

## BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

### Message 10

Scripture: 2 Cor. 10:1-7; Romans 12:1-2

INTRO: Our subject is the beatitudes of Jesus' first extended discourse called the Sermon on the Mount. We started where all who get saved start, and where all who are truly saved must go again and again; blessed are the poor in spirit. Those who come to that place, if they respond right to that truth, will mourn their sinfulness. They will then become meek and begin to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Then true, godly mercy will take place. Now let me say this: anyone who truly hungers and thirsts for righteousness and is filled with it, will become merciful in a godly sense. They will care about that which God cares about. Matters such as money and land and job etc... will now no longer take first place in one's life. Seeking to bring the lost to salvation or the carnal Christian to victory will become primary concerns.

In the last message we looked at what it meant to be 'pure' in heart. It means to be free from any admixture; without blemish; spotless; unpolluted; unadulterated; untainted and wholesome. It means to be free from guilt and evil desire or impure thoughts and so on.

The person who truly becomes poor in spirit and mourns his or her sinful condition and becomes meek and hungers and thirst for righteousness and is filled with it will become merciful. And the merciful who press on will become pure in heart. And this purity in heart will grow and grow in those who faithfully deal with sin and become poor in spirit again and again.

Having studied what the word pure meant, we then began to consider what it means to be pure in 'heart'. I have proposed to you that when the Scriptures speak of the heart, they have in view all that which we mean by the word 'mind'. The heart is the vital center of the soul. It is the place where all mental activity takes place. It is the control of which God and the devil both seek. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, God will control our heart and a godly life will, without fail follow in the faithful. Christians have often stressed the gifts

of the Spirit but I believe the greatest proof of a Spirit filled life is a holy life. There are many who seem to manifest spiritual gifts whose lives are not holy. There is always something wrong when that happens. When holy living takes place then exercising one's spiritual gifts should follow.

So, in the last message, in order to understand what it means to be pure in heart, we began to take the heart, or the mind apart and the very first part we looked at is that which is called the phreen. In my understanding, that is the data processor of the heart. It is where we think. We process our thoughts in the phreen. I mentioned that there are other words that come from the word phreen. Let me share a few of those with you here. There is aphron, foolish thinking; aphrosynee, folly; phronew, to think; phroneema, a thought; phroneesis, thinking; phronimos, thoughtful and so on. The root word is phreen, and it is the thinking part of our mind.

#### A. The Character Of The Pure In Heart

##### NOUS

So we are presently considering the character of the pure in heart. Having looked at one part of the heart, or the mind, the phreen; we now look at a second part. This second part, in the original language, is called the *nous*. Again, numerous words come from that part of the mind. The root word is the word nous. From that come these words: Noew, to perceive, or think; Noema, a thought; anoetos, foolish; anoia, folly; dysnoetos, hard to understand; dianoia; a thinking through; dionoema, a thought; ennoia, a thought, an insight; eunew, well minded; eunoia, goodwill; katanoeo, ponder, study; metanoia, repentance, change of mind; ametanoetos, unrepentant; pronoeo, to foreknow, care for; pronoia, foresight; hyponoew, suspect, conjecture; hyponoia; suspicion, conjecture; noutheteo, to admonish, instruct; nouthesia; instruction, admonition and so on.

From my studies, I have concluded that the nous part of the heart is the data storage part of the heart. Stored in this huge database are all the thoughts, actions, words; all the things we have smelled; all the things we have

heard; all the things we have seen; all the things we have touched, everything from before birth until death is stored there in the nous. Every sin is recorded there.

When I teach this in class I give this illustration. The only grandparent I got to know was my grandfather, my mother's dad. He was a cigarette smoker and lived in a log house. As children, we enjoyed going there. And his house had a certain smell to it. And sometimes when I go into a certain home, and the smell is like the smell of my grandfather's house, in my mind, I am back in his house. Now that is 50 years ago. But that smell is still recorded in the nous part of my mind.

You see, the phreen is the data processor, and the nous is the data storage area. If you are 5 or 6 years old, you have a lot of data already stored in this part of your mind. If you are 15, or 20; you have a lot more data stored there. Let me remind us again, every sin, every evil thought, every bad imagination, everything ungodly we have experienced is recorded there as well.

I think it would be appropriate for me to read an article here I have read for you before. It was written by By Dr. Vernon Gillenwater and it is called, 'The Room.' Let us call it this morning, 'The Nous', the storage part of the mind. He writes:

*In that place between wakefulness and dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features except for the one wall covered with small index card files. They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemingly endless in either direction, had very different headings. As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read "Girls I have Liked." I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one.*

*And then without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude*

catalog system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big and small, in a detail my memory couldn't match.

A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with horror stirred within me as I began randomly opening the files and exploring their contents. Some brought joy and sweet memories; others a sense of shame and regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching. A file named, "Friends" was next to one marked "Friends I have Betrayed."

The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. "Books I Have Read." "Lies I have told," "Comfort I have Given," "Jokes I Have Laughed At." Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: "Things I've Yelled at My Brothers." Others I couldn't laugh at: "Things I have muttered Under My Breath at My Parents." I never ceased to be surprised by the contents. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes there were fewer than I hoped.

I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time in my twenty years to write each of these thousands, possibly millions of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with my signature.

When I pulled out the file marked, "Songs I have Listened To," I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly, and yet after two or three yards, I hadn't found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed, not so much by the quality of music, but more by the vast amount of time I knew that file represented.

When I came to a file marked "Lustful Thoughts" I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed contents. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded.

Suddenly I felt an almost animal rage. One thought dominated my mind: "No one must ever see these cards! I have to destroy them!" In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn't matter now. I had to empty it and burn the cards. But as I took the file at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it.

Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot. Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long, self-pitying sigh. And then I saw it. The title bore "People I Have Shared the Gospel With." The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box not more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand."

But then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No, please not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but Jesus.

I watched helplessly as He began to open the files and read the cards. I couldn't bear to watch His response. And in the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw a sorrow deeper than my own. He seemingly to intuitively go to the worst boxes. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally He turned and looked at me from across the room. He looked at me with pity in His eyes. But this was a pity that didn't anger me. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands and began to cry again. He walked over and put His arm around me. He could have said so many things. But He didn't say a word. He just cried with me.

Then He got up and walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card.

"No!" I shouted, rushing to Him. All I could find to say was "No, no, as I pulled the card from Him. His name shouldn't be on these cards. But here it was, written in

*red so rich, so dark, so alive. The name of Jesus covered mine. It was written with His blood.*

*He gently took the card back. He smiled a sad smile and continued to sign the cards. I don't think I'll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but the next instant it seemed I heard Him close the last file and walk back to my side. He placed His hand on my shoulder and said, "It is finished."*

*I stood up, and He led me out of the room. There was no lock on its door. There were still cards to be written.*

I have used this illustration a number of times to picture the vast amount of material our minds have stored and that sin is recorded there. But there is a misleading element in the story I want to point out. The man in the room cried when he saw what was in those files. Let me first say that Jesus does not forgive us our sins because we cry. Scripture says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When the man who was in the room realized how sinful he was he came under conviction of sin. I believe that conviction of sin takes place through the conscience and we will look at that in a later message. But when we discover how sinful we are, we must ask: how do we become pure in heart with regard to the nous, this storage part of the mind where all sin is recorded? How do we get rid of sin in the heart? In the story, the man in the room was in no way able to remove the cares, which were as strong steel, by himself.

It is right here that the good news becomes the best news there is. I have told you the true story of the boy who kept pulling the fire alarm handles in a school my wife went to. And one day the police powdered the fire alarm handles and the next time the boy pulled that handle, his fingers turned purple. And he could not get the purple off, not even with a knife. When we have sin in our hearts, we cannot get the purple off either. There is only one way and that is by repentance and confession.

There is no better news in all the world than this: there is a way to get the purple out of our hearts! But there is only one way! Jesus Christ shed His blood that we might be able to get the purple out of our hearts. The Lord God said in the OT, "Come, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as wool." And just how is that possible?

Well, first, like this man in our story, we have to become poor in spirit and mourn our sinfulness. Before our hearts can be cleansed from sin, we must repent. Man, in his pride, finds repentance hard. But the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ can be reduced to this one word: Repent! Repentance is not bad news. It is good news. The man in the story found the cards to be impossible to get rid of. They were of strong steel. And the wonderful news is that repentance will melt and consume these cards of steel. If we do not repent, these sins are permanently recorded in our minds.

So it is important that we understand this word, to repent. The original word is *metanoia*. And what does it mean? It comes from two words. The word *meta*, which means *change* plus *noia*, or *nous*. There is the word of that part of the heart we are considering right now, *nous*. Repentance is a change in the material I have stored in the *nous* part of the mind. You see, I might say some harsh word to my wife and then take her out for supper to cover up. That is what someone has called slop bucket repentance. I call it something a little more palatable. I call it bubble gum repentance. Slop bucket repentance or bubble gum repentance is counterfeit repentance. It is not the real thing. It leaves the wronged person contaminated.

But to get the *nous* cleaned up does not only take repentance. The one thing so often missing in dealing with sin is confession. Confession is not making myself look better than my actions have proved. It is openly and fully acknowledging the sin. The word, *to confess* in the NT means *to say the same thing*. True confession would go something like this: "I'm sorry, my dear. Before I said..."

and then I acknowledge what I said without skirting around the issue or excusing myself, and then I say, "It was wrong of me to say that. Would you forgive me for those words?" That is confession.

Now, with regard to our story, the man in the room said, *I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands and began to cry again. He (Jesus) walked over and put His arm around me.* Let me say something I believe to be very important here: tears do not necessarily mean there is true repentance. It may simply be sorrow for the consequences of the sin and a way to get the issue of one's back. True repentance fully owns up to the wrong. But there is something beyond repentance and much harder than repentance that is needed. Repentance is not the final step before forgiveness takes place. There is something that is often much harder than repentance that must take place before forgiveness takes place, and that is confession. Scripture says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When we confess, we must confess those things God speaks to us about. Repentance and confession, in this story I read earlier, is as weak as it is in most of our Christianity.

So we now ask, how do we become pure in heart with regard to any sin that is stored in this storage part of our minds? First, there is no salvation without repentance and confession. Now, justification or initial salvation takes place when we first become poor in spirit and mourn our sinfulness and we repent and confess our sins. Paul speaks of the time of salvation like this in Romans 4:7: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered, Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

But in our beatitudes we have progressed beyond justification. We are now talking about the process of sanctification, or becoming holy. And when we progress in our salvation, we find again and again that sin lurks within. And we struggle. And so, we now ask, how do Christians become more and more pure in heart? Well, we



need to teach the whole doctrine of sanctification here. But we cannot do that so let us go to Romans 7 to answer this (read 15-25). Now notice verse 25. Paul says, "So then, with the mind (nous) I myself serve the law of God..." Well, how do you do that?

Let me say this about Romans 7. A man who lives in this chapter is not yet pure in heart. This chapter is pictured by Israel's wandering in the wilderness. It is not a picture of Canaan, the land of rest, the land of the pure in heart. When the man in this chapter gets to 7:25 and then into chapter 8, that is the man of the pure in heart. That does not mean he never fails. But he has learned to overcome and does so as soon as he fails. This is a huge battle for every Christian to get through, and let me say, like Israel of old, many died in the wilderness, so many never come clear through Romans 7.

But we ask now, how does one gain the victory here? Well, what is the law of the mind in our passage? (read 7:23). Albert Barnes says, "the word 'law' means an inward principle of action, good or evil, operating with the fixedness and regularity of a law." So let me ask, what is it that operates with fixedness and regularity in the nous, the storage part of the mind? Well, the answer to that never came clearer than when computers were invented. What we learned of computers is now called GIGO. And what does that mean? It means, 'garbage in, garbage out.' That is the law of the nous as I see it! When we put garbage in, we will get garbage out!

I checked the meaning of GIGO on the internet for a definition and it said that this phrase is, and I quote, "used to express the idea that in computing and other spheres, incorrect or poor quality input will always produce faulty output." There is the law of the mind, and in our passage, the word for mind is *nous*. Paul, in our passage said that through Jesus Christ he served the law of the mind. When you do that through Jesus Christ, of course it is good material in, good material out.

Let me show you how this works from another Scripture. Go to Romans 12 (read 1-2). If we, as Christians, are going

to be pure in heart, we will have to have our heart renewed! Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world." This word, 'conformed' speaks of our external appearance and speaks of our outward life. You cannot get anything else than that out of the original wording. And if our external appearance or life or outward man is like that of this world, we are not pure in heart. Do I desire to be like the world in that part of my life which is seen by the world? Then I am not pure of heart.

So, how do I change that? Can I become pure in heart, simply by dressing differently or changing so many other externals? No. So I need to be transformed from the inside out. My external life is what it is because of the data I have stored in my mind. And how do I get transformed? Well, it is by a change from the inside out. The word, *transformed* in Romans 12:2 is *metamorphow*. You can tell what word we get from that. It is *metamorphosis*. It is like a cocoon turning into a butterfly, from the inside out. And how do we become pure in heart? By the renewing of the storage part of our mind.

And how do we renew that part of our mind? By repenting and confessing wrongdoing; and by putting in new, good data. And that new, and good data is the Word of God or pure teaching from the Word of God. When we put that in, it will change how we behave on the outside.

Go to 2 Corinthians 10 (read 4-6). Now the word 'thought' there is 'noema'. It comes from the storage part of the mind. Maybe you say, "But I thought we did our thinking in the phreen." Here is how I see that. When we are processing new data, it comes into our phreen from outside sources. When we process data that has been stored in our mind, we are regurgitating that which has already been processed and stored. Every day we all do a lot of thinking on material that is already stored in our nous. That is what this passage is talking about. If we can bring our thinking under the control of the Holy Spirit, we will no doubt become more and more pure in heart.

We have just come through the most sinful and ungodly experience in our church that I have witnessed in my 41

years as a Christian. Such an experience gives one a lot of food for evil and vengeful thoughts. Right here we have a huge opportunity to take every thought captive; every noema, every thing pulled out of the nous and rehashed in the phreen.

You see, the knowledge of the events that happened are stored in our minds and we cannot change that. But we can start to think about that and rehash and get all worked up until we think evil and vengeful thoughts and that knowledge, with which there was nothing wrong in itself, can now become a cancer in our minds. And if we want to avoid that, we must gain the victory and take those thoughts, noema, captive.

L. E. Maxwell tells the story of a soldier who called out to his leader and said, "Sir, I have taken a captive." And the leader said, "Well, bring him here." And he said, "I can't, he won't let me." That is our experience with our thoughts at times. But when we take our thoughts captive, we reign them in and we do not let them run our lives.

So, our beatitude says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." What is that? Well, in part, it speaks of those who have repented of their sins and confessed them where necessary, when sin takes place; and then they are now filling the storage part of the mind with God's truth. Bible read

CONCL: And so we conclude for this morning. In the last two messages we have looked at one of the most profound statements in Scripture: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." We have said that the 'heart' in Scripture speaks of that which we call the mind. The mind is to the soul, what the heart is to the body; it is the vital center. We have looked at the part of the heart the NT knows as the phreen. It is the data processor of the heart. Those who are pure in heart have repented of their sins and received Christ as Lord and have placed under the control of the Holy Spirit, the thoughts that they process.

It is a very important matter for everyone to learn to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. So we considered a second part of the heart this morning, the nous. I

call this the data storage area of the heart. When we become Christians we have a lot of sin and other trash stored there. When we repent, that is cleansed, and then we begin to learn how to change from the inside out by a metamorphosis. We learn how to renew the mind by repenting when we do wrong and by placing good material in to avoid a vacuum. When we do this day by day, we learn how to overcome the wicked one. Important things for the renewing of the mind are a good church life; prayer, and a regular habit of Bible reading.

As we learn to have our thoughts come under the control of the Holy Spirit and we regularly attend church, read the Bible and pray; more and more we gain the victory over the evil one.

So, let me mention once more, that in dealing with sin it is important that we learn to repent and confess our sins. When our text says, "Blessed are the pure in heart" it is not speaking of those who wash themselves white in their confessions, or those who do nice things to cover up their wrong. It speaks of those who get their heart cleaned up by actual repentance and confession of sin. Do you see how huge this beatitude is? Blessed are the pure in heart!