

Again we must ask the question, was there a context of meaning for the hearers. The answer is yes.

There was much knowledge of the idea of purity already written in the Old Covenant and the Hebrew Scriptures. The temple sacrifices were still being conducted, so whether one was merely performing external obedience to the Law during Holy Celebrations and festivals or was genuinely striving to be pure in heart before God, the idea of purity of heart was not at all new to these hearers.

For example [1Sa 16:7](#) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD **looks at the heart.**"

Saul never truly had a heart for God. God used Saul to teach the people of Israel that His ways are better than man's ways. Israel wanted a king like other nations had and God gave them one. This in no way interfered with God's Sovereignty or His purpose being fulfilled. It was His purpose to teach them that even their king needed to be a man of God.

Now, this does not mean that every king in every land is supposed to be a godly king. Israel's kings were the direct under servants of God. Israel was a theocracy, a land ruled by God through the means of men picturing the coming day of the consummated kingdom when the God/man who is king, that is Jesus the Christ will forever reign in resurrected glory.

The idea of being pure in heart is essential for those who are the blessed of God, those who are the favored of God and are therefore spiritually prosperous.

Prov. 4:23 is one of the most important verses in all of Scripture. [23](#) Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life. It is also translated [23](#) Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

There is not an issue of life that is not in some way directly influenced by the condition of our hearts. The heart can also mean the mind or the will in some contexts. They are very interchangeable definitions.

This verse is the foundation of all true biblical counseling and discipleship.

If you were to come to me or my wife, who is an effective biblical counselor, our first concern would not be whether someone verbally abused you for years or whether or not your spouse or perhaps your children were involved in some destructive behavior and so on.

I am not saying that these things would not be important to understand as counsel continues, but what I am saying is that my first interaction with you is going to be to determine your spiritual condition, your heart attitude toward God and then toward the problem people or circumstances. Why?

Because the way to biblically solve your problem will be by changing any attitudes of the heart that are not pure on your behalf before we can consider anyone else or any other circumstances.

It always starts with me or you.

Even if I have been legitimately victimized, and I say legitimately, because our society tends toward victimization rather than bearing complete personal responsibility for our sin where even self confessed murderers often are presented as victims and so their criminal behavior must be seen as a result of their environment and circumstances and so on but you will never see this in the Scripture.

So Jesus says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

This is another direct result of hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness.

What other way is there for the heart to be blessed by God.

The heart, the mind, the will of man without God is bound forever in sin and sin alone. The depravity of the human heart can only bring condemnation without being changed by the grace of God.

Some people don't like this doctrine of the total depravity of man. They believe that men have some capability for doing good and pleasing God but refuse it, reject it or turn away from it.

What does Jesus say?

7* "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:8* 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.9* 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"10* After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand.11* "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."12* Then the disciples *came and *said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"13* But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.14* "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."15* Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us."16* Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also?17* "Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?18* "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.19* "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.20 "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

Jesus is concerned with our heart. It is not enough to clean up our act on the outside. The aim of Jesus Christ is not to reform the manners of society, but to change the hearts of sinners like you and me. So, for example, Jesus would not be satisfied with a society in which there were no physical acts of adultery.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
Matthew 5:27-28.

The heart is what you are, in the secrecy of your thought and feeling, when nobody knows but God. And what you are at the invisible root matters as much to God as what you are at the visible branch.

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

From the heart are all the issues of life.

"We are so bombarded by human tragedies of poverty and crime and abuse and neglect and war and the manifold injustices of man to man, that we are tempted to agree with the world that it is useless pie in the sky by and by to be concerned with whether the soul will ever see God. But this is the greatest of all tragedies—that in seeking to relieve the temporal miseries of man we set aside the centrality of God." J.Piper

Jesus is not concerned with cleaning up the plate of the world merely to have it clean.

I have to agree with many who believe that the fundamental problem in American society and culture is that we attempt to solve human problems while neglecting the centrality of God in the life of the soul. Even with God in our lives many problems go unsolved, but without God all problems in the end are unsolved. For there is no help and no hope without God.

I was very distressed over the coal mining incident this week in many ways. For the loss of family and corporate corruption but most of all over the lack of the centrality of God in the circumstances.

But you may ask me why Pastor Joe. The church was the center for the community during the entire incident, and that I grant you is true.

This is what bothered me.

Reports were given that in the church people went from praising God to cursing when the

truth was known about their loved ones.

I heard one woman say , “we had our miracle and then we were robbed of our miracle. We don’t even know if there is a Lord anymore.”

I want you to think of the ramifications of that statement theologically

First of all there were no miracles.

A miracle would have been that when the explosion occurred and the natural cause and effect as God has created things to be was that the methane, carbon monoxide or carbon dioxide that results would have, let’s say been sucked out of the tunnel or that there was none produced at all against all natural expectations. That would have been a miracle.

It would have been a miracle if the carbon monoxide had not attached itself to the hemoglobin of the men who died and therefore had not affected them at all because this is how it naturally has its cause and effect.

Every time Jesus brought forth a miracle it changed something in the natural order of God’s creation or did something that was organically changed at root level. A healthy living tree is told to die. A man without sight from birth is given eyes to see. A woman with a lifelong genetic bleeding disorder is healed. A man who is dead is raised from the dead.

Jos 10:13 So **the sun** stood still, and the moon stopped, Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And **the sun** stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.

This is a miracle.

We cannot confuse the mercy of God in general with miracles although a miracle may be the demonstration of the mercy of God.

The point of all of this is where is the centrality of God in our lives?

How can someone who truly knows Christ say that God robbed them of a miracle because of a miscommunication between men.

This is a horrible view of God.

If God is only praised when we get what we want then what God do we worship?

We are so bombarded by human tragedies of poverty and crime and abuse and neglect and war and the manifold injustices of man to man, that we are tempted to agree with the world that it is useless pie in the sky by and by to be concerned with whether the soul will ever see God. But this is the greatest of all tragedies—that in seeking to relieve the temporal miseries of man we set aside the centrality of God.

So I ask, What God do we see?

Jesus said, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

What is it to be pure in heart?

Psalm 24:3-4. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully.

You can see what David means by a "pure heart" in the phrases that follow it. A pure heart is a heart that has nothing to do with falsehood. It is painstakingly truthful and free from deceitfulness. Deceit is what you do when you will two things, not one thing. You will to do one thing and you will that people think you are doing another. You will to feel one thing and you will that people think you are feeling another. That is impurity of heart. Purity of heart is to will one thing, namely, to "seek the face of the Lord" (verse 6).

You can see this idea of purity in James 4:8.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind.

Notice that just like Psalm 24 there is reference to both clean hands and a pure heart as preparation for drawing near to God, or "ascending the hill of the Lord." But notice how the men are described who need to purify their hearts: "men of double mind." That is they are men that will two things not just one thing.

The impurity of double-mindedness is explained in James 4:4.

Unfaithful creatures [lit. adulteresses], Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

So the double-minded man of verse 8 has his heart divided between the world and God, like a wife who has a husband and a boyfriend. Purity of heart on the other hand is to will one thing, namely, full and total allegiance to God.

So if we ask, Where in the gospels did Jesus explain purity of heart in this way, the answer would be Matthew 22:37,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Not with part of your heart. Not with a double or divided heart. That would be impurity. Purity of heart is no deception, no double-mindedness, no divided allegiance.

(Note: you can see the echo of this meaning of purity of heart in 1 Timothy 1:5, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere [i.e. unhypocritical faith].")

Purity of heart is to will one thing, namely, God's truth and God's value in everything we do. The aim of the pure heart is to align itself with the truth of God and magnify the worth of God. If you want to be pure in heart pursue God with utter singlemindedness. Purity of heart is to will that one thing.

That leaves one last question: how are purity of heart and seeing God bound together?

Jesus only gives us part of the answer here. It is a true part, but only part. He says that the pure will see God. That is, purity is a prerequisite for seeing God. The impure are neither granted admittance to his presence, nor are they awed by the glory of his holiness, nor are they comforted by his grace.

Jesus' point is the same as Hebrews 12:14, "Strive for ... the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." In other words, blessed are the holy for they shall see God. There is a real purity and a real holiness which fits us to see the king of glory.

And of course that leads every sensitive soul to cry out with the words of Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?'" And with the disciples: "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus' answer comes back just like it did to the disciples in Matthew 19:26—and this is the rest of the answer—"With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." In other words, God creates a purity for us and in us so that we can pursue purity. And by his grace we must seek that gift by praying with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10). And we must look to Christ "who gave himself for us ... to purify for himself a people" (Titus 3:14).

And the response of our hearts to God's act of creation and Christ's act of sacrifice is single-minded faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As the Scripture says in Acts 15:9, "God made no distinction between us and them, but purified their hearts by faith." God is the one who purifies the heart, and the instrument with which he cleans it is faith.

Therefore,
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Pastor Joseph Krygier First Baptist Evans