

## Seeing God Matthew 5:8 (part 2)

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-2-2010

### Introduction

Last week I must have been waxing extra long on the counterfeits to purity in heart, because we weren't even remotely able to finish. But I was hitting up the counterfeits hard because it is so easy to think that *we* can produce the purity of heart that will receive God's blessing. But we need to constantly be reminded that beatitudes 2-8 all flow from beatitude 1, where we as the poor in spirit look outside of ourselves to live our Christian walk.

**I. No True Happiness Without Heart Purity ("pure in heart")**

[Last week's sermon]

### **II. The Pure in Heart Want to See the Pure One – That is a Blessing That Fills Them with Joy**

Think of it this way – apart from grace, no one even *wants* to be drawn into the fire of God's holiness for fellowship. They don't want to see God. Romans 1 says that they try to suppress the knowledge of Him. He makes them uncomfortable. But in stark contrast, Roman numeral II says that the pure in heart want to see the pure one. It is a blessing. "Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They are attracted to Him. So what makes them want to see God when John 3:19 says that our natural state is to love darkness rather than light because our deeds are evil?

In his book *Desiring God*, John Piper said,

The reason people do not come to the light is because they do not love it. Love for the light is not caused by coming to the light. We come because we love it. Otherwise our coming is no honor to the light. Could there be any holy motivation to believe in Christ where there is no taste for the beauty of Christ? To be sure we could be motivated by the desire to escape hell, or the desire to have material riches, or the desire to rejoin a departed love one. But how does it honor the light when the only reason we come to the light is to find things that we loved in the dark?

Saving faith is the cry of a new creature of God. And the newness of the new creature is that it has a new taste. [I think that is such a key statement. The new creature is given a new taste. That is beatitudes 1-4. God gives us new tastes, hungers, and motivations for mourning. We don't mourn over the same things that

we used to mourn over. He goes on to say,] What was once distasteful or bland is now craved. Christ himself has become a Treasure Chest of holy joy.<sup>1</sup>

I think that encapsulates what is going on in this beatitude. So today we are going to continue to look at the blessing of seeing God. It is not a blessing to those who have skipped beatitudes 1-5. It's misery. It makes them feel uncomfortable in their sins. But to the person who day by day experiences beatitudes 1-5, he can't help but say with Moses, "**Please, show me your glory**" (Ex. 33:18). He can't help but say with David, "**In Your presence is fullness of joy**" (Ps. 16:11).

2Corinthians 3 is such a marvelous contrast between ministry of condemnation that looks at the law apart from grace and the ministry of glory that looks at the Law Giver and is drawn to Him by grace. Last Sunday Rodney pointed out that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil doesn't help us at all. We know we are sinners. But looking at the cross is transforming. So Paul ends his chapter by saying, "**when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.**" [What does he mean by that? He means that we are no longer spiritually blind, and we can see the beauty of the Lord. For the first time we are attracted to His glory and His holiness and we want to be like Him. So the chapter goes on to say,] "**Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.** [Not painfully trying to be like Him, but experiencing the liberty of being transformed. And so he goes on.] **But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**" That's the beatific vision. That is the longing to see God. Like is attracted to like. The purity of heart that God places within us is given an attraction to the purity of our Father. True liberty comes from looking at God, not looking at the law, man's law, or any other vision. Our vision must be to see God.

### **III. The Pure in Heart Aren't Attracted by Man's Glory ("Blessed...for they shall see God")**

#### ***A. Counterfeit Vision ("You have heard it said")***

And last week we spent quite a bit of time on the counterfeit standards of purity found in social righteousness, in outward conformity, in technical adherence that misses the spirit of the Word, and in self-affirmations (or you might title it self-esteem). That's all counterfeit purity. But all of those examples of counterfeit purity assume a counterfeit vision of pleasing man

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), p. 68.

that is described in the words “You have heard it said.” Over and over in the Sermon on the Mount Christ takes people’s vision off of man and onto Him – **“But I say to you.”**

I think this counterfeit vision is captured in the title of a book written by Edward Welch, *When People are Big and God is Small*. What he means by that title is that many people fear man more than they fear God. And by fear of man he doesn’t simply mean what grips people when they are cowardly, timid, or shy. He points out that an angry, intimidating person can be protecting what he fears will be exposed. The super-confident movie star or athlete may long for the positive opinions of fans or sports writers, and fear any negative word that they might write. A person who doesn’t witness to his neighbors may be covering his fear of what neighbors or others will think of him. Will they think I am a religious nut? Jealousy can be a manifestation of being controlled by what others think. Both social butterflies and hermits can be controlled by what others think of them. Are you afraid of making decisions because of what other people might think? Shame of being exposed or being humiliated shows a vision focused on man. But when people grow to idolatrous proportions, there is no room in our hearts for the beatific vision.

### ***B. True Vision (“But I say to you”)***

But what Jesus does in His exposition of this beatitude is to strip away all of the curtains and walls behind which we hide our true self, and He helps us to come to grips with the fact that we no longer need to hide from Him. In verses 27-28 Jesus convinces us that He knows the evil in our hearts. In verses 29-30 he convinces us that He already knows our lack of commitment. Which of you has ever cut out his right eye or cut off His right hand? In verses 31-32 He sees through our rationalizations. In verses 33-37 he sees through our attempts at self-esteem. And He doesn’t blow away these smoke screens to be mean. No. He does it so that we will find our security in Him.

When God blows away the smoke screens of the unbelievers, they don’t have grace, so the Scripture says that they hide in the rocks and caves from His wrath. But when God blows away the smoke screens of believers, they cling to Jesus, admire His holiness, and long to be more like Him.

### ***C. What constitutes purity of heart for those who are sinners?***

So here is the strange thing about this whole paradigm. If you don’t handle your sin correctly, you can lack purity of heart and find the cry of

David upon your lips, “**How long will you hide Your face from me?**” (Ps. 13:1; 27:9; 30:7; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7). David missed seeing the beatific vision. But on the other hand, another person may have sinned five minutes ago, and still have the purity of heart that enables her to see the beatific vision. So what constitutes purity of heart for those who are sinners?

**1. Giving your hearts to the Lord for cleansing (“heart” – vv 27-28)**

Based on Christ’s exposition, I would say that it involves at least the following six factors. First, giving your hearts to the Lord for cleansing. I mean, that’s the most obvious point. And there are two things that I want to say on this. First, there is an instantaneous side to this purity. The moment we confess our sins, we are cleansed and able to come to God with joy. Satan hates it when you do that. Satan not only tempts you to sin, but he loves to beat up on you the moment you sin and make you unable to live with yourself. But if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness – *all* – there is the purity of heart. This is instantaneous. It doesn’t require sitting in the doghouse for hours. So even if you keep falling day after day, you can have a pure heart day after day too, if you handle your sin rightly. It’s the person who hides his sin who can’t come to God. So there is the instantaneous side to purity. This is sort of like definitive sanctification.

But the second is progressive growth in purity. It is possible to make huge progress against the sins of the heart. Can you go for weeks at a time without lusting in your heart? Absolutely. I believe you can. And if you desire a paper that shows you how to progressively develop pure thoughts and even pure dreams at night, and also how to overcome the fleshly expressions of that, I would be happy to send it to you. But Jesus brings up the issue of heart adultery because He wants us to deal with it. When I was in Bible College I thought it was impossible to get rid of immoral thoughts until a pastor showed me the Biblical methodology that not only cleaned up my thought life to a great degree, but also my dream life. What about other heart-sins? Is it possible to make great progress against covetousness, pride, jealousy, envy, hatred? Absolutely yes. It’s called progressive sanctification. And the more you progress, the deeper your vision of God becomes. That’s why I say that we will not have the fullest vision until we get to heaven. But there is hope for those of you who want your hearts to be pure before God right now. Even if you have blown it a minute ago, you can have the instantaneous cleansing that comes from beatitude 2, but there is also the progress of time lapses between sins that comes with progressive

experiential purity. So giving your heart to God for cleansing is the first obvious part.

## 2. A willingness to guard the gates to your heart ("heard...looks...eye...hand...one of your members")

A second aspect of a pure heart is a willingness to guard the gates to your heart. In these verses Jesus speaks of the ear gate, the eye gate, the touch gate, and then covers all the bases in verses 29-30 when he speaks of any of the members of our body.

When Jesus speaks of plucking out your eye and cutting off your right hand, he was using an expression of being radical in guarding the gates to your soul. All commentators agree that he isn't saying a literal gouging out of your right eye. And if he was, the question would come, "Well, isn't your left eye still looking?" But some have brought up an even more troubling question. They have asked if this verse does not contradict Mark 7 and Matthew 19. Verse 29 speaks of an eye causing you to sin, and in Mark 7 Christ was very clear that the *heart* causes you to sin. Which is right? Is it the eye that causes you to sin or the heart?

But it really is no contradiction because the flesh, the world, and the devil can all work in tandem to make us sin. In Mark 7 Jesus said that all sins arise from the heart: **"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."** (vv. 20-23). If that is the case, why the need to so carefully guard the eye, the ear, the hand, and the other bodily members? Because they are gates to the soul. Satan is trying to reach to the inward flesh through the outward body!

And it is sheer foolishness to think you can ignore what your ears listen to and think that this feeding of the flesh will not strengthen a monster within. Some of the secular music that Christians listen to absolutely pollutes their souls. And they show a lack of purity of heart by the way they defend their right to listen to that music. It is sheer foolishness to think you can watch filth on TV with your eye gate and ear gate and think there is nothing within you that that TV can appeal to. No! It is reaching right down their into your flesh and feeding a monster. And Christ says, "Cut off the eye gate! Cut off the ear gate! Quit looking. Turn off the TV." It is sheer foolishness for a young person to think he or she can engage in petting, and to think that the hand is neutral and will not be a gate to feed the

monster of lust within. A person who plays as close to evil as he can get lacks integrity, which is one of the meanings of purity of heart. My Dad told me, “Don’t see how close you can get to sin without sinning. See how far away you can stay.” If you want purity of heart, have a willingness to guard the gates to your heart. Be radical. Gouge those eyes out. In other words, quit looking at temptation.

### **3. Resolve sins before they are expressed outwardly (v. 32)**

A third issue related to purity is a willingness to resolve sins before they are expressed outwardly. In other words, confess quickly. I shared last week how shocked I was as a teenager at the first cuss word that that came out of my mouth. But I had been thinking those cusswords and not resolving them. No wonder they came out. So it is natural that the heart adultery of verses 27-30 would progress to real adultery in verses 31-32.

### **4. Rejection of Rationalizations (Matt. 5:31-32)**

Fourth, we saw last week that verses 31-32 call us to avoid all rationalizations. One who is pure in heart will determine before he even reads the Bible that he will obey it even before he knows what the bible will call him to do. Why? Because his heart trusts God, is attracted to God, and wants to be like God. The word for “sin” in verse 29 is literally a word that is used for a snare or a trap. One who is pure in heart will determine that the bait in the trap is not for him even before he sees the trap. He won’t use the rationalizations of the Jews in verses 31-32 to justify his sin. He rejects all rationalizations.

### **5. Being honest (Matt. 5:33-37)**

The last clue that Jesus gives us as to the nature of purity is in verses 33-37. Basically He is calling for honesty and transparency about our sins.

When you have those five characteristics of heart purity, you have nothing stopping you from intimacy with Christ. Notice that none of those four characteristics imply perfection; not a one of them. In fact, they all imply that we will continue to have sin. But it’s how you handle your sin (which we will get to in a bit) that makes the difference between whether you are drawing closer to Christ or farther away. You could have sinned five minutes ago, but still have a pure heart that is close to God because of the way you resolved the sin.

***D. The Presence of Purity in Heart from Regeneration to Glory***

So we have seen that the words “they shall see God” is a promise of closeness to God; intimacy with God; communion with God. Over the past 2000 years there have been many church fathers that have written about the beatific vision – the rapture and glory of God manifesting Himself to us. Psalm 24 speaks of God bestowing His blessing, and as we open the gates of our lives, the King of Glory will come in, and we are able to stand in His holy place.

**1. At Regeneration (Matt. 13:15-17; John 12:40; Acts 26:18; 28:27; Rom. 11:8,10; 1 John 2:11; 3:6; 3 John 11)**

This ability to see God with the eyes of faith starts at regeneration, and I have listed a number of Scriptures that show this. This means that you don't have to be a super-saint to have purity of heart. God's commission to Paul was to go to the Gentiles and **“to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”** The moment a person is regenerated he looks at God and the world from a different perspective. For the first time, God is real to him; he knows God. He is beginning to enter into the beatific vision.

**2. In Sanctification (Job 42:5-6; Ezek. 39:21-29; John 7:17; Mark 8:18; Psalm 63:1-2; Eph. 1:18; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Rev. 3:18)**

But throughout our lives we grow in this area of spiritual vision. Some of the Scriptures talk about a growth in discernment, growth in guidance, growth in seeing God in worship, growth in seeing God in creation, in the circumstances of life and in the march of history. But it is clear if you read those verses on your own that one of the greatest blessings you can have is to daily have God open His life up to you. Psalm 36:8 speaks of the satisfaction we have in God's presence and drinking from the river of His pleasures.

**3. At Glorification (1 John 3:2; Job 19:25-27; Ps. 17:15)**

And of course this joy unspeakable and full of glory will be most fully experienced when we get to heaven. I so look forward the joys of heaven. And I've given some Scriptures that describe the beatific vision in heaven.

## IV. How Do We Gain This Purity of Heart that Hungers to See More of God?

### *A. We Receive it From God (Prov. 20:9; Job 14:4; Ezek. 36:25-26; Acts 15:9)...*

But how do we gain this heart of purity that in turn gives us a hunger for His presence? And we will end with this Roman numeral IV. First of all you must acknowledge to God that you cannot achieve this on your own. You are going back as a beggar to step one and asking God to give you what you cannot do. Proverbs 20:9 says, “**Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?’**” None of us can say that. But there are actions of faith that receive this from the Lord. We put ourselves in the way of His blessing. So the last eight points must all be received by faith.

### *B. By Means of*

- 1. Prayer for the filling of the Spirit (Ps. 51:11; Gal. 5:16; 1Cor. 14:15; Phil. 3:3; 1Thes. 1:6; Rom. 14:17; Jude 20; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26; Col. 1:18; Matt 4:1; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Luke 2:27; Acts 20:22; Rom. 8:6; Rom. 8:6,9; Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:13; 1Cor. 2:13; 12:3; 6:11; Luke 11:13). If you are still having problems, move on to step 2:**

First, we should pray for the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. David knew the opposite of the beatific vision when he had grieved the Spirit. He knew the lack of passion, joy, power, and blessing when the Holy Spirit was grieved, and he couldn't stand it. This should be so obvious that it wouldn't need mentioning, but we forget all the time. And the reason we forget it is that we *can* do all kinds of things in the realm of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil without the Spirit, but they all lead to death. We can do nothing from the tree of life that leads to joy, passion, security, and relationship apart from the Spirit. I've listed a bunch of verses in your outline that speak of every facet of our lives needing to have the power of the Spirit upon them. Let me just read some key phrases from those passages to make this point.

These Scriptures call us to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16), “sing in the Spirit” (1Cor. 14:15), “worship...in the Spirit” (Phil. 3:3) and to “rejoice in the Holy Spirit” (1Thes. 1:6; Rom. 14:17). They call us to “pray in the Spirit” (Jude 20; Eph. 6:18), “love in the Spirit” (Col. 1:18), be “led by the Spirit” (Matt. 4:1; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), be “moved by the Spirit” (Luke 2:27), be “compelled by the Spirit” (Acts 20:22 NIV) and to have my “mind



controlled by the Spirit” (Rom. 8:6). They call us to “live in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25; Rom. 8:13), be taught by the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 2:13), to speak by the Spirit (1Cor. 12:3), and to be washed and sanctified by the Spirit (1Cor. 6:11). That pretty much covers the gamut of the Christian life. We cannot have anything from the tree of life without the Holy Spirit’s empowering.

But the coolest thing is the last verse under point 1. It indicates that all of this is there for the asking.

**Luke 11:11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?**

**Luke 11:12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?**

**Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”**

You are sons and daughters who have a Father who is just waiting for you to ask. Lay claim to the “how much more” of Luke 11:13, and by faith receive an extra portion of the Spirit for this day. He will draw your spirit through the cross of Jesus to the Father. The beatific vision is a Trinitarian vision in which all three Persons enable us to drink from the river of His pleasures. They are for you; they are not against you.

## **2. Prayer That God Would Search Your Heart (Psalm 139:23-24; Jer. 17:9-10)**

But if you are finding obstructions to seeing God, and you feel distant from God, then move to point 2. This prayer of Psalm 139:23-24 is a prayer we can make every day. It says, “**Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**” Every day that needs to be our prayer. We need that prayer because Jeremiah tells us that we cannot even understand our own hearts because they are so deceitful. So ask God to shine His spotlight in your heart.

## **3. Self-Examination (Psalm 77:6; 139:23,24; Prov. 4:23; 22:5; 23:19; Mark 14:38)**

And then by faith (believing that He will shine the spotlight) begin to do a self-evaluation and determine to clean out all of the spider webs that the Spirit might highlight. Psalm 77:6 says, “**My spirit makes diligent search.**” Don’t close your eyes when the Spirit shines His spotlight.

Jonathan Edwards spent a portion of every day evaluating his heart and doing exactly that – making diligent search.

**4. Repentance of Sin & Faith In God's Provisions (Acts 8:21-24; 15:9)**

Fourth, once the Spirit has shown you what sins you need to deal with, have a genuine repentance, which means a determination to turn from those sins and to trust God to change your heart. The Scriptures I have given speak of God cleansing the heart by faith and repentance.

**5. Prayer For Cleansing (Psalm 41:4; 51:10; Acts 8:24; Heb. 9:14; 10:22)**

Fifth, pray for cleansing. And He will cleanse your heart. You don't earn the cleansing. You ask for it.

**6. Prayer again for the filling of God's Holy Spirit**

And once you are cleansed, you can once again pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. John Piper said,

Perhaps we can tie things together with this picture: The fuel of worship is the truth of God, the furnace of worship is the spirit of man, and the heat of worship is the vital affections of reverence, contrition, trust, gratitude, and joy.

But there is something missing from this picture. There is a furnace, fuel, and heat, but no *fire*. The fuel of truth in the furnace of our spirit does not automatically produce the heat of worship. There must be ignition and fire. This is the Holy Spirit...

The fuel of worship is a true vision of the greatness of God; the fire that makes the fuel burn white hot is the quickening of the Holy Spirit; the furnace made alive and warm by the flame of truth is our renewed spirit; and the resulting heat of our affections is powerful worship, pushing its way out in confessions, longings, acclamations, tears, songs, shouts, bowed heads, lifted hands and obedient lives.<sup>2</sup>

So even though the Spirit is where we started, we have to frequently go back to the Spirit to reignite the beatific vision.

**7. Getting In God's Word (Ps. 119:9-11; Hos. 6:3; John 15:3; Acts 2:37; Rom. 10:2; Eph. 5:26; 1Tim. 1:5) And Avoiding Legalistic Teachings (1 Tim. 1:3-8)**

Seventh, get into God's Word. I've listed some Scriptures in your outline that speak of the power that God's Word has to purify your hearts.

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<sup>2</sup> Piper, *Desiring God*, p. 77.

Ephesians 5:26 speaks of Jesus sanctifying and cleansing the church through the washing of water by the Word. Psalm 119:9-11 says that young men can cleanse their hearts by reading the word, hiding it in the heart, and taking heed to it. 1 Timothy 1:3-8 says, “**Now the purpose of the commandment is** [OK? What would you insert in there. The purpose of the commandment is to make us miserable? No! No! No! When it is the Holy Spirit who is applying that commandment, the purpose of the commandment is] **love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.**” If reading God’s commandments leads you to despair, you aren’t reading them by grace. The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith. You ought to be able to let the word shine the spotlight on sin, get it cleansed, and move on to joyful obedience.

**8. Loving Obedience (Ps. 19:8; 25:14; 119:162; Jer. 15:16; John 7:17; 14:21,23-24; 1 Pet. 1:22; James 1:21-27; 2 Pet. 1:5-11)**

Which is the last step – enter by faith into loving obedience. John 14:21 says, “**He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.**” That’s seeing God. He will manifest Himself to you. But many people short-circuit the beatific vision by confessing sin, but refusing to obey. But that is hypocritical confession. You need to repent of a false repentance, and go back through these steps again.

Verse 23 says, “**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.**” He promises to progressively usher us into closer and closer fellowship with Him as we walk in His commandments. And I have given some other passages to meditate upon for that point.

## **Conclusion**

Many commentators say that these beatitudes are like rungs of a ladder. Each step brings us closer to seeing God. But if we fall down, it is still a ladder. We start at beatitude one and quickly work our way upward. And it can be quickly.

May each one of us here have the blessing of the beatific vision – of the joy of seeing God in our day-by-day walk. Amen.

# Seeing God

## Matthew 5:8 (part 2)

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-2-2010

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    2. Prayer That God Would Search Your Heart (Psalm 139:23-24; Jer. 17:9-10)
    3. Self-Examination (Psalm 77:6; 139:23,24; Prov. 4:23; 22:5; 23:19; Mark 14:38)
    4. Repentance of Sin & Faith In God’s Provisions (Acts 8:21-24; 15:9)
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    8. Loving Obedience (Ps. 19:8; 25:14; 119:162; Jer. 15:16; John 7:17; 14:21,23-24; 1 Pet. 1:22; James 1:21-27; 2 Pet. 1:5-11)

### Conclusion

