

Guard Your Heart

Matthew 5:8

Long ago, there lived a king whose kingdom flourished, but his wife, whom he loved most died. The king grieved deeply. Devastated, he resolved to honor her by constructing a temple that would serve as her tomb. Her coffin was placed in the center of a large parcel of land, and construction of the temple began around it. No expense would be spared to make her final resting place magnificent.

But as the weeks turned into months, the king's grief was eclipsed by his passion for the project. He no longer mourned her absence. The construction consumed him. One day, while walking from one side of the construction site to the other, his leg bumped against a wooden box. The king brushed the dust off his leg and ordered a worker to throw the wooden box out.

The king didn't know he had ordered the disposal of the coffin—now forgotten—hidden beneath layers of dust and time. The one the temple was intended to honor was forgotten, but the temple was erected anyway. Difficult to believe? Perhaps, but eerie nonetheless. Could someone build a temple and forget why? Could someone construct a palace, yet forget the king? Could someone sculpt a tribute and forget the hero?

You can also tell the ones who see only the temple. They have lost their love. The heart is not pure and their love has changed. Jesus knew we'd live in a world of competitors for our hearts so he told us, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" Matthew 5:8

1. The Central Characteristic Of Our Heart

Every culture has some internal organ which it considers the emotional, spiritual and mental center of a person. In our culture, we speak of the heart as being that center. We speak of "heartthrobs," "heartaches," and "broken hearts." But when Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart,*" he was speaking in a different context. To Jesus' listeners, the heart was the totality of the inner person—the control tower, the cockpit. The heart was thought of as the seat of the character—the origin of desires, affections, perceptions, thoughts, reasoning, imagination, conscience, intentions, purpose, will, and faith. In the Old Testament the word "heart" is used more than 800 times, but more than 200 times it describes the thought life, the emotions, the wellsprings of life, those things that motivate and mold us.

The Greek word for heart is *Kardia*, from which we get our word "cardiac."

When Samuel is considering Eliab, David's older brother, as the one he should anoint as king. God tells him, "*Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*" 1 Samuel 16:7

In 2 Kings 2:3 we are told to "*Serve the Lord with our whole heart, or without a divided loyalty.*"

The Proverb writer admonished us, "*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*" Proverbs 4:23

Jesus said the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart. "*For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*" Matthew 6:45

"*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*" Matthew 5:19

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.” Matthew 12:35

Jesus makes the truth plain, the heart is the center of the spiritual life. If the fruit of a tree is bad, you don't try to fix the fruit. You treat the roots. And if a person's actions are evil, it's not enough to change habits. You have to go deeper. You have to go to the heart of the problem, which is the problem of the heart.

2. The Corrupting Nature Of Our Heart

The scripture tells us that the heart of man is anything but pure. In fact, it tells us the human heart is wicked. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”* Jeremiah 17:9

On our own, our hearts are diseased, deceitful, and desperately wicked. Everything that you see wrong in the world today has originated in the heart of men.

The Greek word for “pure” is “katharos.” It is used 27 times in the New Testament and means “to be physically clean and unsoiled (free from dirt), unalloyed, without blemish, spotless, free from impure admixture.”

We are born with this tendency towards sin, but because God is God, He searches our hearts and knows us. If we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts, we can be saved. We need our hearts to be purified. To be pure means “to be without alloy; to be solely and completely - one thing.”

We talk about “Pure gold” meaning not mixed with any other metal, with anything else. The phrase “*pure in heart*” does not refer simply to doing the right things but doing the right things for the right reason—being free from hypocrisy, and/or shame. God desires His children to be authentic to the core.

3. The Cleaning Power Of Christ

The good news of the gospel is we can have a change of heart. David's prayer should be ours: *“Create in me a clean heart, O God.”* Psalm 51:10

The sins which stain our hearts need to be washed away, and that can only come from the blood of Jesus. God says to us in Isaiah 1:18 says, *“Come now and let us reason together, Says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* Isaiah 1:18

The pure in heart are those who are saved, those who have been washed in the fountain filled with blood drawn from Emanuel's veins. As the song says, “Sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.”

- The barrier of guilt keeps me stuck in the past.

“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but the one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Proverbs 28:13

Don't minimize your sin. A lot of people repress the guilt. They deny the guilt and say it doesn't exist. They say, “My sins aren't that bad or my mistakes aren't that bad. I'm not a sinner. It's no big deal,” but the guilt is real.

Some people put a positive spin on your sin. Some people compare themselves to someone else and say, “Well my sins aren't that bad. I'm not as messed up as that person. I don't have as many hang ups as they have.” Don't minimize it. Don't put a positive spin on it.

Don't minimize your sin. Don't put a positive spin on your sin because your sin, and my sin, caused the God of the universe to die an excruciatingly painful, humiliating death upon a cross. That's the only way I could be forgiven. That's how bad our sins are. So, don't make excuses for your sin. Admit it. Don't minimize it.

- The bridge of grace leads me to freedom.

The bridge of grace is greater than our sin. The bridge of grace leads me to freedom. The barrier of guilt keeps me stuck in the past, but the bridge of grace leads me to freedom.

“Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.” Psalm 32:1-2

“Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” Psalm 24:3-5

- God is the Great Doctor Who Wants To Give Us A Pure Heart.

God is faithful, and if we will let Him, He will heal our hearts. Sin blinds us, and the world is desperate to see God, but it is only with a pure heart that we can receive the eyes of faith. That is the promise of integrity: when we get our spiritual hearts right, our spiritual eyes will see God.

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 11:19

“Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die?” Ezekiel 18:31

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” Ezekiel 36:26,27

How Do I Take this Step?

- **I ask the Holy Spirit to search my heart.**

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the sins in your life, and He'll bring them up to your mind. Ask Him to show you the sins, the defects, the faults, the problems, and the destructive habits in your life.

- **I ask Christ to forgive my sin.**

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16

No man can forgive sins; only Christ can, but you confess it to someone you trust to experience healing. Go to God and receive forgiveness from Christ.

□ **I Accept God's Grace Instead Of Guilt, And I Live In God's Grace.**

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:23

It's free. We don't earn it or deserve it; but it wasn't cheap. It cost Christ His life. Freedom from our sins isn't cheap. It's grace, and it's free, but it's not cheap. Our sins are bad, but God's grace is greater, and I'm so thankful for that.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1

4. The Clear Experience Of God In His Fullness.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

In the Book of Esther there is an interesting parallel. A new king ascended to the throne of Persia. This king decided to divide the empire that stretched from India to Ethiopia, into 12 different provinces, and the new king appointed a governor over every province. Then, according to the historian, Herodius, he then appointed a Prince - 7 princes - to rule over all the 20 provinces. According to the Book of Esther, only these 7 princes could *“See The Face Of The King.”* ONLY these 7 could see the face of the king – only these 7 had immediate access to the king. In our scripture, Jesus is teaching, ONLY THOSE who are *“pure in heart - can see God.”* Matthew 5:8

You have to be pure in heart in order to see the Lord. How many people are clamoring and shouting, saying, “I want to know God; I want help from God; I want forgiveness from God; I want healing from God.” But the Bible clearly says, “ONLY those who are pure in heart,” have access to the King - the Lord of Hosts.

There is a promise given to those who have made Jesus Lord of their lives, those who have experienced His cleansing, that they shall see God. There is a future application to this. Someday all those who are saved will go to heaven, and there God will reveal more of Himself to us, and we will see Him.

Jesus is not necessarily talking about physical sight, but about perception, understanding and discernment.

Throughout scripture, the metaphor of blindness is used to describe those who are lost, and sight is used to describe spiritual life, that which is given to at salvation. The blessing here is this: as the person who is pure in heart allows their life to be lost in Jesus and allows Jesus to live through them, their understanding, their perception, their discernment of who God is, of His ways, of His will, of His heart and of His hand will grow.

Those who do not know God are alienated from the life of God because of the darkness that is within them, because of the blindness of their heart.

- They are able to see God in that they see His Spirit moving in the circumstances of life.
- They see His will being unfolded in their lives. They see His hand of provision in their everyday experience. They are perceptive to His ways and discerning of His heart and understanding His word.
- They are able to see God because He lives in them through His Spirit, and He reveals Himself to them in new ways every day.
- They see God as He lives His life through them. The pure in heart will see God because they are living life filled with His Holy Spirit.

Max Lucado writes, “There is a window in your heart through which you can see God. Once upon a time that window was clear. Your view of God was crisp. You could see God as vividly as you could see a gentle valley or hillside. The glass was clean, the pane unbroken. You knew God. You knew how He worked. You knew what He wanted you to do. No surprises. Nothing unexpected. You knew that God had a will, and you continually discovered what it was. Then, suddenly, the window cracked. A pebble broke the window. A pebble of pain. Perhaps the stone struck when you were a child and a parent left home – forever. Maybe the rock hit in adolescence when your heart was broken. Maybe you made it into adulthood before the window was cracked, but then the pebble came. Was it a phone call? “We have your daughter at the station. You’d better come down.” Was it a letter on the kitchen table? “I’ve left. Don’t try to reach me. Don’t try to call me. It’s over. I just don’t love you anymore.” Was it a diagnosis from the doctor? “I’m afraid our news is not very good.” Was it a telegram? “We regret to inform you that your son is missing in action.” Whatever the pebble’s form, the result was the same – a shattered window. The pebble missed into the pane and shattered it. The crash echoed down the halls of your heart. Cracks shot out from the point of impact, creating a spider web of fragmented pieces. Suddenly God was not so easy to see. The view that had been so crisp had changed. You turned to see God, and His figure was distorted. It was hard to see Him through the pain. It was hard to see Him through the fragments of hurt. You were puzzled. God wouldn’t allow something like this to happen, would He? Tragedy and travesty weren’t on the agenda of the One you had seen, were they? Had you been fooled? Had you been blind? The moment the pebble struck, the glass became a reference point for you. From then on, there was life before the pain and life after the pain. Before your pain, the view was clear. God seemed so near. After your pain, well, He was harder to see. He seemed a bit distant...harder to perceive. Your pain distorted the view – not eclipsed it, but distorted it. We look for God, but can’t find Him. Fragmented glass hinders our vision. He is enlarged through this piece and reduced through that one. Lines jigsaw their way across His face. Large sections of shattered glass opaque the view. And now you aren’t quite sure what you see. When you can’t see Him, trust Him.”

When we experience God's forgiveness and cleansing, our eyes are opened to see Him in our circumstances in ways we never have before. If your heart is clouded because you've resisted God, clear it by yielding to Him. With a heart purified by Christ, you will see Him everywhere around you today.