

Christian Classic Series

The Pure in Heart

*“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God”—Matthew 5:8*

THOMAS WATSON (1620-1686)

THE PURE IN HEART

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THE PURE IN HEART

From an exposition of Matthew 5:1-12

Part One: Heart Purity

“Blessed are the pure in heart.”—*Matthew 5:8a*

Introduction

THE Holy God, Who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” calls here for heart purity, and to such as are adorned with this jewel, He promises a glorious and beatific vision¹ of Himself: “They shall see God.” Two things are to be explained: the *nature* of purity and the *subject* of purity.

A. The nature of purity

Purity is a sacred, refined thing. It stands diametrically opposed² to whatever defiles. We must distinguish the various *kinds* of purity.

First, there is a **primitive** purity which is in God originally and essentially as light is in the sun. Holiness is the glory of the Godhead: “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:11). God is the origin, pattern, and prototype³ of all holiness.

Second, there is a **created** purity. Thus, holiness is in the *angels* and was once in *Adam*. Adam’s heart did not have the least spot or tincture⁴ of impurity. We call that wine pure which has no mixture; and that gold pure which has no dross mingled with it. Such was Adam’s holiness. It was like the wine that comes from the grape, having no mixture. But this is not to be found on earth. We must go to heaven for it.

Third, there is an **evangelical** purity whence *grace is mingled with some sin*: like *gold* in the ore; like *wine* which has a dreg⁵ in it; like fine *cloth* with a blemish; like Nebuchadnezzar’s image, part of silver and part of clay (Dan 2:35). This mixture God calls purity in a Gospel-sense, as a face may be said to be fair which has some freckles in it. Where there is a study of purity and a loathing ourselves for our impurity, this is to be “pure in heart.”

¹ **beatific vision** – the direct knowledge of God enjoyed by the blessed in heaven.

² **diametrically opposed** – exactly opposite.

³ **prototype** – the original form of something which has the essential features and is the model for subsequent forms.

⁴ **tincture** – stain; blemish.

⁵ **dreg** – solid particles that settle at the bottom of a liquid.

Some, by “pure in heart,” understand *chastity*, others *sincerity* (Psa 32:2). But I suppose purity here is to be taken in a larger sense for the several kinds and degrees of holiness. They are said to be pure who are consecrated people, having the oil of grace poured upon them. This purity is much mistaken.

*Civility*⁶ and *morality* are not purity. A man may be clothed with great moral virtues such as justice, charity, prudence, temperance—and yet go to hell.

Profession is not purity. A man may have a name to live and yet be dead (Rev 3:1). He may be swept by civility and garnished by profession⁷, yet the devil may dwell in the house. The blazing comet is no star. The hypocrite’s tongue may be silver, yet his heart stone.

Purity consists in two things (Psa 119:30, 97):

- rectitude⁸ of mind, a prizing holiness in the judgment,
- conformity of will, an embracing of holiness in the affections.

A pure soul is cast into the mold of holiness. Holiness is a blood that runs in his veins.

B. The subject of purity

The subject of purity is the *heart*—“pure in heart.” Purity of heart does not exclude purity of life, no more than the pureness of the fountain excludes the pureness of the stream. But it is called purity of heart because the heart is the main thing in true religion, and there can be no purity of life without it. A Christian’s great care should be to keep the heart pure, as one would especially preserve the *spring* from being poisoned. In a duel, a man will chiefly guard and fence his heart; so a wise Christian should above all things keep his heart pure. Take heed that the love of sin does not get in there, lest it prove fatal.

Christians should, above all things, breathe after heart purity: “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1Ti 3:9). Justification *causes* our happiness; sanctification *evidences* it.

I. The Reasons for Purity

A. Purity is a thing called for in Scripture.

“Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pe 1:16). It is not only the minister [who] bids you be holy, but God Himself calls for it. What would the Holy God do with unholy servants?

B. Because of that filthy and cursed condition we are in before purity is wrought in us.

We are a lump of clay and sin mingled together! Sin not only blinds us, but defiles us. It is called filthiness (Jam 1:21). And to show how befilthyng⁹ a thing it is, it is compared to a plague of the heart (1Ki 8:38), to corruption (Deu 32:5), to vomit (2Pe 2:22),

⁶ **civility** – courteous behavior; politeness.

⁷ **garnished by profession** – adorned by a profession of faith in Christ.

⁸ **rectitude** – moral uprightness.

⁹ **befilthyng** – to make exceedingly filthy.

to infants “polluted in thine own blood” (Eze 16:6), and to a “menstruous cloth” (Isa 30:22), which (as Jerome¹⁰ says) was the most defiling thing under the Law. All the legal warnings that God appointed were but to put men in mind of their loathsomeness before they were washed in the blood of Christ. If all the evils in the world were put together and their quintessence¹¹ strained out, they could not make a thing so black and polluted as sin does!

A sinner is a devil in a man’s shape! When Moses’ rod was turned into a serpent, he fled from it. Would God open men’s eyes and show them their deformities and damnable spots, they would fly from themselves as from serpents! This shows what need we have of purity. When grace comes, it washes off this hellish filth. It makes Ethiopians into true Israelites! It turns ravens into swans! It makes those who are as black [with sin] as hell to become as white [pure] as snow!

C. Because none but the pure in heart is savingly interested in the covenant of grace.

Covenanted people have “the sprinkling with clean water” (Eze 36:25). Now, until we are thus sprinkled, we have nothing to do either with the *new covenant* or with the *New Jerusalem*. If a will is made only to such people as are so qualified, none can come in for a share but such as have those qualifications. Just so, God has made a will and covenant that He will be our God and will settle eternal glory upon us, but with this clause or proviso¹² in the will: that we be purified people, having the “clean water” sprinkled upon us. Now until then, we have nothing to do with God or mercy.

D. Purity is the end of our election.

“He hath chosen us...that we should be holy” (Eph 1:4). Not *for* holiness, but *to* holiness. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29). God predestinates us to Christ’s image, which image consists “in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24). So that until you are holy, you cannot show any sign of election upon you, but rather the devil’s brand-mark!

E. Purity is the end of our redemption.

If we could have gone to heaven in our sins, Christ needed not have died. Why did He shed His blood but to redeem us from a “vain conversation¹³”? (1Pe 1:18-19). Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people¹⁴” (Ti 2:14). *Christ shed His blood to wash off our filth!* The cross was both an altar and a laver. Jesus died not only to save us from wrath (1Th 1:10), but to save us from sin (Mat 1:21). Out of His side came water, which signifies our cleansing, as

¹⁰ **Jerome** or **Eusebius Hieronymus** (c. 347-419/420) – a learned Latin scholar who produced the *Vulgate*, the first authentic Latin translation of the Bible from Hebrew.

¹¹ **quintessence** – the purest or most perfect form or manifestation of some quality.

¹² **proviso** – a clause in a document making a qualification, condition, or restriction.

¹³ **vain conversation** – empty way of life.

¹⁴ **a peculiar people** – a people of His very own.

well as blood, which signifies our justifying (1Jo 5:6). The truth is, it would make Christ monstrous if the head should be pure and not the members.

II. Why Purity Must Be Chiefly in the Heart

A. Because if the heart is not pure, we differ nothing from a Pharisaic purity.

The Pharisees' holiness consisted chiefly in externals. Theirs was an outside purity. They never minded the inside of the heart. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess...Hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Mat 23:25, 27). The Pharisees were good only on the surface. They were whited-over, not white. They were like a rotten post overlaid with fine paint. They were like a gold chimney, but within nothing but soot. Salvian¹⁵ complains of such hypocrites who had Christ in their *mouths*, but not in their *lives*.

We must go further. Be "pure in heart" like the king's daughter, "all glorious *within*" (Psa 45:13); else ours is but a Pharisaic purity. And Christ says, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:20).

B. The heart must especially be kept pure because the heart is the chief seat or place of God's residence.

God dwells in the heart. He takes up the heart for His own lodging (Isa 57:15; Eph 3:17); therefore, it must be pure and holy. A king's palace must be kept from defilement, and especially his *throne*. How holy ought that to be! If the *body* is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19), the *heart* is the holy of holies! Oh, take heed of defiling the room where God chiefly dwells! Let that room be washed with holy tears.

C. The heart must especially be pure because it is the heart that sanctifies all that we do.

If the heart is holy, all is holy: our affections holy, our duties holy. "The altar that sanctifieth the gift" (Mat 23:19). The heart is the altar that sanctifies the offering. The Romans kept their springs from being poisoned. The heart is the spring of all our actions; let us keep this spring from poison. Be "pure in heart."

See here what that beauty is which beautifies a soul in God's eye, namely, purity of heart. You are but a spiritual leper until you are pure in heart. God is in love with the pure heart, for He sees His own picture drawn there.

Holiness is the angels' glory. They are pure virgin-spirits. *Take away purity from an angel, and he is but a devil!* You who are pure in heart have the angels' glory shining in you. You have the embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Spirit upon you.

¹⁵ **Salvian** or **Salvianus** – Christian writer of the 5th century.

The pure heart is God's paradise where He delights to walk. It is His lesser heaven. The *dove* delights in the purest air. The Holy Spirit, Who descended in the likeness of a dove, delights in the purest soul. God says of the pure in heart, as of Zion, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell" (Psa 132:14). God loves the loveliest complexion. The pure in heart is Christ's bride, decked and bespangled with the jewels of holiness: "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes" (Song 4:9). Your eyes, that is, your graces—these as a chain of diamonds have drawn my heart to you. Of all hearts, God loves the pure heart best. You, who dress yourself by the looking glass of the Word and adorn "the hidden man of the heart" (1Pe 3:4), are most precious in God's eyes, though you may be as bleary-eyed¹⁶ as Leah or as lame as Barzillai. Yet being pure in heart, you are the mirror of beauty and may say, "Yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD" (Isa 49:5). How may this raise the esteem of purity! This is a beauty that never fades and that makes God Himself fall in love with us.

If we must be pure in heart, then we must not rest in *outward* purity. Morality is not sufficient. A swine may be washed, yet a swine still. Morality does but wash a man; grace changes him. Morality may shine in the eyes of the world, but it differs as much from purity as a pebble differs from the diamond. Morality is but strewing¹⁷ flowers on a dead corpse. A man who is but highly moral is but a tame devil. How many have made "morality" their Savior! Morality will damn as well as heinous vice. A boat may be sunk with *gold* as well as with *dung*.

Observe two things:

1. *The moral person, though he will not commit gross sins, yet he is not sensible of heart sins.* He does not discern the "law in my members" (Rom 7:23). He is not troubled for unbelief, hardness of heart, vanity of thoughts. He abhors gaol-sins,¹⁸ not Gospel-sins.

2. *The moral person rises against holiness.* The snake has a fine appearance, but has a deadly sting. The moral man is fair to look to, but has a secret antipathy¹⁹ against the holy ways of God. He hates grace as much as vice. Zeal is as odious to him as uncleanness. Morality is not to be rested in. The heart must be pure. God would have Aaron wash the inner parts of the sacrifice (Lev 9:14). Morality does but wash the outside; the inside must be washed. "Blessed are the pure in heart."

Let us put ourselves on trial whether we are pure-hearted or not! Here I shall show the signs of an *impure* heart and then signs of a *pure* heart.

III. Signs of an Impure Heart

A. An ignorant heart is an impure heart.

To be ignorant of sin or Christ argues impurity of heart. Nahash the Ammonite would enter into covenant with the men of Jabeshgilead so he might thrust out their

¹⁶ **bleary-eyed** – reddened, watery eyes.

¹⁷ **strewing** – scattering; spreading loosely.

¹⁸ **gaol-sins** or **jail-sins** – crimes that would cause one to be imprisoned.

¹⁹ **antipathy** – feelings of extreme dislike.

right eyes (1Sa 11:2). Satan leaves men their *left* eye. In worldly knowledge they are quick-sighted enough, but the right eye of spiritual knowledge is quite put out! (2Co 4:4). Ignorance is Satan's stronghold (Act 26:18). The devils are bound in chains of darkness (Jude 6). So are all ignorant people. Impossible it is that an ignorant heart should be holy. It is knowledge that makes the heart good: "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good" (Pro 19:2). For any to say that though their *mind* is ignorant, yet their *heart* is good, they may as well say that though they are blind, yet their eyes are good.

In the Law, when the plague of leprosy was in a man's *head*, the priest was to pronounce him unclean. This is the case of an ignorant man. The leprosy is in his head: "He is unclean." That heart cannot be very pure which is a *dungeon*. *Grace* cannot reign where *ignorance* reigns. An ignorant man can have no *love* to God: "He cannot love that which he does not know." He can have no *faith*: knowledge must usher in faith (Psa 9:10). He cannot worship God aright (Joh 4:22). Though he may worship the true God—yet in a wrong manner. Ignorance is the root of sin. Blindness leads to lasciviousness²⁰ (Eph 4:18-19; Pro 7:23). Ignorance is the mother of pride (Rev 3:17). It is the cause of error (2Ti 3:7), and, which is worse, a willful ignorance: "It is one thing to be ignorant; it is another thing to be unwilling to know." Many are in love with ignorance: they hug their disease (Job 21:14; 2Pe 3:5). Ignorant minds are impure. *There is no going to heaven in the dark!*

B. A self-righteous heart is an impure heart.

It sees no need of purity: "I am rich...and have need of nothing" (Rev 3:17). Not to be sensible of a disease is worse than the disease! You do not hear a sick man say, "I am well." There are some who "need no repentance" (Luk 15:7). Some sinners are too well to be cured. Heart purity is as great a wonder to the natural man as the new birth was to Nicodemus (Joh 3:4). It is sad to think how many go on confidently and are ready to bless themselves, never suspecting their dreadful condition until it is too late!

C. He has an impure heart who regards iniquity in his heart.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa 66:18). In the original it is "If I look upon sin," that is, with a lustful look. *Sin-regarding* is inconsistent with *heart purity*. What is it to "regard iniquity"?

1. We regard iniquity when we *indulge* in sin. [This is] when sin not only lives in us, but when we live in sin. Some will leave all their sins but one. Jacob would let all his sons go but Benjamin. Satan can hold a man by one sin. The fowler holds the bird fast enough by one claw. Others *hide* their sins like one who shuts up his shop windows, but follows his trade within doors. Many deal with their sins as Moses' mother dealt with her son. She hid him in the ark of bulrushes as if she had left him; but her eye was still upon him, and in the end, she became his nurse (Exo 2:9). Just so, many seem to leave their

²⁰ **lasciviousness** – the quality of being inclined to lust or sexual desires.

sins, but they only hide them from the eye of others. Their heart still goes after them; and at last, they nurse and give breast to their sins.

2. To regard iniquity is to *delight* in iniquity. Though a child of God sins, yet he does not take a delight in sin: “What I hate, that do I” (Rom 7:15). But impure souls make a recreation of sin: they “had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Th 2:12). Never did one feed with more delight on a meal he loves than a wicked man does upon the forbidden fruit. This delight in sin shows that the will is in the sin, and “the will is the rule and measure of the deed.”

3. To regard iniquity is to make *provision* for sin. “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). The wicked are caterers for their lusts. It is a metaphor taken from such as make provision for a family to feed them. The Greek word here signifies a projecting and planning in the mind, how to bring a thing about. This is to make provision for the flesh, when one studies to satisfy the flesh and provide fuel for lust. Thus, Amnon made provision for the flesh (2Sa 13:5). He pretends himself to be sick, and his sister Tamar must be his nurse. She must cook and serve his food to him, by which means he defiled her virginity. It is sad when men’s concern is not to be holy, but to satisfy lust.

4. To regard iniquity is to *give it respect* and entertainment, as Lot showed respect to the angels. “He bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you...” (Gen 19:1-2). When the Spirit of God comes, He is repulsed and grieved; but when temptation comes, the sinner bows to it, sets open the gates, and says “Turn in here, my lord.” This is to regard iniquity.

5. He is said to regard sin who *does not regard the threatenings* of God against sin. We read of “seven thunders [which] uttered their voices” (Rev 10:3). How many thunders in Scripture utter their voices against sin! “But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses” (Psa 68:21). Here is a thundering Scripture, but sinners fear not this thunder. Let a minister come as a *Boanerges*, clothed with the spirit of Elijah, and denounce all the curses of God against men’s sins—they have no regard for it. They can laugh at the shaking of a spear (Job 41:29). This is to regard iniquity and argues an impure heart.

D. An unbelieving heart is an impure heart.

The Scripture calls it expressly “an *evil* heart of unbelief” (Heb 3:12). An unbelieving heart is evil in the highest degree. It is full of the poison of hell. Unbelief is the foul medley of all sins—the root and receptacle of sin.

1. Unbelief is a God-affronting sin. It puts the lie upon God. It calls in question His power (Psa 78:19), mercy, and truth: “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar” (1Jo 5:10). Can a greater affront be cast upon the God of glory? It makes us trust to second causes, which is setting the creature in the place of God: “Yet in his disease he [Asa] sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians” (2Ch 16:12). He relied more on the physician than upon God. Saul seeks to the witch of Endor. O high affront, to lean upon the *reed* and neglect the *Rock* of Ages!

2. Unbelief hardens the heart. These two sins are linked together. He “upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart” (Mar 16:14). Unbelief breeds the stone of the heart. He who does not believe God’s *threatenings* will never fear Him. He who does not believe God’s *promises* will never love Him. What is said of the Leviathan is true of the unbeliever: “His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone” (Job 41:24). Unbelief first *pollutes* the heart, and then *hardens* it!

3. Unbelief breeds hypocrisy. Professors do not believe that God is a jealous God and will call them to account. Therefore, they put on a mask of religion and are *saints in jest*, that they may play *the devil in earnest* (2Ti 3:4-5). They pretend to worship God, but Self is the idol they worship. Like rowers, they look one way and row another. The unbeliever is the greatest hypocrite.

4. Unbelief causes the fear of men. “Fear is proof of a baseborn soul.” Fear is a debasing thing; it unmans a man. It makes him afraid to be godly. The fearful man studies *compliance* rather than *conscience*. “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Pro 29:25). What made Abraham equivocate,²¹ David pretend to be mad, and Peter deny Christ? Was it not their fear? And whence does fear spring but from unbelief? Therefore, the Scripture joins them together: “The *fearful*, and *unbelieving*” (Rev 21:8).

5. Unbelief is the root of apostasy: “...an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12). What is the reason those who seemed once zealous now despise God and leave off prayer in their families?²² Is it not their unbelief? They believed not that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). Infidelity is the cause of apostasy. In the Greek, *apistia* (unbelief) leads to *apostasia* (apostasy). And if unbelief is the breeder and fomenter of so much sin, then the unbelieving heart must needs be an impure heart.

E. A covetous heart is an impure heart.

The *earth* is the most impure element. The purity of the heart lies in the spirituality of it, and what is more opposite to spiritualness than earthiness? Covetousness is “the root of all evil” (1Ti 6:10). “To what cost do you drive mortal hearts, you accursed lust for gold!”

1. Covetousness is the root of discontent. Why do any repine²³ at their condition, but because they think they do not have enough? The Greek word for *covetousness* signifies an immoderate desire of getting. Because the covetous man is never satisfied, his heart frets in discontent and impatience.

2. Covetousness is the root of theft. Achan’s covetous heart made him steal that wedge of gold, which served to cleave asunder his soul from God (Jos 7:21).

3. Covetousness is the root of treason. It made Judas betray Christ: “What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?” (Mat 26:15). Absalom’s covetousness made him attempt to pluck the crown from his father’s head. He who is a Demas will soon

²¹ **equivocate** – to be deliberately unclear.

²² **leave...families** – stop the practice of family worship.

²³ **repine** – complain.

prove a Judas. “Men shall be...covetous” (2Ti 3:2), and it follows in the next verse, “trucebreakers.” Where covetousness is in the preface, treason will be in the conclusion.

4. Covetousness is the root of murder. Why did Ahab stone Naboth to death, but to possess his vineyard? (1Ki 21:13). Covetousness has made many swim to the crown in blood.²⁴ And can the heart be pure when the “hands are full of blood”? (Isa 1:15).

5. Covetousness is the root of perjury. “Men shall be...covetous,” and it follows, “trucebreakers” (2Ti 3:2-3). For love of money will take a false oath and break a just oath. He who lives a Midas²⁵ will die a perjurer.

6. Covetousness is the root of necromancy.²⁶ Why do people indent²⁷ with the devil, but for money? They study the black art for yellow gold. Alexander the Sixth pawned his soul to the devil for a popedom.

7. Covetousness is the root of fraud and theft. Such as would be over-rich will over-reach. It is the *covetous hand* that holds false weights (Amo 8:5).

8. Covetousness is the root of bribery and injustice. It makes the courts of law, “great places of robbery,” as Augustine²⁸ speaks. At Athens, court cases were bought and sold for money.

9. Covetousness is the cause of uncleanness. The Scripture mentions “the *hire* of a whore” (Deu 23:18). For money, both conscience and chastity are sold.

10. Covetousness is the root of idolatry: “Covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5). The covetous person bows down to the image of gold. His money is his god, for he puts his trust in it. Money is his creator: when he has abundance of wealth, then he thinks he is made. Money is his redeemer: if he is in any strait or trouble, he flies to his money and that must redeem him. Money is his comforter: when he is sad, he counts over his money; and with this golden harp, he drives away the evil spirit. When you see a covetous man, you may say, “There goes an idolater!”

11. Covetousness is the cause of unprofitableness under the means of grace. In the parable, the *thorns* choked the seed (Mat 13:7). This is the reason the Word preached does no more good: the seed often falls among thorns. *Thousands of sermons lie buried in earthly hearts!*

12. Covetousness is the root of selfishness and stinginess. It hinders hospitality. A covetous man has a withered hand. He cannot reach it out to clothe or feed those who are in need. The covetous person is so sordid that, if his estate may flourish, he is content to let his name lie dead and buried. What a cursed sin is avarice! And can he be pure

²⁴ **swim...blood** – be covered in blood to the top of the head.

²⁵ **Midas** – Greek mythology: a king who was granted a wish by the god Dionysus. Midas requested that everything he touched be turned to gold, but he soon regretted his choice because even his food and water were changed to gold.

²⁶ **necromancy** – the pretended art of revealing future events by means of communication with the dead.

²⁷ **indent** – enter into an agreement.

²⁸ **Augustine of Hippo** (354-430) – early Latin church theologian and philosopher who served as the bishop of Hippo.

in heart who has such a “root of bitterness” growing in him? We may as well say that the body is pure which is full of plague-sores.

F. Those hearts are impure which are haters of purity (Mic 3:2).

They “hated knowledge” (Pro 1:29). Some things in nature have an antipathy: the serpent will not come near the boughs of the wild ash. There is an antipathy in a carnal heart against holiness; and when hatred is boiled up to malice, it is dangerous. Thus, Julian²⁹ maliciously opposed holiness. Receiving a mortal wound when in battle, he threw up a handful of his blood into the air in indignation saying, “O Galilean, you have overcome me!”

G. He who scoffs at purity has an impure heart.

“There shall come in the last days scoffers” (2Pe 3:3; Luk 16:14). There are some who make a jeer³⁰ of religion. It is a sign of an Ishmael spirit to scoff at holiness. Are we not commanded to be perfect as God is perfect? (Mat 5:48). One would wonder that—those who dare open their mouths in derision against holiness—the earth does not open her mouth to swallow them up as it did Korah and Dathan. These are *devils* covered over with flesh! They have damnation written on their foreheads! Lucian, who in the time of the Emperor Trajan had professed religion, afterwards became so profane as to make a mock at the Christians; and by his jeers and taunts went about to destroy religion. At last, he himself was rent asunder and devoured by dogs. When the scab of the leper appeared, he was to be shut out of the camp (Lev 13:8, 46). Those who flout³¹ at religion, if God does not give them repentance, are sure to be shut out of the camp of heaven.

I shall next show you the signs of a pure heart.

IV. The Signs of a Pure Heart

A. A sincere heart is a pure heart.

“In whose spirit there is no guile³²” (Psa 32:2). There are four characters of a sincere-hearted Christian.

1. A sincere heart serves God with the whole heart!

First, he serves God with the heart. The hypocrite does but make a *show* of obedience. “Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins³³” (Jer 12:2). There may be a fair complexion when the lungs and vitals are diseased. The hypocrite is fair to look on. He has a devout eye, but a hollow heart. But he who is sincere, his *inside* is his *best* side! In the Law, God would have the “inwards” offered up (Lev 4:11). A good Christian gives God the “inwards.” When he prays, his heart prays: Hannah “spake in her heart” (1Sa

²⁹ **Julian the Apostate** or **Flavius Claudius Julianus** (331?-363) – Roman emperor who tried to restore paganism after the adoption of Christianity by Constantine.

³⁰ **jeer** – scoffing or taunting remark.

³¹ **flout** – make insulting remarks; mocking speech.

³² **guile** – deceit.

³³ **reins** – the seat of the feelings or affections; heart.

1:13). In his thanksgiving, the heart is the chief instrument of praise (Psa 111:1). Then is the sweetest music when we make “melody in your *heart* to the Lord” (Eph 5:19).

Secondly, the sincere Christian serves God with the “whole heart” (Psa 119:2). Hypocrites have a double heart (Psa 12:2)—a heart for God and a heart for sin. “Their heart is divided” (Hos 10:2). God loves a *broken* heart, but not a *divided* heart. An upright heart is a whole heart. The full stream and torrent of the affections run out after God. A sincere heart “hath followed me [God] fully” (Num 14:24).

2. A sincere heart is willing to come under a trial. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psa 139:23). That metal is to be suspected which men are afraid to bring to the touchstone. A sound heart likes the touchstone of the Word; it is for a searching ministry. Hypocrites fly from the light of truth; they fly from that light which would reveal their sin. They hate that *physic*³⁴ of the Word that, meeting with their ill humors,³⁵ begins to make them sick and troubles their conscience. A gracious soul loves that preaching best which makes a *heart-anatomy*.

3. A man of sincere heart dares not act in the least against his conscience. He is the most magnanimous,³⁶ yet the most cautious. He is bold in suffering (Pro 28:1), but fearful of sin (Gen 39:9). He dares not get an estate by sinful shifts or rise upon the ruins of another. Jacob got his father’s blessing by fraud, but that is not the way to get God’s blessing.

4. A sincere heart is a suspicious heart. The hypocrite suspects others of sin but has charitable thoughts of himself! The sincere Christian has charitable thoughts of others and suspects himself of sin. He calls himself often to account: “O my soul, have you any evidences for heaven? Is there no flaw in your evidences? You may mistake common grace for saving grace. Weeds in the cornfields look like flowers. The foolish virgins’ lamps looked as if they had oil in them. O my soul, is it not so with you?” The man of sincere soul, being ever jealous, plays the critic upon himself and so traverses things in the court of conscience as if he were presently to be cited to God’s bar. This is to be pure in heart.

B. A pure heart breathes after purity.

If God should stretch out the golden scepter and say to him, “Ask, and it shall be given you—up to half the kingdom,” he would say, “Lord, give me a pure heart! Let my heart have this inscription, *Holiness to the Lord*. Let my heart be Your temple for You to dwell in. Lord, what would I do in heaven with this unholy heart? What converse³⁷ could I have with You?” A gracious soul is so in love with purity that he prizes a pure heart above all blessings.

1. He prizes a pure heart above riches. He knows that he may be clothed in purple and fine linen, and yet go to hell. He is content to be *poor*, so long as he may be *pure*. He

³⁴ **physic** – medicine.

³⁵ **ill humors** – evil inclinations.

³⁶ **magnanimous** – great in courage.

³⁷ **converse** – conversation.

knows heart purity is a special certificate³⁸ of God's love. "The pure in heart" shall see God.

2. He prizes a pure heart above gifts. Gifts do not at all commend us in God's eye. *A pure heart is the jewel!* "O woman, great is thy faith" (Mat 15:28). It was not her rhetorical language Christ was taken with, but her faith. Hypocrites have had rare gifts: Saul had the spirit of prophecy; Judas, no doubt, could make an elegant oration. Hypocrites have come into God's church loaded with the Egyptian gold of human learning. There may be *illumination* without *sanctification*. A small diamond is better than a great deal of brass. A little grace excels the most flourishing abilities. Now if the outgoings of your soul are after holiness, you desire a pure heart rather than an eloquent tongue. You have the oil of the Spirit poured on you, and you shall be crowned with a glorious sight of God.

C. A pure heart abhors all sin.

1. A man may *forbear* sin, yet not have a pure heart.

a. A man may forbear sin for lack of occasion to sin. He may forbear sin as one may hold his breath while he dives under water, and then take breath again. The gunpowder makes no noise until the fire is put to it. The clock stands still until the weights are put on. Let a temptation come, which is like the hanging on of the weights, and the heart goes as fast in sin as ever!

b. He may forbear sin for fear of the penalty. A man forbears a dish he loves for fear it should bring his disease upon him of the stone or gout. There is conflict in a sinner between the passions of desire and fear. Desire spurs him on to sin; but fear, as a curb and bit, checks him. Nor is it the *crookedness* of the serpent he fears, but the *sting* of the serpent!

c. He may forbear sin out of a design. He has a plot in hand, and his sin might spoil his plot. Some rich heir would fly out in excess, but he behaves properly to prevent being cut off from the inheritance. How good was Joash while Jehoiada the priest lived! Prudence as well as conscience may restrain from sin.

2. A man may forsake sin, yet not have a pure heart. It is a great matter, I confess, to forsake sin. So dear is sin to men that they will part with the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls. Sin is the Delilah that bewitches, and it is much to see men divorced from it. There may be a forsaking of sin, yet no heart purity. Sin may be forsaken upon wrong principles.

a. A man may forsake sin from morality. Moral arguments may suppress sin. I have read of a debauched heathen who, hearing Socrates³⁹ read an ethical lecture on virtue and vice, went away changed and no more followed his former vices. Cato, Seneca, Aristides,⁴⁰ seeing beauty in virtue, led unblamable lives.

³⁸ **certificate** – act of assurance.

³⁹ **Socrates (469-399 BC)** – Greek philosopher; profoundly affected Western philosophy through his influence on Plato.

⁴⁰ **Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 BC); Lucius Annaeus Seneca (?4 BC-AD 65); Aristides the Just (530?-468? BC).**

b. *A man may forsake sin from policy.* A man may forsake sin not out of respect to God's glory, but his own credit. Vice will waste his estate, eclipse the honor of his family; therefore, out of policy he will divorce his sin.

c. *A man may forsake sin from necessity.* Perhaps he cannot follow the trade of sin any longer. The adulterer is grown old; the drunkard has become too poor. His heart is toward sin, but either his *purse* fails him or his *strength*—as a man who loves hunting, but his prison-fetters will not allow him to follow the sport. This man, who is necessitated to put a stop to sin, does not so much forsake sin as sin forsakes him.

But he is pure in God's eye who abhors sin. "I hate every false way" (Psa 119:104). This is excellent indeed because now the love of sin is crucified. A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it—as the serpent sheds her coat, yet keeps her sting. But when a man can say he abhors sin, now is sin killed in the root. A pure heart abstains from sin, as a man does from a dish that he has an antipathy against. This is a sign of a new nature: when a man hates what he once loved! And because he hates sin, therefore he fights against it with the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17), as a man who hates a serpent seeks the destruction of it.

D. A pure heart avoids the appearance of evil.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Th 5:22). A pure heart avoids that which may be interpreted as evil. He who is loyal to his prince not only forbears to have his hand in treason, but he takes heed of that which has an appearance of treason. A gracious heart is shy of that which looks like sin. When Joseph's mistress took hold of him and said, "Lie with me!" he left his garment in her hand and fled from her (Gen 39:12). He avoided the appearance of evil. He would not be seen in her company. Thus, a pure heart avoids whatever may have the *suspicion of sin*:

1. A pure heart avoids the suspicion of sin in regard of himself, and that two ways.

First, because the appearance of evil is oftentimes an occasion of evil. Dalliance⁴¹ is an appearance of evil and many times occasions evil. Had Joseph been familiar with his mistress in a wanton, sporting manner, he might in time have been drawn to commit immorality with her. Some, out of novelty and curiosity, have gone to hear mass and afterwards have lent the idol not only their ear, but their knee! There are many who have gone with itching ears to hear false teachers and have come home with the plague in their head! When Dinah would be gadding about,⁴² she lost her chastity (Gen 34:2). A pure heart foreseeing the danger avoids the appearance of evil. It is dangerous to go near a hornet's nest. The men who went near the furnace were burned (Dan 3:22).

Second, because the appearance of evil may eclipse his good name. A good name is a precious ointment. It is better than "silver and gold" (Pro 22:1). It commends us to God and angels, which riches cannot do. Now a godly man avoids the appearance of evil lest he wounds his good name. What comfort can there be of life when the name lies buried?

⁴¹ **dalliance** – playful interaction based on lighthearted feeling, especially one that suggests sexual interest; flirtation.

⁴² **gadding about** – wandering about aimlessly in search of pleasure.

2. A pure heart avoids the suspicion of sin out of reverence and respect to the holiness of God. God hates the very appearance of evil. God abhors hypocrites because they have no more than the appearance of good, and He is angry with His children if they have so much as the appearance of evil. A gracious heart knows God is a jealous God and cannot endure that His people should border upon sin. Therefore, he keeps aloof from sin and will not come near the smell of infection.

3. A pure heart avoids the very appearance of sin in regard of the godly. The appearance of evil may scandalize a weak brother. A gracious heart is not only fearful lest he should defile his own conscience, but lest he should offend his brother's conscience. Were it only an *indifferent* thing—yet if it is an appearance of evil and may grieve another—we are to forbear (1Co 10:25-28). For “when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (1Co 8:12). The weak Christian is a member of Christ. Therefore, the sinning against a member is a sinning against Christ.

4. A pure heart avoids the very appearance of evil in regard of the wicked. The Apostle would have us walk wisely towards unbelievers (1Th 4:12). The wicked watch for our halting.⁴³ How glad would they be of anything to reproach religion! Professors are placed as stars in the highest orb of the church, and if there is but the appearance of any eccentric or irregular motion, the wicked would presently open their mouths with a fresh cry against piety. Now to a godly heart, the fame and honor of the Gospel is so dear that he had rather die than incriminate or eclipse it.

By this, then, let us try ourselves whether we are pure in heart: do we avoid the least appearance of sin? Alas, how many run themselves into the occasions of sin! *They tempt the devil to tempt them!* Some go to plays and comedies—the very fuel and temptation to lust! Others frequent heretical meetings; and truly, God often in just judgment leaves them to the acts of sin who do not avoid the appearance of sin. “[They] were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works” (Psa 106:35). Pure hearts flee the occasion of sin! John would not endure the company of the heretic Cerinthus.⁴⁴ Polycarp⁴⁵ would have no conference with Marcion⁴⁶ the heretic, but called him “the devil's firstborn.” Basil⁴⁷ says that the Christians in his time avoided the meetings of heretics as the “very

⁴³ **halting** – imperfection.

⁴⁴ **Cerinthus** (died c. 100) – heretical leader of a group of Christians who had Gnostic tendencies; taught that Jesus was an ordinary man upon whom “the Christ” descended at His baptism; this “Christ” abandoned Jesus before His crucifixion.

⁴⁵ **Polycarp** (traditionally c.69–c.155) – Bishop of Smyrna and martyr; apparently a disciple of the Apostle John; the leading Christian figure in Roman Asia in the middle of the 2nd century; martyred for his faith.

⁴⁶ **Marcion** (died c. 160) – founder of a heretical sect; rejected the validity of the OT witness for Christians because he believed the God of the OT was incompatible with the loving God revealed through Jesus; believed that the Christian Gospel was wholly a Gospel of Love to the absolute exclusion of Law.

⁴⁷ **Basil the Great** (c. 330–379) – one of three theologians known as the Cappadocian fathers; best remembered for his contribution to the development of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity; withstood the Arian party, which denied the deity of Christ.

schools of error.” Oh, avoid the appearance of evil. The Apostle bids us to follow those things that are “of good report” (Phi 4:8).

E. Another sign of a pure heart is that it performs holy duties in a holy manner.

This holy manner, or due order, consists in three things:

1. Preparing the heart *before* a duty. An unholy heart does not care how it rushes upon an ordinance. It comes without preparation and goes away without profit. The pure heart is a prepared heart. It dresses itself before it comes to a duty by examination and prayer. When the earth is prepared, then it is fit to receive the seed. When the instrument is prepared and tuned, then it is fit for music.

2. Watching the heart *in* a duty. A holy heart labors to be affected and wrought upon by the Spirit. His heart burns within him. There was no sacrifice without fire. A pure saint labors to have his heart broken in a duty (Psa 51:17). The incense, when it was broken, cast the sweetest savor. Impure souls care not in what a dead or perfunctory⁴⁸ manner they serve God (Eze 33:31). They pray more out of *fashion* than out of *faith*. They are no more affected with an ordinance than the dead in the church graveyard. God complains of offering up the *blind* (Mal 1:8). And is it not as bad to offer up the *dead*? O Christian, say to yourself, How can this *deadness* of heart stand with *pureness* of heart? Do not dead things putrefy?

3. Outward reverence. Purity of heart will express itself by the reverend⁴⁹ posture of the body: the lifting up of the eye and hand, the bending the knee. When God gave the Law, “mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke... and the whole mount quaked greatly” (Exo 19:18). The reason was that the people might prostrate themselves more reverently before the Lord. The ark, wherein the Law was put, was carried upon poles, so that the Levites might not touch it to show what reverence God would have about holy things (Exo 25:11, 14). We must not only offer up our *souls*, but our *bodies* (Rom 12:1). The Lord takes notice what posture and gesture we use in His worship. If a man were to deliver a petition to the king, would he deliver it with a foolish jest? The careless irreverence of some would make us think they did not much regard whether God heard them or not. We are run from one extreme to another, from superstition to irreverence. Let Christians think of the dreadful majesty of God Who is present. “How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” (Gen 28:17). Of the blessed angels it is said, “One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy” (Isa 6:3). A holy heart will have a holy posture.

F. A pure heart will have a pure life.

“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2Co 7:1). Where there is a holy heart, there will be a holy life. Some bless God they have good hearts, but their lives are evil. “There is a generation that are

⁴⁸ **perfunctory** – done routinely and with little interest or care.

⁴⁹ **reverend** – deeply respectful.

pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). If the stream is corrupt, we may suspect the spring-head to be impure. Aaron was called “the saint of the LORD” (Psa 106:16). He had not only a holy heart, but there was a golden plate on his forehead on which was written “Holiness to the LORD” (Exo 28:36). Purity must not only be woven into the heart, but engraved upon the life! Grace is most beautiful when it shines abroad with its golden beams. The clock has not only its motion within, but the hand moves outside upon the dial. Just so, pureness of *heart* shows itself upon the dial of the *life*.

1. A pure soul *talks* of God (Psa 37:30). His heart is seen in his tongue. He who is pure in heart, his mouth is full of heaven.

2. A pure soul *walks* with God (Gen 6:9). He is still doing angel’s work: praising God, serving God. He lives as Christ did upon earth. Holy duties are the Jacob’s ladder by which he is still ascending to heaven. Purity of *heart* and *life* are in Scripture made twins. “I will put my spirit within you”—there is purity of *heart*. “And cause you to walk in my statutes”—there is purity of *life* (Eze 36:27). Shall we account them pure whose life is not in heaven (Phi 3:20), but rather in hell? “Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?” (Mic 6:11). How justly may others reproach religion when they see it kicked down with our unholy feet! A pure heart has a golden frontispiece.⁵⁰ Grace, like new wine, will have vent; it can be no more concealed than lost. The saints are called “jewels” (Mal 3:17) because of that shining luster that they cast in the eyes of others!

G. A pure heart is so in love with purity that nothing can draw him off from it.

1. Let others reproach purity, he loves it: As David, when he danced before the ark, and Michal scoffed. David replied: if this is to be vile, then “I will yet be more vile!” (2Sa 6:22). So says a pure heart: “If to follow after holiness is to be vile, I will yet be more vile!” The more others deride holiness, the more a gracious soul burns in love and zeal to it. If a man had an inheritance befallen him, would he be laughed out of it? What is a Christian the worse for another’s reproach? A blind man’s disparaging a diamond does not make it sparkle the less!

2. Let others persecute holiness, a pure heart will pursue it. Holiness is the queen every gracious soul is espoused to, and he will rather die than be divorced. Paul would be holy, though “bonds and afflictions” awaited him (Act 20:23). The way of religion is often thorny and bloody, but a gracious heart prefers inward purity before outward peace. I have heard of one, who having a jewel he much prized, the king sent for his jewel. “Tell the king,” says he, “I honor his Majesty; but I will rather lose my life than part with my jewel.” He who is enriched with the jewel of holiness will rather die than part with this jewel. When his honor and riches will do him no good, his holiness will end in bliss, “You have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:22).

⁵⁰ **frontispiece** – the decorated entrance of a building.

V. Arguments or Motives to Persuade to Heart Purity

Let me persuade Christians to heart purity. The harlot “wipeth her mouth” (Pro 30:20). But that is not enough. “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart” (Jer 4:14). And here I shall lay down some arguments or motives to persuade to heart purity.

A. The necessity of heart purity

1. Heart purity is necessary in respect of *ourselves*. Until the heart is pure, all our holy things (that is, our religious duties) are polluted. They are but *splendid sins!* “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Ti 1:15). Their offering is unclean. Under the Law, if a man who was unclean by a dead body and carried a piece of holy meat, the holy meat could not cleanse him; but the dead body polluted that (Hag 2:12-13). He who had the leprosy, whatever he touched was unclean. If he had touched the altar or sacrifice, the altar would not cleanse him; but he would defile the altar. *A filthy hand defiles the purest water.* An impure heart defiles all religious duties; he drops poison upon them all. A pure stream running through muddy ground is polluted. Just so, the holiest duties running through an impure heart are polluted. A sinner’s works are called “dead works” (Heb 6:1). And those works that are dead cannot please God. A dead wife cannot please her husband.

2. Heart purity is necessary in respect of *God*. God is holy. Purity is the chief robe with which God adorns Himself. “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Hab 1:13). And will this holy God endure to have an impure heart come near him? Will a man lay a viper in his bosom? The holy God and the unrepentant sinner cannot dwell together. None can dwell together but friends; but there is no friendship between God and the sinner, both of them being of a contrary judgment and disposition. An impure heart is more odious to God than a serpent! God gave the serpent its venom, but Satan fills the heart with sin (Act 5:3). The Lord abhors a sinner. He will not come near him having his plague-sores running. “My soul lothed them!” (Zec 11:8).

3. Heart purity is necessary in regard of *angels*. They are pure creatures. The Cherubim, which typified the angels, were made of fine gold to denote the purity of their essence. No unholy thought enters into the angels; therefore, there must be purity of heart that there may be some resemblance between us and them. What would unholy hearts do among those pure angelic spirits?

4. Heart purity is necessary in regard of the *glorified saints*. They are pure, being refined from all the dregs of sin. They are “spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23). Now what would *profane* spirits do among “spirits made perfect”? I tell you, if you who wallow in your sins could come near God and angels and spirits of men made perfect and have a sight of their luster, you would soon wish yourselves out of their company. As a man who is dirty and in his rags, if he should stand before the king and his nobles and see them glistening in their cloth of gold and sparkling with their jewels, he would be ashamed of himself and wish himself out of their presence.

5. Heart purity is necessary in regard of *heaven*. Heaven is a pure place. It is an “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled” (1Pe 1:4). *No unclean beasts come into the heavenly ark!* “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth” (Rev 21:27). The Lord will not put the new wine of glory into a musty, impure heart! All these things considered show the necessity of heart purity.

B. It is the will of God that we should be pure in heart.

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1Th 4:3). Are you low in the world? Perhaps it is not the will of God that you should be rich. But it is the will of God that you should be holy. “This is the will of God...your sanctification.” Let God have His will by being *holy*, and you shall have your will by being *happy*. God’s will must either be fulfilled *by* us or *upon* us!

C. Purity of heart is the characteristic note of God’s people.

“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psa 73:1). Heart purity denominates us, the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). It is not profession which makes us the Israel of God. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6). Purity of heart is the jewel that is hung only upon the elect! Chastity distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot. Just so, the true Christian is distinguished from the hypocrite by his heart purity. This is like the nobleman’s star, which is a peculiar ensign of honor differing him from the vulgar. When the bright star of purity shines in a Christian’s heart, it distinguishes him from a formal professor.

D. Purity of heart makes us like God.

It was Adam’s unhappiness once that he aspired to be like God in omniscience; but we must endeavor to be like God in sanctity. God’s image consists in holiness. To those who do not have this image and superscription upon them, He will say, “I never knew you!” (Mat 7:23). God delights in no heart but where He may see His own face and likeness. You cannot see your face in a looking glass when it is dusty. God’s face cannot be seen in a dusty, impure soul. A pure heart (like a clean looking glass) gives forth some idea and representation of God. There is little comfort in being like God in other things besides purity. Are we like God in that we have a being? So have stones. Are we like Him in that we have motion? So have stars. Are we like Him in that we have life? So have trees and birds. Are we like Him in that we have knowledge? So have devils. There is no likeness to God, which will prove comfortable and blissful, but our being like Him in purity. God loves the pure in heart. Love is founded upon likeness.

E. The excellency of the heart lies in the purity of it.

Purity was the glory of the soul in innocence. The purer a thing is the better. The purer the *air* is, and the more free from noxious vapors, the better it is. Pure *water* is most sweet. The purer the *gold* is, the more valuable. The purer the *wine* is, when it is taken off from the lees and dregs, the more excellent it is. The more the soul is purified by grace and taken off from the lees and dregs of sin, the more precious in God’s eyes.

The purer the heart is, the more spiritual it is; and the more spiritual it is, the more fit to entertain Him Who is pure Spirit.

F. God is good to the pure in heart.

“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psa 73:1). We all desire that God should be good to us. It is the sick man’s prayer, “May the Lord be good to me.” God is good to those whose hearts are pure. But how is God good to them? [There are] two ways:

1. To those who are pure, all things are sanctified. “Unto the pure all things are pure” (Ti 1:15). Estate is sanctified, relations are sanctified—just as the temple sanctified the gold and the altar sanctified the offering. To the unclean, nothing is clean. Their *table* is a snare, and their *devotions* are sin. There is a curse entailed upon a wicked man (Deu 28:15-20), but holiness removes the curse and cuts off the punishment. “To the pure all things are pure.”

2. The pure-hearted have all things work for their good (Rom 8:28). Mercies and afflictions shall turn to their good. The most poisonous drug shall be *medicinal*. The most cross providence shall carry on the design of their salvation. Who, then, would not be pure in heart? “God is good to those who are pure in heart.”

G. Heart purity makes way for heaven.

The pure in heart “shall see God.” Happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness. Purity of heart is heaven begun in a man. Holiness is called in Scripture “the anointing” of God (1Jo 2:27). Solomon was first anointed with the holy oil, and then he was made king (1Ki 1:39). Just so, the people of God are first anointed with the oil of the Spirit and made pure in heart, and then the crown of glory is set upon their head. And is not purity to be highly valued? It lays a path for glory. “Purity of heart” and “seeing of God” are linked together.

H. Note the examples of those who have been eminent for heart purity.

The Lord Jesus was a pattern of purity. “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Joh 8:46). In this, we are to imitate Christ. We are not to imitate Him in raising the dead or in working miracles, but in being holy (1Pe 1:16).

Besides this golden pattern of Christ, we are to write after the fair copy of those saints who have been of a dove-like purity. David was so pure in heart that he was a man after God’s heart (Act 13:22). Abraham was so purified by faith that he was one of God’s cabinet-counsel⁵¹ (Gen 18:17). Moses was so holy that God spoke with him face to face. What were the rest of the patriarchs but so many plants of renown, flourishing in holiness? The fathers in the primitive church were exemplary for purity. Gregory Nazianzen,⁵² Basil, Augustine—they were so inlaid and adorned with purity that envy itself could not tax them. We wish we had such saints as were in the primitive times: so just

⁵¹ **cabinet-counsel** – counsel given privately or secretly in the cabinet or private apartment.

⁵² **Gregory Nazianzen** (c. 330–389) – one of the Cappadocian fathers; influential in the development of the orthodox statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.

were they in their dealings, so decent in their attire, so true in their promises, so devout in their religion, so unblamable in their lives that they were *living sermons, walking Bibles, genuine pictures of Christ*, and helped to keep up the credit of godliness in the world.

I. Heart purity is the only jewel you can carry out of the world.

Have you a child you delight in or an estate? “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1Ti 6:7). Purity of heart is the only commodity that can be with comfort transported. This is that which will stay longest with you. Usually we love those things that last longest. We prize a diamond or piece of gold above the most beautiful flower because the flower is fading. Heart purity has perpetuity! It will go with us beyond the grave!

VI. But How Shall We Attain to Heart Purity?

A. Often look into the Word of God.

“Now ye are clean through the word” (Joh 15:3). “Thy word is very pure” (Psa 119:140). God’s Word is pure, not only for the *matter* of it, but the *effect* of it because it makes us pure. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17). By looking into this pure crystal, we are changed into the image of it. The Word is both a *looking glass* to show us the spots of our souls, and a *laver* to wash them away! The Word breathes nothing but purity; it enlightens the mind; it consecrates the heart.

B. Go to the “bath.”

There are two baths Christians should wash in.

1. The bath of tears. Go into this bath. Peter had sullied and defiled himself with sin, and he washed himself with penitential tears. Mary Magdalene, who was an impure sinner, “stood at his [Jesus’] feet...weeping” (Luk 7:38). *Mary’s tears washed her heart as well as Christ’s feet!* Oh sinners, let your eyes be a fountain of tears! Weep for those sins that are so many as have passed all arithmetic. This water of contrition is healing and purifying.

2. The bath of Christ’s blood. This is that “fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1). *A soul steeped in the brinish⁵³ tears of repentance and bathed in the blood of Christ is made pure.* This is that “spiritual washing.” All the legal washings and purifications were but types and emblems representing Christ’s blood. This blood whitens the black soul.

C. Get faith.

It is a soul-cleansing grace, “purifying their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9). The woman in the Gospel who but touched the hem of Christ’s garment was healed. A touch of faith heals. If I believe Christ and all His merits are mine, how can I sin against Him? We do not willingly injure those friends who we believe love us. Nothing can have a greater

⁵³ **brinish** – salty.

force and efficacy upon the heart to make it pure, than faith. Faith will remove mountains—the mountains of pride, lust, envy. Faith and the love of sin are incompatible.

D. Breathe after the Spirit.

He is called the *Holy Spirit* (Eph 1:13). He purifies the heart as lightning purifies the air. That we may see what a purifying virtue the Spirit has, He is compared to various things:

1. The Spirit is compared to *fire* (Act 2:3). Fire is of a purifying nature. It refines and cleans metals. It separates the dross from the gold. The Spirit of God in the heart refines and sanctifies it. He burns up the dross of sin.

2. The Spirit is compared to *wind*. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,” and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Act 2:2). The wind purifies the air. When the air, by reason of foggy vapors, is unwholesome, the wind is a fan to winnow and purify it. Thus, when the vapors of sin arise in the heart—vapors of pride and covetousness, earthly vapors—the Spirit of God arises and blows upon the soul and purges away these impure vapors. The spouse in the Song of Solomon prays for a gale of the Spirit that she might be made pure (4:16).

3. The Spirit is compared to *water*. “He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit” (Joh 7:38-39). The Spirit is like water, not only to make the soul *fruitful*, for it causes the desert to blossom as the rose (Isa 32:15; 35:1); but the Spirit is like water to *purify*. Whereas, before, the heart of a sinner was unclean and whatever he touched had a tincture of impurity (Num 19:22), when once the Spirit comes into the heart with His continual showers, He washes off the filthiness of it, making it pure and fit for God to dwell in.

E. Take heed of close converse and fellowship with the wicked.

One vain mind makes another vain. One hard heart makes another. The stone in the *body* is not infectious—but the stone in the *heart* is. One profane person poisons another. Beware of the society of the wicked.

Some may object: But what hurt is in this? Did not Jesus converse with sinners (Luk 5:29)?

1. There was a necessity for that. If Jesus had not come among sinners, how could any have been saved? He went among sinners, but not to join with them in their sins. He was not a *companion* of sinners, but a *physician* of sinners.

2. Though Christ did converse with sinners, He could not be polluted with their sin. His divine nature was a sufficient antidote to preserve Him from infection. Christ could be no more defiled with their sin than the sun is defiled by shining on a dunghill. Sin could no more stick on Christ than a burr on a crystal. The soil of His heart was so pure that no viper of sin could breed there. But the case is altered with us. We have a storehouse of corruption within, and the least thing will increase this storehouse. Therefore, it is dangerous mingling ourselves among the wicked. If we would be pure in heart, let us shun their society. He who would preserve his garment clean avoids the dirt. The

wicked are as the mire (Isa 57:20). The *fresh* waters running among the *salt* waters taste brackish.⁵⁴

F. If you would be pure, walk with those who are pure.

As the communion of the saints is in our *Creed*, so it should be in our *company*. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Pro 13:20), and he who walks with the pure shall be pure. The saints are like a bed of spices. By intermixing ourselves with them, we shall partake of their savouriness. *Association* begets *assimilation*. Sometimes God blesses godly society to the conversion of others.

G. Wait at the posts of wisdom’s doors.

Reverence the Word preached. The Word of God sucked in by faith (Heb 4:2) transforms the heart into the likeness of it (Rom 6:17). The Word is a holy seed (Jam 1:18), which being cast into the heart makes it partake of the divine nature (2Pe 1:4).

H. Pray for heart purity.

Job propounds the question, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (Job 14:4; 15:14). God can do it. Out of an impure heart, He can produce grace. Pray that prayer of David: “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psa 51:10). Most men pray more for full purses than pure hearts. We should pray for heart purity fervently. It is a matter we are most nearly concerned in. “Follow...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Our prayer must be with sighs and groans (Rom 8:23-26). There must not only be *elocution*⁵⁵ but *affection*.⁵⁶ Jacob *wrestled* in prayer (Gen 32:24). Hannah poured out her soul (1Sa 1:15). We often pray so coldly (our petitions even freezing between our lips), as if we would teach God to deny our prayers. We pray as if we did not care whether God heard us or not!

Oh Christian, be earnest with God for a pure heart! Lay your heart before the Lord and say, “Lord, You Who have given me a heart, give me a pure heart. My heart is good for nothing as it is. It defiles everything it touches. Lord, I am not fit to live with this heart, for I cannot honor You; nor fit to die with it, for I cannot see You. Oh, purge me with hyssop.⁵⁷ Let Christ’s blood be sprinkled upon me. Let the Holy Spirit descend upon me. ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God.’ You Who bid me to give You my heart, Lord, make my heart pure, and You shall have it!”

⁵⁴ **brackish** – slightly salty, especially from containing a mixture of seawater and fresh water; distasteful.

⁵⁵ **elocution** – the art of speaking clearly and well with correct enunciation.

⁵⁶ **affection** – passion.

⁵⁷ **hyssop** – aromatic shrub used by the Jews in the OT for Passover rites, for the purification of lepers, for plague, and at the red heifer sacrifice. This plant is generally considered to be the Syrian marjoram which is a fragrant, grey-leaved, wiry-stemmed, perennial herb, 20–30 cm high, with white or yellow flowers in small heads, growing in dry rocky places.

Part Two: Seeing God

“For they shall see God.”—*Matthew 5:8b*

Now we shall explain the blessed privilege of seeing God. “They shall see God!” (Mat 5:8b). These words are linked to the former, and they are a great incentive to heart purity. The pure heart shall see the pure God.

I. When We Shall All See God

There is a *double sight* that the saints have of God.

A. In this life

We shall see God in this life, that is, spiritually by the *eye of faith*. Faith sees God’s glorious attributes in the looking glass of His Word. Faith beholds Him showing forth Himself through the lattice of His ordinances. Thus, Moses saw Him Who was invisible (Heb 11:27). Believers see God’s glory as it were *veiled over*. They behold His “back parts” (Exo 33:23).

B. In the life to come

We shall see God in the life to come; and this glorious sight is meant in the text, “They shall see God.” A glorious prospect! This, divines call “the beatific vision.” At that day, the veil will be pulled off, and God will show Himself in all His glory to the soul, just as a king on a day of coronation shows himself in all his royalty and magnificence. This sight of God will be *the heaven of heaven*. We shall indeed have a sight of angels, and that will be sweet; but the quintessence of happiness and the diamond in the ring will be this: “We shall see God!” It would be night in heaven if the Sun of Righteousness did not shine there. It is the king’s presence that makes the court. Absalom counted himself half-alive unless he might see the king’s face (2Sa 14:32).

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8). This sight of God in glory is, first, partly mental and intellectual. We shall see Him with the eyes of our mind.

But second, it is partly *physical*—not that we can with bodily eyes behold the bright essence of God. Indeed, some erroneously held that God had a visible shape and figure. As man was made in God’s image, so they thought that God was made in man’s image; but God is a Spirit (Joh 4:24), and being a Spirit, He is invisible (1Ti 1:17). He cannot be beheld by bodily eyes. “Whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1Ti 6:16). A sight of His glory would overwhelm us. This wine is too strong for our weak heads.

But when I say our seeing of God in heaven is physical, my meaning is that we shall with bodily eyes behold Jesus Christ, through Whom the glory of God, His wisdom, holiness, and mercy shall shine forth to the soul. Put a back of steel to the glass, and you may see a face in it. So the human nature of Christ is, as it were, a back of steel through

which we may see the glory of God (2Co 4:6). In this sense that Scripture is to be understood: “Yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:26).

II. What Seeing God Shall Be Like

Now concerning this blessed sight of God, it is so sublime and sweet that I can only draw a dark shadow of it. We shall better understand it when we come to heaven. At present, I shall lay down these *nine maxims concerning this beatific vision*.

A. Our sight of God in heaven shall be a *clear sight*.

Here, we see Him “through a glass, darkly” (1Co 13:12). But through Christ, we shall behold God in a very illustrious manner. God will unveil Himself and show forth His glory, so far as the soul is capable to receive. If Adam had not sinned, it is probable that he would never have had such a clear sight of God as the saints in glory shall have. “We shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). Now, we see Him as He is not. There, we shall see Him as He is in a very clear manner. “Then shall I know even as also I am known” (1Co 13:12), that is, clearly. Does not God know us clearly and fully? Then shall the saints know Him (according to their capacity) as they are known. As their *love* to God, so their *sight* of God shall be perfect.

B. This sight of God will be a *transcendent sight*.

It will surpass in glory. Such glittering beams shall sparkle forth from the Lord Jesus as shall infinitely amaze and delight the eyes of the beholders! Imagine what a blessed sight it will be to see Christ wearing the robe of our human nature, and to see that nature sitting in glory above the angels. If God is so beautiful here in His ordinances, Word, prayer, sacraments; if there is such excellency in Him when we see Him by the eye of faith through the telescope of a promise; O what will it be when we shall see Him “face to face”!

When Christ was transfigured on the mount, He was full of glory (Mat 17:2). If His transfiguration was so glorious, what will His exaltation be? What a glorious time will it be when (as it was said of Mordecai) we shall see Him in the presence of His Father, “in royal apparel...and with a great crown of gold” (Est 8:15). This will be glory beyond hyperbole!⁵⁸ If the sun were ten thousand times brighter than it is, it could not so much as shadow out this glory. In the heavenly horizon, we behold beauty in its first magnitude and highest elevation. There we shall “see the king in his beauty” (Isa 33:17). All lights are but eclipses compared with that glorious vision. Apelles⁵⁹ pencil could but blot it; angels’ tongues could but dishonor it.

⁵⁸ **hyperbole** – figure of speech consisting in exaggerated or extravagant statement, used to express strong feeling or produce a strong impression, and not intended to be understood literally.

⁵⁹ **Apelles** (flourished 352-308 BC) – early Hellenistic Greek painter; his work was held in such high esteem by ancient writers on art that he is regarded, even though none of his work survives, as the greatest painter of antiquity.

C. This sight of God will be a *transforming* sight.

“We shall be like him” (1Jo 3:2). The saints shall be changed into glory. As when the light springs into a dark room, the room may be said to be changed from what it was; the saints shall so see God as to be changed into His image! (Psa 17:15). Here on earth, God’s people are blackened and sullied with infirmities; but in heaven, they shall be as the dove covered with silver wings. They shall have some rays and beams of God’s glory shining in them. The crystal, by having the sun shine on it, sparkles and looks like the sun. Just so, the saints, by beholding the brightness of God’s glory, shall have a tincture of that glory upon them. Not that they shall partake of God’s very essence, for as the iron in the fire becomes fire, yet remains iron still; so the saints, by beholding the luster of God’s majesty, shall be glorious creatures, but yet creatures still.

D. This sight of God will be a *joyful* sight.

“Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance” (Act 2:28). After a sharp winter, how pleasant will it be to see the Sun of Righteousness displaying Himself in all His glory! Does faith breed joy? “Though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). If the joy of faith is such, what will the joy of vision be! The sight of Christ will amaze the eye with wonder and ravish the heart with joy. If the face of a friend whom we entirely love so affects us and drives away sorrow, O how cheering will the sight of God be to the saints in heaven! Then, indeed, it may be said, “Your heart shall rejoice!” (Joh 16:22). There are two things that will make the saints’ vision of God in heaven joyful.

1. Through Jesus Christ, the dread and terror of the divine essence shall be taken away. Majesty shall appear in God to preserve reverence, but it will be a majesty clothed with beauty and tempered with sweetness to excite joy in the saints. We shall see God as a friend, not as guilty Adam did who was afraid and hid himself (Gen 3:10), but as Queen Esther looked upon King Ahasuerus holding forth the golden scepter (Est 5:2). Surely, this sight of God will not be dreadful, but delightful!

2. The saints shall not only have vision, but *fruition*. They shall so see God as to enjoy Him. True blessedness lies partly in the *understanding* by seeing the glory of God richly displayed; and partly in the *will* by a sweet, delicious taste of it and acquiescence⁶⁰ of the soul in it. We shall so see God as to love Him, and so love Him as to be filled with Him. The seeing of God implies fruition. “Enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21); not only behold it, but *enter* into it. “In thy light we shall see light” (Psa 36:9); *there* is vision. “At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:11); *there* is fruition. So great is the joy that flows from the sight of God as will make the saints break forth into triumphant praises and hallelujahs.

E. This sight of God will be a *satisfying* sight.

Cast three worlds into the heart, and they will not fill it; but the sight of God satisfies! “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). Solomon says,

⁶⁰ **acquiescence** – resting satisfied.

“The eye is not satisfied with seeing” (Ecc 1:8). But there the eye *will be* satisfied with seeing. God, and nothing but God, can satisfy. The saints shall have their heads so full of knowledge and their hearts so full of joy that they shall have no lack.

F. This sight of God will be an unwearying sight.

Let a man see the rarest sight that is; he will soon be cloyed.⁶¹ When he comes into a garden and sees delightful walks, lovely arbors, pleasant flowers, within a little while he grows weary; but it is not so in heaven. There is no cloying there. We shall never be weary of seeing God; for the divine essence being infinite, there shall be every moment new and fresh delights springing forth from God into the glorified soul! The soul shall be full and satisfied, yet still desire more of God. So sweet will God be that the more the saints behold God, the more they will be ravished with desire and delight!

G. This sight of God will be a beneficial sight.

It will tend to the bettering and advantaging of the soul. Some colors, while they delight the eyes, hurt them. But this knowledge and vision of God shall better the soul and tend to its infinite happiness. Eve’s looking upon the tree of knowledge was harmful to her. But the saints can receive no detriment⁶² from the eternal beholding of God’s glory. This sight will be beneficial. The soul will never be in its perfection until it comes to see God. This will be the crowning blessing.

H. This sight of God shall be a perpetual sight.

Here, we see objects awhile, and then our eyes grow dim and we need eyeglasses. But the saints shall *always* behold God. As there shall be no cloud upon God’s face, so the saints shall have no mote in their eye. Their sight shall never grow dim; but they shall be to all eternity looking on God, that beautiful and delightful object! O what a soul-ravishing sight will this be! God must make us able to bear it. We can no more endure a sight of *glory* than a sight of *wrath*. But the saints in heaven shall have their capacities enlarged, and they shall be made fit to receive the delightful beams of divine glory!

I. This sight of God will be an immediate sight.

There are some who deny that the soul is immediately after death admitted to the sight of God; but I assert that the saints shall have an immediate transition and passage from death to glory. As soon as death has closed their eyes, they shall see God. If the soul is not immediately after death translated to the beatific vision, then what becomes of the soul in that period of time until the resurrection?

Does the soul go into torment? That cannot be, for the soul of a believer is a member of Christ’s mystical body; and if this soul should go to hell, a member of Christ might be for a time damned. But that is impossible.

Does the soul sleep in the body as some drowsily imagine? How then shall we make good sense of that Scripture, “We are...willing rather to be absent from the body, and to

⁶¹ **cloyed** – weary with excess of anything.

⁶² **detriment** – damage; loss.

be present with the Lord”? (2Co 5:8) If the soul at death is absent from the body, then it cannot sleep in the body.

Does the soul die? It appears that the soul of a believer after death goes immediately to God. “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luk 23:43). That word “with me” shows clearly that the thief on the cross was translated to heaven, for Christ was there (Eph 4:10). And the words “to day” show that the thief on the cross had an immediate passage from the cross to paradise. Therefore, the souls of believers have an immediate vision of God after death. It is but winking, and they shall see God!

III. Applications

A. See the misery of an impure sinner.

He shall never be admitted to the blessed sight of God. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Such as live in sin whose souls are dyed black with the filth of hell, they shall never come where God is. They shall have an affrighting vision of God, but not a beatific vision. They shall see the flaming sword and the burning lake, but not the mercy seat! God in Scripture is sometimes called a “consuming fire,” sometimes the “Father of lights” (Heb 12:29; Jam 1:17). The wicked shall feel the fire, but not see the light. Impure souls shall be covered with shame and darkness as with a mantle and shall never see the king’s face. Those who would not see God in His Word and ordinances shall not see Him in His glory.

Is there such a blessed privilege after this life? Then let me persuade all who hear me this day:

1. To get into Christ. We can come to God only by Christ. Moses, when he was in the *rock*, saw God (Exo 33:22). Only in this blessed rock, *Christ*, shall we see God.

2. To be purified people. It is only the pure in heart who shall see God. It is only a clear eye which can behold a bright, transparent object. Only those who have their hearts cleansed from sin can have this blessed sight of God. Sin is such a cloud as, if it is not removed, will forever hinder us from seeing the Sun of Righteousness. Christian, have you upon your heart “*holiness to the Lord*”? Then you shall see God. “There are many,” says Augustine, “who want to go to heaven; but they will not take the holy way, which alone leads there!”

There are several sorts of eyes that shall never see God: the *ignorant* eye, the *unchaste* eye, the *scornful* eye, the *malicious* eye, the *covetous* eye. If you would see God when you die, you must be purified people while you live! “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:2-3).

B. Let me turn myself to the pure in heart.

1. Stand amazed at this privilege: that you, who are worms crept out of the dust, should be admitted to the blessed sight of God for all eternity! It was Moses’ prayer, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (Exo 33:18). The saints *shall* behold God’s glory! The

pure in heart shall have the same blessedness that God Himself has. For what is the blessedness of God, but the contemplating His own infinite glory and beauty!

2. Begin your sight of God here on earth. Let the eye of your faith be ever upon God. Moses, by faith, saw “him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). Often look upon Him with *believing* eyes, Whom you hope to see with *glorified* eyes. “Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD” (Psa 25:15). While others are looking towards the *earth* as if they would fetch all their comforts thence, let us look up to *heaven!* There is the best sight. The sight of God, by faith, would let in much joy to the soul. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8)!

3. Let this be a cordial⁶³ to revive the pure in heart. Be comforted with this: *you shall shortly see God!* The godly have many sights here on earth which they do not desire to see. They see a body of death; they see evil and sin; they see unholy people wearing the mask of religion; they see the white devil. These sights occasion sorrow. But there is a blessed sight a-coming! “They shall see *God!*” And in Him are all sparkling beauties and ravishing joys to be found!

4. Do not be discouraged at sufferings. All the hurt that affliction and death can do is to give you a sight of God. As one said to his fellow-martyr, “One half-hour in glory will make us forget all our pain!” When the sun rises, all the dark shadows of the night flee away. When the pleasant beams of God’s countenance begin to shine upon the soul in heaven, then sorrows and sufferings shall be no more! The dark shadows of the night shall fly away. The thoughts of this coming beatific vision should carry a Christian full sail with joy through the waters of affliction! This made Job so willing to embrace death:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

—Job 19:25-27



Thomas Watson was born around 1620, and died in 1686. Educated at Cambridge, he served as lecturer and then rector at St. Stephens in the Church of England. He was imprisoned in 1651 and ejected from the Church of England in 1662 for non-conformity to the Church’s erroneous practices. He continued to serve God’s people in several congregations thereafter. Watson became a well-respected Puritan preacher in his day and a prolific author. His works include *A Body of Divinity*, *The Lord’s Prayer*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, and numerous others.

⁶³ **cordial** – medicine, food, or beverage which invigorates the heart.