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Matthew 5:8 The Pure in Heart

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I'd like for you to stand. Please bow your heads as we pray. "Loving Father in Heaven, there's been such beautiful music, wonderful children's story, and we are grateful for all of that, and we appreciate it. Thank you. Lord now, we are about to open Your word, and we want something unusual, something so Spirit filled and dynamic and powerful that every single person here will leave changed. Every single person here will have a deeper experience in Christ when they walk out of here. I am praying Heavenly Father by Your grace that all the burdens and cares that we have will be given to You at this time, and we will not be distracted by them. Thank you Lord for taking them! Now we long to hear from You. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen." Please be seated.

I went to the doctor to get a physical. First thing they did is they weighed me and then they checked my blood pressure. I went another time to the doctor to have the preliminary visits to begin the process to get a colonoscopy. First thing they did is they weighed me and then they took my blood pressure. I went to the doctor one time because I had poison ivy so bad I couldn't get rid of it. First thing they did, they weighed me and took my blood pressure, checked my heart out. I am convinced, if I had a hangnail, and I went to the doctor, they'd weigh me and check my heart out. There is something about the heart.

Doctors know there is something about the heart, it is so important to the human physical being, and perhaps, you know I am not a medical person, it will be obvious. But maybe, perhaps or it is that the heart is the most important organ we have in our body. And the doctors know that. And if you got a bad hangnail, so what if the heart is failing that day? There are more important issues. In our lives spiritually, we all have issues, we all have matters. But today, we are going to something that is so important, it is to the very heart of our experience with God. And I would like for you to turn there in the Bible to Matthew chapter 5 verse 8.

We are continuing the series of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And Jesus says in Matthew 5 verse 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Now this verse has caused lots of consternation down through time. Pure in heart! Please don't raise your hands, but I am curious, how many of you think you are pure in heart. How many of you have gone this day, this week, maybe this last hour without a thought you wished hadn't come in there or a word that you spoke you wish you hadn't spoken or a deed that you've done as a result of thinking. What does it mean to be pure in heart? It seems that people kind of find extremes when it comes to this.

There have been folks down through time who thought that they were pure in heart. That they had reached the point of not sinning anymore, and so anything they did it wasn't sin anymore. I talked to a pastor, and he told me that he pastored a church one time. And when he went to the church, the pastor that had been there just before him had told the congregation that he had not sinned in two years, and that they could leave the same kind of life he did. The pastor told me, it took a while to clean that mess up. But eventually he did. Ten years later, that pastor came back, tears streaming down his cheeks and said, "I was so wrong, I was so arrogant. I need

Jesus as a Savior. Can I speak to the congregation?" "Yes, you can." And he shared how wrong he was.

There are other people, when they read this: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," they look at it in its eschatological ramifications, you know. "You get to see God if you are pure in heart, I don't have a pure heart, I'm not going to see God!" And they get so discouraged because the harder they try; there is no evidence that they have a pure heart. Because even though they've accepted Jesus, even though they are trying to do the right things, even though they are making good choices, they are trying to be moral and all that. Still, thoughts happen, still words are said, still deeds are done. They don't have a pure heart and they get so discouraged, they just give up. They walk away, ditches on either side of the road.

What does it mean, "Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God." Well, let's deal with seeing God. Obviously those who are serving God are going to see Him in heaven throughout eternity. Praise God for that. But the pure in heart are going to see God now. They are going to see Him in prayers. They are going to see Him in activities of other people. They are going to see Him in His providence in their lives. They will see Him now, but then, face to face. So we have an important passage here. If we can understand this passage, I am telling you right now, for some of you this is going to be life changing. Some of you are going to walk out of here with a different perspective. Some of you are going to have hope for the very first time.

What does it mean to be "pure in heart?" First of all, let's deal with the heart. What is the heart? It is not a physical organ in this verse. It is dealing with the center of personality which involves the mind, the will and the emotions. Let's go quickly through this. Romans 1 verse 21 Paul says: "Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened." The mind is associated with the heart. Their thoughts were darkened and they had dark thoughts and their hearts were darkened as a result.

The will is mentioned in chapter 2 verse 1. Not directly, but you'll see how it's applied: "Therefore, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things." That's a choice. The heart is associated with the mind. The heart is associated with the will. The heart is associated with the emotions. Look at Romans 5 verse 5, Paul says: "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

So the heart scripturally, is dealing with the mind, the will, the emotions. It is the very essence of who we are. And in Jesus' day, He was in constant conflict with religious people over the heart. There is something about religion that people want to have in the head, but not in the heart. And God, from day one, has always been concerned with the heart. If God can get the heart, He'll straighten the mind out eventually. But a straightened out mind with a wrong heart still will be lost for eternity. And so Jesus concerned his effort, his preaching was to reach the

human heart. But the religious leaders in His day didn't understand that. And they fought Him on that. I hope it's changed? Maybe it hasn't?

Let's look at Matthew 15 verse 1. It says, "Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus..." So now, from the religious authorities in Jerusalem, they come to Jesus, and they say this: "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread?" It sounds like something my mother would say when I was a little boy. Have you washed up yet? And we would say, "Yeah," and they could tell we hadn't. How come? They don't wash the way the elders say they are supposed to wash. They were so concerned about ceremonial cleanliness that they had a special ritual of how you are supposed to wash, and how often, and when, and where and all these things. And somehow that was supposed to make you right. Otherwise, you would not be clean and you could be lost as a result.

"Jesus answered and said to them: 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded saying, *Honor your father and your mother; and He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.* But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me has been dedicated to the temple.'" "So there, I am not giving you anything, I am not going to help you." And the Lord is saying, "Look, your traditions, you've turned into commandments, and those commandments are the traditions of men, and they go against the commandments of God."

There is something about religion that does that. The heart is so important that when Jesus was asked, "What is the great commandment?" He said, "It is to love the Lord thy God with all your heart!" He doesn't say, "To understand them with all your mind." I am telling you brothers and sisters, none of us will figure God out, none of us will have eschatological events all lined up perfectly. None of have these issues just exactly the way they are, we'll all be straightened out when we get to heaven. The key is, get there! That's the matter of the heart. It's the matter of the heart.

Well the story goes on. Jesus said, "You guys are hypocrites. Isaiah prophesied about you..." verse 8 it says, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth..." God was not someone they didn't believe in. They drew near Him with their mouth. They honored Him with their lips, but their heart was far from Him. And He said: "In vain they worship Me." So they worshiped Him, but it was vanity. And they thought for doctrines the commandments of men. "Then He called the multitude and He said to them, 'Hear and understand: not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.'"

O that was a problem back then. I am sure it's not a problem now. This week I was talking to a pastor, and he told me a story. He said a fourth grade girl was going to a Seventh-day Adventist school. Her father was raised as an Adventist, her mother was not. And she is learning. The father and mother love each other, love the Lord. They are trying to figure out how to maneuver through some of the landmines that you have as the little different beliefs. But they want their daughter in a good school, so she is in a Christian school. And, first week, becoming

acquainted with some of the children, lunch time; all of the children have their little sack-lunches. They open their sack lunch; they take their sandwiches out, the Little Debbie's and all other the other goods that they can get. And she unwraps hers. Child right next to her, little boy, he unwraps his. Hers is ham. She takes a bite of it. He says to her, "You are going to hell."

Now where did he come up with that? I imagine he is reading Matthew 15. But he is being taught that by somebody. There is a culture that is acculturating him. Making him think that is what happens on the outside that condemns you. This little girl doesn't even know the difference between clean and unclean meat, hasn't been told that. People ask me all the time, what do I think of clean and unclean meat. I don't think much of it, I am a vegetarian. I don't have to worry about it. But I do know this. Jesus said, "It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person. It's what will come out of the mouth."

Look at that, verse 12: "Then his disciples came and said to Him. "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" I want you to know something. I could say some things today that would offend you. Well, not you. None of you are Pharisees, are you? I am talking to the people that hear this on the radio... Verse 13: "He answered and said: "Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into the ditch."" These are people who talked about God, who sought to worship God, who, everything in their life was ordered by their concept of their God. They had an answer and a reason for everything they did according to what they thought God wanted them to do. And the Lord said, "They are blind guides. Leave them alone, let them go. Their heart is wrong."

Peter in verse 15, he said, "Lord, explain that to us, we don't get that." "Jesus said: 'Are you also still without an understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thought, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'" Something about the heart! Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart!"

You know people have different concepts about what that means to be "pure in heart?" I don't know what you've been taught? I suspect what you've been taught. Many people within our belief system have been taught a concept of sinlessness. "You will not sin by thought, by word, by deed." You know, again I ask the question. How many of you could say your heart is so pure that you are there? And how many of you would say, as you draw closer to the Lord your heart gets purer? Or do you see a depth of filth you never saw before? So what are we supposed to do with that?

Well, let me remind you that Noah was declared a righteous man in his generation, then he got drunk. Abraham was called the believer, the one who accepted by faith righteousness, then he lied about his wife. Moses was declared by God to be a special person whom God will speak to face to face, then he disobeyed so he couldn't take the people into the Promised Land. Job was

declared to be the most righteous person on earth, then he cursed the day of his birth. Elijah was God's man, there on the Mount Carmel fighting the battles, then he fled from Jezebel. Peter, the spokesman for the other eleven, but then he denied Christ.

Oh I know what you are saying; I know what you are thinking. You are saying, "Oh Jerry, come on! That all happened before the Holy Spirit was poured out." You are right, you got me. Let's see what happened to Paul after he got the Holy Spirit. Please turn to Romans 7. Romans chapter 7; Paul by the way said, he was the greatest sinner. But notice; now that doesn't mean he was practicing sin. But he knew his capacities, he knew his heart. Romans 7 verse 18: "For I know that in me, (that is in my flesh), nothing good dwells." And that brothers and sisters could be all of our testimonies, amen? There is nothing good that dwells in us. So how is going to be pure?

He goes on, "For the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good, I do not find." I really like... I heard Morris Vendome one time when we were at Andrews. He talked about that. He talked about music. And I can relate because I've always wanted to stand up and sing in front of a crowd of people. The will is there but how to perform, it's not. I could clean this auditorium out in one song. Although some of you may just want to stick around for the show, I don't know? "For the good that I will to do, I do not. But evil I will not to do that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" He goes on to say there is no condemnation if we are in Christ. You and I are never going to know a pure heart, except by faith in Christ! Because our hearts will always have that sinful nature crying for expression! We will always have a bad thought running through our head. We are always going to make a mistake. No one has ever been able to live a life of perfect sinlessness except Jesus! And His record is ours when we accept Him. That's what we need!

So that when I have accepted Jesus, when God looks down from heaven on me, He doesn't even see me. He sees His Son in whom I believe. I am no longer wretched in His eyes. My heart is pure as far as He is concerned, and I am left here to live by faith that indeed in Christ I have been accepted. Now let me give you something here. This is little extra, it's little free, free of charge. But some of you are going to say, "This was worth the sermon." There is no such thing as faith without doubt. You cannot have faith unless there is doubt; the greater the doubt, the greater the faith.

And so, someone was asking me earlier this morning, "Pastor, are you saying it's as easy as accepting Jesus and then God says I have a pure heart?" Yes, I am saying that. But what if we don't feel that way? It doesn't matter how you feel; it matters how God feels. And God says it is so. It is true. The only way to heaven is Jesus in our heart. We have to accept Him as our Savior,

and we've got eternal life. What if I am doubting? Then believe! What if I am doubting a lot? Then believe a lot! That's how it works. The greater the doubt, the greater the faith! And let me ask you something. Have you not read in your word, or in God's word, in the Bible that the people of the last generation are going to be a people of great faith? What does that mean? There is going to be a great doubt. But we are going to hold on! And that's what I want to study with you today. Because the concept scripturally of the pure in heart is different than what a lot of us have been taught. There is more hope in it. There is more courage in it. There is more victory in it if we understand it from the Word of God.

All right, let's go back to the days of Jesus. The phrase that Jesus uses is "pure in heart." In the Greek it's "Catharos ti cardia." Now you know, "cardia" means "heart." If you've ever been to a heart specialist that doctor is called a "Cardiologist." That's where that name comes from. "Catharos" means "pure." That's where the name, Kathy, Kathleen, Katherine, Katie, Karen, and other derivatives, and if any of you are named that you are pure, at least your name is. That's what it means. But there are two English words that help us understand it: "Catharsis" and "Cathartic." And it's a process of making pure by cleansing. Medically, "purgation" or medicine for the stimulating and evacuation of the bowels; emotionally, it is a purifying of emotions or a relieving of an emotional tension. Catharsis, cathartic, it is a cleansing.

In the days of Christ, there were four basic applications to the word, "Catharos." One: soiled clothes cleansed from dirt or stains; two: wheat that it has been separated from the chaff, cleansed away from the chaff, so there it is in its purity; dross that has been removed from the metal so the metal is pure. Now what's fascinating to me, in those three uses of the word, "Catharos," the soiled clothes, the wheat and the metal had nothing to do with it. It all came externally. Do you see that? All came externally to them! However, there is a fourth one, and choices are involved in the fourth one. And that's what I want to talk to you about today.

Back in Jesus day, "Catharos," "the purity" that is talked about there was describing an army that would be purged of the "discontented, the cowardly, and the inefficient soldiers." Someone two weeks ago gave me a book called, "Lone Survivor." It's the story of Marcus Letrel, a Navy Seal who was on a special ops mission into Afghanistan and he was the lone survivor. And in the book he describes how you become a Navy Seal. And it's harder than anything I could imagine trying to go through. For six months they go through this intense training. They started out with 180 men, at the end there were 30 that graduated from the course. A 150 of them were out - all of them by their own decision. They have one special week, and for the children that are here, I am going to change the name. You adults will get it, if you don't get it, talk to me afterwards. It's called, "Hades Week." Got it? All right, "Hades Week."

And these men are up none stop for six nights. And they go through all the hallucinogenic experiences that they have because of disorientation and it's just physical, physical, physical and it's the final 'huh' to see who is to committed to stay or not. And it's all mental because they are physically able to do the exercise but they had to convince themselves they want to stay with it. Purity of an army is that group that has committed themselves to the cause. Purity of an army is that group willing to die for the cause. The purity of an army is someone who will

stick with it, and have a singleness of purpose. They are determined they are in. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Does that give you any hope? Does that give you any courage today? Do you want to be in the army of the Lord? Do you want to rise up in the ranks that He is calling and march from here right on into eternity? That brothers and sisters is a part of what Jesus is talking about.

The question is how? And that’s answered in the Scriptures. Look at Proverbs chapter 4 and we’ll start with verse 20. In Proverbs chapter 4 the writer says: “My son, give attention to my words.” Number one, pay attention to the words of God, amen? “Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes. Keep them in the midst of your heart for they are life to those who find them and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence. For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; remove your foot from evil.”

Hang in there! You start with God’s Word, you keep your eyes on the Lord, and you keep plotting forward even though your heart is constantly screaming out: “I am impure, I am unholy,” and here are the thoughts to prove it. Here are the things I really want to do. You hang in there because it’s Christ that saves you and not your heart. You see, if you are going to examine your own heart, you better know what you are looking for. And Jesus does! He is looking for Himself there. The question is, why does in this list, the pure in heart appear here? Let’s go back to that because this is an amazing thing in my eyes, in my experience, when I look at this.

We have told you that the very first four of the beatitudes are vertical. They are about our experience with God being “poor in spirit,” is having a poverty of righteousness so we have to have Christ. And the people who have Christ it says, “...theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” And those who “mourn,” is describing those people who have accepted Christ and now they are totally and completely repentant for their sins. They are mourning and grieving over how sinful they are. And “Blessed are the meek,” that’s a natural consequence of that experience. Saved by Jesus, and here look how sinful I am! I am humbled before Him and I will go where He leads me. I am teachable. And then, “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” I want to be with Jesus, and I want to be like Jesus. That’s all vertical.

And then last week we talked about the very first one that is horizontal. “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.” So you see, vertical, vertical, vertical, vertical, and now horizontal. And then all of a sudden, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” What’s that got to do with vertical? I’ll tell you what it has to do with it. Jesus knows what the human heart is like. He knows because He is given an instruction that people are going to settle in to that. “Oh, that’s it? I have to be merciful.” Well let’s define merciful.

What is merciful in this situation, what is merciful in that situation? What is merciful over here, what is merciful over there? Am I merciful to my neighbor? Who is my neighbor? Am I merciful

to this person or that person, church member, non church member, family member, on and on, until merciful becomes a whole religion in and of itself, and we forget about God again. And so Jesus bringing us right back to the heart and He is saying, "Get back to God now." And that's what we must do in everything that we learn. Don't think, "Oh, it all sits on this information and now I just learn how to apply it to my life." No, you've got to get back to God. You've got to get back to the vertical.

And it is fascinating; the four that are vertical are directly related to the four that are supposed to be horizontal. In verse 3, "poverty of spirit," verse 7, "blessed are the merciful;" if God has forgiven me, and shown me mercy, I am going to be merciful to you. In verse 4, those that are mourning for sin, in verse 8, "the pure in heart..." I am coming back to that because that's going to change your life when I explain that. Verse 5, "Blessed are the meek," and verse 9, "Blessed are the peace makers." You can't make peace unless you are meek. Do you see that? And then verse 6, "Blessed are those that hunger and thirst," and verse 10, "Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness sake." You are going to be hungering to be with the Lord, and to be like the Lord. Do you see that?

Well let's back up. Mourning for sin and pure in heart are wed together in the teachings of Jesus. Why? Because the truth is brothers and sisters, your heart will never be pure in your eyes, and you are always going to be mourning for sin because of it. But that's not how we are saved! That's a result of being saved. And we have to learn to hang in there with Jesus because doubt is going to be heaped upon us by the bucket full. It's going to be dumped on us because we are going to fail here, and we are going to fail there. And we are going the fail here, and we are going to want to give up! Either that or we are going to get so odd, we are going to think we've arrived! "I actually do have a pure heart." I am telling you, none of us do, and none of us ever will by our standard. But our standard is not God's standard. God's standard is Jesus. And if we have Him, as far as God is concerned, what do we have? A pure heart!

Do you believe it? It's true. "Blessed are the pure in heart." Now brothers and sisters, it doesn't mean we won't try to be better people, of course we will. It's a relationship with God. If you have a relationship with anybody, you try to please them. That's no problem. That's not an issue. We are not in conflict with that idea. What we are in conflict with, is examining our heart, and forgetting about Jesus; examining our heart and forgetting we are already saved in Him; examining our heart and walking away discouraged because nothing has improved. I'll tell you, nothing has improved in your heart; I don't care how long you've been a Christian!

You can walk away from God tomorrow and be a worse sinner than you ever were before. Nothing has changed in your heart! What has changed is your commitment to hang in there with God, and seek by His grace to do what pleases Him. That's what changes. Your heart will always remain filthy! Do you understand that? Because the sinful nature lives until Jesus returns, and then He'll say: "Let that thing die." And you and I are going to know freedom for the first time in our life. We will be able to look at each other and love each other. We won't feel jealous about each other. We won't have any temptations any more.



We are going to be free, but between now and then, we are going to be fighting. And the fighting is a battle of faith to believe that we are saved in Christ; to hang in there despite the discouraging thoughts that come and the unfortunate mistakes that we make. And so I want to know today, is there anybody here who wants to be a soldier in the Army of the Lord? Anybody here who wants to say, "Count me in God! I don't want to be purged out, I want to be in!" Please stand.

"Father in Heaven, we are standing right now. Not because we think we are worthy, not because we have any hope that we ever will be worthy of our own, but because we have Jesus as our Savior. And You've told us that in Him we have the eternal life. Now Lord, we don't want to turn from that. We want to be faithful to You in all that we can in our lives. Help us by Your grace to fight through doubt, and to hang in there with faith. We pray this in Jesus Name, Amen."