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Blessed Are The Pure In Heart



The Beatitudes - Steve Gregg

In this piece, Steve Gregg reflects on the spiritual implications of having a pure heart. The speaker raises questions about how people can truly know and see God, and suggests that a pure heart may be a key to unlocking the divine. Drawing on both Old and New Testament scripture, Gregg emphasizes the importance of a humble and authentic faith, free from hypocrisy and worldly distractions. Ultimately, he suggests that only those with pure hearts will see God, and that this vision may come not just at the second coming of Jesus, but also in the small moments of life where God is present.

Transcript

We're going to be looking at the 7th, is it the 7th or 6th Beatitudes tonight? It's the 6th Beatitudes tonight. It is in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 8, and the Beatitudes of course are those 8 statements at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, which in one sense introduce the sermon, and in another sense summarize it, I think, because it's hard to find anything in the following chapter. It doesn't somehow find its root in one of the Beatitudes or another, and we shall see that tonight with this one as well.

But where do the Beatitudes have their roots? Well, their roots are in the Old Testament. I don't believe there's any of the Beatitudes that are not found in principle in the Old Testament as well, which makes it very clear that Jesus did not come to innovate a new morality, he came to recover that lost truth that God had given to his people much earlier, 1400 years earlier in the law, which David and the prophets had understood much better than most of their contemporaries, and certainly which David and the prophets understood much better than Jesus' contemporaries did, because the contemporaries of Jesus, the Pharisees, and those that were under their religious instruction, tended to change the requirements of holiness into a set of external conformity to certain rules. Now, these rules were not all from the Bible.

A lot of them came from the rabbis. There were hundreds and hundreds of modifications of the Old Testament that the rabbis had developed, and so in Jesus' day, the Pharisees and the Jews were very mindful of these traditions, and in many cases, the traditions either obscured spiritual truth, or in some cases actually contradicted it in one place. In

Matthew chapter 15, it's paralleled in the seventh chapter of Mark, Jesus indicated that by keeping their traditions on occasion, at least the Pharisees nullified the word of God, so they could keep their traditions, but it wasn't always so much that they nullified it as they buried it, so that the average Jewish person had lost sight of what really was essential, what really God had said, because they were burdened with this great body of legislation from human sources.

This is very possibly what Jesus had in mind when he said in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. We might think in terms of being burdened and heavy laden with the guilt of sin, and that would make a very good verse for evangelism that way. Jesus relieves us of the burden of sin, but I suspect that his wording has to do with the burden of legalism rather than of sin, because in Matthew 23, he castigates the word of God.

He castigated the scribes and the Pharisees for being hypocrites and for placing heavy burdens on men's backs and not being willing to lift them with even so much as one finger. That's what Jesus said, so the Pharisees, by their teaching of religion, burdened the people with unnecessary rituals that God had never required, and yet the Pharisee religion offered no relief. It is burdened people, and Jesus said, You are burdened because we all give you rest.

I'll take that load off, and I think that to his own contemporaries that burden that he offered relief from the probably more the burden of their own religion than simply the burden of guilt for sin committed, which is not to deny that Jesus also remove that burden. But the religion of the Jews in Jesus day had become largely as I said, external things. The matters of the heart were obscured, if not forgotten altogether, or sometimes simply preempted by external rules, and Jesus, of course, comes to tell us that the heart is all important, which is taught in the Old Testament as well as the new.

The attitude that in Matthew five, eight, blessed are the pure in heart. They would have no contact with Gentiles or anything that is, I think, a very pure externally, but Jesus said on one occasion, Matthew twenty three that they were like whitewashed tombs who were clean and pure and untainted on the outside, but inside full of dead men's bones. And this certainly had to do with defilement, because a tomb in the Jewish religion would defile you to be in contact with it, because to touch a dead body or anything that had touched the dead body would defile you now during festival season.

Sometimes many Jews from out of town came to Jerusalem for the festival, and they might not recognize a tomb from some other kind of cave. The locals in Jerusalem, I'm told, whitewashed the outside of the tomb so that they might be recognized as not ordinary caves, but to be avoided. And so, if this is so, then the Jews whom we spoke were very familiar with this phenomenon of a whitewashed tomb.

They said, you know, those whitewashed tombs out there remind me a lot of you

religious leaders. You're whitewashed too. You're white on the outside.

You're clean. There's not a speck of defilement outside, but inside you're full of defilement. You're full of dead men's bones, which are not only defile themselves, but defile others upon contact.

And so, Jesus comes to talk about the purity of heart. This is not a new idea with Jesus. It's in the Old Testament too, but that was the forgotten reality and the most important one of what God wants.

And Jesus said, the pure in heart, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Now, we're going to talk first of all, what it means to see God, because definitely the Bible gives mixed signals on that matter of seeing God. Have you ever noticed that? I mean, has anyone seen God? Anyone going to give me a yes or no on that? Has anyone ever seen God? Who knows? Well, the Bible actually says both.

The Bible says no man has seen God at any time. It also says that certain people saw God. Now, obviously, this to the person who is a shallow thinker would just be written off as a contradiction in the scripture.

But, of course, the writers of scripture would never be so inattentive as to make such a gross contradiction, since the Jewish religion had as its basis the fact that the God is not made of wood and stone like the gods of the heathen were, but he is spiritual and invisible. And so, obviously, all the writers of scripture being Jewish or Luke was no doubt a Gentile, but the question is, was he unfamiliar with the Jewish concept of God or the Christian concept? No. There would not be really contradictory ideas, and when you find things in the Bible that seem like contradictions, we have to be open to the possibility that they could be, but I doubt that they are, because I don't believe the Bible contains contradictions.

I'll state my bias right at the front. I believe the Bible lacks contradictions. I know of many things about what it sounds on the surface contradictory, but I've never been content to simply read the Bible on the surface.

I want to know what it means, not what it sounds like. And I have found, as many people have, what sounds like contradictory statements in the scripture. When Moses, well, first of all, let's talk about the doctrine of seeing God.

God possesses traits that human beings do not possess. He is omnipotent, he is omnipresent, he is omniscient, and he is invisible. And he's a lot of other things, too, that we're not.

But it says in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 17, Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be power and glory forever and ever. Amen. Now, Paul states what is the basic Jewish concept of God and Christian concept of God.

God is invisible. You cannot see him. This is stated in the Old and the New Testament.

In the Exodus, in the book of the Exodus, chapter 33, Moses was on the mountain with God, and it's interesting because you get mixed signals about that, too, because God said in Numbers, If I, the Lord, raise up a prophet, I will speak to him in a dream or a vision or a dark thing. But my servant Moses is not so. He said, With him, I will speak apparently even mouth to mouth and the appearance of the Lord.

He will be whole. So it sounds like God is saying that Moses would see God in ways that other prophets are not. And yet, on one occasion, Moses asked God, Show me your glory.

And God said, No man can see me and live. He can't see my glory. I can't show you that.

This is Exodus 33, verse 22, 23. God posed an alternative to me. I will pass by when I have to shield you from the site.

I'll put you in this class of the rock. Hold my hand over. I'll pass by when I've gone by.

I'll let you look out and you can see my what the king James called my hindered part. Some people think a better translation would be the afterglow. But whatever, whatever the best interpretation is, he says, But my faith shall not be seen.

Now this tells us something. Did Moses see God or didn't he? Well, he thought his hindered part. He thought the afterglow or whatever that is, but he did not see God's faith, at least not directly.

Now, I would point out to you that Moses had not actually said, Show me your faith. You can show me your glory. And God equated that with seeing his face.

It's as if, because of sin, there was a veil between man and God, and God had to veil his faith from man. And even Moses, when he took on some of that goal, had to bail his face from the children. They could not look on that glory.

It was too much to bear. It wasn't so much that God did not wish to be made known. It's simply that man was not capable of dealing with the unveiled glory of God.

And I dare say that the teaching of Scripture is that no one has ever seen the unveiled glory of God. And when the Scriptures notice seeing God, I believe that that's what it means in John one eighteen. It says no man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten son who is in the bosom of the father, he has declared him or founded him.

Now that says no man has seen God at any time. And yet John, who said that certainly knew of old testament stories of people who said they had seen the Lord will look at those two. But you know, that is an interesting thing, because he has earlier in the same chapter said in the beginning was the word and the word was with God.

The word was God, and they said, Then the word was made flesh and we beheld his glory. But it wasn't the unveiling of glory is veiled in a flesh in a body of the veil of flesh. The glory of God dwelt there, and he says, We saw his glory, but it was the glory as of the only begotten of a father and is not the exact unveiled image.

It was seen. Jesus was seeing God, but through a veil of human flesh. No one in this body in this human life in mortality can see the unveiled glory of God would appear.

In fact, we read in the New Testament in second Thessalonians chapter two, that Jesus, when he comes, will destroy the man of sin with the brightness of his appearance. So just destroying in second Thessalonians chapter one of her data says Jesus will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that do not know God. That heat that fire, that brilliant must be his glory.

And when he comes, that glory just kind of melts everything. In fact, it says in second Peter chapter three verses ten to twelve or ten to thirteen that when Jesus comes back the day of the Lord will come to see from the night and in that day the heavens will be dissolved. The earth will melt with a fervent heat.

The glory of Jesus unveiled at his second coming apparently is such a spectacle that not only can mortal man, not even the elements themselves cannot bear the heat and the light and the brilliance of his Lord. So there's a sense in which some people have seen God and there's a sense which they have not in the first Timothy chapter six and verse sixteen speaking of Christ. Let me get further back.

I'll start at verse thirteen, since that's where this long sentence begins. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things and before Christ Jesus, who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ appearing, which he will manifest in his own time. He who is the blessed and only potentate the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, apparently referring to Christ and those terms refer to Christ in the book of Revelation, though it's not clear he could be referring to the father that Jesus will manifest, but probably Christ, because who alone has immortality dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see that must be the father because people have seen Jesus to whom be honor and everlasting power.

So God has not no one has seen or can see. He was an unapproachable light. Can't see God in your mortal body, at least.

Yet, although we cannot stand, the Bible tells us that we do and are expected to love him, though we do not think it says in first Peter one eight whom having not seen the love in whom, though now you cannot yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory receiving the end of your faith. The salvation of your soul. So Peter says that we have not seen him, but we love him nonetheless.

Just like Rebecca, when she was given the opportunity to go back to another man she'd never been in to marry a man Isaac, whom she never laid eyes on. She only knew of his father by reputation, but never seen the man she was married. She she chose to be his wife.

She chose to love him, and the Bible says when they came here, they did love each other. She she, like the church on Earth today, has decided to marry somebody and to love somebody who may never really set eyes on. And Peter says that that's normal for Christians at this particular point in time.

Remember, Jesus said to the disciples, what did Thomas in particular when he showed in his hands and feet and Thomas of my Lord, my God, Jesus said, You believe because you've seen, but blessed are those who, having not seen yet believe it is normative in all the generations since those of the apostles and Christ for us to love and believe in him who we have not seen. In fact, we demonstrate that we love him who we cannot see by loving his kids, whom we can see. And John says in first John four and verse twenty, he says, If any man says, I love God but hates his brother, he's a liar for he that loves not his brother, whom he has seen.

How can he love God whom he has not seen? Apparently, we do see God in his people, and if we don't love him when we see him there, we can't love him when we don't see him at all. That's what John seems to be saying. So we have these affirmations throughout scripture that God is invisible, can't be seen, dwells in unapproachable light.

No one has seen him or can see him. No man has seen God at any time, and then you've got all this conflicting information in the Old Testament, and we read again and again of people seeing God being Jehovah. Yet when they see him, we never read of him seeing him unveiled.

He presents himself to them in some filtered form. I dare say just as when he came in Christ. Actually, when he came in Christ, he was less veiled than ever, because it says in Hebrews chapter 1 and verses 1 and 2 that God, who at sundry times in diverse manners and times past, spake unto our fathers through his servant the prophet, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, who, verse 3 says, who Jesus is the express image of his person and the brightness of his glory.

So Jesus is about the best demonstration and appearance of God on earth that anyone ever has seen. He is the expression of his person, unlike anything the prophet saw, but the prophet did see God in even more filtered form. I could use that term.

There are a number of ways the scripture says that people see God. The first of those is what we could call theophany, and this is where God and some theologians say Christ himself appeared in the Old Testament before the incarnation and spoken and interacted with his people on occasion briefly. It would be impossible to make a total list of all of

these theophanies, and some of them are disputable.

No, for example, I believe no case. It was a theophany that many people do not, but we certainly know there were theophanies. We know that God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day and no doubt in a visible form of his walking is probably in a physical body.

We know that a man wrestled with Jacob all night physically, and at the end of it, Jacob said, I've seen God face to face in my life is preserved. He named the place Penuel, the face of God, because he had an encounter with God. This is a physical wrestling match.

I mean, we know it's physical because he walked away limping because the man who wrestled with text on fine crippled and he recognized that he'd seen God. I personally think that he thought Christ, but Christ is God before before he came to the earth and still part of the Godhead. So these are cases in the Old Testament.

People actually did see God in in Genesis 18 one. It says Abraham saw Jehovah. And he was sitting in the Abraham was sitting in the shade of his tent door in the heat of the day, and he saw three men coming.

Now, the temptation is to think he saw the Trinity, because he he thought Jehovah. That's what he thought. Three men.

But as it turns out, you read the narrative further. Two of those men were angels, but the other one was Jehovah. And he and these men ate food with him.

He cooked for them and had food prepared and brought it to them, and they ate with him. This was a physical manifestation of the Bible distinctly tells us that was the Lord. He saw the Lord when God appeared in a physical manifestation like this.

The Old Testament. This is what theologians have termed a theophany comes from two Greek word. They are between God, which means appearance and or appearing.

And so they often they often is an appearance of God. And there were a number of these new Testament. The parents of Samson were visited by a divine being, and they didn't know who it was at first.

But when they offered a sacrifice and he went up in the flames of the sacrifice in the heavens, the father said, We're going to die because we've seen God. And his wife said, Well, you know, if we're going to die, I don't think you don't think you would have given all these promises. I think we're not going to die.

But the fact is, he recognized that he'd seen God in a physical form. And and he thought, of course, you can't do that and live. But he had seen a theophany, and apparently people can see theophany can live.

That story is in Judges 13, and that statement is in verse 22. Jacob wrestling with the man on it is in Genesis 32, and there are many other cases. The man who walked with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fire and furnace.

The king said, I hear the third. The fourth one looks to me like a son of God. Well, a divine person, obviously.

Christians are very much prone to think this was an appearance of Christ, and I think that's a fair assumption. Although it could have been an angel, we don't know, but it could have been a theophany. There were such in the Old Testament, and people have seen God.

But in those cases, God was veiled in a human structure, the structure of a human body, or in some cases, another kind of physical structure, like a flame in a bush. Or a cloud, a pillar of clouds. God was in there.

They saw God. These were theophany appearances of God, where people actually laid eyes on an appearance that was God. But he was veiled through clouds of smoke or through flame or through human flesh or whatever.

This is one way in which people can see God, and it does not contradict the idea that no one has ever seen God unveiled. Glory, because these were cases where God was indeed veiled. There are another way that people saw God in the Old Testament.

That's in vision. In Exodus 24:10, we read that the elders of Israel went up on the Mount of Sinai, and they were eating a meal there, and it says they saw the God of Israel there. But I guess it was a vision that they had.

It was a vision of God, because in Numbers chapter 12, verse 6, as I said earlier tonight, God said, If I appear to anyone other than Moses, it's going to be in dreams and visions and dark things. But Moses didn't seem to be a little more distinct than that. I believe they had a vision of God.

Isaiah certainly did when he said in Isaiah 6, 1, In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his veil filled with heaven. He saw God, he saw the Lord. But it was a vision.

In fact, the very first word in the book of Isaiah speaks of the vision that Isaiah's friend Amos saw. So it was a vision of God. Now, what is a vision? Now, when we speak of a vision, we use it very broadly.

If someone has a bright idea, we call them a man of vision. If someone has an agenda, they call it their vision, if they're a church leader. And I mean, there's all kinds of ways that the word vision is used differently than in the Bible.

And I don't understand what visions are. I read about them, but I don't know what they are, essentially. But I do know this.

They are likened to dreams, and it seems like dreams and visions are different from each other, only with respect to the fact that in one case, the person is asleep, and the other time the person is awake. So if we understood more what dreams were, we might understand better what visions were, because they might be simply the waking counterpart of dreams. Now, I'll tell you what I think about visions, but I don't know if I'm right.

I could be wrong. If you watch a live telecast of the United States President making a State of the Union address, and it's live, but you watch it on a television screen. If someone asks you the next day, did you see the President give his speech last night? You could say yes.

But have you seen him really? Well, it's as good as seeing him. You saw a perfect representation on a screen that met your eye every time he blinked. In real life, he blinked on screen.

It was a true image. It's a vision, a television. Tele means distant, and vision means seeing.

And I don't know if I'm right, but I suspect that visions may be that people who saw God high and lifted up, they didn't see him directly. They saw something like an image presented to their senses that might be analogous to a live broadcast on TV or might not be. But they did not see God directly.

But what they saw was true enough, pure enough, a representation of God that when he spoke, it was really God speaking to them. And when they saw him do such things, God was really doing those things. At least I believe so.

Or maybe visions aren't that way. Maybe visions are entirely imaginary like dreams are. But God gives them in order to communicate something.

When King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, this image with a head of gold and chest of silver and belly of bronze and legs of iron and so forth, that image didn't exist in real life. It was a make-believe dream that represented something, a representative succession of Gentile empire. And that's what dreams are like.

Maybe visions are like that, too. Maybe they're not like television. Maybe they're just like something that is presented to the senses in which God is a player in some cases.

And when he is, they say, I saw God. It's hard to say. Visions are a mystery to me because I've never had that kind of vision.

I've had dreams. I've never had a vision such as the Bible describes, although I believe in them. God can also be seen scripturally in his creation.

In Romans chapter one in verse 20, Paul said, for the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen, being made manifest in the things that he has made. Now, Paul doesn't shy away from the paradox because the invisible attributes of God are clearly seen. How can anything that's invisible be clearly seen? If it's seen, it's not invisible.

But Paul here is joining the dichotomy of no one has seen God with the fact that some people have seen God. But it's not, there's no contradiction because Paul is not saying that people, when they look at nature, see God directly, which is what no one can do. But they see God manifesting his nature, manifesting his power.

In fact, that's what Paul says. The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being made manifest in the things he has made, even his eternal power and deity or Godhead. And so those things of God are seen in nature.

When you see the stars or the heavens declare the glory of God, Paul 19 said, and it's not really God that you're seeing directly, but in a sense you can see God that way. And that gets us close to what I suspect Jesus might be saying when he says that pure heart will see God. Another way that God is seen in scripture, as we point out, is in Jesus.

In John 14, nine, when Philip said to him, Lord, just show us the father. And that's the five of us. Have I been so long time with you, Philip, and you still don't know me? I tell you, he that has seen me has seen the father.

So why do you say, show us the father? Do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me? So if you've seen me, he said, you've seen the father in both Colossians and Hebrews. I quoted Hebrews 13 a moment ago. It says that Christ is the image and express appearance or image of God.

So when we look at Jesus, we're not seeing an unveiled vision of God, but we are seeing the best representation of God made visible to human eyes in all history. Because what Jesus did, his father, he said, I can do nothing but what the father shows me to do. The son can do nothing of what the father does.

The son watches and does just the same thing. He says, the words I speak here, they're not my own. It's the father who does the work for me.

And Jesus made it very clear. If you want to know what God is like, just look at him, because whatever he did was what God does. And so, in a sense, you see God in him.

You can also in the New Testament, see God by way of inward revelation. Now, this is something I could say that I have some experience with, so I'm not sure that I could ever describe it to someone who had not had it. But this is how it was put in John 14, verses

21 through 23.

Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples and said, he who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my father and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. And Judith, not a scary, it said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world? And Jesus answered and said to him, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. That is, of course, in us.

God lives in us. And Jesus described this as coming and manifesting himself to us. There is when God truly comes to live in you, there is a manifestation of his presence.

His holy spirit is announcing upon arrival. I don't mean I'm not alluding to speaking in tongues. That is not my view.

Speaking in tongues is always present when the Holy Spirit comes. That's not my position. My position is that when God, the God who created the universe, invades your body and invades your soul, it's kind of hard to miss.

It's not an ordinary, everyday, mundane kind of thing. You are transformed. You die and resurrect spiritually.

You are born again. It's dramatic. It's like being raised from the dead.

We were dead in Christ Jesus and he makes us alive. How could you not be aware that that's happened? If that has happened to you. And so there's this inward revelation, this inward manifestation, this inward witness.

So that John says in 1 John chapter five, he that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. And Paul says in Romans eight that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. So this is an inward revelation where there's a sense in which we see God because he manifests himself to us subjectively.

Now, this is, of course, a result of faith. And the Bible teaches that when it comes to invisible things, faith plays the role that sight plays toward the visible realms. The Bible teaches that we live simultaneously in two arenas, the physical and the nonphysical.

As Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 4, 18, he said for the visible things are temporal. But the things that are not seen are eternal. There is a temporal part of us, the atoms and molecules and cells of our body.

We wrestle with, you know, principalities and powers. There's a dealings in the spiritual realm that we do as well as our dealings with ordinary flesh and blood people. Now, when it comes to the visible, tangible realm, the best way we know of anything in it is by sight, which is why an eyewitness testimony is the best of all testimonies in court,

because if you saw it, there's a very good chance that it's real and it did happen.

But in the unseen realm, in order to know anything about the unseen realm, you can't see it. So there must be some other form of evidence that takes the place of sight so that we gain access to information about the unseen realm. And in Hebrews chapter 11, in verse one, it says, Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, and it is the evidence of things that are not seen.

Just as eyesight is the evidence of the things that are seen, faith is the evidence of things that are not seen. And so we read also in Hebrews 11, in verse 13, that these all died in faith, not having ever received the fulfillment of the promise, but they saw them afar off and embraced them and confessed that they were children, strangers and soldiers in the land. Now, in other words, they saw by faith the promise, the fulfillment far off, but it hadn't happened yet, but they could see it.

Likewise, in Hebrews chapter 11, in verse 27, it speaks of Moses when he fled from Egypt from the pharaoh. It says he fled from Egypt and he endured as one who sees him who is invisible. Now, it says he did this by faith, by faith.

Moses fled from Egypt and he endured the hardships of that flight as a man would endure it if he could see God who is invisible. Moses couldn't see God at that point, but he endured as if he could because he had faith. His faith that God was with him was as good as if he could see it.

The that's what true faith really is. True faith is a firm conviction. Faith is wishful thinking and hope so and so forth.

And there's not a lot of people who call themselves believers who don't really have any firmness of faith at all. That would change their whole life. You know, Abraham is an example in Romans chapter four.

It says that he was not weak in faith. He didn't stagger at the promise of God. He didn't consider the deadness of his own body or the deadness of Sarah's womb, being as old as they were and incapable of having children, which God said they could and would.

It says, but he did not stagger in at the promise of God. He was strong in faith. He was being strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, he says, because he was convinced that he who promised was able to perform it.

I mean, this man changed his whole life, changed his name based on a promise that he'd never seen fulfilled, but he acted as if it was as true as if he could see it. That's what faith is like. And interestingly, after Paul goes through all that Romans four, he says, therefore, it, namely his faith, was accounted to him for righteousness.

In other words, that's the kind of faith that is imputed to people for right. It's not some

lesser inferior type because his faith was so life changing and it changed the whole direction of his life, the way he thought about himself and others in the whole his whole destiny. I mean, it was he and he felt that way as much as if he had seen it with his eyes.

And by faith, in a sense, we can say we see Jesus Paul or the writer of Hebrews says that we do not yet see all things put under man, but we do see Jesus who is made a little lower than the angels. But I don't see him with my eyes, but I see him by faith. I believe what he said.

The Bible says in Hebrew chapter twelve that we're laying aside every weight and setting sin that encumbers us and run with patience. The race that is before us looking unto Jesus. And it does consider him way we are faith is upon him, and we run this race and live this life as as truly as if we could see him with us.

We know he's with us. It's a conviction. That's what faith is.

It's a life changing conviction. So faith is as good as sight in terms of the unseen realm and God's in that realm to believe in him whom we have not seen is a blessing. He said, you have believed because you've seen the blessing is he who has not seen and yet believe.

And then, of course, there's another sense in which people can see God, and that is when Jesus comes back. We all know that we anticipate seeing Jesus when he comes back. Job even anticipate that, although Job is very probably the oldest book in the Bible written earlier than any of the others that we know of.

And yet way back then, there was a hope of resurrection and of seeing God ultimately to the righteous. He didn't necessarily believe everyone would see God, but he knew that God was his redeemer and would not leave him in the grave and would reveal himself to him. In Job 19, 25, Job said, For I know that my redeemer lives and he shall stand at last on the earth.

Of course, that is, I believe, the second coming of Christ. And after my skin is destroyed, you know, after I've died and decomposed this, I know that in my flesh, I shall see God. What? After your flesh is decomposed, how are you going to do it in your flesh? Well, it's a statement of the resurrection.

And it says, Whom I shall see for myself, it says in my flesh, I shall see God whom I will see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another. How my heart yearns within me. The anticipation of seeing Jesus, of seeing God at the second coming in first John, chapter three, verses two and three says, But now are we the sons of God and does not yet appear what we shall be.

But we know that when he shall appear, we should be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Now, notice we see him now, but we don't see him as he is. We don't have his

unveiled.

We don't have the unveiled view until Jesus comes back in his unveiled glory. In first Corinthians 13, 12, Paul said, For now we see through a glass darkly, but then that's when Jesus returns face to face. So we look forward to actually seeing him face to face.

The next question is, in what sense did Jesus mean it when he said the pure in heart will see God? Because in some ways, even the non pure in heart are going to see God. They're all going to stand at his judgment throne. They'll see him there.

And so in what sense especially do the pure in heart see God? There's more than one possibility, and some of them are in this list that we've considered, but certainly one of them is that we will see him on friendly terms when he returns. If someone says, I never want to see you again, it doesn't necessarily mean that the very sight of them is something that would repulse them. Although maybe they feel that way at the moment, but it means they don't want to see them on friendly terms.

They don't want to commune with them. They don't want to be together with them. And there will be sinners will see God on the day of judgment, but they will not see him on friendly terms.

Those who are pure in heart will. And I don't know if that's what Jesus meant when he said the pure in heart will see God that he was referring to at the second coming or the judgment. In that sense, I'll see him in a way differently than other people do.

They'll see him as a friend. He will not be like a thief to them. But to those who are in darkness, he'll be like a thief will not be a friendly encounter.

Now, I suspect that Jesus had other things in mind because seeing God, as I pointed out, is a spiritual experience to inscription. And although Paul saw vision and so did other Christians division, Stephen saw a vision of Christ, it would appear yet not all Christians have vision. At least not in this lifetime.

But there is a sense in which every true Christian has had the manifestation of Christ within them because Jesus said he that loves me keeps my commandments and I will. My father will come and make manifestoes to him. If you've been if you're converted, you've had this manifestation, but there's more to it than that.

I believe that because the believer has faith, he can see Christ. He can see God in places that no one else can see them, not the least of which, for example, is in nature. The heavens declare the glory of God, but the unbelievers seem to be blind and deaf to it.

But you can see God. You can see the glory of God because your eyes are open because your heart is pure. You don't have anything clogging up your spiritual vision.

And you can see God in places others do not. You can see God, no doubt, even in people. You can see God in circumstances.

I hope. One of the most pure hearts in the Old Testament is Joseph kept himself pure in very difficult temptations. But remember what he how he saw his circumstances of his brother selling him in slavery.

So if you intend to evil against me, but God meant it for good. It was not you that sent me. It was God who did.

He saw God in the circumstances the way that his brothers didn't see God and the way that people who don't have pure heart can't. People who are not pure in heart are more likely to become bitter and resentful if God treats them harshly. But those who have a pure heart see God in it and say, oh, this is God had a purpose in this.

This is great. This is God working. And there is a sense in which Christians have, therefore, a perception of the unseen, which others do not.

We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. So seeing God may not only refer to seeing him on good terms at the second coming, but it may also be that Jesus means they will see God in places others don't. After all, the Pharisees didn't see God when he was looking at him face to face.

I mean, Jesus stood right before them and they still didn't couldn't identify who he really was. Why they weren't pure in heart and they didn't see God there. In fact, that might even be the principle way in which Jesus means that only the pure heart will recognize God when they see Jesus will recognize that Jesus is God will recognize who it is they're looking at.

The disciples didn't recognize it immediately. They walked with Jesus a long time and still didn't know quite who he was when he filled the storm. This is what manner of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him they didn't quite grasp it, who he was yet.

But they were getting there. It dawned on them gradually. But purity of heart allows you to recognize Jesus in a way that you could not if you were not pure heart.

Why? Because if your motives are impure, you'll be always trying to obscure the truth and the light, the light. You'll hate the light because your deeds are evil. But those who do the truth come to the light.

And so their works can be made manifest that running God. So there's a sense in which we see God places everywhere, really, because, you know, God is everywhere. And although none of us have yet seen his unveiled glory any more than Moses had yet, we see God everywhere in ways that people whose hearts are not pure cannot.

Now, I'm giving everyone here the benefit of the doubt that their hearts are pure and that you do see God, as Jesus said. I don't know if that's true of all of us or if it's true of us at all times, because it certainly is possible for our hearts to become polluted. But it is only as our hearts are pure and holy before God that we can anticipate seeing God.

What does it say in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14? It says, pursue peace, holiness. All right, actually says pursue peace with all men and holiness. Then what does it say? Without which no one will see the Lord.

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Only the pure in heart will see God. The right of Hebrews says, and this actually comes from the Old Testament, from one of the songs in Psalm 24, which is the song that follows probably the most familiar song in the Bible.

This one is not as familiar to everyone, but in verse three of Psalm 24, it says, who may ascend to the hill of the Lord or who may stand in his holy place? And the answer comes back. He was clean hands and a pure heart. There's that pure heart, the one who has a pure heart and has clean hands.

That one can stand comfortably in the presence of God, can ascend his hill and dwell in his holy place. As David longed to do, he said, there's one thing I've desired of the Lord, and that alone will I speak that I might dwell in the house of the Lord to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in his temple. In Psalm 27, four.

So David was sure in heart sometimes. And when he was, he got to see the beauty of the Lord. He got to meditate in his temple.

Those who have pure hearts and clean hands, it says now the clean hands part, of course, has to do with your action. And the Pharisees, to a certain extent, probably kept their hands clean. And the religion of the Jews, at least those that were pious, probably did not neglect this part about the clean hands.

In fact, they washed their hands all the time. We read in Mark chapter seven, but the heart part was what they're missing. Jesus could have said, blessed are the pure in heart and clean of hands, for they shall see God.

But the clean of hands was not an issue with the prevailing religious world. But the purity of heart was the missing element. So he focused on that.

You need to be pure in heart if you want to see God. Now, the Bible in the old and New Testament affirmed that the heart is the most important thing to God. According to Proverbs 23, the heart is actually the seat of all of a person's secret thoughts and motives and what's really going on, who he really is.

It's all defined by what's in his heart. Solomon warned his son not to associate or not to accept invitations from miserly hosts. Because they have an agenda, they have, you

know, if they're miser, they're not sharing generously, they're going to be sharing so that they can get something out of you.

And he says in verse six, Proverbs 23, six and seven, do not eat the bread of a miser nor desire his delicacies for as he thinks in his heart. So is he eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you. Something else is going on in there.

What he says is one thing. And what he's really thinking is something else. It's what's in his heart that defines the man, because that is the the core of a person's character and personality and motivation.

And that, therefore, is the part that matters to God the most. In Proverbs 4, 23, it says, Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. All the issues of life that matter spring from the heart.

And Jesus said the same thing. It's the same thing that Proverbs said. Once again, Jesus and the Old Testament are always pretty much on the same page when it comes to spiritual and moral issues.

But in Matthew 15, and he said this in order to really take to task the Pharisees about their externalism. And in Chapter 15 of Matthew, verses 18 and 19, Jesus said, But those things which proceed out of a mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.

Now, what comes out of the heart is what's important. The defilement of the sinner is that which emanates from his heart. The righteousness of the righteous is that which emanates from the heart.

Remember when Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse to choose a successor for Saul and all the older sons of Jesse were presented to him first, and they were big and strong and looked pretty promising, like Saul was big and strong and promising. But God said, No, that's not the one. Finally, David comes in just a lad, and he's chosen.

And God told Samuel, Do not regard him because of his size. But he says, The Lord looks at what he says. The man looks on the outward appearance.

God looks at the heart. The heart is the area that God is scrutinizing, because that's where the real person lives his life. Outwardly, you can be a hypocrite.

You can be utterly corrupt and impure in heart and live like a Christian outwardly and fool everybody except one person, the one that matters. Paul says that the goal of the Christian life is, therefore, to love and believe out of a pure heart. The pure heart is the foundation from which the love must spring.

We see this in First Timothy, Chapter one in verse five. Different translations arrange these words differently, but in the New King James, he says, Now, the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith. The purpose for Paul, given instruction, is that his audience might have love proceeding from a pure heart and from a good conscience and from sincere faith.

The pure heart is that from which love must come, because we all know it's possible to love impurely. It's possible to love somebody because we really want something from them rather than because of any real concern about their well being in First Peter, Chapter one and verse twenty two. Peter says, Since you have purified your soul or your heart in obeying the truth through the spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart as a Christian, your heart is made pure.

Therefore, you're to love out of a pure heart. Also in Second Timothy and Chapter two, Second Timothy, Chapter two and verse twenty two. Paul tells Timothy, Flee also youthful love, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Those with whom we must be in fellowship are those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. He does not specify the particulars of the doctrine that these people must hold. He just does.

If they call on the Lord out of a pure heart, then these are the ones that we are with. These are the ones we are one with. These are our Christian companions.

I've had many times people asking, you know, well, where do you draw the line theologically in terms of fellowship and call someone a heretic and drum them out and have nothing to do with them? Well, there are lines that I would draw theologically, but the principle line is that which Paul expressed right there. Those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Now, what constitutes purity of heart? For one thing, it has to have all the residual stains removed, because before you can have a pure heart, you have to live.

And when you live without God, you sin. All have sinned, we know that, and come short of the glory of God, and therefore all have stained their conscience and their heart by sin. But in the book of Hebrews, we're told that the blood of Jesus purifies the heart from such residual defilement.

Hebrews 9, 14. The writer says, How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Your conscience, your heart can be cleansed and made pure by the blood of Jesus. And in chapter 10 of Hebrews, in verse 22, essentially the same thought, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Our hearts have to be true, our hearts have to be pure, and when they are, we can draw near. Like it says in the psalm, who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in the Lord's place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart. We can draw near.

We can ascend the hill of the Lord and fellowship with God if our hearts are pure and it makes it very clear the blood of Jesus is what cleanses. Now, that is, of course, an objective reality. It's not necessarily even something that you know from the way it feels inside forgiveness.

You might get a tremendous witness and sense of forgiveness, but you can be forgiven without knowing you forgive. You can be forgiven without sensing that. That's an objective legal transaction.

God accepts Christ's sacrifice on behalf of you so that he imputes Christ's righteousness. That's kind of a legal thing. It's objective.

It's not something you subjectively sense, necessarily. But a pure heart also has to do with subjective behavior so that you know when you have it and when you don't. A pure heart is one that is unpolluted.

And one of those things that pollutes the heart is guile. Now, guile simply means hypocrisy. It means pretense.

There's a brother in this room that I won't name. I don't want to embarrass him, but he will recall that many people have described him as a brother without guile. It's one of the first things that people who know him say about him.

They don't say he's real spiritual. So he is. They don't say a whole bunch of things about him, but they say he's got a guileless heart.

He's pure. He's unpretentious. And I agree with that assessment of him.

In fact, it's quite obvious when you know him. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming in John 147, he said, Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. What a rare thing in Israel in those days.

Someone who wasn't pretending to be more religious than he is. Somebody who's sincere. Somebody who's not a hypocrite.

Jesus was refreshed to see such a heart without guile. Actually, the 144,000 described in Revelation are described as being without guile. They have no guile in Revelation 14.5. Jesus taught about this kind of purity of heart in the Sermon on the Mount in the early part of chapter six of Matthew, where he gave illustrations of how to and how not to do your alms and say your prayers and do your fasting.

He said, When you fast, when you pray, when you do your own, don't do it like the

hypocrites. You know, do it guilelessly, do it sincerely. And he gave an example of how they did it and how his disciples should do it.

But he basically was teaching your religious service. God must be internally. Coherent and pure, your heart must be pure.

Well, there's a whole lot of pollution that can get into the heart. And the Bible talks about some of them. I don't want to go into great detail about them, but I've listed some of your notes.

An unpolluted heart is holy for God. That's what pure means is unpolluted. It has no foreign element.

Pure water is nothing but water. There's nothing else in it polluting it. If there's something in it, it's impure.

And a pure heart has is a heart with one thing. And that one thing is God. Jesus said, Mary has chosen that one thing that is needful.

It will not be taken from her. And a heart like that is that is the person of the pure is a person of one thing. And that is God.

Holy, dedicated, holy, surrendered to God. Now, you might say, well, Steve, I'm a Christian, but I don't know that I describe myself as holy, surrendered God every moment of every day, loving God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength every moment of every day. Well, I don't I guess I couldn't describe myself that way either.

I wouldn't pretend that I'd be I have guile and I wouldn't have a pure heart. I must confess, I do not exemplify purity of heart at every moment of every day. But I will say that when I don't, my vision of God becomes hazy, becomes obscure.

It's as your heart is pure that you see God most clearly. And as pollution creep in, your vision of God is changed, I believe, and then Jesus said in Matthew 22, 37, You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, all your mind and all your strength. If you love God with all your heart, that's the one thing that makes it pure.

You can't have love of the world or love of other things. James said that, you know, he, a friend of the world is the enemy of God. John said in 1 John 2 that if anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him.

You have to love one thing supremely, and that is God himself and his will for you. A pure heart is unpolluted with complexity. It's simple.

In Acts 246, the spiritual life of the early church was described as they conduct themselves in simplicity. They were not complex theologically, I suspect. And as I said, Jesus said of Mary and Martha, there's only one thing needs one.

Mary's the one who's chosen that one thing. Keep it up. That's all that's necessary.

One thing simple, an unpolluted heart is morally pure. We know that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that a man who looks at a woman to lust after her had committed adultery already with her in his heart. That certainly isn't a pure heart if it's full of adultery.

And so obviously, moral purity must be in the heart to not just in the action. That's the area where the Pharisees, I think, needed the most correction. But it's not as if they had to wait for Jesus to come for them to find out they could have read their Old Testament in Job 31.

What Job said, I've made a covenant with my eyes. Why then should I look upon a maid? He indicated that it would be wrong for him to look at a woman other than his wife. That was known before Jesus said it a long time before Jesus said it.

A pure heart must be free from immorality. Another thing that pollutes the heart is love of money. We're told in First Timothy chapter six and verses six through ten, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

And some, having desired it, desire to be rich, fall into all kinds of snares and complexities in their life and they drown their souls in perdition and destruction. The love of money is a pollutant. In Matthew 13, 22, Jesus told the story of a seed that fell in ground where thorns and thistles grew up and choked out the seed.

And he said, that's those who hear the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches come and choke out the good seed. The heart is the soil. The deceitfulness of riches is a pollutant that grows up like bad seed in the soil and corrupts and kills the good seed in the heart.

And of course, a pure heart is one that is trusting and is not polluted with doubt. James said in James chapter one, but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering for he that wavers, he that doubts is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and time. For let not that man think that he will receive anything from the Lord.

Faith must be the only element in your thoughts toward God, as opposed to doubt. Jesus said in Mark 11, 23, said, Whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you receive it and you shall have it. He said you have to believe without doubting.

So doubting is a pollutant to the heart. Simple childlike trust without doubt. Unconcerned about material wealth.

Not loving the world. Morally pure thoughts. A simple walk with Jesus.

That's what brings you into contact with God. I was at the prison in Sheridan last night

and taking Bible questions from the prisoners for a couple hours, and they asked a lot of questions about things that didn't even matter. I was amazed they get really tied up in trivia.

They asked me what I thought about the Bible code, and I expressed my own doubts about the Bible code. I said, I don't know. I mean, I certainly don't read Hebrew, and I don't have a computer program, and just my first impressions make me doubtful.

And then some of them leap to the defense of the Bible code and try to make me believe it was right and so forth. I said, wait, wait, wait, wait. I don't care whether the Bible code is real or not.

I can't imagine one thing in my life that would be affected if it is true or if it is false. It's just a bit of trivia that has nothing to do with my walk with Jesus. And as I get older in the Lord, I become less and less interested in bothering myself with mere matters of curiosity.

I want to know the practical stuff. I want to know how to walk with Jesus. I said, you tell me, give me a book that tells me how to love my wife as Christ loves the church.

Give me a book that tells me how to hate sin and love holiness. Tell me how. Give me a book that tells me how to understand what Jesus said when he told me what he wants me to do.

Give me those kinds of books. I can get excited about that because that's what I want. I'm a man of one thing.

I might have a lot of familiarity with a lot of other things in the Bible, but as far as my heart is concerned, there's one thing only that matters to me, and that's just following Jesus. We can. I can talk sometimes knowledgeably about some other things that aren't directly related, but I talk in such a disinterested way because in most cases, I don't care.

I mean, even things that some people get really wild about, like the Trinity. There's a lot of mystery there. I believe in the Trinity, but it's not that big a deal to me, the Trinity.

The Bible doesn't make a big deal of it anywhere. I don't see the Bible even mention the Trinity directly, but I do believe it is a biblical doctrine. But what if I believe this about the Trinity or that about the Trinity? What does it make a difference in the way I live my life for Jesus? That's what God's going to judge me for.

Remember, Jesus said, many will say, Lord, Lord, we prophesy in your name. We cast out demons in your name. We're real spiritual in your name.

And he said, you know, I never knew you didn't do the will of my father in heaven. Why

do you tell me, Lord, Lord, we don't do what I say? That's what I want to know. Tell me how to do what he says.

That's the one thing meaningful, and that's what I want.