

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 12 March 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Beatitude Attitudes (Part 4)

Matthew 5:8-9

In November of 2007, as Katie and I were in the early stages of planting a church in Athlone, Pastor McKinley and I paid a visit to a man named Michael, who lived about halfway between Athlone and Mullingar. Michael was battling with drug and alcohol addiction, and was looking for help; and so, I offered to collect him on Wednesdays, and to take him to the midweek service at Good News Baptist Church. (We had not yet begun to hold Wednesday evening services at Redemption Baptist Church; and so, for the time being, Katie and I were attending Good News Baptist Church on Wednesdays.)

Now, Bro. McKinley and I knew that church attendance (crucial though it is) was not Michael's greatest need. His greatest need was *to be saved from his sin*. For more than an hour, we shared the Gospel with Michael. Michael wasn't willing to surrender his heart to Christ that evening; but he did realise that there was something very different about us. Michael could see a purity in us that he hadn't seen in others; and he said something that I've never forgotten. He said, "You know, you lads are different. Ye have a warm glow about ye." What "glow" was Michael talking about? He was talking about the glow of *Christ in us*. What he saw in us was the "new heart"—that "new man" that Christ places within every believer. As for myself, I had been praying, all the way to Michael's house, that the Lord would cleanse me from any sin that might be within me, so that the new heart, and the new man, would shine through as I spoke to Michael. I wanted to be "pure in heart," so that God could use me; and God answered that prayer.

In the past month, we have been studying the Beatitudes (those "blessed" statements at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount). As Jesus preached this sermon, He was speaking to His disciples—those who will inherit the Kingdom. These believers did not yet have the Holy Spirit living "*in*" them; but the Holy Spirit was "*with*" them, and by them, to enable them to live the righteous life that Jesus was talking about. If believers *before* Pentecost could live righteously through the Spirit's power, how much more so are *we* able to live righteously, when we have the Holy Spirit *within* us, all the time? The Bible tells us that when the Spirit came into King Saul, to empower him to rule the nation of Israel, he was "**turned into another man,**" and "**God gave him another heart.**" Those who knew Saul were so amazed at the change in him, that they said, "**What is this that is come unto the son of Kish?**" This is what the Holy Spirit does *permanently* for believers today. He puts "**another heart**" within them, so that they might be able to live pure lives; and people around them take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus.

Up to this point, we have learned about the first five Beatitudes: "**Blessed are the poor in spirit**" (those who are broken about their sin); "**Blessed are they that mourn**" (those who mourn over their sin); "**Blessed are the meek**" (those who are humble before God); "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness**"; and "**Blessed are the merciful.**" All these spiritual qualities flow from the first one—"**Blessed are the poor in spirit.**" There must be that humble brokenness over sin before a person can have any of the other spiritual qualities that we have examined. So it is with the sixth and seventh Beatitudes. Those who are "**poor in spirit**" will also be "**pure in heart**"; and they will be "**peacemakers.**" It is these two spiritual qualities that we will be learning about this morning. The title of this message is *The Beatitude Attitudes (Part 4)*.

Read Matthew 5:1-9.

I. Beatitude Attitude #6: Purity of heart

As I said a moment ago, the first Beatitude, ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit,”*** is the foundation of the Sermon on the Mount. Only those who are broken about their sin, and who therefore humble themselves before God, and receive His gift of salvation, will see the Kingdom of Heaven. Every other spiritual quality that Jesus talks about in this sermon flows from this first one. However, if I were to pick a statement from the Sermon on the Mount that *summarises* the whole sermon, it would be ***“Blessed are the pure in heart.”*** Every spiritual quality that God wants us to have is summed up in these words. A ***“pure heart”*** is what God wants to see in every one of His children; and He has given us the ability to have it.

Now, what *reward* will be given to those who are ***“pure in heart”***? Jesus says that ***“they shall see God.”*** What does this mean, though? Obviously, God is invisible to human eyes. How, then, can *anyone* see God? By seeing the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ is the Member of the Triune Godhead who revealed God to men, by taking on human flesh. That is why John the Baptist said, ***“The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (revealed) him.”*** That is why Jesus told Philip, ***“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”*** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, yet *one*, in being and essence; thus, when Jesus took on human flesh, those who saw Him were also seeing the Father *revealed through Him*. They were seeing *God*. When Thomas saw Jesus after His resurrection, he said, ***“My Lord and my God.”*** Jesus *is* God in human flesh! Thus, when Jesus says, ***“The pure in heart shall see God,”*** He is saying, “The pure in heart will see *me*.”

Yet, this raises a question. If Jesus be God, and if *sinful* people looked upon Jesus when He was on earth, then why does Jesus say that only the ***“pure in heart”*** shall see God? Because He is talking about the *future* day, after His return to earth, when Jewish and Gentile saints will enter into the glorious 1,000-year Kingdom. *They* will see Christ in the Kingdom. On the other hand, those who rejected Christ will *not* be allowed to see Christ in the Kingdom.

Remember, this whole sermon is about the Kingdom that Christ will establish on earth; and *only* the redeemed and pure in heart will enter into that Kingdom. The unredeemed, who are still wicked and filthy in heart, will *not* enter that Kingdom. That is why Isaiah warned the people of Israel, ***“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”*** Simply put, Isaiah was saying, “Who among us will end up in hell? Those who loved their sin, and who only *pretended* to be righteous.” However, Isaiah went on to say that those who walk righteously, and who speak uprightly, and who shut their eyes from beholding evil, ***“shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes,”*** he says, ***“shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”*** In other words, “The righteous will dwell in the promised land in the future Kingdom age; and *they* will see the King.”

It is only right that those who have been made ***“pure in heart”*** should ***“see God.”*** The ***“pure in heart”*** will *delight* to look upon God in the future Kingdom age, because they *love* God, and they love His holiness. On the other hand, unredeemed sinners would have *no* delight in looking upon the holy God—no more than God would have any delight in looking upon *them*, in their sin. They will be separated from Him in the Lake of Fire, forever! My friend, if you have never received God’s gift of salvation, I urge you to repent and place your trust in Jesus. If you pass out of this life without Christ, you will *not* see ***“the king in his beauty.”***

Now, we who are saved know that in *position*, we are “pure in heart.” We’ve been “declared righteous” before God not because we actually *are* righteous, but because Christ’s perfect righteousness has been imputed to our account. Yet, the Lord wants us to be *actually* pure in heart. That’s the whole reason Jesus preached this sermon—to show us His standard of purity! However, if we are to live a pure life, then we must never forget the danger that is afoot. We must never forget that our *natural* heart (our old, sinful nature) is wicked; and it will *never* be reformed, or made better to any degree. It can only produce wickedness.

Read Jeremiah 17:9.

Jeremiah says that **“the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”** This is true not just for lost people, but for *the saved*, as well. Our *old* heart can produce nothing good or pure. Even the “good” things that we *think* we’ve done are like filthy rags to God. Even for the believer, sin distorts and warps our thinking, so that we *actually think* that we are being righteous, when, in fact, we are being worldly, carnal, and wicked.

To illustrate the real condition of our sinful hearts, consider this true story. Back in 1964, in Göteborg, Sweden, a journalist named **Åke Axelsson**, who worked for the *Göteborgs-Tidningen* newspaper, pulled a hoax which made international headlines. What was his hoax? Well, Axelsson was very sceptical of modern art; and so, he decided to put the art experts to the test, to see if they could tell the difference between a work of “modern art,” and the “artwork” of a monkey! He went to the Borås Djurpark zoo, and met with a 17-year-old zookeeper; and he persuaded the zookeeper to help him with a little experiment. The zookeeper had, in his care, a four-year-old chimpanzee named Peter; and so, Axelsson provided this chimp a canvas, some paints, and a brush, to see what kind of artwork he could produce! Now, at first, Peter wasn’t getting the idea. He wasn’t interested in painting: he just wanted to *eat* the paints! (He especially liked the flavour of the Cobalt blue.) However, with some encouragement from the zookeeper, Peter finally got the notion of putting the brush into the paint, and splotching it onto the canvas. Axelsson then took Peter’s four best paintings to the Gallerie Christinae art museum, and presented them to the curators. He said that they were the work of an unknown French artist named “Pierre Brassau.” And guess what? The paintings were a smashing success! The art critics praised them to the skies. In fact, they won international acclaim (that is, until it was revealed that they were the work of a chimpanzee)!

What is the point of this story? The point is this. Modern art is so distorted and removed from reality, that even art critics can’t tell the difference between the artwork of a man, and the artwork of a monkey. Likewise, *our hearts* are so warped and perverted by the deceitfulness of sin, that we, on our own, cannot even discern the difference between good and evil—between God’s truth, and our own sinful fancies. Just as modern art severely twists and distorts reality, so our sin twists and distorts God’s truth, until it is just as perverse as our own wicked imaginations. That is why we, in ourselves, cannot produce anything truly clean or holy. We will go astray every time. Even our best efforts at righteousness are defiled by impure motives. Out of our hearts proceed **“evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride,”** and **“foolishness.”** How, then, can our hearts be pure, when they are incurably wicked? There is only one way: we must be given a *new* heart, which is generated by the Spirit of God! Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit convicts believers of sin, and gives them the desire, and *power*, to do what is right. However, we must *yield* to Him, if we are to avail of this divine power. We must submit to Him continually, every hour of every day.

My friends, God isn't interested in empty, phony, outward purity. He wants a clean, pure heart; and He is the only one who can *give us* a clean heart, by imparting to us an entirely "***new heart.***" In **Ezekiel 36**, the LORD foretold of this "new heart" that He would give to believers, through the new birth (the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers).

Read Ezekiel 36:25-27.

In **Ephesians 4:24**, the Apostle Paul says that every believer has a new nature, which he calls the "***new man***"; and this "***new man***" is created "***in righteousness and true holiness.***" Our old nature can produce nothing but sin; but the "***new man***" can produce nothing but righteousness and holiness. Yet, we who are saved know, too, well that our hearts are often filled with sin. Why? Because when we are not submitting ourselves to God, and allowing Him to work His righteousness in us, the "new heart" is not in control. The instant we stop submitting ourselves to God, the *old* heart will take control, by default; and we will begin to set up "idols" in our hearts. Let's see what Ezekiel said about "idols in the heart."

Read Ezekiel 14:1-4.

In this passage, God, through the prophet Ezekiel, was rebuking the elders of Israel, because they had "***set up their idols in their heart.***" These Jewish leaders had been taken away as captives to Babylon years earlier; yet, in their hearts, they were still worshipping the false gods that they had worshipped when they were in their homeland of Judah. Even though their "gods" had been powerless to help them against the Babylonian invasion, they *still* were worshipping these false gods in their hearts.

Now, before we cluck our tongues and say, "How could they have been so foolish," we need to take inventory of our own hearts. We may not have *carved idols* of wood and stone; but we *do* often have "idols" in our hearts. What is an idol of the heart? It is anything we worship instead of God. How can you know that you have erected an idol in your heart? It's simple. Just ask yourself this honest question: "**What makes me happy?**" Should your answer be *anything other* than "To have a real, intimate, passionate relationship with the Lord," then you have erected an idol in your heart. It doesn't matter whether it be a person, or a career, or money, or a hobby, or a recreation, or a pursuit, or a pastime, or any other "designer lust": it is an idol. And what does God say about idols? They are abominable and impure.

Should there be any impurity in your heart to cleanse, or idols to cast down, take it to the Lord in prayer. God promises that "***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***" Allow the Lord to break down every idol, and cast down every stronghold in your heart!

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

Christian, your heart and mind is a battleground. The day you were saved, you were given the "***mind of Christ***"—the ability to think like Christ. However, you also have another "***law in our members***"--the old fleshly nature. Your flesh is constantly waging war against the mind of Christ. This is why every day, throughout the day, you must "***cast down***" ungodly thoughts as soon as they arise.

You'll notice that there are two specific kinds of thoughts that we are to "cast down." First, we are to cast down "***imagination.***" By the way, I believe it is significant that "***imagination***" is never spoken of in a good way in Scripture. Not surprisingly, our world

glorifies imagination and fantasy, instead of reality. Our world encourages troubled people to create a “safe place” in their minds—a place of fantasy, if you will—where they may go to escape their problems. Movies and video games draw people into a world of fantasy, as well. Why is our world so enamoured with fantasy? Because the *“prince of the power of the air”* knows that imagination is a tool he can use to draw people into rebellion against God.

Of course, God did create us with the ability to picture things in our “mind's eye”: and we often call this process “imagination.” (We even use our imagination to picture the scenes that we read about in Scripture.) However, our imagination can be quickly hi-jacked by evil, because we have an enemy within, called “the flesh.” That is why we must evaluate every thought in light of God's Word, to see whether it be acceptable to God. Otherwise, our imagination will go astray from God *every single time!*

The imaginations of men's hearts are continually evil; and if we, as Christians, do not take every thought captive, and submit it to Christ, *our* imaginations will be evil, too. A Christian who is living in rebellion against God is in rebellion because he is *not* casting down imaginations, and is living in a fantasy world. Too many Christians allow their minds to run off and fantasise about thoughts of another time or place which they yearn for, instead of their present problems or responsibilities; thoughts of committing adultery or fornication with someone; thoughts of scenes from godless movies which they should never have watched; thoughts of what they would do if they had a certain thing that they covet; thoughts of self-pity, or even suicide; thoughts of self-righteousness, pride, self-glory, and personal achievement; thoughts of selfishness, and envy of others; thoughts of hatred, anger, bitterness, or revenge against someone; and a thousand other things that draw their hearts away from holiness. Many Christians mechanically read their Bibles, or sit under a sermon; yet, all the while, they are allowing their imagination to wander into ungodly things, or things that simply draw their hearts away from God and His Word. Many Christian homes have been completely destroyed, or else are spiritually powerless, because the thoughts of husbands, wives, and children were never taken captive. Many churches are spiritually powerless because many of the members have no control of their thought lives. The “old heart” is in control, instead of the “new heart”; and God cannot use them, because of their impure thoughts.

Christian, the moment a wrong thought springs into your head, *pray to God immediately*, and ask Him to forgive you, and to help you to cast down that thought. Pray for several moments, if necessary. Secondly, replace that wrong thought with meditation on Scripture. The Bible calls this being *“renewed in the spirit of your mind.”* Thirdly, put on the *“new man.”* Start praising and *thanking* God for something. Sing a hymn. Think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Don't merely do this first thing in the morning; submit your thoughts to Christ *throughout the day* (and especially at the point of temptation).

Read Philippians 4:4-9.

The second kind of thought that we must cast down is *“every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.”* If you ever find yourself thinking, “I know that's what the Bible says, **but,**” you'd better watch out. You are about to entertain a thought that is opposed to the *“knowledge of God”*; and disobedience will follow. When you think about *“casting down imaginations,”* don't merely think about casting down *filthy or immoral* thoughts. That is only *part* of what we must cast down. Any thought that contradicts the *doctrines* or *precepts* of God's Word, or the *will* of God, is an ungodly thought; and it must be cast down. Every thought must be brought into captivity *“to the obedience of Christ.”*

Paul says that in submitting our thoughts to Christ, we are pulling down **“strongholds.”** The word “stronghold” refers to a “fortification to which one runs for refuge.” Spiritually speaking, a “stronghold” is a fantasy, or a false argument, in which one seeks “shelter,” or escape, from biblical reality. Christian, don’t allow *any* strongholds in your mind! Pull down every one of them with the weaponry of God’s Word. The only alternative is continual spiritual defeat, loss of rewards in Heaven, and discontent and misery in this life.

Christian, which heart is in control in your life today? Is it the “new heart,” which is clean and pure? Or is it the old heart, which is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked? As a child of the Kingdom, you *have* a new heart; but for the new heart to be in control, you must consciously yield yourself to God every day!

II. Beatitude Attitude #7: Peace-making

(Read Matthew 5:9 again.) Jesus says, **“Blessed are the peacemakers.”** This sounds simple enough; yet, what is a **“peacemaker”**? Is it merely someone who tries to break up a fight? No. (Even a lost person can do that!) Is a “peacemaker” someone who doesn’t like confrontations, and who thus tries to “smooth over” tense situations by telling “little white lies,” or by making compromises, or by using flattery? No. Lost people do this kind of pseudo “peace making” all the time. However, a child of God should be different.

You see, when Jesus talks about **“peacemaking,”** He’s talking about *helping others to be made at peace with God!* Only a child of the King is able to do this, because he actually knows God. In **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**, Paul reminds Christians that God has given to us the **“ministry of reconciliation.”** We are **“ambassadors”** for Christ, Paul says. This means that we are to beseech others in Christ’s stead, **“Be ye reconciled to God.”**

One of the marks of a true child of God is that he can’t keep his mouth shut about his salvation; and he wants *others* to be made at **“peace with God”** by receiving God’s gift of salvation. Incidentally, when a person is made at peace *with God*, he is now in the right position to make peace *with others*. The change in a Christian’s life compels him to make wrongs right, and to live peacefully with everyone around him. An obedient Christian does not desire to “get back” at people: instead, he does all he can to **“live peaceably with all men.”**

Read Romans 12:16-21.

Christians **“have peace with God”** in *position*, because they are saved; but in *practice*, a Christian’s heart cannot be at peace as long as he holds a grudge against someone. Christian, are you being a peacemaker? As a citizen of the Kingdom, you have been appointed to this business. Being a peacemaker is a high calling; and it’s not merely a suggestion: it’s a *command!* It is a distinct mark of those who are the children of the Kingdom. Furthermore, Paul makes it clear that being a peacemaker is a critical part of your personal testimony. Paul says, **“Recompense to no man evil for evil”**; and immediately *after* making this statement, he says, **“Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”** Is there a connection between these two thoughts? Yes! The connection is that when you try to “pay someone back” for what he did to you, *people are watching you*; and you are not rightly representing your Saviour. When you recompense evil for evil, you are *not* “providing things *honest* in the sight of all men,” because you are giving people a *false, dishonest* portrayal of the character of your King! When a Christian sets out to “teach a lesson” to someone who has hurt him, he misrepresents the Saviour; and many years’ worth of good testimony for the Lord are quickly destroyed!

Being a “peacemaker” means far more than trying to “smooth things over” between two angry parties. It requires that you yourself are doing all in your power to live peaceably with the difficult people in *your* life. Paul says, “***If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.***” Does that word “*if*” imply that we have an “out” clause? Is Paul saying that there are some people who are so cantankerous, that we are *not* required to try to live at peace with them? No! What Paul is saying is that it takes *two* to fight; and on your end, you are *not* fighting, or giving that person the “silent treatment”! You are doing all in you can to make peace; and you are “giving place” to wrath. What is the right “place” to leave your wrath? With the Lord! That’s why the Lord says, “***Vengeance is mine; I will repay.***”

When you seek vengeance, you are trying to do God’s job; and that never ends well. By the way, you may not *outwardly* be trying to pay back those who have hurt you; but if you are *inwardly* demanding that God pay that person back, it’s much the same. You are saying, “All right, Lord, I trust you to take care of this situation; *but*, here are *my* suggestions as to how you could teach that person a lesson!” Folks, this is not the prayer of a peacemaker; this is the prayer of a bitter, carnal Christian. God knows the spiritual needs of the person who hurt you, just as He knows *your* spiritual needs; and you must leave it in His hands. In the meantime, “pay back” that person with *kindness*! Paul says, “***Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.***”

When you leave your anger with the Lord, pray for those who have hurt you, and treat them with Christ’s love and kindness, you find emotional freedom. Instead of being eaten up with bitterness, your heart is filled with the joy of knowing that Christ is pleased. Whether or not that person ever responds to your kindness and asks you for forgiveness, God will use that hurtful situation to purge you, purify you, and prepare you for greater service to Himself.

In closing, I would like you to consider two incidents in the life of David. In these two situations, David reacted to his enemies in two polar opposite ways. In the one situation, he was a peacemaker. He sought to make peace with a deadly enemy, and succeeded (at least, temporarily). In the other situation, he was ready to *murder* a man who had wronged him!

Read 1 Samuel 24:1-17.

Read 1 Samuel 25:2-33.

The David that we read about in **chapter 24** doesn’t even look like the same David that we read about in **chapter 25**, does it? Yet, it *is* the same David! What made the difference? Submission to the Spirit of God! By the way, don’t forget that David, unlike most other Old Testament believers, *did* have the Holy Spirit living inside him. In **1 Samuel 16:13**, we are told that after Samuel anointed David to be the next king of Israel, the Spirit of God came upon him from that day “***and forward.***” It appears that the Spirit of God never left David for the rest of his life! As post-Pentecost believers, we can relate to David, because *we also* have the Holy Spirit indwelling us permanently. Yet, the fact that the Spirit is *in* us doesn’t mean that we are always *yielded* to the Spirit, does it? So it was with David. In the situation with Saul, David was yielded to the Spirit; and because he was yielded, he humbly reached out to Saul, and made peace with him! Yet, in the situation with Nabal, he was *not* yielded to the Spirit; and in his frustration over not getting his paycheque, he went into a rage, and was ready to wipe out not only Nabal, but all the men in his house! David got right with the Lord, and yielded to Him again; but it was only because *Abigail* was a peacemaker that day!

Conclusion: Christian, are you being a peacemaker—not just between *other* parties, but between yourself and others? Are you living Beatitude number 7? If not, then go back to Beatitude number 1! Get “poor in spirit” again. See your anger, or bitterness, or unforgiveness, or lack of mercy, or spiritual apathy and callousness, for what it is, and mourn over it, and repent of it. Let the peace of God rule in your heart; and then, with a pure heart, go and make peace with others. Be like David when he made peace with Saul. Be like Abigail. Let God’s Spirit control your heart. Be a peacemaker; and you will be blessed!

Perhaps you are not even saved. Perhaps, as you have heard this message, you’ve realised that you are *not* pure in heart, because you’ve not been made at peace with God. If so, Jesus is calling to you today. He has already paid the price of your sins, so that you can be saved. Simply cry out to Him in faith and repentance of heart, and ask Him to save you! He will then enable you to be truly pure in heart.