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“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.”
(Matthew 5:8 *The Message*)

Pure Motives

Humanity in the Raw

Purity can be a frightening prospect to such generously imperfect human beings. How in the world can we attain to anything so obviously outside our reach? Because absolute purity *is* impossible, we can find a clue to the meaning of this Beatitude in the story of King David.

The life of David was anything but pure. He was a man of war and bloodshed, of political intrigue and, ultimately, of adultery and murder.

Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

(2 Samuel 11:2-5)

Later, the king compounded his sin of adultery with murder.

Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. He had written in the letter, saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die." So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there were valiant men. The men

of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died.

(2 Samuel 11:14-17)

As a result of his profound sin, David and his family experienced gross corruption, incestuous rape, and attempted patricide. Near the end of his life, seventy-thousand Israelites paid the ultimate penalty of death for another sin he committed. On the day of his death, David looked back on a life of countless failures and disappointment. Yet, even with all this, David was declared a man after God's own heart.

"After He had removed [Saul], [God] raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.' From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus."

(Acts 13:22-23)

Why? How could such a flawed man be so close to God's ideal? How, indeed, could an adulterer and murderer be someone declared by God to be a "man after my own heart"?

A Persistent Devotion

The answer lay in *his* heart. Throughout his entire life David met disappointment with praise, crisis with worship, and great sin with brokenness and confession. He never permitted his mistakes, or God's decisions, to stand between him and his Lord. Time and again, when a lesser man would have railed against what some might have

called bad breaks or unfair treatment, King David knelt in devotion to his God.

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die." So Nathan went to his house. Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick. David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died... When David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the Lord and worshiped.

(2 Samuel 12:13-18a,19-20a)

Those who are "pure in heart" are not perfect. Striving after perfection is a fool's occupation. Purity of heart means, instead, that in our imperfection—in our failures and missteps and outright sin—we never lose our connection with the Lord. We never turn on Him. We never blame Him for what happens. In all things we continue to worship and praise His name—and in our praise we see His face.

Peace, perfect Peace

An Active Pursuit

If we would study to be Christ-like, we would study to be peacemakers, for He is the supreme peacemaker, placing Himself between not only Jew and Gentile, but between both communities and the heretofore untouchable holiness of God. Christ, at the cross, became, in His person, our peace.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

(Ephesians 2:13-18)

The Cost

Jesus takes it for granted that those who display the qualities of the previous beatitudes will not escape persecution. (Guthrie)

The Common Enemy

It's a little awkward for anyone in the western world to speak of the possibility of—let alone actual—persecution for the faith. Compared to the saints of old, and contemporary saints in some parts of the world, we have enjoyed nothing less than an easy, effortless road.

But absent tangible persecution in the classic sense—physical or psychological opposition because of one's faith—there is still the universal experience of opposition from the evil one. Every Christian has

But Jesus was no milquetoast appeaser; He was no simple-minded fool looking to just get along so all would be happy and placidly at ease. That's not an accurate picture of the Son of God, for He was willing to pay the ultimate price for the peace we enjoy with God. His peacemaking was gritty and tough, devoted to the right. And it cost Him His earthly life.

In fact, this Beatitude has little to do with simply 'getting along,' but is a call for us to become *active* peace-makers.

This beatitude is not, however, directed to those who are at peace with others, but to those who actively create conditions of peace. Admittedly the difficulties of creating peace are immense. But Jesus was not simply commending an impossible ideal. The disposition towards peace is a moral and spiritual quality which can be achieved only by spiritual means.

(Donald Guthrie)

experienced his unique style of confrontation—very often when we are at our highest Spiritually.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

(1 Peter 5:8)

Satan has a special gift for sniffing out believers who have been soaring close to the Lord. He knows he can safely leave alone Christians who are flirting with the baser life; they've already done half his work for him. But his radar is set for those climbing ever higher toward righteousness. His priority is to nail them with an unhealthy dose of temptation, or doubt, before they soar too close to the Son.

"You're blessed when

you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family."

(5:9 The Message)

"You're blessed when

your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

(5:10 The Message)

...in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

(Ephesians 6:16)

An easy path without fear or temptation is not necessarily sign of a healthy spiritual life; it may just mean Satan doesn't need to bother with you. Constant bombardment from his "flaming arrows," however, is a sure sign that we're on the right track.