

Russell Kelfer

The Pure in Heart: “The Issues”

547-A

Series: The Beatitudes

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

The Pure in Heart: “The Issues”

Some time ago, we began a study of the Beatitudes. We started with the meaning of being blessed: “Oh What Bliss”. We have covered these topics: blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and blessed are the merciful. We then began a study of blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

The heart is the real you. The heart is what you think when you think no one knows what you think. The heart is your real emotions. It is how you really feel. It is how you really feel about God, how you really feel about your spouse, how you really feel about your parents, and how you really feel about yourself. This is your heart. The heart is your real will. It is what you would do given the freedom with neither restraint nor consequences. This is the heart.

The Scripture teaches that this is what God sees when He looks at you and me. Man looks on the outward appearance, what he does and how he looks, but God looks on the heart. What God wants is a heart that is becoming increasingly, progressively pure.

By way of review we need to remember that the word pure has five basic meanings in Scripture. In tracing them, we found that there were five characteristics of a pure heart that corresponded with those five definitions.

1- To be pure is to be free from false adornment. False adornment is like having an expensive watch in a cheap case. It is misleading. God’s evidence of that in the Christian’s life is the absence of hypocrisy. We see this in Matthew 23 as Jesus gave the Hypocrite of the Year Award. We learned from that passage what a hypocrite really is. We found that some of us knew some.

2- To be pure in heart is to be free from an admixture that diminishes value. Literally translated, God’s evidence of this is

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pure motives. When you sing, when you pray, when you witness, when you study and when you labor, you do it for one basic reason: to be acceptable to God as seen in II Corinthians 5:14. It is the love of Christ constraining you. You do these things because you are in love with the lover of your soul. This is the motive that pleases the heart of God.

3- To be pure in heart has to do with being free from restrictions that hinder usefulness. Picture a pipe that is free of corrosion, so that fluid can pour freely through it. This is what it means to have a clear conscience.

A clear conscience requires a three-fold responsibility in a Christian's life. The first was to have a clear conscience with God. We saw this in I John 1:9. It really means more than most of us give it credit for meaning. It means more than saying, "Hey Lord, sorry about that." It has to do with a real spirit of repentance in the heart. The second is to have a clear conscience before men. We did a study of I Corinthians 8 and 10 and Romans 14. The concept is that we are responsible for the tender consciences of our weaker brothers. The third is to have a clear conscience with man. The study of Matthew 5:23-24 teaches that having a clear conscience is more than gaining a clear conscience for ourselves, it is the principle of being reconciled to our brother.

4- To be pure in heart is to be free from disdain, discoloration or confusion. It was at this point that we began to discuss James 4 about the problem of double-mindedness. In James 4 we read,

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that
friendship with the world is enmity with God?

...Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts,
you double-minded. (James 4:4a,8b NKJV)

It was at this time that we decided we needed to know what are the lies that Satan tells that make the Christian double-minded.

Here we are, back to pure in heart. When you see the subject you will realize why I have avoided it as long as I have.

5- To be pure in heart is to be free from that which decays or corrupts. It has to do with moral purity of the thought life. God is not impressed with our performance. He is not even impressed with our appearance. He is impressed by a pure heart. This is a heart free from false adornment or hypocrisy. It is a heart that is unrestricted and has a clear conscience. It is a heart that is

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free from admixture, that has clear motives. It is a heart that is free from confusion, that is single-minded. But perhaps most of all, God is impressed and pleased by a heart that is not defiled by filth. It is a heart that is characterized by a clean thought life. This is the subject of this study. Here is an outline.

I- The Issues

- A- What is the heart?
- B- What are the marks of an impure heart?
- C- The thought life: the real you and me.
- D- What is lust?
 - 1- Three things we lust over.
 - 2- Six things we lust for
- E- The crisis of our secret thoughts
- F- Five motives for wanting a pure thought life

II- The Answers

- A- The case for innocence: what you see is what you get
- B- Transfusion equals transformation
- C- The ten-second moment of truth in the Christian’s life
- D- Major surgery on God’s realm: when and how it is accomplished

I will try to cover The Issues in this lesson and The Answers in the next. Let’s begin by asking ourselves, “What do we mean by the term ‘thought life’?” Thought life is the entirety of the process that goes on in the secrecy of the human mind. It includes your secret desires, that is the things you would like to do that you keep locked up in the closet of your mind. It includes your secret fantasies, those unreal kinds of self-directed dreams that overplay and yet point out the real desires of your life. All of us have certain kinds of fantasies that we play out in our minds that we don’t want anyone else to know about. It includes your imaginary conversations where no wife or husband ever loses an argument, or the boss doesn’t get the last word. You think you are talking to yourself, but in reality you are listening to the voice of a stranger. Those imaginary experiences, that mental play-acting can seem so real that you may think it has happened, and you give yourself credit for the experience, although it is only a figment of your imagination.

How many of you think you understand what I mean when I say “thought life”? It is the game we play with reality. It is the sham we think is known only to us and the thoughts we think

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will never be expressed. But the truth is, that our thought life is the seedbed of preparation for future behavior.

As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

(Proverbs 23:7 paraphrased)

It is out of the heart that proceeds all of these forms of behavior that bring discredit to the name of God.

I want to ask another question, If there were a theater marquis this morning and it said, “Now showing: The Theater of My Heart”, or “My Thoughts for This Week”, how many tickets would you give out? Would we be shut down by the District Attorney’s office as unfit to see? How can this kind of chasm exist? If we are moral, upright believers compared with the world’s standards, why are we not transparent in our thoughts? Why shouldn’t we be able to flip on the projector at any time and show anyone around what is going on in our minds and our hearts?

I believe the key to understanding what it is that defiles the thought life is to understand what the word “lust” means. How many of you lust? Lust is an appetite that is out of control. It may be a good appetite, or it may be a bad appetite, but it is an appetite that is not under the dominion of God. It is an appetite that is out of control.

There are three categories of things we lust over:

1- We lust over people, things and experiences. We have a picture of David looking at Bathsheba. He was thinking in his mind that he wanted her. He was willing to pay whatever price was necessary to get her. His mind was no longer in control of the situation because his emotions consumed him. He then began to operate based on lust. It was an appetite out of control. As a result, there was adultery, later a murder and all sorts of judgments by God. There were all kinds of difficulties, because there was a moment in which his lust or appetite went out of control.

2- We also can have an appetite and lust over things. Lot had a lust for things. He wanted the best piece of real estate. Solomon had a lust for things. Even though he asked God for wisdom, he wanted all of the best that the world had to offer. When he did get it, it didn’t satisfy him.

3- We can also lust for experiences. Eve had this problem. Her wisdom lost out when she looked at the tree and thought that it

looked good to eat. She felt it would make her wise as the serpent told her. Satan said, "You can have a spiritual experience. You can be just like God." Eve fell for it.

There are three categories we lust over: people, things and experiences, but there are six specific things we lust for with resulting consequences. These may be more practical for us to think about. It is a breakdown of these three categories.

1- Some people lust for acceptance. They have an uncontrollable urge to be liked. They look in the mirror, and they don't like what they see. Or, they listen to other people talking, and they don't like what they hear. So with an uncontrollable urge to be accepted, oftentimes the end result is conformity or compromise. They do what everybody else is doing so that everybody else will like them, or they compromise their convictions hoping that will change people's attitudes. Sin. It gets out of control.

2- People lust in the desire to escape reality. They can't handle the present situations. They oftentimes get in bondage to addicting substances or new adventures.

3- Food is another area people lust after. Can you believe that we can actually lust for food? The end result is gluttony. A few years ago I went on a diet. I went a year and a half without eating any sweets even though my wife is the best dessert cook. After this, I decided that it wouldn't hurt for me to eat a little piece of candy out of a machine at work. I had lost the taste for sweets so I knew it wouldn't bother me. I ate a little piece. It was terribly sweet and I didn't like it. A few days later, I decided it wasn't really that bad, and I decided to eat some more. You can imagine the effects. By Christmas time there was a new dessert craze called Rice Krispies Bars. I developed a real taste for these. All I have to do is to walk through a room with them and I am caught. I had developed a lust for these treats. You may think that it takes a lot of will power not to eat sweets. But, no, it takes a lot of will power to eat just a few sweets.

4- Some people lust for power. When they are given just a little bit of authority, it turns into ambition.

5- Some people lust for sex. This is the problem that most men have. The men who don't have it can be categorized as exceptional or liars. This is a problem that they face in terms of the thought life.

6- Most women have the lust for security by possessing things.

Their thought life goes on and on thinking about what they can buy, when they can buy, and how good they will feel when they get it. It gives them security in this area or that.

The basic cause of all of these is discontentment. Discontentment is at the root of all lust. If you are satisfied with God's acceptance of you, how could you lust for the acceptance of others? If you are satisfied with relating to the world through God's eyes, why would you escape reality through lust? If you are satisfied to be nourished, then why would you lust for food? If you are satisfied to be used of God, then why would you lust for power? If you are satisfied with your mate, then why would you lust for another? If you are satisfied with your lot in life, then why would you lust for more? The basic cause of lust is discontentment. Contentment is being satisfied with your lot in life. Discontentment is not being satisfied with your lot in life. This is what lust is all about.

What do we know about these lusts, and how do they affect us? Scripture teaches us a few things. The first place we need to look is I Peter 2:11 where it says,

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from
fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (I Peter 2:11 NKJV)

Here is how this war is waged. The Spirit has access to your mind. Let's assume by using the gate of your eye you look at some sweet goodies, or you look at an immoral picture that stimulates certain thought patterns in your life. Let's suppose you look at something that resurrects a memory of a bad experience of rejection. Or you look at something that reminds you of a bad habit that you have. In your mind, immediately there is conflict. The conflict in the mind comes between truth and the lie. The truth says, there is an absolute, these things are not pleasing to God and you need to reject them. The lie says, wait a minute, all things are relative. Immediately, these thoughts go roaring through your mind,

- 1- "It's okay, because everybody else does it."
- 2- "No one will know."
- 3- "I'll repent right away."
- 4- "I'm doing better. I used to do it all the time."
- 5- "It's good for me emotionally because it gives me a release."

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So whatever these lusts are, the mind has to go through a conflict and all the while, your emotions are listening to the physical senses which are appealing to you. They are saying, "Let's do it!" So your will is caught in a tug of war between your mind and your emotions, between the Spirit of God and the flesh. Finally, it must decide if your mind will run wild and listen to your emotions, or will it come under the control of the Holy Spirit. All of this happens in a split second. It is up to us. The choices we make will be affected by how we program our spirits in the days to come, and how we overcome the way they have been programmed in the days past.

Imagine a movie screen with two projectors running at the same time. They are focused on the same screen showing two totally different programs.

1- The projector of the world. It is produced by the 20th Century Fox, Satan. It is reproducing all of the images he has recorded on the film of your life. It is rated R for rotten. The other one is produced by MGM with the Message of God to Man. It is reproducing the image of God and the will of God. It is rated G for godly. You can't watch them both at once, or you will go crazy. So hundreds of times a day, you have to choose either consciously or unconsciously to throw the switch from one to the other. The problem is when you refuse to throw the switch to see God's projection, the world's show overrides God's, because it has been shown so many more times in the same theater. Galatians 5, confirms this principle better than any. It says,

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Galatians 5:16,17 NKJV)

This shows our appetites warring within us, driving us to choose to give them the freedom to control our thoughts. That is where the battle is won or lost.

2- We learned that these lusts or uncontrolled appetites are self-destructive. Psalm 78:18 says,

And they tested God in their heart by asking for (meat) the food of their fancy. (Psalm 78:18 NKJV)

Later He gave them their request but sent leanness to their souls.

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II Peter 1:3,4 says,

as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (II Peter 1:3,4 NKJV)

We will talk about this in the next lesson, that by these you might become partakers of the divine nature because you have escaped the corruption and self-destructive tendencies that are in the flesh through lusts.

The truth is that lust cannot be satisfied. You cannot eat enough to satisfy the desire to eat. You cannot satisfy the desire for sex, for drugs or for drink. It is a whirlpool where the mind becomes diseased, and it always requires more and more and more to satisfy.

3- All lust is the result of a discontented spirit. A good reference is I Timothy 6:6-9 where Paul says,

Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain[c] we can carry nothing out.

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

But those who desire to be rich (and allow their appetites to take control) fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. (I Timothy 6:6-9 NKJV)

4- Yielding to lust makes you the slave of Satan. Romans 6:12,13 and 16 says,

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (Romans 6:12,13; 16 NKJV)

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The Amplified says,

Do you not know that if you continually surrender yourselves to anyone to do his will, you are the slaves of him whom you obey,
(Romans 6:16 Amplified Bible)

John 8:44 says to the unbeliever,

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.
(John 8:44 NKJV)

In other words, you cannot be in bondage to lustful drives without being in bondage to the author of those drives which is Satan. We kid ourselves when we say, “This is just my personal problem.” No, you and I are locked in a conflict, an eternal conflict, between the King of kings and the prince of darkness of this world. The battle is for control of our minds. If our minds can be brought under the control of the will of God, our bodies and our behavior will follow suit.

The Spirit of God and the spirit of the enemy are locked in mortal combat for the control of our minds. This is where the battle is fought. It isn’t that we just have some “little” habit, or some “little” problem, or some “little” thought process that is peculiar to us. We are caught in the midst of a Satanic conflict.

5- They choke out the Word of God. You may have noticed that when your thought life is under control, and the lusts that drive you are under God’s discipline, that the Word of God has meaning and it grows. But you let your sensual appetites come, and they will kill your taste for the Scriptures. You and I will find more reasons under those circumstances to avoid the Word of God. Mark 4:19 explains it. Paraphrased it says that some of the time the Word is sown among the thorns and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.

6- Eventually, they lead to more overt sins. We see this in James 1:13-16,

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires (or uncontrolled appetites) and enticed.

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

(James 1:13-16 NKJV)

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No overt sin is ever its own source. It always begins in the mind. It gets replayed in the mind often enough until the computer is programmed. When the moment comes, the behavior follows naturally.

You may be here or listening on tape and think to yourself that these lusts are no problem to you. That is great. But to those of us who do battle the flesh in one or more of these six areas, I think it is important for us to find the answers, to stop the hypocrisy, and to clean up the heart. I think this is important for five reasons.

1- Most of us have a fear of being found out. None of us want the world about us to know our hearts. I asked you at the beginning if you would like to program and play for the rest of us what went on in your mind this past week. We didn't have any real volunteers. I think that we walk around wondering if others know what we are thinking, and knowing that someday perhaps they will. Luke 8:17 in the Amplified says,

For there is nothing hid that shall not be disclosed nor anything secret that shall not be known and come out in the open. (Luke 8:17 Amplified Bible)

I Corinthians 4:5 paraphrased says,

...When the Lord comes He will turn on a light so that everyone can see exactly what each one of us is really like deep down in our hearts. Then everyone will know why we have been doing the Lord's work... (I Corinthians 4:5 TLB)

I don't know about you, but that verse doesn't excite me a whole lot. Luke says,

Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:3 NKJV)

2- We fear the judgment or discipline of God. Romans 2:16 in the Living Bible says,

The day will surely come when at God's command, Jesus Christ will judge the secret lives of everyone, their inward thoughts and motives. This is all part of God's great plan. (Romans 2:16 TLB)

Not only do we fear the judgment and the loss of rewards in heaven, but the wrath of God that must finally come and bring discipline back into our lives in order to get our attention, if we

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do not by an act of our will deal with the thought problems that continually plague us.

3- We fear the loss of power. Psalm 81 says,

But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me.

So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. (Psalm 81:11,12 NKJV)

In other words, they did their own thing in their own power. God then sent leanness to their souls. None of us want to be God's man or woman attempting to do God's work in our own strength just because our minds cannot be brought into the captivity of the Spirit.

4- We fear becoming unusable and being put on the shelf or being sent back to the barracks and disallowed from representing the King in the midst of the battle, because we could not win the battle of the mind. I Corinthians 9:26,27 in the Wuest translation,

Therefore, I so run in no uncertain manner. I so swing my fist not as one who in fighting, misses his opponent, merely beating the air and not striking a straight blow reaches its target. But I beat my body black and blue and make it my abject slave lest somehow, when I preach to others, I myself might become disqualified from further Christian service.

(I Corinthians 9:26,27 Wuest)

There is that nagging fear in all of us who labor in God's vineyard that by lowering the standards of what goes on in the mind, we might someday be disqualified from really being used in the Kingdom.

5- The final reason we must control our thought lives is the most important of all. We do not want to break the heart of God. II Corinthians 6:19 in the Living Bible goes like this,

Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you and that He lives within you?

(II Corinthians 6:19 TLB)

I Peter 1:13-15 goes on to say,

Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!

I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries.

The haters of the Lord would pretend submission to Him, but their fate would endure forever. (I Peter 1:13-15 NKJV)

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The key to understanding all of the Christian walk is to understand this one principle, God now lives inside of your heart. You asked Him in, didn't you? Some of you have done that just a short time ago, some of you a long time ago. Now would you invite the president of the United States or even your parents to come visit you and not scrub every nook and cranny, pick up all of the dirty clothes, change all of the sheets and wax all of the floors? Shame on you, if you wouldn't. When Christmas time comes, and we are going to have company, we have the house undergo an unbelievable scrub treatment. Everything is fixed, and everything is put in place. Why? Because important people are coming to visit, and we don't want to offend them with filth.

Paul says, "Haven't you yet learned that you have an honored guest in your heart? His name is Jesus Christ. He is allergic to filth, to all of the consuming lusts that war against the soul." The question is, must Jesus Christ be curled up in the corner of our hearts, grieved and limited by the absence of a pure, clean place to live? Don't we realize that when our minds run wild, Jesus is standing in the middle of that mental party that is going on, weeping. He hates it. Can we not learn to turn at the onset of impure, uncontrolled thoughts and say, "Jesus, does this thought make you happy?" If it doesn't, then say, "Excuse me, Lord. Please forgive me." We need to do this immediately. He will do it. He will scrub the mind anew. He will make it fresh and pure. That is His business. He is in the cleaning business. He has all of the tools.

So those are the issues, but we can praise God that there are clear solutions. They are not easy, but they are clear. In the next lesson, we would like to deal with these five things that every Christian can do to bring his thoughts under God's control.

1- We will talk about the case for innocence, the programming of a child's mind in his formative years that sets so many of his thought patterns for life.

2- We will talk about a God's eye view of the eye and realize that what you see is what you get. Scripture is very clear that what we do with our eyes will determine what God can do with our hearts. We will talk about man's responsibility for what he looks at and a woman's responsibility for what he sees.

3- We will talk about the ultimate goal of God which is a transfusion that leads to a transformation. This is how to replace

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wrong thought patterns over a long period of time and replace them with God's thoughts.

4- We will talk about the "ten second moment of truth" in which the battle with the mind is either won or lost. The key to the whole issue is the minute by minute choices.

5- We will take a look at radical, spiritual surgery. We will see what to do when the mind will not come under control. God does have a plan, and it does work, but there is a price attached to it.

There are not many of us who would like to have our thoughts magnified on the screen for everyone to see. Yet, by the same token, none of us here wants to be placed on the shelf and marked unusable for the Kingdom. Most of all, none of us wants to consciously fling filth in the face of God who now lives in the home of our hearts.

This week, ask God to help you become more conscious of what is showing in the theater of your mind. Remember that it is an exclusive showing. The audience is the King of kings. May He progressively come to view in each of us the message of a pure heart. As He sees that, we will see Him more clearly. Remember what the Scripture says, Oh what bliss for those whose hearts are becoming pure. They are becoming more intimately acquainted with God Himself.

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
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