



Purity of Heart

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"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

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Purity of Heart

W.D. Furioso ~ At Christ's Table ~ ACTpublications (2009) ~

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“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him,
‘Here is truly an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit!’”
John 1:47

I can still picture in my mind, one particular morning in 1979, as I sat at the counter of a local diner in Fort Worth, Texas, reading this verse of scripture over and over again. The Spirit of God had just opened the eyes of my heart to what was impressed upon me as being an essential aspect of Christianity.

The import was that this seemed to be what the Lord desired of every one of His people. It seemed that, in the eyes of the Lord, this was to be the definitive characteristic of His children, namely, **“in whom there is no deceit.”** That much seemed simple and clear. But I was intrigued - I wondered: *“Of all the possible characteristics - of all the many godly virtues that could be singled out - why this one?”* I guess I still cannot really answer that question to my own complete satisfaction, but I'm satisfied with the fact that God has chosen this **"no deceit" as the definitive characteristic of "the people He is forming for Himself to declare His praise."**¹ As I

¹ Isaiah 43:21

looked into the etymology of this concept of "no deceit" in Scripture, I became convinced that this was wonderfully intentional on God's part.

I first investigated Jesus' cryptic words to Nathanael: "Here is truly an Israelite...." – in other words, *"Here is a prototype of the people of God"* (Second to Jesus Christ Himself, of course.) *"Here is someone who is an excellent example of the kind of people My Father desires...."* The word "Israelite" draws our thoughts - as it did Nathanael's - to the story of when Jacob wrestled with God, and his name was changed from "**Jacob**", *the Deceiver*, to "Israel", *a Prince*, one who has wrestled with God² - "Israel the children of promise",³ those who have "seen God face to face",⁴ those who populate the "house of God",⁵ those who, like Jacob, have had a life-changing, character-changing encounter with God,

² Genesis 32:24-28

³ Romans 9:6-8, 4:13 & 16; Galatians 3:29, 4:28

⁴ Peniel, Genesis 32:30

⁵ Bethel, Genesis 28:19, 35:1

wherein something very fundamental to the fallen nature is removed from the heart - "deceit".⁶

What is this "deceit"? Jacob was born with it. It is what caused him to come out of the womb attempting to steal the birthright of his brother. His name depicts his nature. In Hebrew, Jacob's name⁷ and the origin of his name⁸ are indeed both somewhat obscure yet broad in their meaning. Suffice to say they mean **all that is "false"**. It may be best to say that the meaning represents all that is *the opposite of what the Lord desires to have in the hearts and lives of His people*.

The same Hebrew word translated "deceit" appears in a passage of Jeremiah in the midst of a string of sins being exposed in the people of God: "For all of them are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. They bend their tongue like their bow; lies and not truth prevail in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and **they do not know Me**," declares the LORD. Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, and do not trust any brother; because every brother deals craftily,

⁶ Greek: *dolo*, Strong's #1388

⁷ Hebrew: *Yagob*, Strong's # 3290

⁸ Hebrew: *aqab*, Strong's # 6117

and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. Everyone deceives his neighbor and does not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity. Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit; **through deceit they refuse to know Me,**' declares the LORD."⁹

What is most significant about the deceitful heart is this: It not only gave rise to the sin(s) mentioned above, but it also created the following situation: "**they did not know Me**", "**they refuse to know Me**". Deceit and falsity are not only directed toward God, but also toward others, and even ourselves. This falsity prevents us from knowing God, prevents others from knowing us, and also prevents us from knowing our true selves.

And when Jesus walked the earth, the leaders of God's people were characterized by the same deceit and falsity, which Jesus called "hypocrisy":

²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you **hypocrites**. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind

⁹ Jeremiah 9:2b-6

Pharisee, **cleanse first the inside of the cup**, so that the outside also may be clean.²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you **hypocrites**. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth.²⁸ Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but **inside you are filled with hypocrisy** and evildoing.¹⁰

In contrast to all of this, Jesus said: "**Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.**"¹¹ This is to say that the "pure in heart" *will want to know God, and they will know God*. Purity of heart allows us to know God, allows others to know us, and allows us to know our true selves.

What is "purity of heart"? Certainly, the fruit of purity of heart is seen in a reality, an honesty, and a transparency in relationship with God, others, and ourselves. "Purity of heart" is key to any and all relationships. I believe David recognized this key and spoke of it in one of His psalms to the Lord:

¹⁰ Matthew 23:25-28

¹¹ Matthew 5:8

"Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom. **Purify me** with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. "¹²

Only a pure heart, cleansed of deceit and falsity, can be true to God, others, and oneself. Only a pure heart, cleansed of deceit and falsity, can know, and make known God's wisdom. For this reason, God desires for us to have truth - reality - and wisdom **in our hearts**.

The process by which this is accomplished is through the purification of our hearts - a process known as "**Sanctification**".¹³ There are different schools of thought regarding "Sanctification" or "Holiness". Since the Scripture says, "Without sanctification no one will see the Lord,"¹⁴ most all Christians generally recognize the necessity for the believer to live a holy or sanctified life; but vary as to what Sanctification is and how it can and should be achieved. The five major views on

¹² Psalm 51:6-7 12

¹³ "Sanctification" is a major doctrine of Christianity and would require volumes to discuss in detail. Here I am offering just a brief definition of the term.

¹⁴ Hebrews 12:14

Sanctification are: the *Wesleyan* view, the *Reformed* view, the *Pentecostal* view, the *Keswick* view, and the *Augustinian-Dispensational* view. The differences center on the various definitions of the terms: “sin”, “old man” and “new man”, “perfect” or “perfection”, “entire sanctification”, and “the Baptism in the Holy Spirit”. Also, there are various answers given to the following questions: “*In this life, what degree of Sanctification is possible?*” “*Is a ‘crisis experience’ following conversion normal or necessary? If so, what kind of experience, and how can it be verified?*” But all views of sanctification hold certain things in common:

Sanctification is understood to be the process of Holiness. There are two essential aspects of the biblical concept of holiness: **separation** - *a setting apart to and for God*, and **purification** - *a cleansing*.¹⁵ Biblical

¹⁵ Baptism – both in water and in the Holy Spirit - is a concept which is naturally very closely associated with both Sanctification and Holiness. "Baptism always means cleansing, and the Baptism with the Holy Ghost means the cleansing of our hearts by the Holy Ghost." J.B. Chapman, *Holiness Triumphant*, Old Paths Tract Society. Further definition of the Baptism of/with/in the Holy Spirit and when it takes place in the life of the believer, etc. is beyond the purpose of this brief article. While there are many spiritual implications and applications surrounding the ideas of both Water Baptism and Holy Spirit Baptism, I do believe that the origin and essence of the concept of Baptism is primarily the idea of cleansing,

Sanctification is understood to be **past** (beginning in a position of separation already accomplished by Christ's completed work), **present** (in that it is a process of cultivating a holy life), and **future** (when the effects of sin will be fully removed at the return of Christ). Also, all views of biblical Sanctification agree that the process of Sanctification preserves *both divine sovereignty and human responsibility* in requiring believers to endeavor to express God's love nature in their life experience by devoting themselves to the traditional Christian disciplines, and by choosing and struggling daily against the evil of sin and for God's ways of righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

Jesus said: **"The pure of heart will see God."**¹⁷ And the writer to the Hebrews wrote: **"Pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."**¹⁸

purification, hence "sanctification". (e.g., Hebrews 6:2a; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 3:25)

¹⁶ This description of Sanctification and Holiness is based on the Forward to Five Views of Sanctification, Zondervan's Counterpoint Series, an excellent source for an overview of the subject. Cf. Studies in Biblical Holiness, Donald Metz, Beacon Hill Press.

¹⁷ Matthew 5:8

¹⁸ Hebrews 12:14

With that brief overview of the terms “Sanctification” and “Holiness”,¹⁹ let’s return to the simple point of this article: **The connection between “Purity of Heart” and being among "the people He is forming for Himself to declare His praise"²⁰ – a people without deceit in their hearts.**

There is a story contained in the Book of Acts which I think gives us some insight as to whom would be counted as being among this people of God: The apostolic church was dealing with the question of Gentile believers and the possible requirement of circumcision - a Hebrew ritual symbolizing the sanctification, cleansing, and purification of the people of God. God had given this instruction to the Jews. Should it now also be required of Gentile believers in Christ? Peter's answer goes to the "heart of the matter" - and that is, "the matter of the heart".²¹ Relating his experience to those gathered at the house of Cornelius,

¹⁹ I have written more extensively on the subject of Sanctification in [*“Transformation of Self”*](#).

²⁰ Isaiah 43:21

²¹ Samuel 16:7

Peter concluded the matter in this way: **"So God, who knows the heart,** acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts** by faith."²² From this, I believe that we can conclude that not only is **"Purity of Heart"** the result of baptism into Christ, but also **the definitive characteristic of those who would be counted among God's people.**²³ The Scriptures show this to be God's point of view, as well as the apostolic point of view with regards to defining the people of God.²⁴

²² Acts 15:8-9 NKJV

²³ I believe the apostle, John, confirmed that, regarding the true people of God, "The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart" when he wrote: "We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him...." 1 John 3:19

²⁴ The idea has been maintained throughout the history of the Church through the ministries of John Wesley, John Fletcher (1700s); Edward Irving, the Keswick Movement (1800s); A.B. Simpson, A.J. Gordon (1900s); et. al.

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing,

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