

Overcoming the Spirit of the World

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

Peter Marshall, former chaplain of the U.S. Senate, told of a mythical town at the foot of a mountain range.

The town’s water supply came from the many springs located in the hills above it. A hermit forest dweller asked if he could be the keeper of the springs. He patrolled the hills, clearing each spring of silt, fallen leaves, mud, mold and other matter that could contaminate the pure water flowing to the people below.

But the city council decided to dispense with the “unnecessary” cost of the keeper of the springs and build a cement reservoir instead. Soon, an epidemic raged as the stored water turned stale and stagnant. The town begged the hermit to return to his task of keeping the springs.

In this sixth beatitude, Jesus talks about keeping the springs of our hearts pure. Notice several things.

Outside Influences

First, no one can escape the influence of moral contamination. A small group of Pharisees in Jesus’ day tried. They walked around blindfolded—attempting to protect themselves from seeing anything that could become a temptation or snare. They got the tag “bruised and bleeding” because they were always bumping into pillars, posts, walls, doorways or obstacles.

You cannot go through life, or even a single day, without the values of this world impacting your thoughts and actions. You are going to see and hear things, as a follower of Jesus, that you wish you could avoid.

However, you must not let the values of a non-believing society infect your spirit. You are challenged to have the mind of Christ (see Phil. 2:1-8).

Inside Responses

Second, what happens when you fail, when impurity gets inside you? The apostle John admits that “if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

The path to purity of heart lies in cleansing. Thus, John writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Confession is to the heart what the tear duct is to the eye. When you get a speck of dirt on your eye, the tear duct instinctively opens to flood away the irritant. When you sin, act immediately to get the sin out of your life by letting the instinctive response of the Holy Spirit lead you to confession and right relationship with God.

Continual Purity

Third, don't let impurity build up. As a missionary's kid living in northwest China, I reveled in the fact that I only had to take a bath once a week on Saturday night. Since we depended on our donkey to haul our water from the river, there was not sufficient water to take a daily bath. My mother would take a washcloth and probe into my ears, where the week's grime had accumulated.

If you take a spiritual bath daily, the grime cannot collect and harden. King David permitted a ring of accumulated dirt to build up around his heart. He progressively added layers of impure thoughts, adultery, deceit, murder and lies. It took a prophet of God to break through the calcification. Only then did David cry, “Purify me ... and I will be clean; wash me, and

I will be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7).

Don't let sin build up. The apostle Paul writes, "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:26,27).

How often can you come to the Lord for cleansing? Every time you need it. If Jesus tells us to forgive one another 77 times (Matt. 18:22), do you think God's own forgiveness would be less?

Jesus promises that the pure in heart will see God. We often take this as a promise reserved for eternity, but this promise also has present application. The apostle Paul speaks of the eyes of our hearts being enlightened (Eph. 1:18). When your conscience is clear, when your heart is right with God, you see Him now. The heavens are as brass and God remains hidden when you don't deal with your wrong attitudes or actions.

George O. Wood *is the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God.*