

“JESUS ON PURITY”  
by Rom A. Pegram (8/11/19)

So ... *what's your answer going to be?* Earlier, you were asked the question: If you could only choose to keep one of the five (5) senses we've been given—taste, touch, sight, hearing & smell, which would it be? So, what's your answer? Have you thought about it?

Today, we are talking about 'Jesus on Purity,' and this is where I want to start today. God has blessed us with five (5) physical senses:

- We have *smell*, so we can smell the good and not so good smells of Wisconsin (Can anyone say 'fresh country air?') When we'd take our usual Sunday afternoon drives in the country, as kids, my parents'd always kid about that...
- We have *taste*, so we can really enjoy sweet things, sour things, rich things, scrumptious things (i.e. cheese curds, brats, and Gilles Frozen Custard)...
- We have *hearing*, so we can identify sounds (i.e. birds, cicadas, train whistles) and we communicate with one another through sound...
- We have *touch*, so that we can physically touch the world around us—soft things, hard things, sharp things, fuzzy things...

*All our senses are important*, and we have a need for each and every one of them. But *for me, sight is probably the most important sense God gives us*. Now, I don't know how you answered the earlier question about having to choose one of the five senses to keep ... but I would take eyesight every time!

I can't even imagine the difficulty of getting around without being able to see ... and the things I'd miss if I couldn't—the sunsets Jane and I enjoy here in Lomira, watching a storm pass by, seeing the Christmas lights in our communities nearby, being able to look at my wife... Missing my eyesight would be a huge loss to me! And I think—of the five (5) senses—that would be the one I'd be most *unwilling* to give away...

Now, here's something else to think about today: *God has also given us a 'sixth sense.'* No, it's not seeing dead people (like in the movie), if that's what you were thinking. It's not seeing dead people; it's our *spiritual eyesight*—being able to see God, to hear God, to sense God's presence and direction in our life. The Bible says our spiritual eyesight, our ability to connect with God and our sensitivity to the things of God is the most important, most valuable, sense we have. And God's given each of us that ability—the ability to connect and have a personal relationship with him. No other part of God's creation has that privilege or can do that. Unfortunately, more than with any of our other senses, *this is the one we have the most problems with...*

If we're honest, some of us who have 20/20 vision with our eyes ... don't have 20/20 vision spiritually speaking. In fact, way too many today are almost spiritually blind. Many times ... it feels like God isn't near, that God doesn't care, and we can't see him clearly ... even if we want to. And just like if we were physically blind, when spiritually blind we're missing God's direction for our lives and we have difficulty finding meaning in things going on around us, when others seem to. That's one of the main reasons we come to church—to be able to see (& hear) from God. We want to experience his presence & receive direction for our lives. But *the Bible gives us ways we can improve*

*our spiritual eyesight*; did you know that? Look with me at our Bible verse (Beatitude; Matthew 5:8, NLT) for today; read this with me, would you?

**“God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.”**

Jesus says, in essence, if you want to be able to see God clearly (have your spiritual eyesight corrected), *you need to have a pure heart*. Purity, then, is the key element to being able to experience God—to know his will. But, where’s the pure heart come in?

Webster’s dictionary defines ‘purity’ in several ways ... and I can’t help but think of the Tide commercials and clean white t-shirts; that reminds me of purity. But a more biblical definition of purity might be this: *Something that is unmixed with any other matter*. That would be ‘pure’...

...which reminds me of Jello ... and my mom. When I was a kid, when I wanted Jello, I just wanted Jello (*Jigglers*)! Do you know what I mean? My mom was always like ‘Oh, let’s take that lime Jello and put celery in it’ (Wisconsin salad). And I’m like, ‘No, Mom! I just want Jello in my Jello!’ (I’m sorry, but to me ... Jello should always be *pure*!)

*Purity = something that is unmixed with any other matter*. Look at Proverbs 17 (3, NLT) with me, would you? “Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart.” When you find gold or silver, it’s usually mixed with a lot of other matter. You have to put it to fire to purify it—to get rid of the other matter so that you’re left with pure silver or pure gold, making it much more valuable. And this verse basically says, ‘Just as fire makes silver and gold pure (more valuable, precious, beautiful), so God wants to make our hearts and lives the same.’ That’s what Jesus is talking about in the Beatitude for today. If we don’t allow God to purify us, we’ll never see the way God wants us to see; we’ll never know God like God wants us to know him!

And, folks, do not ever doubt this: *God wants to bless you ... and help you to see him clearly in this life!* But how do we do that? In looking to the Sermon on the Mount, I’m seeing *three (3) characteristics we need to live lives of purity*. (One is external; the other two are internal.) Here they are: GOD BLESSES ME WHEN I HAVE...

**A PURE MOUTH.** This is the ‘Listerine’ part of today’s message! *God blesses me when I have a pure mouth*... Let me say right up front, this is going to be a tough issue; what I’m going to talk about today is going to sting a little bit, because it goes against what culture teaches us. In our culture, we pay very little attention to words anymore; I mean, do words really matter?

A few years back now, the Parents’ Television Council gave this report, talking about language on television: They said there was an overall increase in foul language in every time slot. Foul language during the family hour (7-8 pm) increased by 94.8% during the period of years they studied. Specifically between 8-9 pm, foul language increased by 109.1%. Ironically, the smallest increase (38.7%) took place during the last hour of prime time (9-10 pm) when young children were the least likely to be watching anyway. This was years ago, so imagine where we’ve gone to today...

What I'm saying is this: What we're talking about today is *very* counter-cultural! I don't know if you've thought about this or not, but *it was counter-cultural in Jesus day, too!* They didn't have television, but get around a bunch of fishermen (or other laborers Jesus hung out with) together, and the language probably wasn't the best there either. In my former life (Ministry = 25 years), I worked on docks and in freight offices; I experienced the same thing... But Jesus said that what comes out of our mouths ... is the most visible sign of who we really are; *our words are an external expression of our internal intentions*. So, yes, our words matter ... especially to Jesus. And if you study the Sermon on the Mount, you'll realize Jesus' teachings are divided into 3 areas on this topic: lying, language, and love—in that order...

- Jesus said, don't lie (take a false vow) and let your yes be yes, and your no be no (Matt. 5:33-37)... That's about lying...
- Paul said (Spirit of Christ) in Eph. 4:29 (NLT): "Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." That's about language...
- Then Paul says (Rom. 1:12—look it up!) that what God desires for us to do with our mouths is this: express love/encouragement to others...

Do we want to be blessed? That's what the Beatitudes are all about, aren't they? And having a pure mouth is a part of that life of purity Jesus calls us to...

This all stings a bit, doesn't it? But one thing I know about language is this: I CAN TURN IT OFF. Have you ever been there?

- When you go to a job interview ... you can turn it off...
- When Mom's in from out of town ... you can turn it off...
- When you go back home and visit your grandmother ... you can turn it off...
- When you go to church on Sundays ... you can turn it off...

We can turn it on ... and we can turn it off. We know we can; we just need to know *it matters to Jesus!* Use profanity; no blessing. Turn it off; receive blessings from God. Let's work this week to 'turn if off,' because I want God's very best for you (& me) ... and I believe that's what you want to. Here's *another characteristic we need to live a life of purity*: GOD BLESSES ME WHEN I HAVE...

**PURE EYES.** This is the 'Visine' part of today's message! I think this may be the hardest area for us; this is the *Visine verse*, where Jesus talks of having pure eyes... Matthew 6:22-23 (NLT) – "Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. <sup>23</sup> But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!" This reminds me of the old computer programmer acronym, GIGO: Garbage in, garbage out...

The concept Jesus is talking about here is what we might call 'the soul.' *Your whole body (or soul) is filled with light...* We don't talk much about the soul anymore. Physicians admit there's something about the soul that can't really be explained, but

Jesus said *your eye is tied to your soul*. So, what your eye takes in ... affects your soul...

As I'd mentioned earlier, I haven't always worked in the Church—even though I grew up in a Christian home. And when I worked in freight offices and freight docks and drove truck for a living in my early 20s, the places I visited didn't have the same reading materials as the waiting room in my doctor's office. But, folks, that kind of living—letting anything into your eyes and your soul—can take its toll...

That's why the Psalmist (David?) said (Ps. 101:3a, NLT): "I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar...." Why? Because the eyes are connected to the soul ... and *the soul is eternal!* Am I being clear enough today, without having to spell it out further? Jesus, using hyperbole of course, says (Matt. 5:29, NLT): "So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." (Hyperbole to say 'this is serious!') Folks, if we want to be blessed, not having anything blinding us from seeing God/cutting us off from our relationship with God, we need to have PURE EYES. The final characteristic of a life of purity is this: GOD BLESSES ME WHEN I HAVE...

**A PURE HEART.** As usual (and I wish I had more time), we've saved the toughest one for the end; this is the toughest because we spend a majority of our lives trying to keep people from seeing what's in our heart... In our hearts, we have mixed motives and other emotions, feelings and desires, that we don't want the world to ever know! But the Bible tells us that we can't really hide what's in our hearts ... from God or from others...

First off, God already knows every thought you've ever had, and every feeling you've ever felt. God knows you better than you know yourself! Did you know that? And your heart is the source of everything you do in life—all of your actions...

Look at Matthew 15:19 (NLT) with me: "For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander." And whatever's in your heart will eventually show itself through your actions. It's inevitable.

*So, when our actions are continually impure, it's usually a reflection of a much bigger problem in my heart.* Proverbs 29:19 (NLT) says, "As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person." It's what's in your heart that determines &/or reveals who you really are... Scary, huh? But if we want to know God's blessings, we need to learn to live a life of purity (and it's a process, I know). But if we're to learn to live a life of purity, it has to begin with having a 1) pure mouth, 2) pure eyes, and 3) a pure heart. Let me end with this...

In Isaiah 1:18 (NLT), the prophet says: "Come now, let's settle this," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool." Notice here, God says 'I will', not 'you will.' Did you notice that? He says it a couple times. And you see, *this is why I'm a Christian!* Other religions tell me how to make myself a better person, by changing *the external*. The problem is, I know my heart ... and so does God. I know my sins; I know

my heart's stained and messed up. I need God's help changing my heart—*the internal*. I need his love, his forgiveness, his power to transform my life...

My life at times reminds me of a white t-shirt. I like wearing white t-shirts, but usually I only get to wear them once or twice. Why? Because I'm notorious for spilling things like tomato sauce on them; or, sometimes I just stand there in a white t-shirt and it gets dirty—either way. I'll take it home, make puppy eyes at Jane; she'll take them, soak them and scrub them, but many times the stain just won't come out...

If we're honest today, some of us feel the same way about our lives. We think about what's really in our hearts, and all the ways we're missing the mark about this purity thing. All the lies we've told, the hurtful things we've said, the mistakes we've made. All the ways we've tried on our own to change, but couldn't...

The Bible says all we need to do to have our hearts made pure is to *realize we need God (1<sup>st</sup> Beatitude)*, then ask for forgiveness! When we ask Jesus to come into our lives and begin to follow him (which means he's in control), God removes those stains from our lives ... and we're spotless before God—brand new, like our sins never happened. Your sins are removed as far as the east is from the west—immediately...

But, some of you are *still* wondering, "God, what do you want for me?" Wonder no more. Read this with me (Col. 3:15a, NLT): "And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts." That's what God wants for YOU! It's a life-long process, but it can begin today; we can begin a path toward purity today, so that we'll know the blessings of God! "God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God." Don't YOU want to see God clearly? ... I want to close in a little different way today. I want to close by praying together, from a favorite scripture of mine—Psalm 51:7-12 (NLT). Pray this with me:

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. <sup>8</sup> Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. <sup>9</sup> Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Amen.