

PURER IN HEART

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One of the qualities Paul told Timothy to have in order to be an example to his brethren was purity (1 Tim. 4:12). Every Christian knows he must be pure, but he may not realize all that is involved in practicing this trait. Thayer tells us that the Greek word *katharos*, from which purity is translated, means, in an ethical sense:

1) Free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt; 2) free from every admixture of what is false; sincere, genuine; 3) blameless, innocent; 4) unstained with the guilt of anything.

James wrote that “pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). One thing is certain: wicked deeds show a wicked heart. The prophet Micah asked: “Shall I be pure with wicked balances, and with a bag of deceitful weights?” (Mic. 6:11).

Jesus said that wicked, vile, and filthy words originate in an impure heart:

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (Mat. 12:34-35).

He also said:

But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man ... (Mat. 15:18-20).

Purity is obviously highly relevant to every part of a Christian’s thought, conduct, speech, and deeds. Indeed, David was moved to write that only the pure would have fellowship with God:

Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood, and hath not sworn deceitfully (Psa. 24:3-4).

Jesus made the same point in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat. 5:8). We can safely assume that the opposite is also true. Those who are not pure in heart will not see God.

Some may pretend to be pure, but if they are not, they will ultimately betray themselves. The wise man wrote: “Even a child maketh himself known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Pro. 20:11). He may be able to cover it up and deceive others for a while, but sooner or later he will, without fail, show his true colors. He will often do this when great pressure is placed on him, and he does not have time to remember to put on a front. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day are a classic example of this.

Paul wrote:

To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Tit. 1:15-16).

His statement is based on the truth that every person judges others by himself. The only person he knows intimately is himself. So, if he is dishonest, he tends to believe all others

are too. If he is pure in heart, he believes others are the same way. As Proverbs 20:11 states, he cannot help showing what he is by the things he does and says. This is why Jesus said: "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat. 7:20).

Everyone has trouble keeping a pure mind and always doing and saying those things God considers pure. Paul's counsel would help tremendously if we would follow it:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, *whatsoever things are pure*, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phi. 4:8).

We will keep our minds focused on God's word if we are pure, for these are the only truly pure words by which we can be guided. David wrote: "The words of Jehovah are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times" (Psa. 12:6). He also said: "The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psa. 19:8); and Psalm 119:140 states: "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it." Isn't it tragic that a growing number of brethren no longer believe this? No wonder they display so much deception, sophistry, fraud, and trickery. Surely, Proverbs 30:12 was describing them: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." Their faith has been shipwrecked. They ridicule those who try to obey the Lord, calling them "Bible-thumpers," "knuckleheads," and other terms of contempt. They would never humiliate themselves by quoting a verse of scripture or citing book, chapter, and verse for anything they taught (that would show they acknowledged the authority of God's word).

On the other hand, one who is pure in heart knows the importance, not only of obeying the will of God, but of not defiling himself by associating with the impure and disobedient—in or out of the church. Paul taught this principle when he wrote: "Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22).

The faithful child of God will strive to be pure in heart. He will practice 1 Timothy 1:5: "But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned." He will: "Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9), and he will recognize that "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy" (Jam. 3:17). Because he honors the word of God, believes in the necessity of living by it, and wants to possess that eternal home, he strives for purity in heart, in word, and deed. He believes what John wrote: "And every one that hath this hope set on him (Christ) purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).~