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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

June 28, 2015

Blessed Are The Pure In Heart

Matthew 5:8

Prayer: *Father God, we do again thank you for your grace, we thank you for the incredible gift that it is, we thank you for this church, we thank you that we can still every week come together without fear, that we can come for corporate worship, and this is what we're doing right now, Lord, and we're at the part of our service where we are opening up your book. We pray for your Holy Spirit's presence, your guidance, walk us into your word, give us the grace and the wisdom to understand what is in there and again, make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, our text this morning is *Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."* You know, sight is a funny thing. I mean on the one hand it is -- it's proof that something is real, I mean, we say, "Hey, I saw it with my own eyes," you know, we've got ABC Eye Witness News. You know, when we finally understand something we say, "Okay, okay, now I see." So we use "sight" to mean something is real or at least we perceive it as

real; but on the other hand we also know that sight can be deceptive. I mean, sometimes our eyes -- either our eyes or our brains, they deceive us. We even have a name for it. We cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when our brains receive information from our eyes and the brain simply refuses to accept that information. When I lived in San Francisco, I used to commute to work every morning on a motorcycle. I used to park the motorcycle out in front of my apartment. And one night during the night, the motorcycle was stolen, and I went charging out of my apartment in the morning and I just ran down to the spot where the motorcycle was, and I just -- I looked at it, then I looked at my apartment, then I looked at it, then I looked at my apartment. Meanwhile what was happening is my brain was saying that spot's empty and there was supposed to be a motorcycle there and my brain was saying, "No, I don't accept that." That's the way cognitive dissonance works, your brain is unwilling to accept the input that it's given. Speaking of motorcycles, anyone who drives a motorcycle understands that one of the greatest dangers that you face is the other drivers who are driving in cars. And one of the reasons is because they can look directly at you and not see you, and sometimes with disastrous consequences. It's a different type of blindness; and that's why in spite of the fact that I drove a motorcycle for years, I'm desperate that my kids not get one.

So the difference between real sight and deceptive sight, it has a parallel in the spirit world. There what you see is not always what you think you see. Jesus said it's only the pure in heart who are going to see God; and those who are not pure in heart, they won't. But it's not quite that simple. You see, it's not a choice between seeing God and seeing nothing, I mean, that would be way too obvious. The problem is much, much more profound. From a human perspective our problem is choosing which God it is that you see.

As Jesus said, the pure in heart see God. Those not pure in heart see what? Well, we have some instances in scripture to talk about. When Jesus confronts the Pharisees in *John 9:39* he says this, he says: *"For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."* Jesus had just healed a blind man and the Pharisees had just refused to believe it. The incident's in *John 9:13*, it says this: *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.*

Jesus had broken their rules. You know, one thing we've stated over and over and over again as we've been examining the Sermon on the Mount is that in it Jesus is giving a description of who you are. He's not giving a description of what you have to do, he's giving a description of who believers are. But to the Pharisees, all that mattered was what it is you do. All that mattered is what rules you followed. See, the Pharisees had evolved this subculture of pseudo-faith and it attempted to mirror the outworking of a pure heart, but it really was counterfeit and they managed to get everything perfectly backwards. I mean, they taught that external actions were everything. You know, if you follow the rules, if you get everything right then you're all set. But Jesus taught the exact opposite. He taught that if you are one of his children, then what you do as his child will come naturally to you because he's inside you, because he lives within you. To the Pharisees, you are what you do, and to that end what mattered most was that you play by their rules. They had these things they called hedge laws. These were the rules that they -- that they made up to make sure that you would never break the rules. You know, if the government said the speed limit was 55, they would make a hedge law saying nobody can ever go 45 or 40, and they would make that rule so that there was never even a possibility that you would break the real rule. Well, soon these hedge laws became the actual laws, and over time they developed hundreds and hundreds of these hedge laws

that controlled everything, from the way you spit to whether or not you could eat an egg that was laid by a chicken on the Sabbath. They had all kinds of rules particularly governing the Sabbath. It was loaded with hedge laws, and even these hedge laws were on the surface absurd. So Jesus constantly clashed with the Pharisees and he clashed with them primarily over the Sabbath. You know, we have one instance recorded in *Matthew 12:9*, it says this, describing Jesus, it says: *He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" -- so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."* Then he said to the man, *"Stretch out your hand."* And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

You see, the Pharisees, they were not just upset with Jesus over the Sabbath, they wanted to kill him. They wanted to take his life over the Sabbath. See, they tyrannized their fellow Jews with this bondage not to God but to their own culture, to their own tradition. And Jesus said in *Matthew 15:8*: *"These people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they*

worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." You see, these folks thought they had honored and worshiped God and they taught all about who he was, but because their hearts were far from him, Jesus said their honor was lip service, their worship was vanity, and their teaching was just a bunch of rules that were taught by man. You know, that was God's assessment of their hearts. And here's the question. Do you think that they thought their hearts were far from God? I guarantee you they didn't. I guarantee you they were convinced they were God's choicest servants. And yet they were the one group that Jesus singled out as snakes, hypocrites, whitewashed tombs, blind guides, fools. I mean, they couldn't possibly have been more blind. And they wound up far worse than the prostitutes and the tax collectors who Jesus said in Matthew 21 would enter the kingdom ahead of them. See, Jesus said the pure in heart would see God. All the Pharisees did to be in the terrible position they were in was to listen to their hearts. You know, when somebody advises you or either tells you that, you know, you really do have to listen to your heart. Tell them the last place that you want to go for advice is that place, it's your heart. It's the most dangerous thing to listen to there is. *Jeremiah 17:9* says: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* You see, it was their hearts that destroyed the Pharisees. You know, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart they shall see God," but he could

have just as easily added: Accursed are those with corrupted hearts, they will lose the ability to see that they lost the ability to see. So it was with the group of Pharisees who witnessed a man they had seen for years, for years they had seen him begging and blind and now he's fully sighted and he's challenging them with all of these assumptions. So in fact they wind up throwing the blind man out. And when the Pharisees literally come face to face with God himself, he's standing right in front of them, they can't see him. Jesus tells them that blindness is God's judgment, and they're absolutely incredulous. After the blind man was cast out of the temple, Jesus met him and he spoke to him, saying this in *John 9:39*, he says: "*For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.*" Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "*Are we also blind?*" Jesus said to them, "*If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.*" See, they clearly believed that they were fully sighted and that the judgment of blindness, well it couldn't possibly apply to them.

Hence the question are we also blind? And Jesus responds, he tells them they looked right at the evidence, they acknowledged their ability to see and then they proceeded to demonstrate this unique form of spiritual blindness. They saw a blind man receive sight

and they rejected the one who they knew was the one who gave him that sight. It was cognitive dissonance of the spirit. They stared directly at the truth and they literally couldn't see it. And so we ask why? Well the answer's because they'd already produced their very own god. They produced that god in the image that they wanted him to be and Jesus did not fit into that image. But they had great confidence, they had great confidence that they could see God but all they really saw was a false image that they had created for themselves. And that image had become so real to them that they chose it over the real God who was actually standing directly in front of them.

Well, this morning I want to ask us, I want us to ask ourselves, are we really any different than they are? You know, when God says: "*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,*" he is giving us the very same challenge. And like the Pharisees, we're not choosing between God and nothing. We choose between the real God who is literally standing in front of us, or an image that we or someone else has created. And sometimes that image seems far, far more real than the real one. And we know because it certainly did so for the Pharisees. You see, there are cosmic rules that are set in motion when you suppress the truth that is right in front of your eyes. Not only do you lose the ability to perceive that truth sitting right there in front of you, but your

ability to take in that truth through your eyes and through your ears begins to diminish. You also lose the ability to perceive any truth at all. Jesus put it this way in *Luke 8:18*, he says this: *"Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."* And what Jesus is saying is that every time you are confronted with the truth and you suppress and you reject that truth, you begin to lose the ability not just to take in that truth but all truth. Even what he thinks he has will be taken away. We look at the Pharisees today and we think we're safe because, I mean, we're never going to become such pompous, arrogant, hypocrites. But we forget, for the Pharisees their behavior was not the cause of their downfall, it was the effect. What caused their downfall was blindness. In *Matthew 23* Jesus pronounces seven woes on the Pharisees. Seven times he says things like this in verse 15, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves."* Jesus goes on to absolutely excoriate them calling them blind guides, blind fools, blind men, and blind Pharisees. But he insists that this blindness is self-inflicted. In the very next verse he says in *Matthew 13:14*: *"Indeed, in their case the prophesy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will*

indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has become callused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.'" You want a sure way to make yourself blind? Just close to your eyes. To repeat Jesus' indictment, he says: "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'we see.' Therefore your sin remains." See, the blindness that Jesus is speaking about is unique in that it is blindness to blindness. In Matthew 13, Jesus quoting Isaiah says: "This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them."

See, the one thing that is overwhelming about this form of spiritual blindness is that those who are afflicted with it never realize they have it. Never. "Are we blind," they say? Well, that's the question that we have to ask ourselves. That's an incredibly important question for us. You see, the Pharisees asked it but they only asked it rhetorically, and the way they asked it proved that they were ever seeing but never perceiving. So how do we avoid asking that question that way? How do we ask ourselves that incredibly important diagnostic question? Well, the only way that I know is that I, too, assume the possibility that I'm as blind as they were. I approach the question like a kingdom citizen

would. Jesus said: "*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*" A pure heart sees things that the Pharisees could never, never see. You know, pure heart sees first and foremost what only the poor in spirit can understand. He sees that the very best that he's capable of comes woefully short of God's perfection. He sees that we are all under the curse that Adam and Eve released when they rebelled against their creator. He understands that the moment that Adam and Eve ate that fruit, they traded in their perfection for a fallen nature that all of us are born with and that every single one of us is born with this natural inclination to sin. You know, we say nobody's perfect, and that's exactly the problem. We have a perfect God who demands a perfection we can no longer supply. Jesus Christ lived that perfect life, and he lived it so that he could be executed in our place. It's the poor in spirit who know that they come to God with nothing but our nothingness, with nothing but our sin, and they know that before a holy God, we are wicked, we are naked, and we are also blind. And yet at the same time we are profoundly loved.

You know, there's a reason why Tim Keller's quote makes such profound sense. This is what he said about the gospel, he says: "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." You

know, it's no wonder that the Pharisees were blind. I mean, they couldn't put together the two truths that we hold as crucial. Number one, God loves me; but number two, I am full of it. You know, they accepted the former and they rejected the latter. I mean, I know that God loves me, but I also know that what I am full of is profound wickedness. You know Paul put it simply in *Romans 7:14*, he said: *I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.* In verse 18 he said: *For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.* You know, Paul is not looking to beat himself up, he's simply looking with a pure heart at something that the Pharisees couldn't see. I mean, he acknowledged it was a wickedness within him and that he couldn't fathom the depths of that wickedness. Paul is speaking for all of us. You know, all it takes is the right set of circumstances and the wickedness that is in us is going to bubble up to the forefront. You know, we had a tiny taste of that with Hurricane Sandy. After only a few days folks started getting a little bit nasty around the edges, you know, about their gasoline and about their other necessities and in communities that suffered greater losses, we saw greater wickedness. When Katrina hit, basically New Orleans descended into anarchy. You know, the entire country was appalled because one of our premiere cities almost instantly descended into murder and rape and looting and assault. People wondered who are these people? Well, the answer is actually quite simple, they're you and me.

Folks are terrified to find that under this thin veneer of civilization we are far, far more wicked than we appear to be, so they conclude that there was just some vicious people taking advantage of the circumstances and they said, "Well, look at all the good people that were involved," and they were right. But I know myself that if I didn't have a God, and if I lost every single thing that I had and there was no police and no authority, I would be just as wicked. I mean, if you don't think so, I don't think you really get grace. I mean, the only real difference between the very worst of New Orleans and me is the grace of God. Practically speaking, I should never, never be shocked at the depth of my own depravity and the extent of my attempts to shield myself and others from seeing that depravity. I mean, to pretend that it's not there is to invite the very same kind of blindness that the Pharisees also invited and lived with. You see, from the moment we become Christians, God is at work inside us, and he's at work shaping and molding us into the very image of his son Jesus Christ. But you know, that molding often involves a very painful process. God is causing us and he's calling us to deal each of us with our own personal wickedness, and he does it one issue at a time, and he always does it by giving us a choice. Each time we get to choose. We can choose to see or we can choose blindness. And each time we choose blindness, we lose not only that vision that God is giving us but also the ability to understand what it is we're losing.

Though seeing we no longer see. See the principle is clear, Jesus said in *Luke 19*: "I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away." So how do we prevent this blindness? How do we prevent it from overtaking us? Well, we acknowledge that God has given us some tools, and God has given us these tools to avoid the blindness. We'll look at three of them this morning. God uses confrontation, he uses conviction, and he uses confession to open our eyes. We got -- we get to decide whether we're going to keep them open or shut them tight.

Probably the best example we have of God's use of confrontation to open blind eyes is the story of David and Nathan. You all know David was a man after God's own heart, but David, like you and me, had this profound wickedness within him. 2 Samuel tells the story, and most of you already know it, David committed adultery with Bathsheba and he impregnated her. And in order to cover up, he tried to arrange for Bathsheba to spend some time with her husband Uriah in order to cover up David's adultery. But when Uriah out of loyalty to David refuses, he refuses to divert his attention because he's actually serving in the military, serving David, and so he refuses to be with his wife and David panics. He has him murdered. And he has him murdered by instructing his fellow soldiers to abandon him in the heat of the battle, which is just

what they did, and Uriah, loyal and unsuspecting to the end, is killed. Well, David for a considerable amount of time thought he had gotten away with it, that is until Nathan the prophet confronted him and he confronts him with a story. This is the story. It's from 2 Samuel 12. It says: *The LORD send Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him. David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all of this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why*

did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own."

This is confrontation. This is a gift from God. Nathan confronts David with his wickedness. You know, he tells him, David, God gave you everything and it wasn't enough? I mean, he tells David that he was the wretch who had to take something precious from someone who had nothing. David's response to this confrontation is to say I have sinned. You see, God used Nathan to confront. And David was blessed, he was blessed with his sight restored. He was blind because what he had seen in his own life was so profoundly wicked that he willingly blinded himself to it. The confrontation opens his eyes. And after the confrontation, David is filled with conviction. And he chronicles that conviction in *Psalm 51*, he says this: *To the choirmaster, a Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. You see, it's the*

conviction of the Holy Spirit that leads David to confess his sin. He says: *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.*

What a gift David has received, what a far cry from the scheming that David was engaged in when he sent out the letter telling his troops to abandon Uriah at the heat of the battle. David makes a confession that literally restores his sight. It happened because Nathan was willing to confront him. You know, sometimes God sends Nathans into our lives because he loves us enough to confront. Our sin may not be as extreme as adultery and murder but God will confront us about our sin. It may be a parent, it may be a friend, a spouse, it may even be a government authority who confronts you, but understand something, when that happens, they are doing God's business. I mean, confrontation also has a way of starting out slow and working its way up. I mean, you may have had somebody repeatedly telling you that you're driving too fast and it's only when you're pulled over and given a citation that you truly begin to see that maybe they were right. You see, confrontation is God's way of getting our attention when we refuse the conviction of his Holy Spirit. I mean, David had been under the Spirit's conviction for some time before Nathan's confrontation, but conviction, it made him ready for confrontation. And conviction is something that

God does to and for his children and he does it by sending us his Holy Spirit. Jesus tells the disciples in *John 16*: *When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*

Now the way the Holy Spirit convicts us is through a word that has become a forbidden word in our culture. It's the word "guilt." I mean, it's amazing but the idea behind guilt is that if you do something bad, you're supposed to feel bad. That's not rocket science. That bad feeling is what we call guilt. Now, there are two different types of guilt. There's guilt that is sent by the Holy Spirit and there's guilt that is sent by the enemy. One of them drives us to get right with God, one of them drives us to destruction. Both Peter and Judas, they were both under conviction for betraying Jesus. Peter denied Jesus three times, but Peter was convicted by God himself, and so he wept and he repented and he was restored. Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. His conviction was not from God; his conviction was from Satan. Judas wept, then Judas despaired then Judas hung himself. See, the difference in conviction with both men is where the conviction came from.

In *Luke 22:60*, we pick up at Peter's third denial of Jesus and we find the convicting agent for Peter is the Lord Jesus Christ

himself. It says -- this is Peter when he's involved in these denials, it says: *But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.* So the convicting agent for Peter is God. The convicting agent for Judas is the prince of darkness himself. That very same chapter says this about Judas in *Luke 22*, it says: *Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.* God's Holy Spirit was the source of Peter's conviction; Satan was the source of Judas's. The results were predictable. I mean, God convicts us toward confession, repentance, and restoration; Satan convicts us towards darkness, despair, and death. God's conviction in both Peter and also in David's life led to a place where their spiritual light was restored and their eyes could see again. The key to that restoration was at first confrontation which led to conviction, which produced confession.

Now confession is a very interesting word, it's a very critical word to understand. The Greek for "confession" is "homologeō." I've mentioned this many times, but it's important to understand this. Those two words mean "same speak." It means to speak the

same, it means to be on the same page with, it means to agree with God. We often quote *1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* We think of this marvelous offer that God has made us, and it's a wonderful offer but it is a conditional offer, that is, there's an "if" clause in this offer. God says if, if we confess. If we same speak is what he's saying. If we get on the same page with God's convicting Holy Spirit, God is faithful and just to forgive us. You know, it sounds so simple, but here is the place where blindness has its work. For confession to matter, I have to agree with God's conviction. I have to see sin for what it is, and often times I just don't want to. And that's what makes this week's decision by the Supreme Court so devastating. The Supreme Court this week claimed to find within the Constitution the absolute right for members of the same sex to marry. I don't think I can give you a better example of the type of spiritual blindness it took to arrive at that conclusion. The vote was five to four in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage, and the best opinion I can derive from it what Antonin Scalia's dissent. This is what he said about the opinion. This is quoting Scalia. He says: "Not surprisingly then, the Federal Judiciary is hardly a cross-section of America. Take, for example, this Court, which consists of only nine men and women, all of them successful lawyers who studied at Harvard or Yale Law School. Four of the nine are natives of New

York City. Eight of them grew up in east- and west-coast states. Only one hails from the vast expanse in-between. Not a single Southwesterner or even, to tell the truth, a genuine Westerner, (California does not count). Not a single evangelical Christian (a group that comprises about one-quarter of Americans), or even a Protestant of any denomination. The strikingly unrepresentative character of the body voting on today's social upheaval would be irrelevant if they were functioning as judges, answering the legal question whether the American people had ever ratified a constitutional provision that was understood to proscribe the traditional definition of marriage. But of course the Justices in today's majority are not voting on that basis; they say they are not. And to allow the policy question of same-sex marriage to be considered and resolved by a select, patrician, highly unrepresentative panel of nine is to violate a principle even more fundamental than no taxation without representation: It is no social transformation without representation."

What Scalia is saying, the people of the United States, they didn't make this decision. What he is saying is five elite representatives of wealth and Ivy League education, they made that decision. And he went on to say: "If, even as the price to be paid for a fifth vote, I ever joined an opinion for the Court that began: 'The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach,

a liberty that includes certain specific rights and allows persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity,' I would hide my head in a bag." Scalia recognizes that the Court (which represents nobody in this country) that they've twisted the logic of the Constitution into a pretzel, and it's a pretzel that allows one's expression of his own identity to be the definition now of what liberty is. In other words, anything goes. I don't know that I can adequately express how devastating this ruling is to our country. Our representatives in the Supreme Court essentially stood up and shook their fist directly in the face of God.

Pastor John Piper is sort of a Nathan himself, and he's often times confrontational and he confronts us with these words. I just want to read to you what he had to say about it. He says: "What's new is not even the celebration and approval of homosexual sin. Homosexual behavior has been exploited, and reveled in, and celebrated in art, for millennia. What's new is normalization and institutionalization. This is the new calamity. My main reason for writing is not to mount a political counter-assault. I don't think that it is the calling of the church as such. My reason for writing is to help the church feel the sorrow of these days. And the magnitude of the assault on God and his image in man. Christians, more clearly than others, can see the title wave of

pain that is on the way. Sin carries in it its own misery: 'Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error' Romans 1:27. And on top of sin's self-destructive power comes, eventually, the final wrath of God: 'sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.' Christians know what is coming, not only because we see it in the Bible, but because we have tasted the sorrowful fruit of our own sins. We do not escape the truth that we reap what we sow. Our marriages, our children, our churches, our institutions -- they are all troubled because of our sins. The difference is" -- and listen carefully to what he's saying -- "we weep over our sins. We don't celebrate them. We don't institutionalize them. We turn to Jesus for forgiveness and help. We cry to Jesus 'who delivers us from the wrath to come.'"

I mean, allow me to put Piper's words into our context for today's message. What God is saying is any sin is forgivable, any and all sin is forgivable. The condition for forgiveness, though, is confession. It is same speaking with God about my sin. And without an acknowledgment of my sin, I cannot pursue God's forgiveness. You know, *1 John 1:9* says: *If, if, if, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned,*

we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. Well, the Supreme Court of the United States has just effectively said to the homosexual community, "Trust me, you've got our approval. Trust me, you are not sinning." They have in essence and by judicial fiat stated that God is a liar and they said that God is a liar when he says in *Romans 1:26*: *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* Please understand, this is not to single out homosexual activity as being some kind of special sin above all other sins; it is not. And the church is a place where sinners gather and they gather to celebrate the forgiveness that is ours that cost God his only begotten son. There's nobody in this building who's any better than anybody else. We are all sinners. What we decry is a governmental decision that essentially takes homosexual acts out of the realm of rebellion against God. I mean, it doesn't matter if the sin is homosexual acts or it's actually intentionally stealing a paper clip. Our loving God confronts us with our sin, he convicts us by his Holy Spirit, and that leads to our confession of our sin so that he can faithfully and justly forgive us. But if I'm under conviction and I refuse that, I refuse to same speak with God, then I've

essentially cut off forgiveness at the very beginning. And so ignoring confessing sin, whether it's homosexual sins or even stealing a paper clip, it can turn any sin into an unforgivable sin because we refuse to go through the process of getting forgiven.

What is so devastating about this decision is that it now institutionalizes and approves of behavior that God says is deadly. The Supreme Court of the United States is now complicit in removing even the possibility of that sin's forgiveness because they are removing it from vast numbers of people who now see the government's approval as a form of approval from God. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*" The Supreme Court of the United States has just put a blindfold on literally thousands of people caught in sin and then dared them to see through that blindfold to seek forgiveness. Piper goes on to say: "We weep for the world and for our own nation. In the days of Ezekiel, God put a mark of hope 'on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in Jerusalem.'" Piper says, "This is what I'm writing for. Not political action, but love for the name of God and compassion for the city of destruction. *My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.*"

Mark my words. God is not mocked and this Supreme Court did just

that. In *John 9:39* Jesus says: "*For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who may see may be made blind.*" They have been made blind. They're not aware of it because they just don't see it. They are blind to the fact that they are blind. And we see it only because our hearts have been made pure not by us, not by our behavior, not what we do, but by the only one who can make them pure. It is God who forgives us and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And it's Jesus who declares: "*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*" Let's pray.

Father, this is a sad day for this country. Lord, it is a momentous day when our own government will codify and make sin acceptable, and yet that's exactly what has happened. Lord, we just want to pray -- first of all, I pray for the homosexual community who has been done an incredible disservice, that the very act of seeking forgiveness has been co-opted by our government. I pray for each and every person in this room and for every single one of us who knows and loves members of the homosexual community, that you would give us the ability to help them see through the fog that our government has created, to the forgiveness that is there for them. Give us the grace, the peace, and the power that we need to navigate these waters, to speak the truth in love, and to understand that you are the only thing that keeps us from absolute

*chaos, despair, and darkness. And we thank you for that, in Jesus'
name. Amen.*