

# ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

## BIBLE STUDY, 07/05/2008

### STUDY 6

## THE PURE IN HEART

Matthew 5:8

The Jew, under the tuition of the Pharisees, cared little for the state of the heart, so that outward forms were duly kept. Jesus, however, demands that the heart, the affections, the mind, shall be purified, as the fountain from whence flows the moral and religious life. A pure heart begets a pure life; an impure heart, a corrupt life. The pure in heart are those who are free from evil desires and purposes. They have that similarity of life to the divine life which excludes all uncleanness, and which enables them to comprehend, after a sympathetic fashion, the motives are actions of God. Such see God by faith now, that is, by the spiritual vision of a regenerate heart (Ephesians 1:17,18), and shall see him face to face hereafter (I Corinthians 13:12; I John 3:2,3). The Jews having their hearts defiled with carnal hopes and self-righteous pride failed to see God, as he was then revealing himself in the person of his Son, thus forming a sad contrast to the gracious promise of the beatitude. Beecher writes: "they only can understand God who have in themselves some moral resemblance to him; and they will enter most largely into the knowledge of him who are most in sympathy with the divine life".

True Christianity lies in the heart, in the *purity of heart*; the *washing* of that *from wickedness*, Jeremiah 4:14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Psalm 24:4, 5; I Timothy 1:5. The heart must be *pure*, in opposition to *mixture*—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to *pollution* and *defilement*; as wine *unmixed*, as water *unmuddied*. The heart must be kept *pure* from *fleshly lusts*, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and from *worldly lusts*; covetousness is called *filthy lucre*; from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, all that which come *out of the heart*, and *defiles the man*. The heart must be *purified by faith*, and entire for God; must be presented and preserved a chaste virgin to Christ. *Create in me such a clean heart, O God!*

### 1. Purity of heart explained

Matthew 5:8; I John 1:7; II Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5; I John 3:3; Acts 15:9; 2:46; Hebrews 10:22; Romans 5:1

Purity of heart penetrates far beyond both the new heart received at regeneration and the transformation of character that follows God's work of grace in the soul. First, there is a "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5), by which we understand a cleansing of the affections. This is closely linked with that change that follows upon the heels of regeneration, in which all believers undergo a "purifying [of] their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Accompanying this is the cleaning of the conscience (Hebrews 10:22), which refers to the removal of the burden of conscious guilt. This results in the inward realisation that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

The words "and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7) do not mean that our hearts have been washed from every trace of the corrupting defilements of evil, but primarily teach that the sacrifice of Christ has availed for the judicial blotting out of sins. When the apostle Paul, describing the man who is a new creature in Christ, says that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are

become new" (II Corinthians 5:17), he is speaking of the new disposition of the Christian's *heart*, which is wholly unlike his inner disposition prior to the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration.

The purity of heart then is freedom from defilement and divided affections; it is sincerity, genuineness, and singleness of heart. As a quality of Christian character, it is *godly simplicity*. It is the opposite of subtlety and duplicity. Genuine Christianity lays aside not only malice, but guile and hypocrisy also. It is not enough to be pure in words and in outward deportment but to be pure in desires, motives, and intents. Here, then, is a most important test for every professing Christian to apply to himself. Are my affections set upon things above? Are my motives pure? Why do I assemble with the Lord's people? Is it to be seen of men, or is it to meet with the Lord and to enjoy sweet communion with Him and His people?

## **2. The purification of the heart**

Matthew 5:8; Psalm 51:5–6; I Samuel 16:7; Ecclesiastes 9:3; 8:11; II Chronicles 2:24; Matthew 12:35; Ezekiel 36:26; II Chronicles 19:3; Jeremiah 32:40; Philippians 1:6 "Blessed are the pure in heart." Here the Lord exposes the thoughts of the natural man, who errs greatly in his ideas of what constitutes real blessedness. Therein He refutes the Pharisees, who contented themselves with a species of external ceremonialism or mere outward holiness, failing to realise that God requires "truth in the *inward* parts" (Psalm 51:6). This study equally condemns most of the efforts now being put forth for genuine religion in Christendom. How many today rest satisfied with a *head* religion, supposing that all is well if their creed be sound; and how many more have nothing better than a *hand* religion—busily engaged in what they term "Christian service." "But the Lord looketh on the *heart*", which includes the mind, conscience, affections and will.

The heart of fallen man by nature is totally depraved and corrupt, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). The heart of the Christian is made pure by a fourfold operation of the Holy Spirit. First, by imparting a holy nature at the new birth. Second, by bestowing a saving faith which unites its possessor to a holy Christ. Third, by sprinkling him with the precious blood of Christ, which purges his conscience. Fourth, by a protracted process of sanctification so that we, through His aid, mortify the flesh and live unto God. Thereafter, a believer has a sincere desire and resolution not to sin against God in thought or word or deed, but to please Him in all things.

The work of Divine grace in the soul is begun here in this life, but it is only completed hereafter (Philippians 1:6). We are not wholly perfected, having received only "the *first fruits* of the Spirit" (Romans 8:23). Observe carefully the tense of the verb in Acts 15:9: it is not "purified their hearts by faith," but "purifying their hearts by faith"—a continuous experience. So again "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and (not "renewal" but) *renewing* of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Consequently it is written "in many things we *all* stumble" (James 3:2, RV). Yet it is our bounden duty to use every legitimate means of purification: the daily denying of self, sincere confession of our sins, walking in the paths of righteousness.

## **3. The attendant blessing**

Matthew 5:8; Psalm 17:15; II Corinthians 4:6; 3:18; I Corinthians 13:9–12; Psalm 16:8

The pure in heart "shall *see God*." Corresponding to the fact that the Christian's purity of heart is only in part in this life, but perfected in the life to come, is the experience that "now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Corinthians 13:12). To "see God" is to be brought nigh to Him (for we cannot see an object which is a vast distance from us), to be introduced into intimate intercourse with Him, which is the consequence of having the thick cloud of our transgressions blotted out, for it was our iniquities which separated us from Him (Isaiah 59:2).

The pure in heart possess spiritual discernment and with the eyes of their understanding they obtain clear views of the Divine character and perceive the excellency of His attributes. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. It is by faith God is beheld. To "see God" also is to *enjoy* Him, as in John 3:36, and for that a pure heart is indispensable. That which pollutes the heart and beclouds the vision of a Christian is unjudged evil, for when any sin is "allowed" communion with God is broken, and can only be restored by genuine repentance and unsparing confession. Since, then, the privilege of seeing God is dependent upon the maintenance of the heart purity, how essential it is that we give earnest heed to the exhortations of Isaiah 1:16; II Corinthians 7:1; I Peter 3:15.