

The Vision of Purity

Matthew 5:8 - NCBC, June 23, 2019

Main Point: **Jesus' kingdom blessings belong to the pure in heart.**

- **Purity is not:**
 - External, but Internal
 - Sinlessness, but Single-mindedness
 - Something to lose, but something to gain
- **Purity is:**
 - Undivided devotion to loving God – Jas 4:4-8
 - True relationship with God and others – Ps 24:4
 - All of me valuing God above all else – Mt 22:37
- **Purity sees God:**
 - NOW: Increasingly satisfied in knowing God
 - THEN: Impossibly admitted into God's presence
- **Purity comes by:**
 - Believing God can purify you – Acts 15:9
 - Mourning your impurity – Mt 5:4; 1 Jn 1:9
 - Washing in God's Word – Jn 17:17; Eph 5:26
 - Beholding the glory of God – 2 Cor 3:18
 - Praying and asking – Ps 51:10; Phil 2:13
 - Persevering after failure – Heb 12:3-4, 12-14
 - Anticipating the joy of seeing God – 1 Jn 3:1-3

Opening Announcements:

- Ecuador Team Commissioning today – Team will be in Ecuador July 5 – 14, 2019.

<<Give us clean hands>>



Do you long for your hands to be clean and your heart to be pure this morning?

Welcome to the worship of our Lord Jesus Christ who alone can cleanse sinful hearts and wash filthy hands. This morning we gather to seek the face of the God who is able to cleanse and purify the deceiver Jacob – believing that there is no more purifying power on this earth than truly seeing and savoring Jesus Christ!



God is most clearly seen today in His autobiography of the Holy Scriptures. So if you do not have a copy of God's Words with you this morning, simply raise your hand as people are coming now with Bibles for you to use. Once you receive a Bible, please prepare to read from **James chapter 4, verses 4-10**.

Today **Matthew 5:8** is our meditation: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*. This is the 6th beatitude – or divine pronouncement of God's blessing which introduces Jesus' sermon on the mount.

And O how favored is the soul whose heart has been made inwardly pure by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who will someday see God! This is an amazing profound and infinitely glorious blessing. We are all far too limited to be able to take in all the wonders of this simple pronouncement of our King Jesus. And yet by God's grace, we come to this text, and we stand amazed as once again Jesus proves the inability of human effort, and the profound sufficiency of His finished work to grant us the righteousness of God.

Progression of Thought in Jesus' Beatitudes

Poor in Spirit: Right view of Self before God	5:3
Mourn: Right view of Sin before God	5:4
Meek: Right view of Suffering before God	5:5
Hunger: Right view of Salvation before God	5:6
Merciful: Right view of Serving before God	5:7
Pure: Right view of Satisfaction before God	5:8

Each Beatitude explains who Christians really are in Christ. These are all descriptions of what God's salvation gives to those who possess God's Spirit and thereby made one with the righteousness of Christ.

The first 4 beatitudes all described our need for God's righteousness. The poor in spirit receive a right view of self, those who mourn over their sin receive a right view of sin, the meek receive a right view of suffering, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness gain a right understanding of salvation.

Then starting in **verse 7**, the beatitudes shift from describing the Christian's needs to describing the Christian's character – specifically as it is expressed in relationship to others. So the merciful are the ones who receive mercy – so that they are always supernaturally empowered to channel God's mercies of forgiveness and friendship to anyone suffering the consequences of sin. This is a right view of serving others before God.

Now **verse 8** calls us towards a right view of satisfaction before God. For only pure hearts will ever see God.

To help us understand biblical purity, we're going to read from **James chapter 4** starting in **verse 4**. For I believe this Scripture explains and illustrates the kind of supernatural purity that is portrayed in **Matthew 5:8**: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*.



Please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word as I read from **James 4, verse 4**, in the English Standard Translation:

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

This is God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's Pray.

Yesterday I read an article that stated 68% of Christian men regularly look at pornography.¹ I did the math – 247 men in our church family, times 68%, means approximately 165 men in our church who are regularly consuming shameful nakedness through a screen.

Now of course I can't attach that many names to this statistic, and I pray that it is wrong, but denial and dismissiveness doesn't seem to be the wisest answer. How should we address such an invisible yet pervasive spiritual cancer that is raging through our body?

I believe the answer is found this morning in **Matthew 5:8**. The purity spoken of in this Beatitude is far greater than sexual purity – but it is not less than sexual purity either. The purity of **Matthew 5:8** is a purity of heart that addresses our sexuality, our money, our ambitions, and our reputation. **Matthew 5:8** is a glorious truth for all who live under King Jesus' rule:



Jesus' greatest kingdom blessings belong to the pure in heart.

¹ June 2019 Issue of FaithLife's Bible Study Magazine

Only those with pure hearts will ascend the holy hill and see God Himself. Only those with pure hearts will have the spiritual vision to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Only the pure in heart are really righteousness.

So let's first unpack some misconceptions about purity:



First, **Purity is not External, but Internal.**

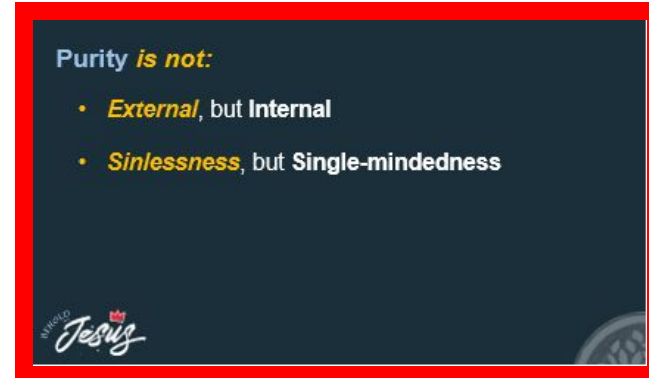
Notice Jesus qualifies the purity in **verse 8**. *Blessed are the pure...in heart*. Biblical purity is not outside in, but inside out. Not righteousness by following rules, but imputed internal righteousness that comes by receiving a new heart.

His Jewish audience was well acquainted with all kinds of teaching about external purity: ceremonial purity, religious washings, and purity by law-keeping. But the main point of Jesus' sermon was that your righteousness

had to exceed the righteousness of the best religious rulers to ever be accepted by God.²

Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom of the heart – not a kingdom of outward appearance. It's an internal kingdom. So make sure to note – biblical purity is always a matter of the heart – it's more about who we are than what we do or believe.

Further, biblical purity is not,



Sinlessness, but Single-mindedness.

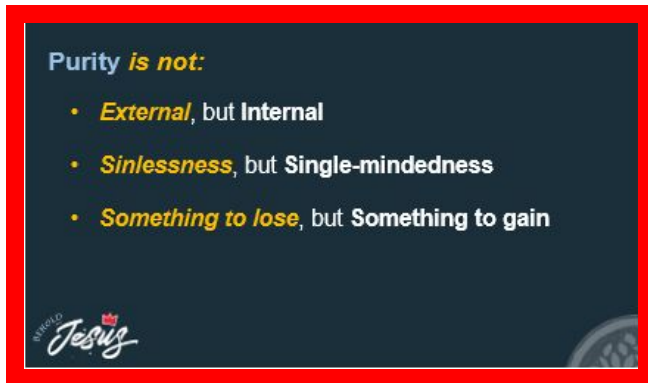
To be pure in heart does not mean that you can't sin. David was a man after God's own heart,³ and he committed some scandalous sins in his time. Purity of heart does not mean that our sin nature has been removed by a second work of God's grace which gives us sinless perfection in this world. The Scriptures teach nothing along these lines.

² Matthew 5:20

³ 1 Samuel 13:14

To be pure in heart is to be single-minded, or to possess a heart that is undivided or unpolluted with competing loves.

In other words biblical purity is not,



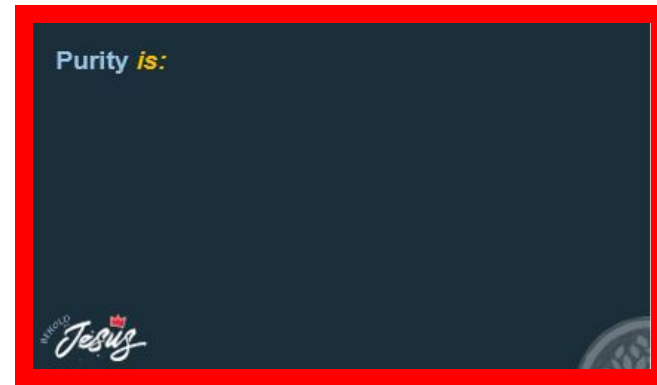
Something to lose, but something to gain

Sometimes we talk about purity as if it's something we lose. You hear things like, that person committed a sin and lost his purity. But contrary to popular opinion, abstinence is not the highest expression of purity. Biblically every human heart – even a little child's – is deceitful and wicked and impure.⁴ Purity is never a matter of abstaining from certain sins. Biblical purity is a gift from God – where my heart is cleansed internally from all false loves. Biblical purity cannot ever be achieved, but only received.⁵ Since every human soul is born into the impurity of sin,⁵ biblical purity is not something to lose, but something to gain.

So then let's define this phrase, "the pure in heart."

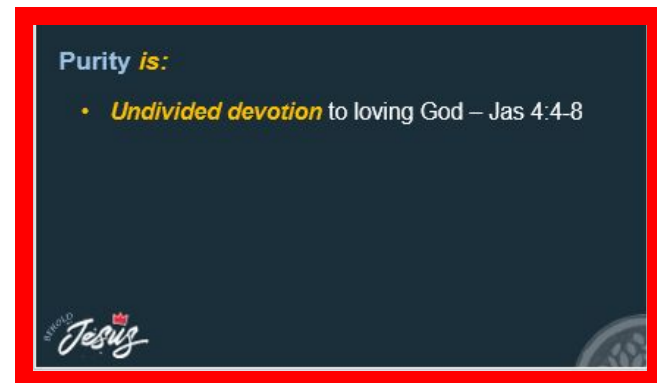
⁴ Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 51:5

⁵ Romans 5:12



To be pure means to be free from defilement, not polluted or contaminated. No additives. Like gold which has been purified – all the dross has been burned off and removed.

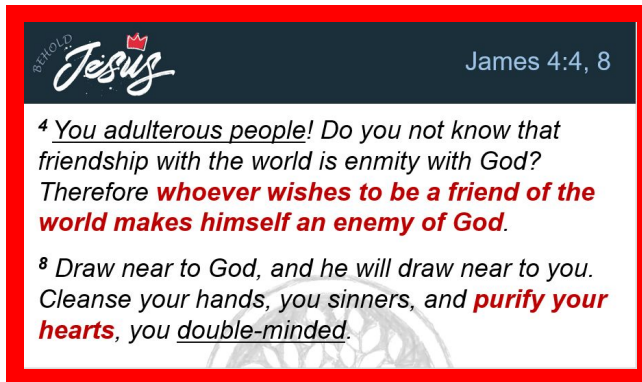
But purity of heart means more than just being clean. It means that my treasure is found in God alone.



Biblical purity is **undivided devotion to loving God**. There are no false loves mixing into my worship of God.

You see, so many times we Christians live like God is our husband, but the world is our boyfriend. Our devotion to God is divided with our love for the world.

And **James 4** confronts this impurity in our hearts:



Pronouncing in **verse 4**, *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

The word *adulterous* graphically pictures the reality of impurity. In the context this is not a sexual sin. This is the sin of double-mindedness. The sin of two-timing on God. Coming to church and singing, “God You’re All to Us” and then leaving to live out a jealous and selfish ambition that fights and quarrels and assassinates God’s children with your words.

An impure heart loves both the world and God – depending on who’s watching, and what benefit can be realized for himself in the moment.

⁶ James 3:10ff

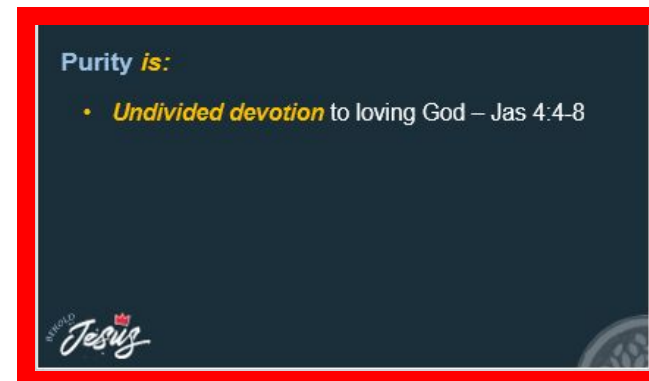
We’re starting to see now how purity of heart is far greater than mere sexual purity aren’t we? What can be done for a heart that loves the applause of people? What hope is there for a heart that claims to love God but also loves money?

Hear the hope of **verse 8**,

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

Isn’t that good news for impure hearts this morning? God doesn’t require us to clean up our act before we come to Him. In fact, the more we’d try to clean it up is the more we’d spread our impurity. So just come. Surrender. Confess. Draw near to God, and you will see Him – He will draw close to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Forsake your sin. And then notice these next words which are so helpful for our definition of purity: *purify your hearts, you double-minded.* A pure heart is the cure for double-mindedness or spiritual adultery.

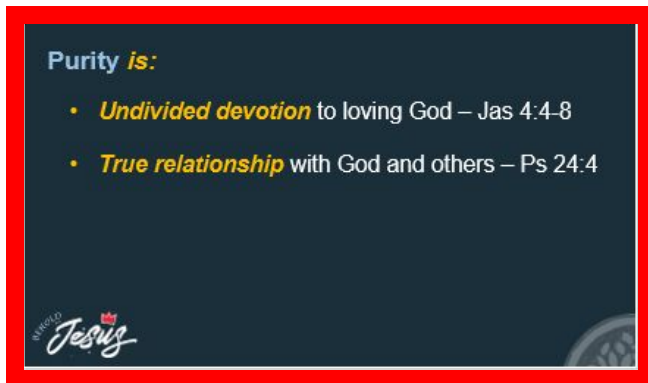


Therefore biblical purity is a single-minded devotion to loving God. Now we all must honestly consider our own heart this morning.

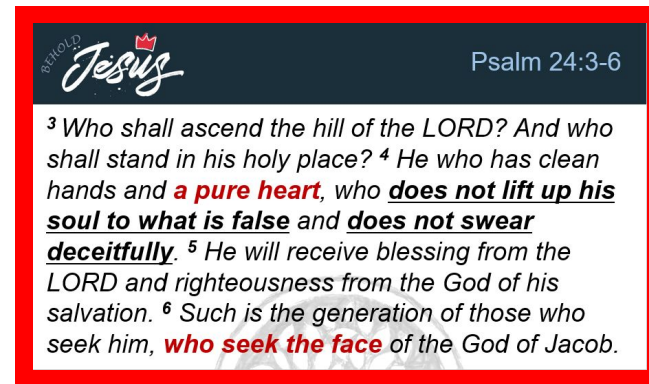
Are we toying with sin – never giving in to it entirely, but just flirting with it, while we never go entirely in with Christ as well?

I fear too many of us are like the hypocrite named “Mr. Facing Both Ways” in John Bunyon’s classic *Pilgrim Progress*. We are unstable in all our ways, because our hearts are impure, and we’re constantly trying to cover for our guilty pleasures.

Now **Psalm 24** further helps us define biblical purity. This is the psalm which we sung earlier together in our worship service this morning.



And **Psalm 24** teaches us that purity is **True or sincere relationship with God and others**. The pure heart nurses no falsehood towards God or others.

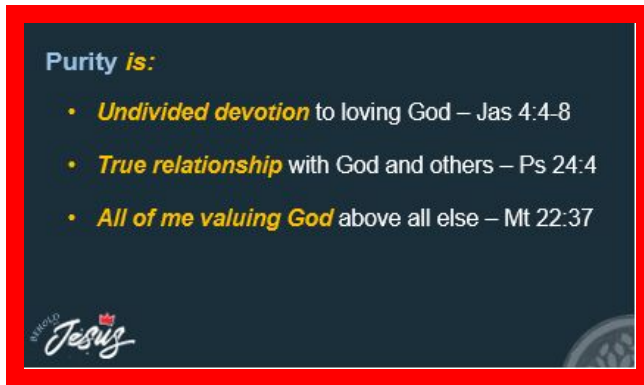


In many ways **Matthew 5:8** is a simple restatement of **verses 4-6** in **Psalm 24**. **Verse 3** asks the question: who gets to see God or have an audience with God? **Verse 4** – *He who has clean hands and a pure heart*. Now notice how the verse goes on to define purity: *Who does not lift up his soul to what is false* – that’s idolatry. The pure in heart do not practice false worship. And the pure in heart *do not swear deceitfully*. In other words, they don’t play the hypocrite and seek to deceive others. These are the blessed ones in **verse 5**, who will be able to see the face of God in **verse 6**.

So according to **Psalm 24**, to be pure in heart means to have no falsehood towards God and no falsehood towards others. Unpolluted worship, and unpolluted words. Freedom from lies in both my vertical and horizontal relationships.

In other words, to be pure in heart is to be a person of integrity. Exactly the same both in public and in private. To always be true in my relationship towards God and with others.

The pure heart unites the outer person that you can see, and the inner person that you can't. Such a heart only has one supreme love and treasure – to love and enjoy God forever! To be pure in heart is to have a heart that is united in the fear of God's name,⁷ truly to have a heart that is mastered by God and reflective of the character of King Jesus Himself.



One more way to explain purity of heart – it simply means **All of me valuing God above all else**. To be pure in heart is to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind*.⁸

Biblical purity is receiving a new heart from God's Spirit in fulfillment of the New Covenant promises – receiving a heart that is holy or singular in its submission to King Jesus. The pure in heart are entirely free from lies in their relationships with God and others. Those who have pure hearts possess undivided devotion to loving God, for every part of them values and treasures God above all else.

So when Jesus says, *Blessed are the pure in heart*, this is what His audience would have understood Him to mean.

So listen church. I've never seen a stat in a magazine article for what percentage of our church is worldly. Or what percentage of our hearts are believing some lies in how we seek to relate to God or others. I've never seen a statistic that would help me to know what percentage of our hearts are impure.

I suppose such inner secrets of our hearts don't show up real well on metrics. But I believe Jesus knows that 100% of all the men and women and children in this room should now be convicted by this picture of righteousness.

To see God requires not just some outward purity of ritual or abstinence. To see God requires complete purity of our hearts. And since everything that has the potential to defile us before God comes out of our hearts,⁹ this is a call for absolute perfection.¹⁰

Has the purity of Christ been imputed to you? Have you received the miraculous heart transplant which is free to all who call on King Jesus? Is the rule of Christ even now purifying your heart from the lesser satisfactions of this world?

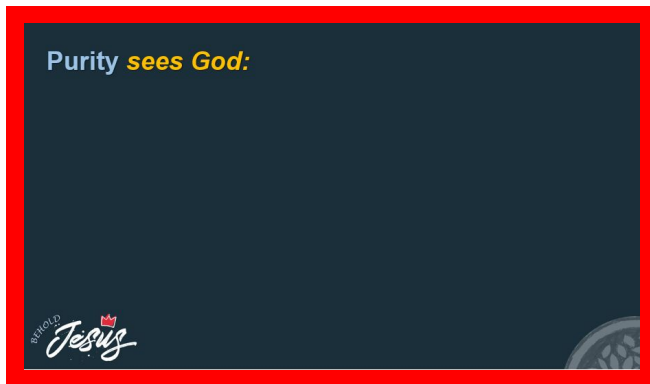
O how blessed is the reward for the pure in heart.

⁷ Psalm 86:11

⁸ Matthew 22:37

⁹ Matthew 15:18-20

¹⁰ Matthew 5:48



...*For they shall see God!* Literally *they shall continuously see God for themselves*. Not just a quick glance at God, or even just one 2-hour appointment, but those who are pure in heart shall be blessed with a constant and ever-growing vision of God both here on this earth now, and throughout all of eternity in His very presence.

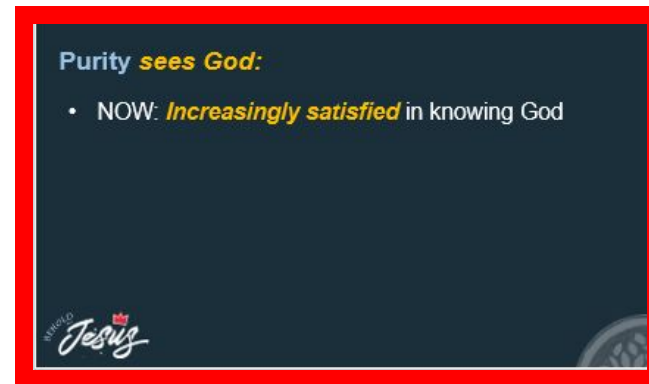
Now in the Scripture, seeing is often used with believing. To look is to believe in – just like the Israelites who were saved from God's wrath by looking upon the curse.¹¹ According to **Psalm 34**, To see is to taste and savor.¹² Seeing is knowing and delighting in. And according to **2 Corinthians 3:18**, to behold is to become and be satisfied.¹³

Therefore there are two primary ways in which the pure in heart shall see God.

¹¹ Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14; 1 Peter 1:8

¹² Psalm 34:8; 1 Peter

¹³ 2 Corinthians 3:18



NOW, while we await our final deliverance and entrance into the heavenly kingdom of Christ, seeing God means that we are **Increasingly satisfied in knowing God**.

The heart that is singularly controlled by loving God experiences its greatest delights in knowing Him more and more.¹⁴

Pure hearts have clearer vision – the eyes of their hearts are enlightened to understand the riches of God's glorious inheritance.¹⁵

Perhaps an illustration could help you understand the power of a pure heart in seeing God. I'd like all of you to please direct your attention to the large cross on the wall behind me. That cross will represent God for the purpose of this illustration.

Now take your finger or your pen and place it in your view, directly in front of your nose. Your pen or finger represents an idol – some impure distraction. Some

¹⁴ Philippians 3:7-14

¹⁵ Ephesians 1:15-23, especially verse 18

false love for money or fear of man or love for worldly comfort.

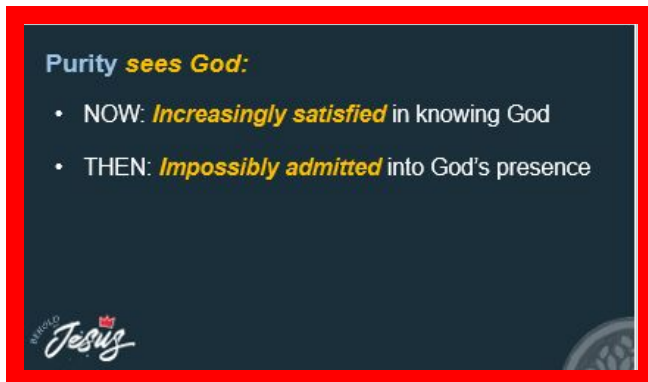
To be double-minded, or impure, is to try to stay focused on both God and your idol. Both the large cross up here, and the much smaller object of your affection right up close to you.

You can't do it well can you? You're impure. You're unstable in all your ways. And your impurity blinds you to the spiritual realities of knowing Christ more and more.

But those who are pure in heart shall see God. For the purity has removed all false loves, and their supreme delight is in God alone.

Does that make sense?

Purity enables a heart on the earth to look forward to the invisible realities of heaven, and therefore endure suffering for the sake of loving God now.¹⁶



¹⁶ Hebrews 11:27
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And **THEN** finally, the pure in heart shall see God, meaning they shall be **Impossibly admitted into God's presence**.

Revelation 22:4 pictures the human impossibility¹⁷ of our eternal audience with God.

Christian – what is impossible with men is possible by the sovereign grace of God! Your future is within the audience chamber of the Most High! *You will see His face!* And you will worship Him in fullness of joy and blessed satisfaction forever and ever! This is the highest hope of all the redeemed from all time.

What a blessed kind of righteousness Jesus is speaking about – that His kingdom citizens are pure in heart, for they shall see God!

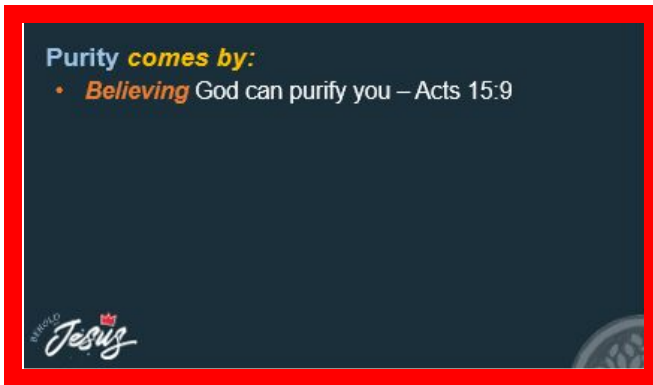
*So since we have these promises, beloved, [how might we] cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God?*¹⁸

First, **Purity comes by:**¹⁹

¹⁷ Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16; John 1:18

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 7:1; c.f. Hebrews 12:14

¹⁹ For these points I'm indebted to Pastor Colin Smith's sermon, "Cultivating Purity"
<https://unlockingthebible.org/sermon/cultivating-purity/>



Believing God can purify you.

Let me ask you a question. Do you really believe God can take your sinful heart – your double-minded, two-timing heart, and cleanse it from all unrighteousness and make it pure?

This is the first step towards purity. **Proverbs 20, verse 9** says, *“I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin?”* And of course the answer is no one can say that. No human effort can achieve purity of heart.

So be honest: Do you believe that the Spirit who rose Jesus from the dead is strong enough to give you a brand-new purified heart if He would come into your life today?

You say, well I know my heart is impure, but honestly I don't even want it to be pure. I'm not that concerned about my impurity.

Then do you believe that God is powerful enough to give you desires to love and know Him where you only desire to love the world and yourself today?

Purity of heart only comes by faith in God's miracle of the New Covenant.²⁰ Purity of heart is only possible by the goodness and lovingkindness of God.²¹

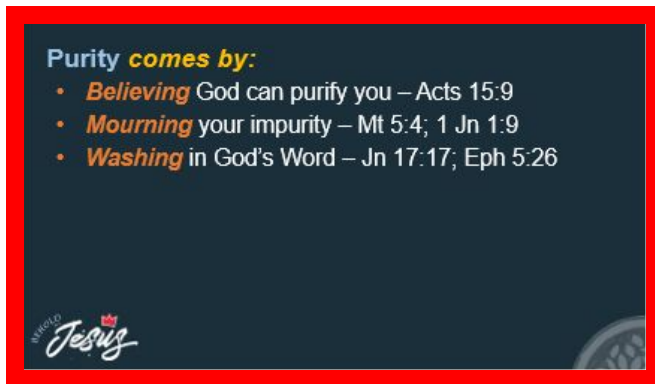
Believing the good news of God's undeserved and all-powerful salvation then opens the floodgates of progression towards purity.



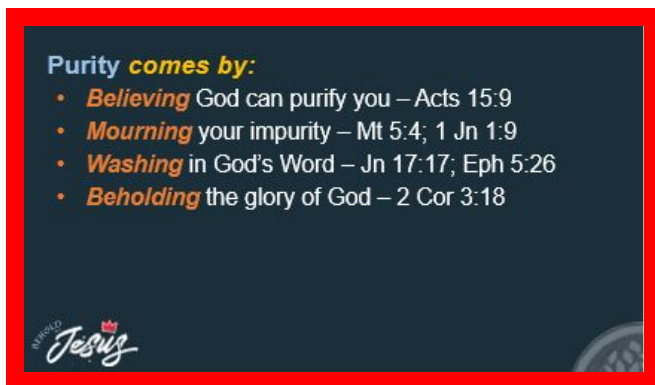
It begins as we've already seen in our study by **Mourning our impurity**. Confessing our sins, and admitting our false loves to God, and then submersing ourselves in the,

²⁰ Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 3:3-8

²¹ Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

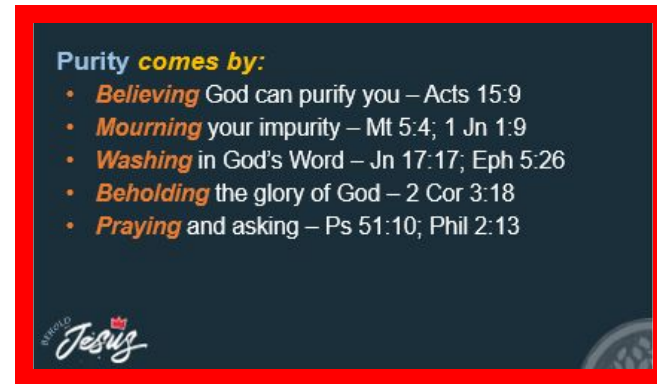


Washing of God's Word. For only the Gospel of God has the power to produce life in our heart. It is the Truth of God's glory that will overwhelm the lies of our hearts. If you've become enslaved to impurities and false lovers you've worshipped your way into slavery. So the path out of sin's bondage is by,



Beholding the glory of God. As you behold God, you will become more like Him, and you will worship your way out of the deceitful strongholds of sin's lies, and bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!²² So follow David's example today. Purity comes by,

²² 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
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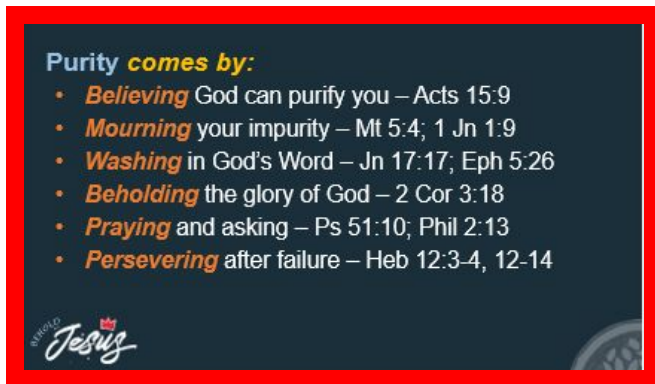


Praying and asking for God to give you a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within you. It is God who has the power to change your heart desires and cause you to see Him as most lovely. When's the last time you've asked God to purify your heart?

Sincerely pray and ask God to bless you with a pure heart that has a clear vision of His infinite glory!²³

And then, when you fall into impurity of any kind, don't grow weary or fainthearted. Purity comes by,

²³ Exodus 33:18

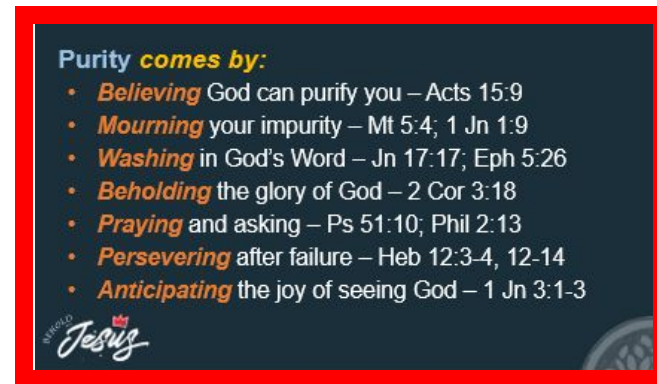


Persevering after failure. Lift up your eyes and behold your Savior who is also your great High Priest! He lives to make intercession for you. He never saved you because you were doing everything right in the first place. So by His grace, get back up, and make straight paths for your feet. Repeat all the previous steps as you strive for the holiness that God alone so graciously gives, and then, remember,

*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*²⁴

Purity comes by,

²⁴ 1 John 3:2
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Anticipating the joy of seeing God.

*And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.*²⁵

O friend, do you hate the inner impurities which blind your clear vision of God's truth and glory?



Jesus' kingdom blessings belong to the pure in heart.

Purity of heart is far more than sexual sin, but it is not less than sexual sin either. May God purify all of our

²⁵ 1 John 3:3

hearts with a greater vision of His infinite glories in the face of Jesus Christ!

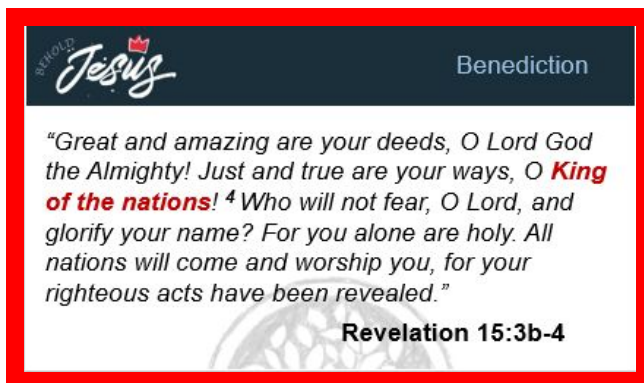
Revelation 15:3b-4



Let's pray.

<<Behold Our God>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Recommended Resources on The Vision of Purity:

- Psalm 17:15; 24:3-4; 27:8; 32:1-2; 73:1
- Ezekiel 36:25-26, 36
- Matthew 5:48; 6:22-23; 22:37-40
- John 1:18; 3:3
- 2 Corinthians 7:1
- Colossians 3:1-4
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3
- 2 Timothy 2:22
- Hebrews 11:27; 12:14
- James 4:4-8
- 1 Peter 1:22
- 1 John 3:2-3
- Revelation 22:4
- <https://unlockingthebible.org/sermon/blessed-are-the-pure-in-heart/>
- <https://unlockingthebible.org/sermon/cultivating-purity/>
- *Finally Free*, Heath Lambert
- *Gospel Treason*, Brad Bigney
- *Taste & See*, John Piper

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Psalm 24:1-6. Explain the meaning of "pure in heart" from verse 4. What is the blessing of the pure in heart according to verse 5? How does verse 6 parallel the promise of Matthew 5:8?
2. Read James 4:4-8. What does this passage teach us about the meaning of "pure in heart"? And how to cultivate purity of heart?

3. Read 1 John 3:2-3. Explain the connection between purity and seeing God. What does it mean to see God as He is?
4. Read Jude 10. What is destroying the people in this verse? Do you ever live according to your own instincts? Why is living by your own instincts in life spiritually destructive? (C.f. James 4:4)
5. Read Matthew 6:22-24. Explain Jesus' teaching here in light of Matthew 5:8, 48; and 22:37-38. Do you believe you are "pure in heart"? Why or why not? If not, what remedy is offered to you? (C.f. 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 John 1:9) Do you know what steps God is calling you to take to cultivate purity? (c.f. Matthew 5:3-8)
6. Read 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22. How could God see David as being pure in heart after David committed such high-handed sins as lying, adultery, and murder? Discuss David's prayer in Psalm 51:10, and pray this together for one another in your group.