

## “How Can I Be Blessed of God? Part 4”

*Matthew 5:8-9*

The beatitudes or ‘blessings’ were Jesus’ message to the people, who had been misled by the religious leaders to think that God only blesses those who are wealthy, in positions of power and follow the Law meticulously, that God desires to bless and make His face shine on everyone. God’s blessing/joy comes to . . .

- Those who recognize their spiritual poverty and need for God (poor in spirit).
- Those who mourn over their sins and receive the comforting love of God through ongoing forgiveness (those who mourn).
- Those who are meek; who demonstrate an unwavering faith in God and stay under the Spirit’s control in life’s trials and persecution not trying to defend themselves or attack the enemy.
- Those who passionately pursue God and what He calls right in the world.
- Those who act in mercy towards others, meeting others needs through their God-given resources and time.

These are the ones who will be blessed, who will be happy in God because God keeps watch over them and happily shines His face on them and gives them true peace in life. The blessings are an introduction to bring back into the light what God’s Word actually said because His Word was being distorted and buried by the misguided teaching and traditions of the religious leaders. And isn’t misguided teaching and religious traditions what turns people off from God and makes sharing the truth about God so difficult for us?

Another way Jesus says we can be blessed (know true joy in God) is by having pure hearts. How many of us have a pure heart? Probably none of us would say we do. How about, how many of us who know Jesus will have a pure heart one day? Yes we will. I know what that means in eternity; no sin and a clear vision of God. If I know what that will look like one day and if I know God is conforming me more into the image of Jesus each day then that helps me know what to aim for each day now; a little less sin in my life and removing the distractions that keep me from seeing God clearly around me.

The word for “pure” means unmixed, undiluted like wheat without the chaff. It also means undivided, nothing swaying it from the direction it is going. So then those who are blessed of God, Jesus says, are those who . . .

### **Live with the Undivided Purpose of Seeing God** **(5:8)**

If those who are ‘pure in heart’ see God, then we have to make seeing God our goal so that are hearts become purer. The ‘heart’ in Hebrew understanding is not of course the physical organ that pumps blood to our veins so we can live and breathe. To the Hebrew, ‘heart’ means the center of one’s life. It describes your focus, your purpose. To love God with all our heart means to let God occupy center stage in our mind so that our decisions and actions revolve around His purposes for us and His glory. The best illustration I can think of is when you were dating your spouse and you knew he/she was the one and the bulk of your day was filled with thinking about him/her and looking forward to being with him/her. This is the kind of relationship God desires with us. To make Him the

priority of our lives so that our marriages, our friends, our work, school and recreational activities reflect Him “*So whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God*” (1 Cor. 10:31).

If we want purer hearts then we’re going to get it . . .

## **Through heart maintenance**

If our bodies and our vehicles need regular maintenance shouldn’t our heart – the center of our life where we make all our decisions? Solomon said we need it. He wrote in Prov. 4:20-27,

- 20 My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words.*
- 21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;*
- 22 for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.*
- 23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*
- 24 Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.*
- 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you.*
- 26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.*
- 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

Everything flows from our heart. Jesus said the very same thing in Matt. 15:18-19,

*18 But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

Therefore, we need to

Make sure what we allow in our heart and mind is what God wants. We’ll know we’re doing that correctly when what comes out of our mouths agree with God’s Word.

The Pharisees emphasized an external purity, an outside holiness. Jesus is talking about inner purity that is devoid of hypocrisy and seeks to please God with one’s life. This isn’t impossible because Jesus would have never said we could be blessed by this if it was something we could not experience at some level while we’re alive. That’s where the power of the Spirit working through the Word of God comes into play. Listen to these verses in Ps. 119:9-16,

- 9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.*
- 10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.*
- 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*
- 12 Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees.*
- 13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.*
- 14 I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.*
- 15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.*
- 16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.*

Those who are pure in heart desire to please God with their thoughts and decisions. And when we obey His Word we receive His joy as a result. But when we sin and blow it there’s another maintenance program that we need to apply;

## **Cleanse our heart**

When Jesus went to wash Peter’s feet to show them they have ‘have a part with Him’, Peter insisted Jesus wash all of him. Jesus said that wasn’t necessary since one who has already had a bath only needs His feet cleaned. This is the principle of ongoing forgiveness for you and me

as believers. Yes, we've accepted Christ as our Saviour confessing we are sinners who are separated from God, but there is still the need for maintaining a healthy relationship through ongoing forgiveness of sins we commit as believers. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who did neither in Matt. 23:25-26. Jesus said they needed to *clean themselves on the inside and then the outside will be clean*. They may have went to the temple and made the effort to offer a sacrifice for their sins but it was all external. It didn't change their hearts.

David knew the difference between phoney external cleansing and genuine heart repentance. In Ps. 51:7-12 he cried out to God,

*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

<sup>8</sup> *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

<sup>9</sup> *Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*

<sup>10</sup> *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

<sup>11</sup> *Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

<sup>12</sup> *Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

Cleanse me, wash me, blot out my sin. David realized that God could have taken the Holy Spirit from him like He had from Saul because before Pentecost the Spirit did not indwell all believers. He empowered prophets, judges and kings. We don't have to worry about losing the Spirit because since Pentecost every born-again believer is baptized by the Spirit (immersed, receives all of Him). However, our sin does grieve the Spirit and we can quench the Spirit's work in people's lives because of our sin. Confession of our sins then returns the joy of our salvation (since sin robs us of joy), renews our spirit (since we are starting a fresh again) and creates in us an inner purity once again that we have to maintain if we're going to see God. Since this is a blessing we can experience now at some level, what does Jesus mean the undivided in heart will see God? Living with an undivided purpose of seeing God

## ***Results in a clearer vision of seeing God***

### **In worship and fellowship (Ps. 24; James 4:8)**

I believe Jesus is alluding to Psalm 24 when He said, *'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.'*

<sup>1</sup> *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;*

<sup>2</sup> *for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.*

<sup>3</sup> *Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?*

<sup>4</sup> *The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.*

<sup>5</sup> *They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior.*

<sup>6</sup> *Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.*

Ps. 24 tells us that everything and everyone that is, was and ever will be in the world, is God's; including you and me. God is perfectly holy and totally beyond us. How can we man and God get together? That's what the psalm addresses. Since everything belongs to God therefore who may ascend the hill of the Lord? To go to Jerusalem is to go up to worship God and fellowship with His people. Only the pure in heart 'see' God, sense and enjoy His presence.

He whose outward actions [hands, words and worship] are the evidence of a clean heart of integrity, of single-mindedness in his/her purpose in life to please and glorify God are the ones who can have access to God. V.6 says *"Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face O God of Jacob."*

James 4:8-10 is an echo of Ps. 24.

*“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail [Over your sin? Because anyone who wants to come near to God must clean their heart]. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.”*

The context of James 4 is a lack of fellowship with God’s people because God’s people were fighting with one another, therefore they were not submitting to God or His Word; even though they were still doing church! They were double-minded. That’s why James called them adulterers. You can’t please or serve both.

When you and I come to God for worship with a clean heart, we sense God speaking to us, enjoying our fellowship with Him and with one another. God said if we come near to him then He will come near to us. But that requires humbling of ourselves, forgiving each other and being single-minded in our life’s purpose: to glorify Him.

There is great joy when we get together to worship, fellowship or study and sense God’s presence among us. If we’re not seeing God in our worship or fellowship perhaps we have an attitude problem, are divided in our goals [trying to please self and God] or we’ve got a problem with another person. Do you want to see God? Purify your hearts. The purer of heart the more clearly we’ll see God . . .

### **At work around us (John 5:17; Col. 1:15-20)**

Once when Jesus healed on the Sabbath we read in John 5:16 that the Jews were persecuting Him. Jesus replied: *“My Father is always at His Work to this very day, and I too am working.”* God and His Son are always working. Therefore, we should be seeing them in a visible way through the evidence of God’s work all around us – if we’re sensitive. If we’re removing the distractions that keep us from our purpose of glorifying God. If we are not growing in spiritual purity we are not looking for God’s work and obviously won’t see it.

Where else is He working? Paul says in Col. 1:15-17 Jesus made the world with His Father and is holding all things together. So that’s another way we see God through creation. But Col. 1:18 goes on to say *“And He is the head of the body, the church . . . and through Him God is reconciling to himself all thing . . . making peace through His blood.”* Have you seen anyone’s life change because of Jesus Christ? Has anyone been reconciled to God, to another family member or friend? Have you noticed God answering prayer this week? The Holy Spirit helping you understand His Word or reminding you of sin or encouraging you to act in faith or help someone? Did someone obey God’s Word even though they knew it would be hard? Then you saw God at work.

This is what Paul tells us in many of his letters. For example, when he writes to the Thessalonians he says in 1:3,

*<sup>2</sup> We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. <sup>3</sup> We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup> because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup> You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. <sup>7</sup> And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup> The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in*

*Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, <sup>9</sup> for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

Paul thanks God for all the ways they saw and heard God working through these believers. Every act of service and obedience is evidence of God's work. If you were blessed this morning or encouraged or challenged or witnessed or heard people talking about God working, you saw God today. Which means there's a desire for that singleness or undivided spirit in you to see God.

One day we will be completely pure, we will be fully glorified and we will see God visibly. Paul said in 1 Cor. 13:12 *"Now we see but a poor reflection [of God and His glory] as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face."*

We can't see God visibly now because we still have sin. Not until we die or are raptured and taken to His presence will we see Him. Rev. 22:3 says that *"the throne of God and the lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His Name will be on their foreheads."*

Are you looking forward to the day when you'll see God and Jesus face-to-face? Is this not what we should desire more? Should this not motivate us everyday to go to serve God in whatever we do and do it for His glory, because we're going to see His glory one day. This is what John wrote in 1 John 3:2-3,

*But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself just as he is pure.*

If we want to see God working around us in creation, in the church and in our life experiences then we need to strive to be purer today, a little less distracted today in pursuing God's purposes than yesterday.

Let's do some heart maintenance. Confess your sins to God, ask him to renew a right spirit if you've been struggling with a negative spirit. Take steps to protect your heart and mind. Be careful what you let in. Don't let garbage in your heart and mind and it won't come out.

Treasure the Word of God. Value it above all. Don't neglect the feeding of your soul individually as well as corporately here. Psalm 119:9 says we keep our way pure by living according to the Word. We seek God with all our hearts by not straying from His commands. When we hide God's Word in our hearts, we are less inclined to sin against Him. Memorize verses like these. Pray them over and over as you read the Word every day. And don't be surprised when you see and enjoy God's presence more.

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