

# Becoming Pure in Heart

From Brokenness to Blessing #6 - Pastor Jonathan Combs - September 10, 2023 - 1 Peter 1:17-23

**INTRO:** Good morning church! We are continuing our series entitled, “**From Brokenness to Blessing.**” The series is based on the eight blessings or beatitudes that Jesus declared in His Sermon on the Mount. These eight blessings of Jesus turn worldly wisdom upside down!

This week we’re looking at the 6th beatitude:

Matthew 5:8 (ESV) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

To be “blessed” means to be supremely happy, completely content. Blessed to the max (*macro*)! As we look back over the previous beatitudes, we see how we have come to this step:

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit” - We admit our brokenness. We admit we are powerless and need help.
- “Blessed are those who mourn” - We release our grief to God, believing He has the power to help.
- “Blessed are the meek” - We surrender our control to God, committing our way to Christ.
- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” - We confess our guilt.
- “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” - We give mercy that we have received from God.

Now in this step, we desire to have a new heart that has been totally purified by God. We begin to recognize that our heart is the source of all of our conditions and the very place that God must purify in us. The blessing is seeing God. When we are pure in heart, we experience God in our lives, we see His hand at work, we get to know Him better, and others see God in us.

**What is a pure heart?** The word pure in both the beatitude and in our text today in 1 Peter 1 is the Greek word *katharos* (καθαρός). This is where we get the English word catharsis which is the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from. This word is rich with meaning, it means **pure** like purified by fire, **clean** like a vine cleansed by pruning and so fitted to bear fruit, **free** from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt, **blameless** as in unstained with the guilt of anything.

**Need:** When we hear this definition many of us might feel a sense of discouragement, knowing that we are terribly far from having a heart that is pure. If you’ve taken an honest inventory of your heart then you know that broken things, unclean desires well up from there. You know that this blessing is truly impossible because your heart is so broken either by your own desires or by external circumstances that have made your heart filthy over time. You’re not alone in this, in fact, Scripture describes the heart exactly how you feel:

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV) The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Trans: Who can possibly understand it? Who can make it pure? Only our Lord and Savior Jesus ...

**BODY:** In 1 Peter chapter 1, the apostle Peter encouraged the persecuted believers scattered throughout Asia that through the mercy and power of God they could become pure in heart even in their time of exile. We can become pure in heart by God’s power. How do we become pure in heart by God’s power? The text gives three ways to become pure in heart by God’s power:

Read text: 1 Peter 1:17-23 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. <sup>20</sup> He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. <sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

**HOW TO BECOME PURE IN HEART BY GOD’S POWER:**

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## 1. Call upon the Lord as His child.

**EXP:** (3-5) You will notice that Peter is giving us prescription here, to do if you will. So let us look back at the beginning of Peter's letter to see the diagnosis. He has already stated in verse 3-5, "According to God's **great mercy**, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... who by **God's power** are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." So believer, you are brand new in Jesus and being changed by God's power.

(17a) Now, look at this conditional statement, "If you call." Church we have an opportunity to call upon the Lord again and again, daily, every moment of every day. This is where the pureness of heart begins. And not just that, we can call on Him as Father. We are His children whom He loves beyond measure.

"**Call**" (17) (ἐπικαλέω, *epikaleō*) - to call upon, to appeal unto. There is only one number to dial when you seek to be holy as God is holy, only one to call when you desire pureness of heart and that is the Lord. And you call on Him in relationship, not as a foreign far away God, but as His child.

"**Father**" (17) (πατήρ, *pater*) - father, parent, generator, the founder of a family or tribe. We have not merely been invited into the throne room of the King, we have been adopted into His family. Do you call upon the Lord constantly and do you come into His presence like a beloved child?

"**Judges**" (17) - to distinguish, decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish, conclude, condemn, decree, determine, judge, question, sentence to, think. He is our righteous judge.

"**Impartially**" (17) - in a way not accepting the person, impartially, without respect of persons. Did you know God doesn't have teacher's pets? He doesn't look at the platform or skillset of one believer as superior to another. He hasn't more love for the one who serves Him among the thousands as the one who serves Him in obscurity. He judges simply according to our deeds. What have you done with Christ where you are?

**ARG:** **Ask God to purify your heart. Call upon Him to purify you as David did in the Psalms:**

Psalms 51:10-12 (ESV) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

**Do you call upon the Lord regularly, do you come into His presence daily, moment by moment? Pureness of heart comes not in our strength but through our growing relationship with the Lord:**

Psalms 1:1-2 (ESV) Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

**Draw near to God and receive a pure heart:**

James 4:8 (ESV) Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

**ILL:** Now, I have noticed a tension point in the spiritual advice we often receive. The "quiet time" seems to be the silver bullet for everything the Christian needs. I have felt that frustration too, but let's approach it from another direction.

Perhaps, we have assumed that we wake up each day already full in Christ. Friends, I don't believe this is supported by Scripture or experience. I believe we wake up empty and ready to be filled. Christ awaits the first thoughts and words of your day with a readiness to fill you with power, mercy, grace, purity, and love so that you may be His ambassador that day. When we skip this step, the world's buffet awaits us. Understand something my friends, Christ doesn't often change the world's buffet, instead He changes us so that we

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aren't enticed by it. The temptations, the frustrations, the easy fixes, they most often continue even when we come to Christ but we are changed.

So brothers and sisters, what are filling up on to start your day? The "don't talk to me until I have had my coffee" idea is funny, but it's also false. We should consider not even opening our mouths until time well spent with the Lord. Start everyday with the vertical relationship before any horizontal ones.

**APP:** Who do you call when you need healing for your broken heart? There are many people out there who love you and will help you in times of need, but who can really mend an impure heart? This isn't some gimmick, some flippant answer to your major life concerns. God is the only one who can heal your heart, He is the only one who can create in you a clean heart. Call upon Him, call upon Him right now as His kid, call upon Him on the ride home, over lunch, after the next deceitful thought, before the next difficult conversation, with your children, with your spouse, day and night. Call upon the Lord as His beloved child!

## 2. Live with reverence to God.

**EXP:** (17b-21) If we call upon Him as Father then our behavior is being changed by that relationship. Peter is saying that those who spend time with the Father will also be living differently because of God's influence. This is the statement he makes after just quoting Leviticus 11, "Be holy, for I am holy." Time spent with the Lord results in a life of imitating His holiness. We are quite literally picking up His traits as a child would their earthly parent.

**"Conduct yourselves" (17)** - to overturn; also to return; by implication, to busy oneself, live, abide, behave self, have conversation, pass, be used. The most literal translation is "pass the time" as the KJV translates it. So as you live, as you conduct your life, pass the time on this earth do it with reverence to God in mind.

**"Fear" (17)** (φόβος, *phóbos*) - fear, dread, terror, that which strikes terror, reverence.

**"Ransomed" (18)** - to ransom (literally or figuratively):—redeem, to liberate, to cause to be released to one's self by payment of a ransom, to redeem, to deliver: from evils of every kind, internal and external

**"Futile ways" (18)** - empty, i.e. (literally) profitless, or (specially), an idol:—vain, vanity, devoid of force, truth, success, result, useless, of no purpose

**"Inherited from your forefathers" (18)** - in the sense of handing over or down; traditionary:—received by tradition from fathers, handed down from one's father's or ancestors

**"Perishable things" (18)** - decayed, i.e. (by implication) perishable:—corruptible.

**"Lamb without blemish" (19)** - At face value this analogy might not be striking to you, but when we carefully examine it we much of Scripture come into play. You see, there is a whole sacrificial system that has been dealt with in Jesus. The apostle is reminding us that the blood of Jesus is like the passover lamb with defect, that just as his blood covered the Israelites from the deadly plague of the firstborn in Egypt so our Savior's blood covers us from spiritual death and eternal separation. (*Gospel presentation here*)

**"Foreknown" (20)** (προγινώσκω, *proginōskō*) - combination word of *pros* meaning beforehand and *ginōskō* meaning to know. So to know beforehand, i.e. foresee:—foreknow (ordain), know (before). Foreknown by God, although not yet 'made manifest' to men, to have knowledge before hand, to predestinate. God was planning His redemption from the beginning.

**"Foundation" (20)** - a deposition, i.e. founding; figuratively, conception:—conceive, foundation. The injection or depositing of the virile semen in the womb, the seed of animals and plants, a founding. Before God even spoke His first creative word that, "Let there be light," He had already created a redemption story. Our omniscient God already knew that the very thing He would create would need His saving.

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**ARG:** Our conduct is not from some inner strength or self empowerment, it is the right response to the truth of God's love. Our reverent conduct is our natural response to His glorious redemption:

1 John 4:19 (GW) We love because God loved us first.

**Our reverence (fear) of the Lord is what guides our conduct. Drawing nearer to Him is our greatest teacher.**

Psalm 111:10 (ESV) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

**Our response to this great love is worship with reverence and awe:**

Hebrews 12:28 (ESV) Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe

**ILL:** Have you ever taking a bite of something so delicious that you couldn't contain the guttural response to go, "Yummy!" There are so many things in life like this. When you see something amazing (a sunset, a mountain range, a feat of skill) you can't help but say, "Wow!" When you lay eyes on your future wife coming down that aisle, your heart melts within you. Peter is saying that when we really see the saving love of Jesus we can't help but respond in reverence, with a life of worship.

Song came to mind: "*When I Think About the Lord.*" Lyrics:

|                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| When I think about the Lord          | When I think about the Lord           |
| How He saved me, how He raised me    | How He picked me up, turned me around |
| How He filled me with the Holy Ghost | How He set my feet on solid ground    |
| Healed me to the uttermost           | And it makes me wanna shout           |

Alleluia, thank You, Jesus  
Lord, You're worthy of all the glory  
And all the honor, and all the praise

**APP:** Have you moved on from the Gospel my friend? As if Jesus' saving love was a one and done in your life. If we desire a pure heart, a pure heart that worships God with reverence, then we must never get over the salvation story. We must come back to the Gospel everyday with a fresh glance that we might respond all over again with a heart that melts at that love and a "Wow" at His redemptive plan.

## 3. **Love one another earnestly.**

**EXP:** (22-23) Now what happens to our horizontal relationships when we are in community with our Lord vertically? Our souls are being purified and through that pure heart we are loving one another earnestly and with sincerity. The outcome of a pure heart from time spent with the Lord is genuine love for others.

**"Purified souls"** (22) - to make clean, i.e. (figuratively) sanctify (ceremonially or morally):—purify (self), to make pure, purify, cleanse. God is purifying our souls in time we walk with Him. These are results of our vertical relationship pure souls and pure hearts.

**"Sincere"** (22) - sincere:—without dissimulation (hypocrisy), unfeigned, undisguised, sincere. We can love each other without an agenda, without a disguise. Imagine being that free, to love without fear.

**"Brotherly love"** (22) (φιλαδελφία, *philadelphia*) - fraternal affection:—brotherly love (kindness), love of the brethren, love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love, in the NT the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren.

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“**Love one another earnestly**” (22) (ἀγαπάω, *agapáō*) - to love (be-)love(-ed), to love dearly, to be well pleased, to be contented at or with a thing, to love without condition. Peter adds to this amazing love the word earnestly. We are to love each other earnestly, fervently, intensely.

“**Born again**” (23) - to produce again, be born again, born anew, i.e. to have one's mind changed so that he lives a new life and one conformed to the will of God.

“**Imperishable**” (23) - uncorrupted, not liable to corruption or decay, imperishable, immortal, of the risen dead. We are no longer of perishable seed, our new life is eternal.

ARG: **Love one another as Christ loves you:**

John 13:34-35 (ESV) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Our love for another is evidence that we know God and are in community with Him:**

1 John 4:7-8 (ESV) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

ILL: Love is the fruit of love. What that means is that a loved person who rightly understands that love they have received will be loving to others. We see this in children naturally. They respond to the environment of their home lives. A kid who feels unloved at home with struggle to show love at school and later life. Whereas the opposite is also true, a healthy loving home life results in a loving child. In an article entitled, “What Happens in the Heart of an Unloved Child,” they cited seven (7) symptoms of an unloved child:

**They develop fears and phobias.** Of the dark, certain objects or animals, certain situations.

**They become very impulsive.** They can't contain their rage, their tears or laughter, any emotions.

**They're unstable.** They want one thing today and another thing the next.

**They develop anxious behaviors.** Like not being able to stay still, asking questions all the time ...

**It's hard for them to concentrate or pay attention.** They tend to have problems in school.

**They become invisible, or try to.** They'll try to hide, sneak away, “not exist.”

**An unloved child doesn't have many social skills.** They feel very uncomfortable or behave very badly when with other children or adults.

APP: Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. What fills up your heart? Is it the love of God or something else? Have you rightly recognized the love that God has poured out for you? Have you received it for yourself? Has it now so impacted and informed your life that love is poured out of you? This is the truth of this text, not that we have pure hearts or that we are unconditionally loving, but that God is and His love pours out to us and through us. Will you allow the love of Christ to change you and love others sincerely and earnestly?

**CONCLUSION:** God blesses the pure in heart. He promises one of the greatest blessings of all, that we would see Him. As we draw near to Him, as we walk in His presence, He purifies us and makes us pure of heart. But perhaps today you feel stuck in this area, you feel as if your heart is beyond help.

This is where our **Celebrate Recovery** ministry comes in. It's a place where you can spend time with other believers who are learning to BECOME PURE IN HEART with one another and to get free of your past. In **CR** we lead people through 8 steps to recovery. Here are the six we've covered thus far:

**R.E.C.O.V.E.R.Y.:** (8 principles based on the Beatitudes)

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**Realize I'm not God.** I admit I'm powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable. *This is the "reality" step. "I've got a problem. I need help."*

**Earnestly believe that God exists.** I believe that I matter to him and that he alone has the power to help me recover. *The "hope" step. "God's the answer."*

**Consciously choose to commit.** I commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control. *The "commitment" step. "I'm giving my life to Jesus"*

**Openly examine and confess my faults.** I confess my sins to God, to myself, and to someone I trust. *The Housecleaning Step. "I'm casting my sin, my shame, my guilt on my Savior Jesus Christ!"*

**Voluntarily submit to make changes by God's power.** I submit myself to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. *The Transformation Step.*

**Evaluate all my relationships.** I call upon God as His child and I love my brothers and sisters with a pure heart. *The Relational Step. "God first in my vertical relationship and the His love pours out through me to others."*

Will you ...

- 1) Call upon the Lord as His child.
- 2) Live with reverence to Him.
- 3) Love one another earnestly by His power.

Let's pray.