

What Saith the Scripture?

<http://www.WhatSaithTheScripture.com/>

Blessedness Of The Pure In Heart- No. 2

by Charles Grandison Finney
President of Oberlin College

from "The Oberlin Evangelist" Publication of Oberlin College

Lecture IX
September 1, 1858

Public Domain Text
Reformatted by Katie Stewart

Text.--Matt. 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

I. What are we to understand by "heart" in this passage, and what by a "pure heart?"

II. Let us next consider some of the natural and necessary manifestations of a pure heart.

III. What is meant by saying "they shall see God"?

I. What are we to understand by "heart" in this passage, and what by a "pure heart?"

- 1. The term, "heart," is used in the Scriptures in various senses -- a fact rendered necessary by the poverty of all language. The difficulty of arriving at the true sense in any particular case is much less than you might suppose, inasmuch as it may generally be determined accurately by the connection in which the word stands and the things said of it.
- 2. When used of the mind, we of course cannot understand by it the fleshly organ of the body -- the great central power in the circulation of the blood.

But as applied to the mind, it has several somewhat various senses. It is sometimes used as synonymous with conscience; e.g. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart" &c. It is also used as synonymous with soul, the spiritual as opposed to the material part of man, and here it indicates the fountain of moral action; as "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" &c. We know that when the mind has committed itself to any chosen end, this very committal controls its action, everything is drawn into the great current. Now it should be noted that the term heart is used sometimes for the mind considered as thus committed voluntarily to its chosen end.

- 3. Consequently it is used to denote that in which moral character consists -- as, a "pure heart," a "wicked heart" &c. -- and as that which must be morally changed; -- "Make yourselves a new heart" -- "A new heart will I give you" &c.

- 4. Our text, speaking of the heart as PURE, must mean by it, a committed state of mind -- morally committed to some chosen end. It cannot mean a mere executive volition, but must imply a state as distinct from a single executive volition, and of course a state of moral purity. A wicked heart is a mind in a state of devotion to self; a pure heart, a mind in a state of devotion to God. It is a state of moral purity, resulting from a committal of the soul to God. Of course it includes the affections which by this voluntary committal are drawn into sympathy with the will. The thing in which we are specially active is the committal of our whole mind to the will of God. The rest follows by natural laws.

II. Let us next consider some of the natural and necessary manifestations of a pure heart.

This enquiry becomes all-important to us because only such as are pure in heart are truly blessed. Hence it behoves us to know whether we are of this number.

- 1. Our Lord has said that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." We may safely infer therefore that if the heart be pure, the conversation will be pure also. The words spoken will be heavenly if the heart be heavenly. Christ affirmed only a natural law when He said that the mouth would speak from the abundance of the heart. The conversation therefore will be pure -- not sensual, not worldly.
- 2. The heart will appear in the life, for by a law of necessity, the heart governs the life. If the heart is pure, the life not only ought to be pure but will be. If the heart of a man be pure, all else will be pure -- all his activities -- all he does as well as all he says. If any of us suppose that our hearts are better than our lives, we are fundamentally deceived. Nothing can be pure if the heart is not; and nothing can be impure if the heart be really pure. For the heart controls all our activities by a law of necessity; hence there can be no variation from this universal law.
- 3. A pure heart loathes everything foreign to its nature -- everything unchaste, impure. "I hate vain thoughts," said David, "but Thy law do I love." Great pains will be taken to keep the imagination pure. Persons of impure hearts dwell on the lustful scenes of the past, and linger round the memories of their sinful indulgencies; but the pure heart loathes these things which the impure cherish.

There will be also a great loathing of impure conversation. Those things you would be ashamed of if Jesus Christ were present, you will loathe now. The fact that the pure in heart shall see God shows that they must loathe evil thoughts. Even if filthy dreams are thrust into your mind by Satan, you will repel and rule out their influence the moment you awake, and will dread and abhor such visitations of evil.

The pure heart has a keen sensibility against everything impure, and intuitively repels every approach of evil as it would the devil. This is an instinct of a pure heart.

- 4. Great prayerfulness is another indication of a pure heart. Such persons will pray a great deal. They have many things which they desire for others, and hence there are many subjects of prayer always present and pressing. Pure hearts literally "pray always" when they are awake,

and I have sometimes thought, when they are asleep also.

- 5. A pure heart will manifest itself in great watchfulness, for we live in a filthy world. As one would walk carefully and circumspectly in the midst of filth, gathering up his skirts to prevent their being soiled, so will they of pure heart guard against everything that would defile the mind.
- 6. There will be great reluctance to mingle in worldly society, for such society cannot be agreeable. It will be submitted to as a disagreeable thing, as when you go to visit the sick. You do not go there because the surroundings are agreeable. Some of them may be very disagreeable, and some really dangerous to your health. You go to do good, and not to enjoy things agreeable.
- 7. This state of mind is the opposite of the worldly man's. "God is not in all his thoughts;" but the man of pure heart "sets the Lord always before him." He lives as seeing God, though He be invisible. Hence, he cannot enjoy the presence and society of God's enemies. If duty calls him among such persons, he will go, yet not to enjoy their society as a thing congenial to his tastes, but rather with a kind of fear and shrinking as if his dangers and temptations were thereby to be greatly increased. I may appeal to every Christian's experience. He knows how he feels when he goes among ungodly men. Ah, he is fearful lest his heart may be drawn away from God, or agonized by the presence of sin against the God he loves. A pure mind, going into the great cities where licentiousness abounds, will feel an intuitive loathing. So, a man who from some eminence should look down on a battlefield and see its carnage and strife and bloodshed, will recoil with horror. Scarcely less will one who goes into a political caucus loathe the manifest selfishness, ambition and false hood which he meets with there. No sympathy can he have with such things. He can go there only with loathing and fear of contamination. I went to one political convention, and I pray God never to let me go to another. Lies were there; falsehood and ambition were there. I longed to get away alone to pray and to weep.
- 8. The same is true of business. Christians will not go into its scuffles and scrambles, save with loathing and dread. What is there? Who does not know what it is? The spirit of the world. Not that politics or business necessarily imply this; but they usually involve it.
- 9. A pure heart is pained at the sight of sin. "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved," said the Psalmist. So all pure hearts feel. As far as is consistent with duty, a pure heart will shun contact with the world, submitting to such contact only at the call of duty, and then going with much watchfulness and prayer. So contrary is the spirit of a pure heart from that of the world, there can be no points of sympathy between them. The one is all holy; the other is unholy, and worldly. The enjoyments of the one are all heavenly; of the other, all selfish. There can be no real fellowship between spirits so unlike.
- 10. A pure heart cannot be a friend of the world, any more than it can of its own personal enemies. "Am not I grieved," says the Psalmist, "with them that rise up against Thee?" "Do not I hate them that hate Thee?" Did he mean that he had malignant feelings? No! but only that as he was in sympathy with God, he could not but love those who loved God and hate those that

hated Him.

What is your experience in regard to your personal enemies? You have had opportunity to test your feelings on this point. I have had. You cannot be their friend in the sense of having sympathy with them. Who can be in this sense the friend of the wicked? Not he who is pure in heart. How do we treat God's enemies? Kindly, to be sure, -- with cordiality as sentient beings, but not with such cordiality as implies the least sympathy with their moral life. The Psalmist said -- "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved. Horror took hold of me because men kept not Thy law." How would an angel feel in view of sin? How would the holy in heaven feel if sin were to break out there? Suppose all at once some one in those heavenly throngs should utter disrespectful language against God; would they not withdraw from him -- as Moses cried out when Korah and his company sinned -- "Get away from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs lest ye be consumed in all their sins." "Come not, O my soul, into their secret; to their honor, be not thou united."

If you once understand what a pure heart is, you will see that these must be its manifestations. The mind will instinctively avoid all these worldly ends and ways which so charm ungodly men. A pure heart consisting as it does in consecration to God and its necessary results, it must seek its pleasures in doing God's will and in building up His kingdom. Several years ago I knew a Christian brother in one of our great cities who was a teacher. In his summer vacations, he would go into the country, and seeking a retired location, he would set himself there to promote the salvation of souls. He would visit families, get up prayer meetings, and would almost always have a revival of religion. It was remarkable to see how much delight he took in this work. It was the life of his soul. I have known others also who, like him, seemed to realize the idea of walking with God. Such must find their supreme delight in communing with God. Nothing else do they seek so naturally. They must of course loathe whatever interferes with perfect communion with God.

III. What is meant by saying "they shall see God"?

- 1. The leading idea is, they shall be admitted into His presence to dwell with Him, as, in oriental palaces, those who were admitted saw their monarch face to face and enjoyed his friendship. Only a few -- the specially favored, ever saw the face of the Eastern king. Hence the figure.
- 2. The words may bear another sense. They shall see God now by an inward spiritual apprehension of His character. So the Bible teaches. The Spirit of the Lord dwells with those of a pure heart. They are fully conscious of His presence. They see Him in His providences; not any visible form, but yet the real manifestations of His power and of His love. They are aware of His agency. So great is their sympathy with Him, they cannot fail of this. They feel His presence in their secret devotions. They know He manifests Himself to them otherwise than to the world. Often it is with them as if they saw God, even as our senses apprehend their objects, the eye, its sights, and the ear, its sounds. So we seem to receive a new sense when we come into such deep sympathy with God. We have a spiritual apprehension of Gods' presence and

character.

- 3. The Savior says the pure in heart are blessed because they shall come into His presence and enjoy Him forever. But more than this is true; they are blessed here in time. They have in their souls a sense of sweetness and purity; they are conscious of loving God and of having great peace of soul and purity of heart -- which, of themselves, work out great peace and joy.
- 4. None but the pure in heart can see God. What would heaven be if the impure in heart were to go there? Surely they ought not to go there to defile heaven! It could be of no use to them to go there. It is safe to say, that would be the most awful place for them in the universe. Nothing could be so repugnant to their sympathies -- nothing so horrible to their hearts. When Isaiah had a vision of heaven and saw the seraphim veiling their faces with their wings, and heard them cry -- "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory," what was the impression made on his soul? He cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." And not until a seraph touched his lips with a live coal from the altar, and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged," could he breathe freely. O sinner, what a strange thought has entered your mind that you should think of going to heaven without holiness! What manifest madness! You doubt whether you need a new heart? Alas, if you once saw heaven, you would see that you could not even desire it without a new heart.
- 5. The Scriptures represent men as becoming conscious and aware of God's presence. "Lo, God is in this place!" "The Lord is in His holy temple." "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery which none of the princes of this world knew; but as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:7-15) A beast cannot understand the experience of a man, for it is not in him. So "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." Try to make a blind man understand colors; can you do it? Never. You have one entire class of ideas which you cannot communicate to him. So, suppose you try to explain sounds to one who has no ear. He has never heard the sweet sounds of the human voice in conversation or in music, and what can he know of those things? A blind man, being asked what his notion was of scarlet color, replied he thought it was like the sound of a trumpet. So wicked men conceive of spiritual things. The Christian can understand the experience of the sinner, but the sinner cannot understand his. "Himself," says the divine word, "is discerned of no man." Christians have once been sinners; sinners have not once been Christians. Hence the Christian can understand the state of the sinner in his wickedness, and also when he advances to a state of conviction, but the sinner cannot understand his states.

REMARKS.

1. Nothing short of this purity of heart really crucifies one to the love of the world. After his heart is made pure, you have no need to argue with a man to persuade him to give up worldly amusements. Before his heart becomes pure, your arguments avail nothing. He asks you what harm there is in it?

You may plead ever so much that he abandon them; it does no good. You may speak against useless ornaments; it does no good; but after they have a pure hart, the work is done. What have they to do with running after earthly things? Before, they would cry -- "How can we live without this pleasure? We are made to have it." But after they have known God, you need not tell them they must lay such things aside. Their own intuitive convictions declare it to their souls. After I became a Christian, though no one spoke to me about it, yet I was ashamed of my ruffles and of my great bunch of watch-seals and keys. I could see that I had worn them for mere show. At once I ceased to care for those vain things. When young converts obtain a pure heart, all they want in the line of dress and adornment is only so much as will make them most useful.

2. Christians need not be surprised at the apologies the wicked make for worldly fashions. They seek those things as their pleasures, and they will have them in some form. Shut them off in one direction, and they fly to another.

3. Those who are really converted will be shocked intuitively by things that are improper for a Christian. I say, they will, and I mean that they will unless they are led astray by older professors in whom they have confidence. By such influences they are sometimes led astray. But their intuitive convictions are likely to be right. Invite them to a party of pleasure. They have no heart to go. They say rather, "Let us have a prayer-meeting. Cannot we have a season of prayer? I want to spend all the time I can in prayer and praise. Let me bathe my soul in God." They are shocked at the suggestion to go back and sip at the fountain of worldly pleasures.

4. There really is no other happiness in this life save in a pure heart. O how much happiness is missed and lost by seeking it elsewhere. You may weary yourself for nought, in chase after worldly pleasures, but you can find no substantial good save in a pure heart and in God. Go wherever you please, you find it not. You may go to Europe, to the White Mountains, to Niagara, anywhere; all is vanity. You return as empty as you went unless your heart is pure. But if God calls you and your heart is with Him, it matters not where you go -- to the Esquimaux, to the Labrador, to the Hottentots; all is sweet if God is there. But if your heart be not pure, no matter how high in heaven you may be lifted up, there is no bliss there for you. Suppose an angel should open the door of heaven and let you in. Ah, see there! Holiness to the Lord blazes all across those glorious palaces! All heaven is radiant with holiness!

You, young men, are getting an education; but for what? To be a lawyer? And are you ambitious for the distinction of having your hand in everybody's quarrels, and your heart drawn into sympathy with all the worst and meanest human passions? But you say -- Cannot I promote the great ends of justice there? You will be much more sure to promote the end of debasing your own moral principles and feelings. I can speak on this subject from some experience. After my conversion the whole subject of going into court to engross myself in other men's quarrels became unutterably loathsome. I saw that I had never managed a case with real honesty. All I had cared for was to get my case and do well for my client, and my soul turned away from it with loathing. Thou pressed very hard to engage again, I refused. Now I do not say that no man can serve God at the bar, but I do say that if he has known God indeed, he will not wish to serve in that sphere. He will beg to be excused. A judge in Hartford said to me -- I loathe my business; I am shut up day after day among the vilest of men, and amidst the lowest sort of business. The men who quarrel and fight are our associates. If I were compelled to spend my

days there, what a grief to my heart!

There is a nobler office to which you might aspire. Young Tyng -- just about to die, said to his father -- "stand up for Jesus." Blessed brother Tyng! May God give me such a son if I am to have one die before me, and may his last words be such as these! And if I am to die before my son, may such be my last words to my son!

Young man, is not this a noble calling? What do you think of this -- "Stand up for Jesus?" How long ere you will make up your mind and commit yourself to God with all your heart? This is precisely what you must do.

Let me ask any of you who has ever taken one draught from the fountain of the waters of life -- Are not these joys pure and rich above all other joys? You know they are. You can testify to this glorious truth. Does some one come to you and urge you to go into some vain amusement? You say, No! Are you told there is no harm in it? We shall have a good time? You answer -- If you had known how I am permitted to sit amid the overshadowings of my Savior's love, you would not ask me to abandon such joys for anything your vain amusements can offer me.

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.

Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.
3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.
4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other

words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.

5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.