obedient to it.

The pure heart does not question the validity of God’s law and does not argue with its implications or applications toward him/herself.

# How to “get” a Pure Heart?

There are certain physical or natural laws that man cannot break without consequences, but God can. Put your hand in a fire – you cannot break this, but God can. Cannot feed 5,000 people fully with a few fish and pieces of bread. God can & did. We call these miracles. Then there are moral laws that man can break but God cannot. We can lie, commit adultery, cheat, steal, etc., but God can't.

God cannot break these laws or ignore them when they are broken. Many people are more aware of, and more careful about the natural laws. The person with the pure heart strives to keep God's moral laws.

# A Pure Heart lives for the Sole Purpose of God

B. A “Pure in heart” is totally devoted to God. Some people have ulterior motives. They may do what is right (outwardly) but they do not do it for the right reason.

1. Have you ever heard the saying that everyone has an angle? The Bible says that the wisdom of the world is dominated by selfish ambition.

James 3:14-16: “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”



# A Pure Heart lives for the Sole Purpose of God

The pure heart is unadulterated with covetousness or materialism.

Paul had a pure heart - 1 Thess. 2:4-5 "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. 5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness - God is witness."

# A Pure Heart lives for the Sole Purpose of God

When he is asked a reason for his conduct, the pure hearted person speaks only of pleasing God. 1 Peter 3:15-16: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ...”

1. We must sanctify (hagnos) the Lord as the One we serve (pure devotion to Him alone)
2. We must display our obedience to His word in a clear conscience.
3. Double-mindedness has always been a problem for God's people. But Jesus says that is impossible. “No one can serve two masters (Matt 6:24).

# A Pure Heart lives for the Sole Purpose of God

4. The pure hearted Christian has no ulterior motives or selfish angle. He/she loves his/her brother and helps him because they seek to please God.

They give generously because they seek to please God; They teach and preach freely, sacrifice, pray, fast, support their family, visit the sick, submit to their spouse, act kindly, obey the law – because they are seeking to please God.



# Purity of heart has 3 stages

- 1) Regeneration: God gives us a new nature that is holy like His nature. It occurs simultaneously with justification.
- 2) Sanctification: God purifies our thinking and our motives so that we live out the righteousness He has for us. Rom. 12:2; Phil. 2:5
- 3) Glorification: God gives us a glorified body at resurrection and our salvation is complete.

# It implies

**1) Sincerity:** Singleness of heart or "single self" as opposed to the divided self. It is the person who presents the true self to God and man.

The opposite is hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is all about presenting a false face to God and man. The word hypocrite itself originated in the world of Greek drama and has come to refer to someone who is playing a role. This beatitude of Jesus presents a problem before it offers a promise, because it is very hard for me not to present a false face to God. I am sorely tempted to come into God's presence like an actor wearing a mask.

# It implies

## **2) Cleansing:**

If we look at the way this idea is treated throughout the Bible, we find the biblical notion of purity always implies the need for cleansing. One could say that the Law of Moses is obsessed with the need for cleansing. There are clean and unclean foods, actions and states that make a person unclean, and ceremonies for cleansing. In the Law of Moses, every approach to God begins with an act of cleansing. Not even the High Priest, the only worshiper permitted to enter directly into God's presence, was exempt from this. The message in this was clear: everybody stands in need of cleansing.



# It implies

## **3) Transformation:**

This promise gives us confidence to finally remove the mask. "Come near to God and He will come near to you," we are told in James 4:8-10. "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Draw near to God and take off your mask. Offer Him your true heart. Offer it not in hopeless resignation, but in hope: He will lift you up. Offer Christ your sins and He will take them away. Offer Christ your hands and He will wash them clean. Offer Christ your divided heart and He will give it back to you whole. This is our hope when we come to Christ for cleansing—the hope that He will receive us and lift us up. It is the hope of transformation.

# Therefore, Jesus expects

- 1) A heart that is not hypocritical in its approach to God. It confesses its sins rather than justifying it.
- 2) A heart that is undivided in its loyalty and purpose. A heart unadulterated in its nature and uncompromised in its commitment to God. Ex. James 4:8
- 3) A heart undefiled by the corruption of this ungodly world system. Ex. 1 Pet. 1:4 "That through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust".

# And So What?

- 1) The Beatitude is linear—keeping working on the previous one.
- 2) Keep seeking the face of God
- 3) Do not rebel when God allows trials in your life as a refining process
- 4) Keep your eyes on the prize. The Bridegroom will return.
- 5) Stay in the Word
- 6) Pursue holiness
- 7) Congregate with people who are in this quest for holiness.
- 8) Ask God for on-going purification of your heart.



