

# NICK GUY & THE CASE OF THE SECRET CASE AFFAIR

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**THEME:** What does it mean to be “Pure in Heart?”

**NOTES:** In Matthew 5:8, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” What does it mean for us to have a pure heart?

**DEFINE PURITY:** Thomas Watson, in his commentary on Matthew 5:8, defines purity as a “sacred, refined thing. It stands diametrically opposed to whatever defiles.” He goes on to distinguish three kinds of purity:

First, there is, what he calls, a *primitive purity*, which is in God originally and essentially. Secondly there is *created purity*, meaning the holiness found in the angels and, at the beginning, in Adam.

Thirdly, there is an *evangelical purity*. This is where grace is mingled with some sin. This mixture, Watson writes, “God calls purity in a Gospel-sense...Where there is a study of purity and a loathing ourselves for our impurity, this is to be “pure in heart.”

Some equate being “pure in heart” with morality or civility, but these are not what Jesus is speaking of in this beatitude. The Greek word used for pure in this verse is *katharos*. It is where we get our word catharsis, and it means to make something pure by cleansing. This Greek word was often used to describe the process of refining metals to remove all of the impurities out of them.

The purity spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 5:8 goes beyond just performing good, moral deeds. He is not speaking merely of morality, but of gaining eternal life. Salvation cannot be found in morality. Of this, Thomas Watson wrote: “A man may be clothed with great moral virtues such as justice, charity, prudence, temperance - and yet go to hell.”

Although morality should follow salvation, it is not the basis of it. It can't be, since even with our most noble efforts, pure motives are found mingled with bad ones. And good deeds from bad motives is not Purity.

Watson wrote: “Morality can drown a man as fast as sin.”

Perfection of heart is needed for purity. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus said, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The Pharisees made numerous additions to the Law of God. Though many, these additions did not make living a holy life harder, it made it easier, and that by design. The Pharisees attempted to make it possible for a man to live in fulfillment of the Law,

something that is impossible.

**THE HEART, PART 1:** Jesus pointed out, in Matthew 15:19,20 that it is the things found inside of our hearts that make us impure. He said, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person...”

These things may not be visible to those around us (maybe not even to ourselves), but they cause the heart to be impure all the same.

As Thomas Watson put it in his commentary: “Would God open men’s eyes and show them their deformities and damnable spots, they would fly from themselves as from serpents.”

**THE HEART, PART 2:** In Matthew 5:8, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” The subject of purity, then, is the heart.”

For the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, holiness consisted chiefly in externals. Their purity was an outside purity. They had merely a show of purity. But to be pure in heart is not merely a show of morality. Doing the right thing is an indication of a pure heart, but not the cause of it.

Simply doing the right thing does not mean we possess a pure heart. An impure heart might do the right thing, but with the wrong motives. Right motives are essential for our hearts to be pure.

But even when we do the right thing for the right reason, we find our right motives mingled with ulterior ones. So even there we are not pure in heart. The standard is high. It is perfection.

**SALVATION BY WORKS/SALVATION THROUGH FAITH:** The Pharisees of Jesus’ time, had a show of purity. In interpreting the Law of God, the religious leaders had added to it. These additions were many and we might assume made following the Law of God harder. But, in reality, they were intended to make the Law easier to fulfill, not harder.

Pharisees thought to work for their salvation. But man is not justified by outward acts. The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:16

“Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

**SIGNS OF AN IMPURE HEART:** Thomas Watson listed several signs of an impure heart.

One is ignorance. Watson wrote: "To be ignorant of sin or Christ argues impurity of heart." For a person to have wrong thoughts of sin, or to not understand the necessity of Jesus' atoning work on the Cross would indicate that their heart is not pure. They may be worshiping the true God, but they would be doing it in a wrong manner.

Another sign of an impure heart is self-righteousness. He wrote: "A self-righteous heart is an impure heart." A self-righteous heart sees no need for purity. The Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day felt that they had obtained righteousness by their own works and did not consider that their hearts remained impure. A self-righteous man may have the outward appearance of possessing a pure heart, but it is actually a false front.

Jesus called such men white washed tombs. Outwardly they appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

**SIGNS OF A PURE HEART:** A pure heart will reflect God's heart. Where there is purity of heart, one will find purity of life.

One of the benefits of the New Covenant is laid out in Ezekiel 36:26,27; which reads:

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

A sign of a pure heart would then be one that does not delight in sin, but rather is repelled by it. Desiring to avoid even the appearance of evil. As Watson wrote: "A gracious heart is shy of that which looks like sin."

The world many times exalts and lauds the very things God calls sin. The man with a pure heart will not be swayed by the world's standard, but will continue to walk in the light of God's truth despite what the world says or does. A blind man's disparaging a diamond does not make it sparkle the less.

**PURE HEART SEES ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST:** In Philippians 4:8, the Apostle Paul wrote this exhortation:

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

**THE CONDITION OF OUR HEARTS:** God's standard of purity is complete holiness. We not only fall short, we are totally incapable of reaching that standard. Jeremiah 17:9 reads:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

Heart purity is not graded on a curve. There are no degrees of purity with human hearts. They are either pure or impure. And, according to the Scripture, all men stand guilty, with impure hearts, before God.

So, when Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," who did He have in mind?

**MATTHEW 5:8 - CLIMAX OF BEATITUDES:** "Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God," is the climax of the Beatitudes. All those that came before, and those that follow, flow from a pure heart. One cannot be poor in spirit, or truly mourn, or be truly meek or merciful unless their heart is pure. It is convicting as we realize we have failed in them all, and have no ability to walk in them for even one day, or one hour.

A big contrast to those who heard the Sermon on the Mount was between what Jesus was calling for and the outward, superficial, hypocritical Pharisaic Religion they had been taught and had seen by the religious leaders.

The call to a pure heart is an old truth. Psalm 51:6,10 read:

"Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart...Create in me a  
clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 73:1

Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

Psalm 24:3-6

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

We can be saddened when we hear this call, yet realize we have failed to answer it. The truth is none of us possess, apart from Christ, a pure heart; and none of us can be holy, as God is holy. At least not on our own. But what we can't do it, God can.

We cannot make our hearts pure, we cannot save ourselves. But God can. He has the power to make the hearts of men pure. The revelation that we have impure hearts is not meant to bring frustration or despondency, but, rather, to lead us to the cross.

It is meant to show us our need, and the only source of rescue and redemption.

**CONCLUSION:** We are commanded in Scripture to be holy as God is holy, and Jesus, in Matthew 5:8 exhorts us to be pure in heart. Yet, as we've seen, none of us is holy and none of us posses a pure heart. Even after we have become Christians, we still are prone to sin, and we are still capable of being motivated by selfish, sinful desires. So, how do we achieve holiness? How do we achieve pureness of heart?

While we walk this earth, we never will. Our sanctification, that process by which we become more and more like Christ as we grow in Him, will continue our entire lives. The consummation of that process will happen when we pass from this life into eternity.

Jesus' purpose was not to cause to be discouraged or disheartened, but to show us the depth of our need for Him.

What He spoke is truth, and the truth is, on our own, in our own strength, we cannot hope to gain eternal life; and without the blood of Jesus, we will never find salvation.

**RESOURCES:** Thomas Watson's "The Pure in Heart"

<http://www.chapellibrary.org/files/9313/7643/3334/pihe.pdf>

R.C. Sproul, <http://www.ligonier.org/search/?q=matthew+commentary>