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S E R M O N

ON THE

Blessedness of the Pure in Heart,

BY

NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.

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A

# DISCOURSE

ON THE

*Blessedness of the Pure in Heart.*

BY THE LATE

NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.



ALBANY:

PRINTED BY C. VAN BENTHUYSEN.

1862.

This Discourse was delivered in the Second Presbyterian Church, Albany, about a year before the death of its lamented author. A gentleman, who was present at the time, was so much impressed by it that he requested the privilege of getting it printed; and Mrs. Murray has kindly yielded her consent. It is one of a series of Discourses, embracing the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, which, it is hoped, may, at some future time, be given to the public.

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# S E R M O N .

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MATTHEW V, 8.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART; FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

The subject of our discourse, this morning, is the sixth beatitude pronounced by the Saviour in his sermon on the mount ; in which the pure in heart are blessed, and cheered with the promise of *seeing* God.

In order to see the full meaning of this beatitude, we must recall the circumstances under which it was spoken. Jesus was now expounding, and stating the fundamental principles of the new dispensation, and in the presence of a *Jewish* audience. These regarded themselves as a peculiar people,—as separated from the nations of the earth, by peculiar institutions,—as possessing external sanctity,—as a holy nation, who *alone*, were entitled to draw near to God in the acts of worship. Upon their privileges and advantages they plumed themselves; and instead of improving them so as to secure the great object for which they were given, they were made the causes of boasting, and of vain glory; and whilst they clung with unwonted tenacity to the letter of the law, they cultivated a character entirely alien to its spirit. They were *exact* in their obedience to ceremonies,—they were *lax* in all their moral principles. They paid tithes of mint, anise and cumin; but they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. They made clean the outside of the cup

and platter; but within they were full of extortion and excess. And it was to strike, as with Heaven's lightning, this Phariseism, and to bring up to the view of all men its opposing virtue, that Jesus Christ gives utterance to the benediction now before us:—"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

And our object in the present discourse is to place before you

I. THE PERSONS DESIGNATED; and

II. THE PROMISE MADE TO THEM.

And whilst discoursing to you on these high topics, may the prayer of each heart be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

I. THE PERSONS DESIGNATED.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." This phrase is obviously figurative, and, like all such language, admits of different interpretations and illustrations. The original word rendered "pure," means clean, chaste, physically; as when we speak of clean hands, or pure water; or as when we speak of ceremonial purity. Morally, it means guiltless, innocent, sincere, upright. So, also, the word heart is used not only for the part of the body which is the fountain of life; but, also, and mainly, for the soul and its powers. Hence, the heart is said to be *clean*, when the soul is filled with holy dispositions and thoughts;—to be *true* and *perfect*, when the soul follows after that which is true and good, with candor and sincerity;—to be *broken* and *contrite*, when the soul feels the weight of its sins and mourns over them;—to be *large*, when the soul is benevolent and is filled with spiritual liberty and joy;—and to be *pure*, when the desires and motives and ends of the soul are sincere, and upright, and true. So that a man of *integrity* may be said to have

a pure heart, in opposition to a dishonest or deceitful man ; a man of *principle* has a pure heart, in opposition to a man of profession,—a man of strict *truth* has a pure heart, in opposition to a man of no truth. The pure hearted are those whose principles are true, and whose conduct is in accordance with their principles.

There is much said in the Old Testament, and in the New, by Prophets and Apostles, by Moses and by Christ, directly and indirectly, as to heart purity. This was for the purpose of counteracting the natural tendencies of humanity, and of correcting the depraved conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees. The principal part of *their* religion lay in ceremony, and in outward cleansing ; and because *ceremonially* pure, they expected to see God. Nor have the tendencies of human nature changed in these respects. Yet is the *shadow* put for the substance,—the *form* for the power,—the *ceremony* for the thing signified. This error is as vast as are the domains of Heathenism, Islamism, Romanism, Formalism. And we have yet to echo through the world the sentiments uttered by Jesus on the mountain's side, that however ceremonially clean may be our hands, or apparently upright our lives, or costly our oblations,—the pure in heart *alone* shall see God. "Who," says the Psalmist, (24—3, 4,) "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? Or who shall stand in his holy place ? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." That is, he whose principles are pure, and whose conduct is in keeping with his principles.

True religion consists in heart purity. And one of the most successful devices of Satan has ever been to withdraw attention from this fundamental truth to minor topics. There are many *minor* matters needful to make the *new*

man a *perfect* man ; but, alas, in how many instances are these minor matters made the great matter ! But on the supposition that you could be complete in *all* matters beyond the heart,—that your conduct, as touching the law, was blameless,—yet if the heart is not pure you cannot see God,—because the converse of our text is here, the *impure* in heart shall *not* see God. How important, then, the inquiry, what are the characteristics of a pure heart ? The pure in heart are they in whose souls carnal, sensual and sinful desires are so mortified that they do not seek to gratify them,—who are replenished with holy inclinations and affections,—and who are influenced by love for God, and for his truth. Their understanding is enlightened,—their judgment corrected,—their will subdued,—and their leading object is to do duty, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God. Purity of heart is opposed to subtlety and duplicity. Genuine religion lays aside not only malice, but guile and hypocrisy. It is not enough to be pure in words, nor in outward deportment,—still less to be pure in our own eyes ; for all this may consist with inward wickedness. True religion has its seat in the heart, whence are the issues of life. Heart purity is a quality not very much prized in the world. Men prefer the subtle to the simple hearted. The one may succeed in his plans, and rise high in the world ; but if the other fails in all his plans, yet shall he see God, and stand accepted in his presence. *Show* and *pretension* make men with men ; it is the heart that makes a man with God.

A pure heart is consistent with many mistakes on minor subjects. In everything, *here*, we are imperfect. The holiest and purest of men have made sad mistakes ; as we

learn from the narratives of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and Peter. The judgment often errs, when the heart is right. Hence the common and truthful distinction between an error of the judgment and of the heart ; but the moment the error is discovered, the true heart leads to its correction. The pure heart, like the needle of the mariner, may be turned away from its true object ; but when left to its proper action, it will tremble back again to the pole.

There is also a personal purity of heart, which, like personal holiness, is always on the increase, after the work of regeneration has been effected. The grace of God does not expel, at once, from the cage all the unclean birds which infest it. This, like the expulsion of the Canaanites, may require years. So that, because not as pure as we desire, we must not conclude that we possess no purity. The *very desire* is an evidence to the contrary. To pray, as did David, for a "clean heart," and a "right spirit," is a sign of grace. The graces, like the grain cast in the earth, have their various stages of progress, from the blade, onward, to the full corn in the ear.

The pure in heart, then, are the spiritually pure. Their *bodies* may not be purified by Jewish lustrations, but their hearts are purified by faith, and sprinkled from an evil conscience. They hate sin. They love the truth. They delight to do the will of God, and to do good to men. They seek, in everything, to act from pure motives. They flee to the justifying righteousness of Christ for salvation. To the pure in heart Christ is everything. Christ is their life,—their meat,—their drink,—their guide,—their friend,—their hope,—their joy. He is made unto them, of God, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. They live in Christ, and Christ lives in them. They



are a habitation of God through the spirit. These are they who are fitted for spiritual intercourse with the High and Lofty One.

This brings us to consider

## II. THE PROMISE MADE TO THE PURE IN HEART.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Here again the language is figurative. In the East, down to the present day, monarchs are but rarely seen by their subjects. And an introduction is attended with great ceremony, and always confers great honor. To enter the holy of holies was but *rarely* done; and never but with high ceremony, and with the blood of bulls and of goats; and amid the smoke of sacrifices. But far higher is the privilege enjoyed by the pure in heart. They shall see *God*;—they shall obtain clear and satisfactory views of his character, and they shall be admitted into intimate and delightful fellowship with him. As signal service to the State is honored by an introduction to kings and emperors;—as ceremonial purity, sacrifices and ceremonies gave admission to the holy of holies, so does purity of heart entitle us to see God. And such are blessed for two sufficient reasons.

### 1. *Because of the natural effect of purity of heart.*

The man who has always before him the fear of God, and the love of man;—who is evermore seeking to subdue the law of his members which is warring against the law of his mind,—who lives up to the light which he possesses, and is always seeking for more,—who never forsakes the high principles of truth and honesty in his transactions,—who keeps a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man,—such a man is satisfied from himself. The law of God is in his heart; and a consciousness of his integrity is to him a continual feast. He has no tricks of

trade or profession,—he fears not the discovery of any schemes or frauds,—he has done nothing simply to be seen of men,—he has acted with uprightness of principle towards all,—he has done to others as he would have others do to him. And he is blessed.

He is actuated by no prejudice,—by no spirit of sect,—by no party ties,—by no jealousies or envyings towards his neighbor. He loves the *true*, wherever he finds it ;—he does the *good*, whomsoever it benefits ;—he promotes the *right*, even to his own loss ;—and no motive of profit or prejudice will induce him to do the wrong. And, hence, whilst others are driven hither and thither by the counter currents which ever disturb society, he is peaceful and quiet, with a conscience void of offence, having no object in view but to do the greatest good. And he is blessed. So that heart purity is, *in itself*, a blessing.

And he is blessed of men. Not that high virtue will always receive its merits at the hand of man,—for Christ, the incarnation of virtue, was crucified as a malefactor. Yet it will sooner or later receive its reward. A pure hearted man may be disliked by those who cannot bend him to their interests ; but he will leave a testimony in their conscience to his integrity. They may curse him with their lips, but they will respect him in their hearts. When Archelaus sought to bribe Socrates, by a seat at his table, he replied, “ please, your majesty, I can buy meal for half a penny a peck, and water costs me nothing.” An English peer sought to influence the mind of Matthew Hale as to a case coming before his court, but was at once repulsed: He complained bitterly to the king, who replied,—“ He would serve me just so if I should seek to bias him as to any cause to be tried in his court.” And whilst integrity like this is

dying out of the world, yet it is true that the pure in heart are blessed of men.

But the great reason of our text is

2. *They shall see God.*

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “To see God” is a comprehensive phrase, which includes a great many things.

They see God in his truth. And what is the truth, but a manifestation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,—an illustrious display of the combined radiance of divine holiness and benignity. It is by the truth instrumentally, we are convicted, and converted, and sanctified. It is by the truth we are conformed to the image and the character of God. The more we know of truth the more we know of God, and the more happy we are. Truth is to the mind what light is to the eye—what sound is to the ear. And how pleasant it is for the eye to behold the sun! Nothing in nature is so pleasant, so refreshing, as the light of the sun. It reveals to us the treasures of nature; and lays open to us the bosom of the universe. There is no pleasure on the earth to be compared to the search after, and the discovery of, truth. The intense speculations of an Archimedes, or of a Newton, or of a Bacon, gave more pleasure than all the carousals of Epicureans. And if natural truths so transport philosophers, what must be the constant discovery of supernatural truth by the Christian! Why, when the veil of sin is taken away from the eyes of men, and they are permitted, whilst yet in the flesh, to see Jehovah as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness,—they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Such often have been the

views of God, through his truth, of good men, that whether *in* the body, or *out* of the body they could not tell !

And they see God in his works. Until grace changes the hearts of men, and opens their eyes, the works of God are to them as a blank-book, it may be with a splendid binding, and gilded covers, but teaching nothing. The sun, moon and stars, suggest to them nothing, or but little, as to their Maker. They walk up and down through the works of God, like a blind man in a grand temple of art, without seeing the evidences, in any of them, of his eternal power and Godhead. But, now, with a mind and heart corrected by grace, they see God everywhere, and in everything. The water, air, earth, fire ; the rain, the dew, the snow, the hail ; the stormy winds that blow ; the sun by day, the moon and stars by night ; everything becomes a mirror to reflect the greatness and the glory of God. " The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." And from this world and its fulness, the pure in heart rise to the contemplation of the things of Heaven, each saying with David,—“ When I consider Thy Heavens, the work of Thy fingers ; and the moon and stars which Thou hast ordained,—what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that Thou visitest him ?” And to the pure in heart do the Heavens daily declare the glory of God, and the earth show forth his handy-work.

And they see God in his providences. As the hand of the sailor is upon the helm of the ship that guides it over all the waves of the ocean, so is the hand of God guiding all the affairs of men to their destined and desired ends. He guides the sun in its course, and the sparrow in its flight, and the loosened hair in its fall. It is in God all things live, and move, and have their being. And,

yet, by multitudes, God's hand is seen in nothing. Are kingdoms overturned? It is because of a spirit of revolution among the people! Are battles won or lost? It is because of the skill of generals or the want of it! Are cities consumed? It is because of accident! Does the pestilence rage? It is because of some existing malaria! Do friends die? It is in accordance with the course of nature! Thus, by secondary causes, is God exiled from his own dominion; and his hand, because unseen, is unrecognized by millions of the race!

But not so as to the pure in heart. They see God in all the works of his providence. Looking back on the past,—looking around them in the present,—they see the hand of God directing, with infinite wisdom, all the affairs of men. They see that the Lord is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. They say, with David,—“The eyes of all wait on Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thy hand; Thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing. That Thou givest them they gather; Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face; they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to the dust.” The pure in heart are blessed, for they see God in his providences, and rejoice in them, even when most afflictive, because persuaded that they are all working together for good.

But, above all, and more than all, they shall see God in his glory. The present views of God enjoyed by “the pure in heart” are but a foretaste of brighter and better views in the future. Before the perfection of the vision promised in our text is enjoyed, there are some events of solemn import to transpire. Death must intervene; but they see God

in death. They count it a blessing, that when their warfare is ended, they are not left uncared for on the battle field. God sends death to take them home. And the resurrection must intervene; and in this they will see the exceeding greatness of the power of God. And the great white throne of judgment is to descend; and the dead, small and great, are to be called before it. And then they will see God, surrounded by holy angels, and separating the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And they will see Him, when He says to those on his right, "Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And now is the promise of our text realized to its full extent. All previous views of God were but preparatory to this. The body and soul, long separated, are now united; and in communion with Angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect, they see God as He is—face to face—and forever!

By thus seeing God is meant the whole enjoyment of the felicities of Heaven. "To see the sun," is an eastern phrase for the perfect enjoyment of life; and "to see God," is a Scriptural phrase, for the perfect enjoyment of Heaven. But why is the perfect bliss of Heaven expressed by "seeing," rather than in some other way? (1st.) Because we best comprehend objects by *seeing* them. We shall have the fullest comprehension of God of which we are capable. (2d.) Because the sense of seeing is that most universally exercised and employed. Save when sleeping, we are ever seeing; and in Heaven we shall *ever* see God. (3d.) Because the sense of seeing is to us the greatest source of pleasure. "The light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun." "In Thy presence is ful-

ness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." (4th.) Because of all the senses, sight is the most insatiable. The eye is never satisfied with seeing. It is never satisfied ; it never wearies. It goes from one object to another ; and the more it sees, the greater its desire to see. So that "to see God," is the strongest possible representation of our enjoyment of his glory. It is God *only* who can fill the eye, and keep pace with its ever increasing desire *to see*. "Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God," until the eye is satisfied with seeing.

We learn from the whole discussion that the seat of all true religion is *the heart*. The Pharisees made a great show of religion. They abounded in its external manifestations. But all was "for a pretence." And there are many correct in deportment,—upright in conduct,—regular in attendance on ordinances,—but whose hearts are not right in the sight of God. They are pure in their own eyes ;—but not in the sight of God. Let us be true to our *hearts* ; and let us seek to have *them* pure in the sight of God, as we desire our *conduct* to be in the view of men !

Let the prayer of each of us be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."