

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTERIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

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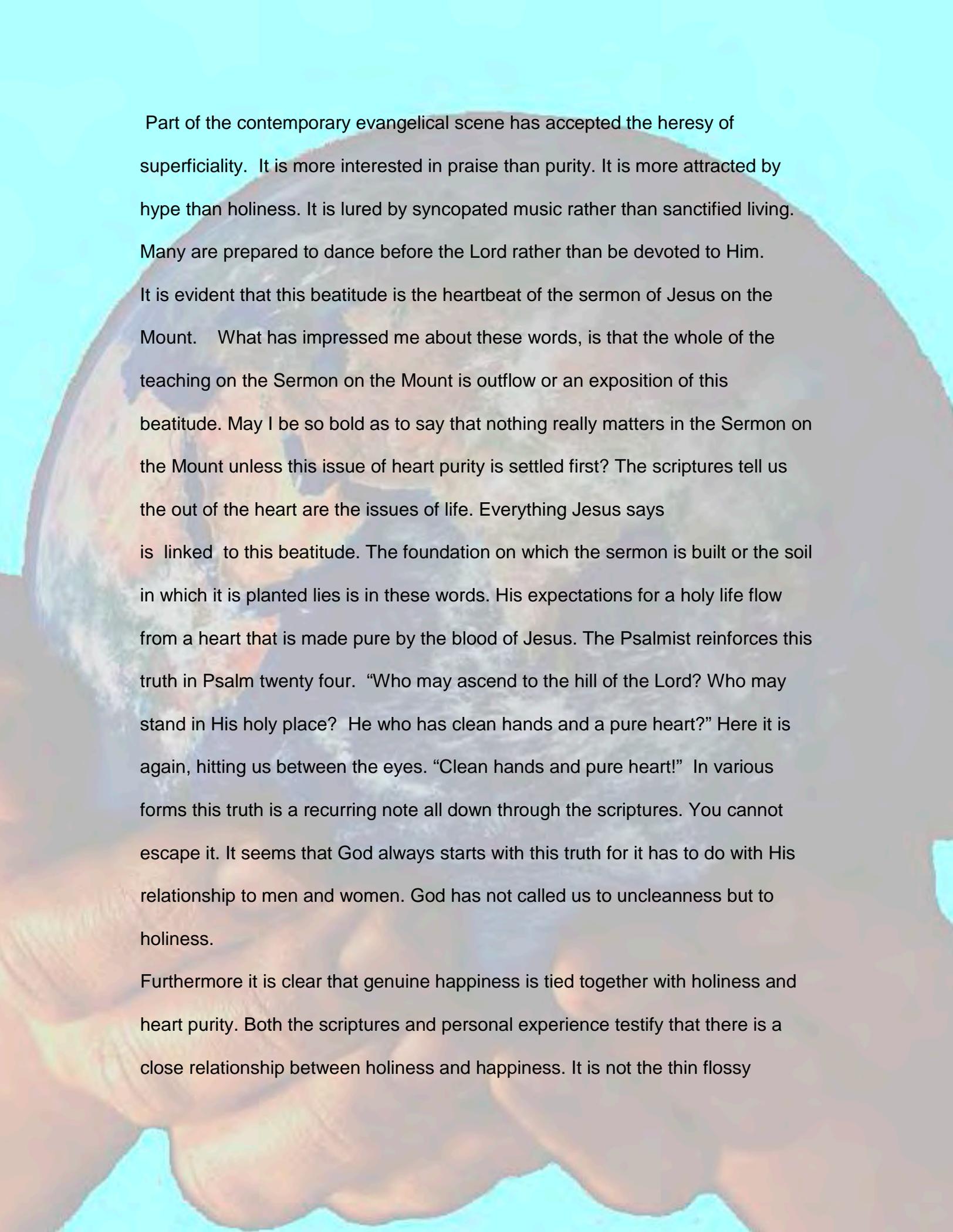
TRUE BLESSEDNESS IS PURITY OF HEART.

Scripture Reading - Matthew 5:1-11. Text Matthew 5:8.

Introduction

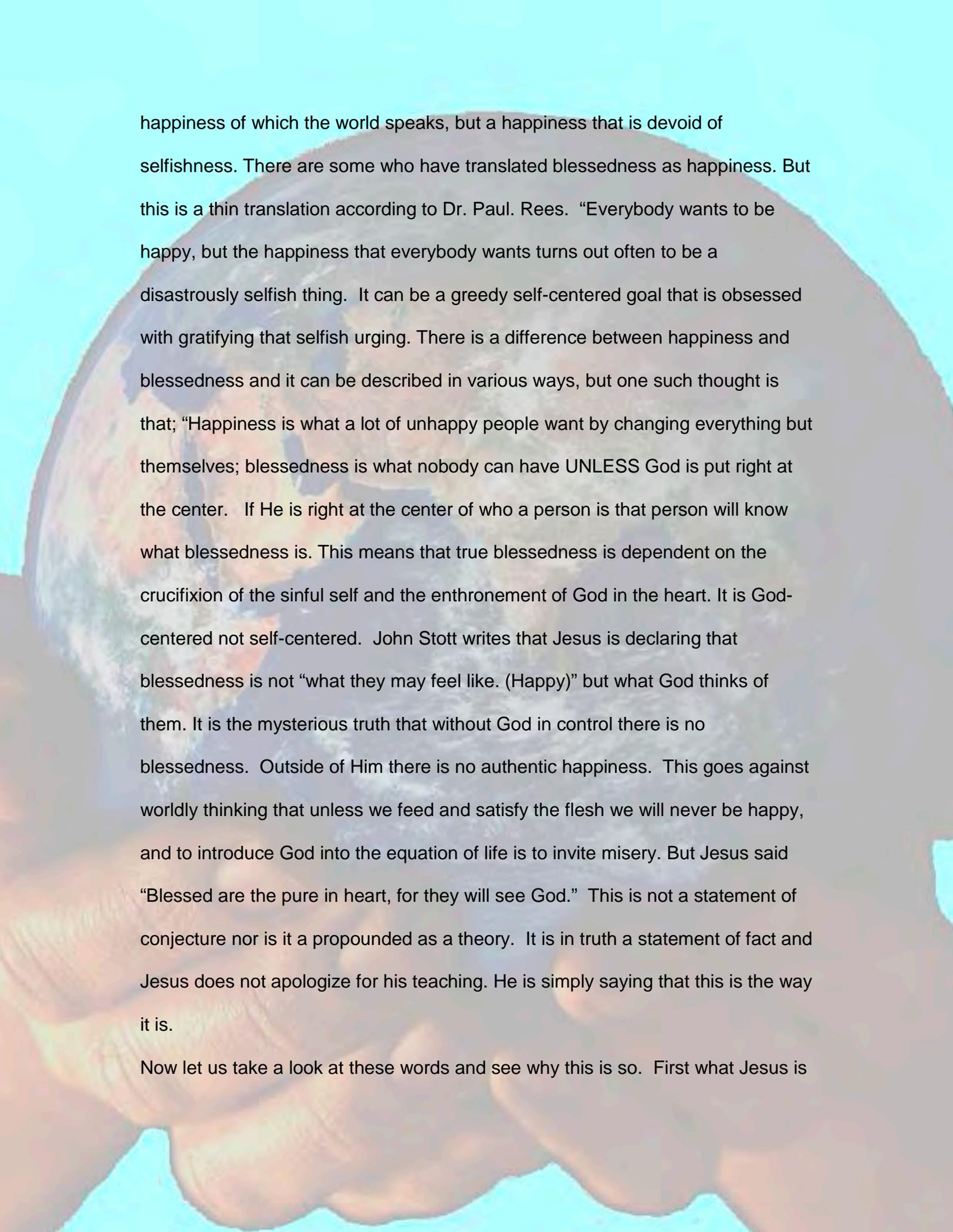
“Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.” There are only eleven words in this text, but when we give our minds to search and dig out the riches contained in it, are we willing to go where it will take us. It will lead us into the depths of where we live and who we are. Jesus is not interested in a surface type religion. He is interested in the condition of the heart.

When He takes us there what will it reveal? What are its expectations? “Does Jesus really mean what He says?” Is this talk about heart purity a fanciful theory or is it simply conjecture or maybe the unrealizable ideal that is simply pious talk or religious day dreaming. Is this thing called heart purity is beyond human attainment? It is clear Jesus assumes it is a heart condition that is possible in this life. It is based on the power of His atoning death. He provides a pure heart through His shed blood on the cross.



Part of the contemporary evangelical scene has accepted the heresy of superficiality. It is more interested in praise than purity. It is more attracted by hype than holiness. It is lured by syncopated music rather than sanctified living. Many are prepared to dance before the Lord rather than be devoted to Him. It is evident that this beatitude is the heartbeat of the sermon of Jesus on the Mount. What has impressed me about these words, is that the whole of the teaching on the Sermon on the Mount is outflow or an exposition of this beatitude. May I be so bold as to say that nothing really matters in the Sermon on the Mount unless this issue of heart purity is settled first? The scriptures tell us the out of the heart are the issues of life. Everything Jesus says is linked to this beatitude. The foundation on which the sermon is built or the soil in which it is planted lies in these words. His expectations for a holy life flow from a heart that is made pure by the blood of Jesus. The Psalmist reinforces this truth in Psalm twenty four. "Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart?" Here it is again, hitting us between the eyes. "Clean hands and pure heart!" In various forms this truth is a recurring note all down through the scriptures. You cannot escape it. It seems that God always starts with this truth for it has to do with His relationship to men and women. God has not called us to uncleanness but to holiness.

Furthermore it is clear that genuine happiness is tied together with holiness and heart purity. Both the scriptures and personal experience testify that there is a close relationship between holiness and happiness. It is not the thin flossy



happiness of which the world speaks, but a happiness that is devoid of selfishness. There are some who have translated blessedness as happiness. But this is a thin translation according to Dr. Paul. Rees. “Everybody wants to be happy, but the happiness that everybody wants turns out often to be a disastrously selfish thing. It can be a greedy self-centered goal that is obsessed with gratifying that selfish urging. There is a difference between happiness and blessedness and it can be described in various ways, but one such thought is that; “Happiness is what a lot of unhappy people want by changing everything but themselves; blessedness is what nobody can have UNLESS God is put right at the center. If He is right at the center of who a person is that person will know what blessedness is. This means that true blessedness is dependent on the crucifixion of the sinful self and the enthronement of God in the heart. It is God-centered not self-centered. John Stott writes that Jesus is declaring that blessedness is not “what they may feel like. (Happy)” but what God thinks of them. It is the mysterious truth that without God in control there is no blessedness. Outside of Him there is no authentic happiness. This goes against worldly thinking that unless we feed and satisfy the flesh we will never be happy, and to introduce God into the equation of life is to invite misery. But Jesus said “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” This is not a statement of conjecture nor is it a propounded as a theory. It is in truth a statement of fact and Jesus does not apologize for his teaching. He is simply saying that this is the way it is.

Now let us take a look at these words and see why this is so. First what Jesus is

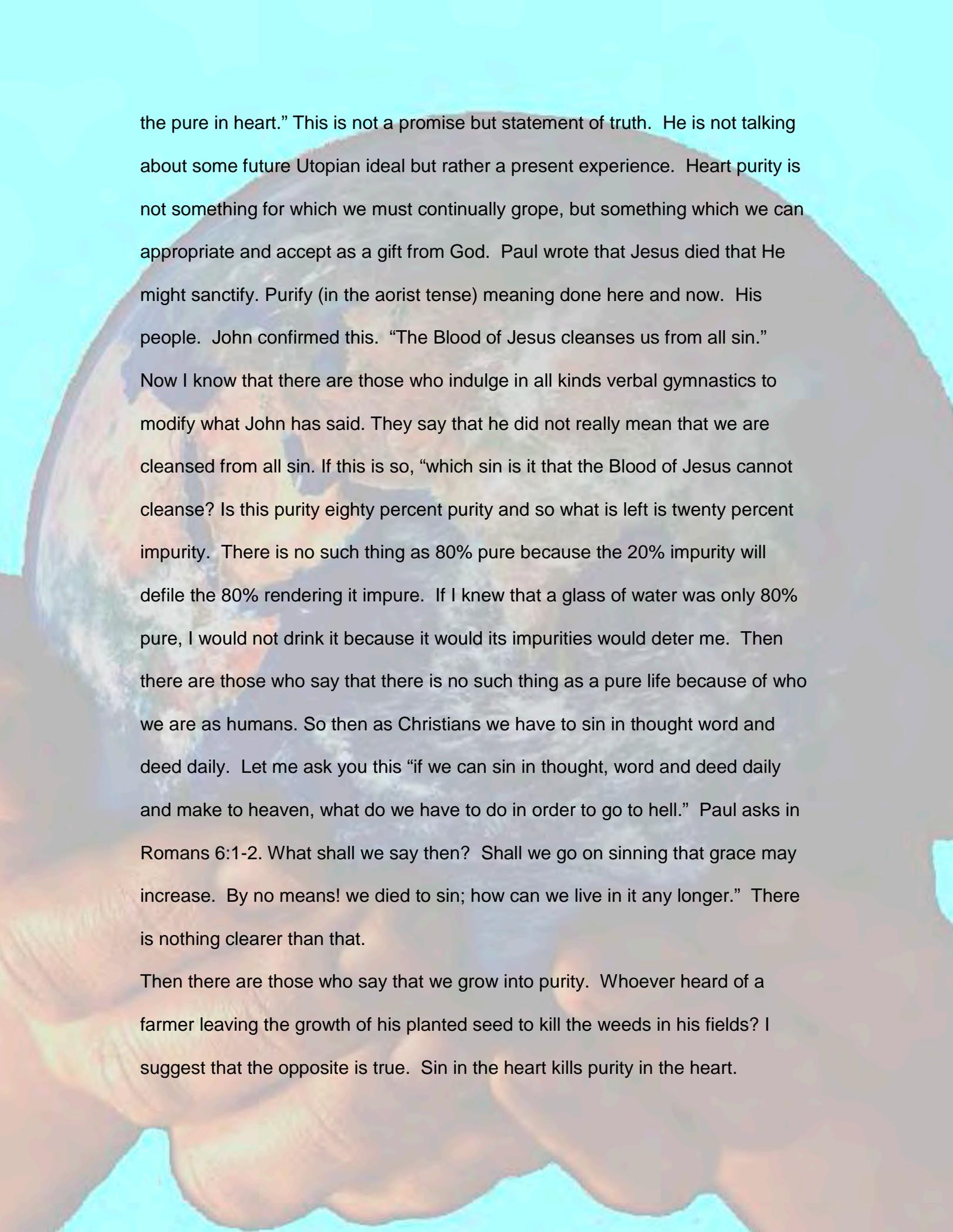
saying here is that,

1. HEART PURITY IS A POSSIBILITY. Matthew 5:8.

Note the words “Blessed are the pure in heart...” This is the strong note of certainty. There are at least two thoughts that emerge from this truth. Jesus here emphasizes,

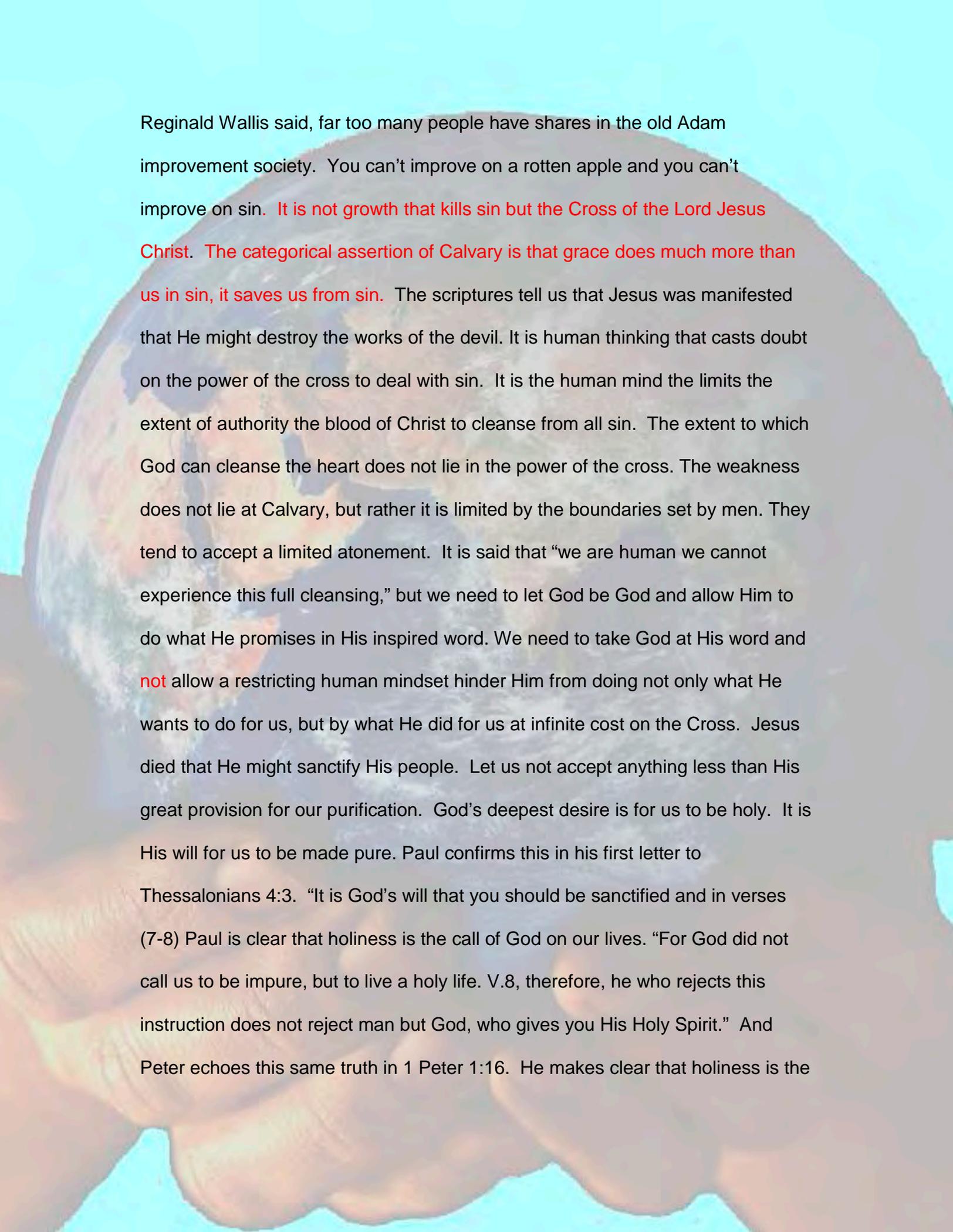
a. The Necessity of Heart Purity. Matthew 5:8. When Jesus said “Blessed are the pure in heart.” He implied that there is a condition in man other than purity of heart. The scriptures are clear on this. The prophet Jeremiah was in no doubt of the sinful condition of the heart of man. “The heart is deceitful above all things.” Jeremiah 17:9. In Psalm 51: 5. King David having committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband Uriah to cover his sin confessed, “Surely I was sinful at birth and sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Jesus once made it clear that what, “comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.” Matt. 15:18-20. This list reminds you of a sewer at its worst. It is this defiled condition of the heart of man that necessitates a cleansed heart. Dr. Campbell Morgan said it well “From that spiritual center spring all forces that defile...nothing makes life pure but inward purity which will influence all externalities,” or that which is external or outward Jesus made clear that **heart purity was a necessity. But Jesus also makes clear,**

b. The Reality of Heart Purity. Matthew 5:8. Jesus said simply, “Blessed are

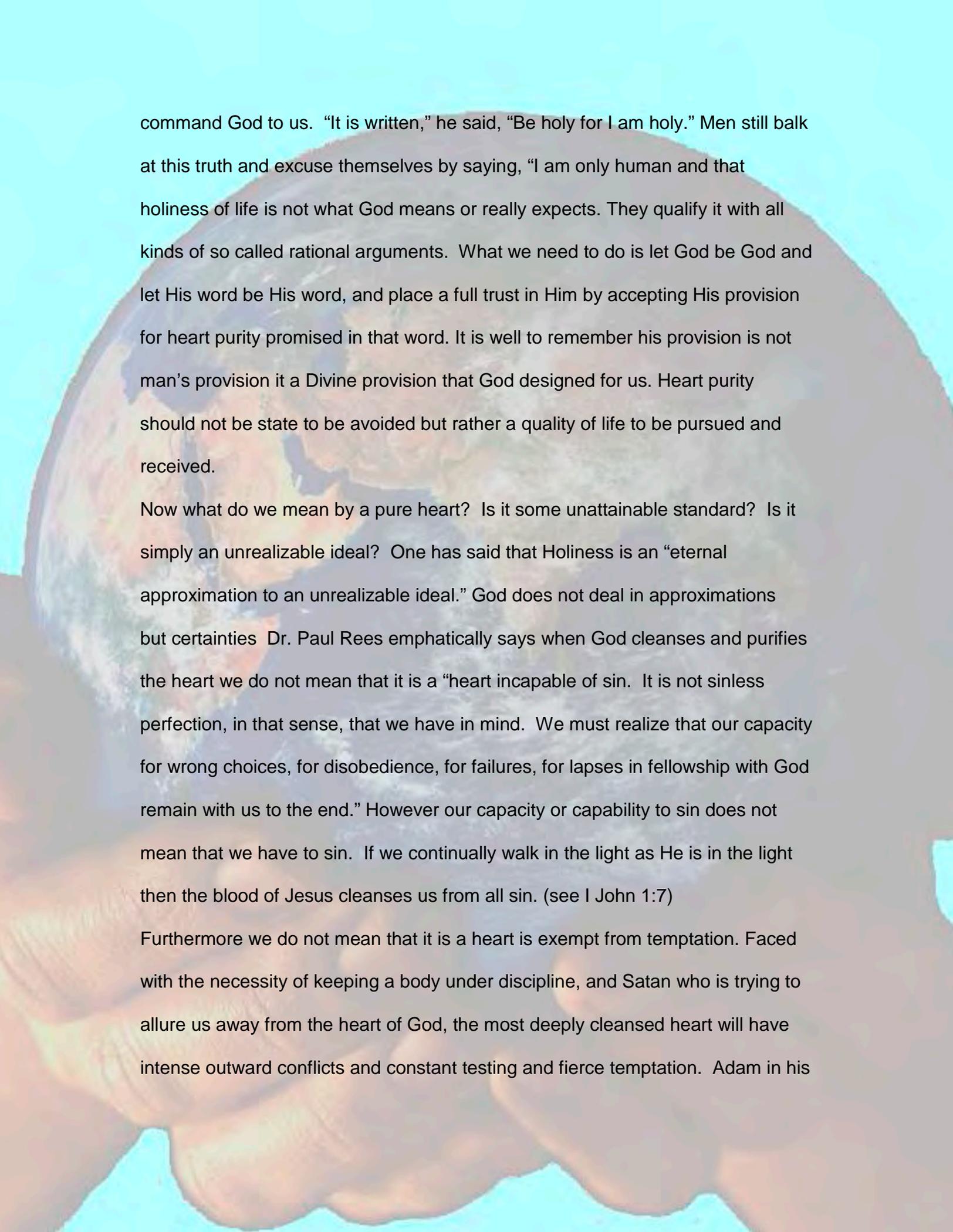


the pure in heart.” This is not a promise but statement of truth. He is not talking about some future Utopian ideal but rather a present experience. Heart purity is not something for which we must continually grope, but something which we can appropriate and accept as a gift from God. Paul wrote that Jesus died that He might sanctify. Purify (in the aorist tense) meaning done here and now. His people. John confirmed this. “The Blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.” Now I know that there are those who indulge in all kinds verbal gymnastics to modify what John has said. They say that he did not really mean that we are cleansed from all sin. If this is so, “which sin is it that the Blood of Jesus cannot cleanse? Is this purity eighty percent purity and so what is left is twenty percent impurity. There is no such thing as 80% pure because the 20% impurity will defile the 80% rendering it impure. If I knew that a glass of water was only 80% pure, I would not drink it because it would its impurities would deter me. Then there are those who say that there is no such thing as a pure life because of who we are as humans. So then as Christians we have to sin in thought word and deed daily. Let me ask you this “if we can sin in thought, word and deed daily and make to heaven, what do we have to do in order to go to hell.” Paul asks in Romans 6:1-2. What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase. By no means! we died to sin; how can we live in it any longer.” There is nothing clearer than that.

Then there are those who say that we grow into purity. Whoever heard of a farmer leaving the growth of his planted seed to kill the weeds in his fields? I suggest that the opposite is true. Sin in the heart kills purity in the heart.



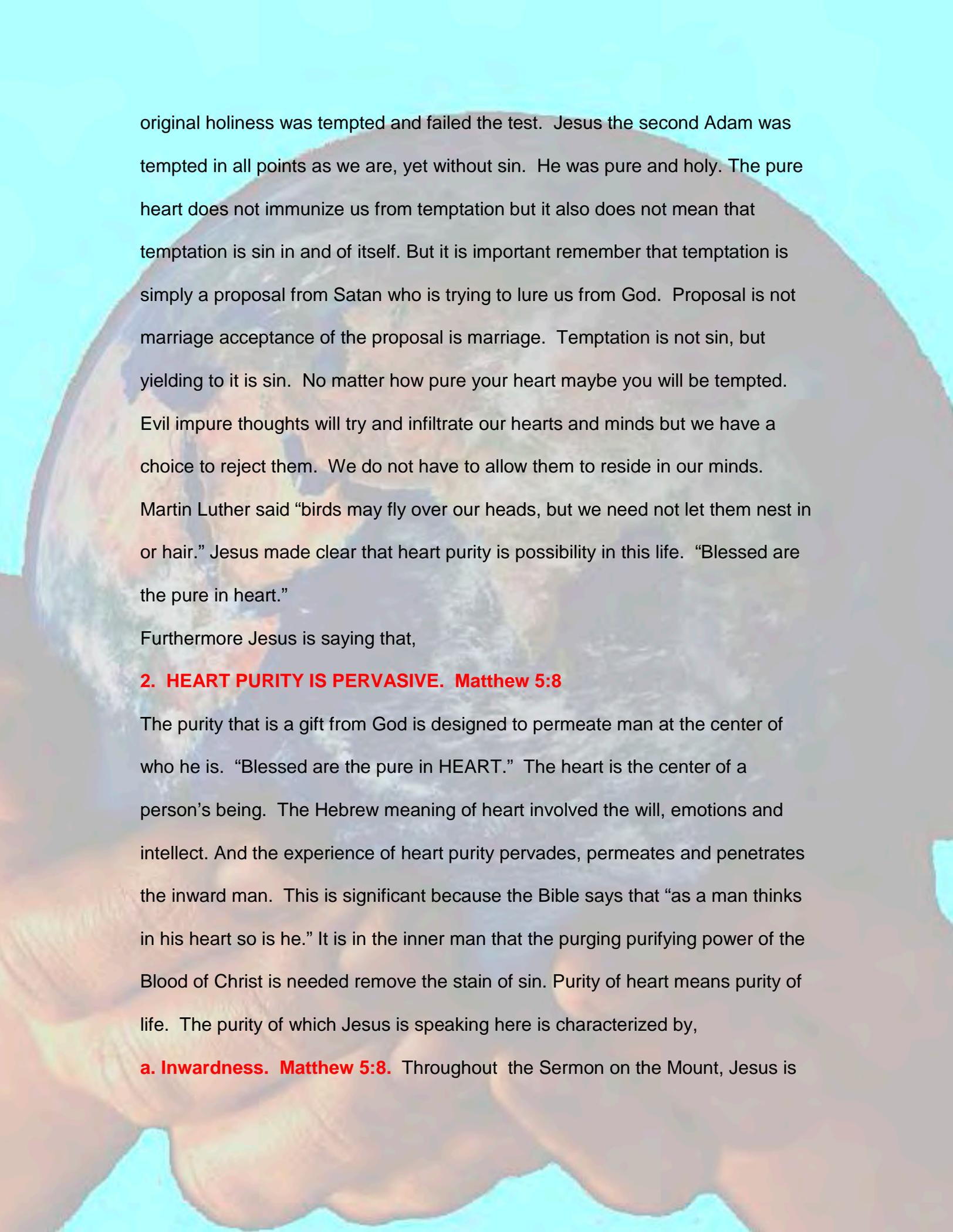
Reginald Wallis said, far too many people have shares in the old Adam improvement society. You can't improve on a rotten apple and you can't improve on sin. **It is not growth that kills sin but the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The categorical assertion of Calvary is that grace does much more than us in sin, it saves us from sin.** The scriptures tell us that Jesus was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. It is human thinking that casts doubt on the power of the cross to deal with sin. It is the human mind that limits the extent of authority the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin. The extent to which God can cleanse the heart does not lie in the power of the cross. The weakness does not lie at Calvary, but rather it is limited by the boundaries set by men. They tend to accept a limited atonement. It is said that "we are human we cannot experience this full cleansing," but we need to let God be God and allow Him to do what He promises in His inspired word. We need to take God at His word and **not** allow a restricting human mindset hinder Him from doing not only what He wants to do for us, but by what He did for us at infinite cost on the Cross. Jesus died that He might sanctify His people. Let us not accept anything less than His great provision for our purification. God's deepest desire is for us to be holy. It is His will for us to be made pure. Paul confirms this in his first letter to Thessalonians 4:3. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified and in verses (7-8) Paul is clear that holiness is the call of God on our lives. "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. V.8, therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit." And Peter echoes this same truth in 1 Peter 1:16. He makes clear that holiness is the



command God to us. "It is written," he said, "Be holy for I am holy." Men still balk at this truth and excuse themselves by saying, "I am only human and that holiness of life is not what God means or really expects. They qualify it with all kinds of so called rational arguments. What we need to do is let God be God and let His word be His word, and place a full trust in Him by accepting His provision for heart purity promised in that word. It is well to remember his provision is not man's provision it a Divine provision that God designed for us. Heart purity should not be state to be avoided but rather a quality of life to be pursued and received.

Now what do we mean by a pure heart? Is it some unattainable standard? Is it simply an unrealizable ideal? One has said that Holiness is an "eternal approximation to an unrealizable ideal." God does not deal in approximations but certainties Dr. Paul Rees emphatically says when God cleanses and purifies the heart we do not mean that it is a "heart incapable of sin. It is not sinless perfection, in that sense, that we have in mind. We must realize that our capacity for wrong choices, for disobedience, for failures, for lapses in fellowship with God remain with us to the end." However our capacity or capability to sin does not mean that we have to sin. If we continually walk in the light as He is in the light then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. (see I John 1:7)

Furthermore we do not mean that it is a heart is exempt from temptation. Faced with the necessity of keeping a body under discipline, and Satan who is trying to allure us away from the heart of God, the most deeply cleansed heart will have intense outward conflicts and constant testing and fierce temptation. Adam in his



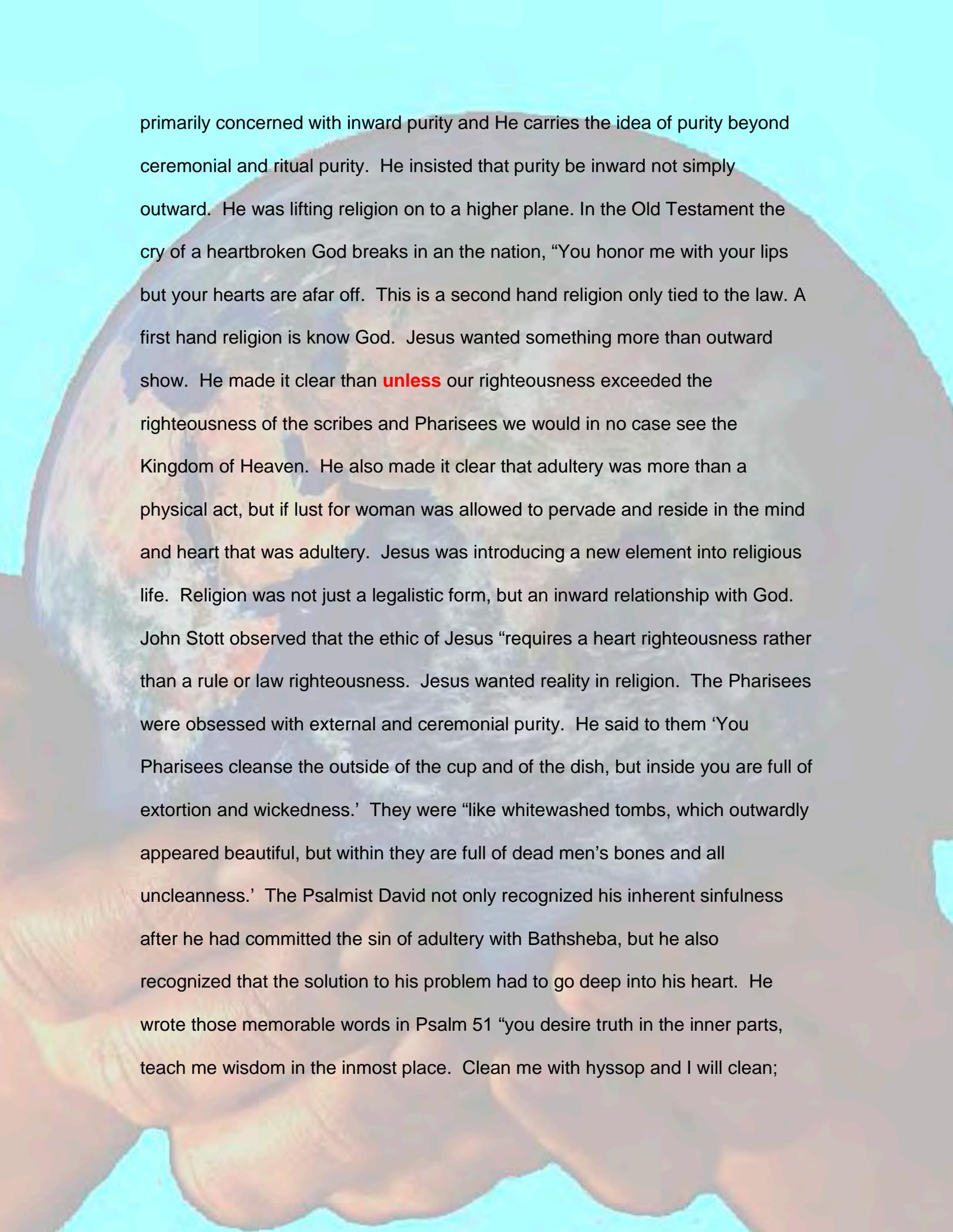
original holiness was tempted and failed the test. Jesus the second Adam was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He was pure and holy. The pure heart does not immunize us from temptation but it also does not mean that temptation is sin in and of itself. But it is important remember that temptation is simply a proposal from Satan who is trying to lure us from God. Proposal is not marriage acceptance of the proposal is marriage. Temptation is not sin, but yielding to it is sin. No matter how pure your heart maybe you will be tempted. Evil impure thoughts will try and infiltrate our hearts and minds but we have a choice to reject them. We do not have to allow them to reside in our minds. Martin Luther said “birds may fly over our heads, but we need not let them nest in or hair.” Jesus made clear that heart purity is possibility in this life. “Blessed are the pure in heart.”

Furthermore Jesus is saying that,

2. HEART PURITY IS PERVASIVE. Matthew 5:8

The purity that is a gift from God is designed to permeate man at the center of who he is. “Blessed are the pure in HEART.” The heart is the center of a person’s being. The Hebrew meaning of heart involved the will, emotions and intellect. And the experience of heart purity pervades, permeates and penetrates the inward man. This is significant because the Bible says that “as a man thinks in his heart so is he.” It is in the inner man that the purging purifying power of the Blood of Christ is needed remove the stain of sin. Purity of heart means purity of life. The purity of which Jesus is speaking here is characterized by,

a. Inwardness. Matthew 5:8. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is



primarily concerned with inward purity and He carries the idea of purity beyond ceremonial and ritual purity. He insisted that purity be inward not simply outward. He was lifting religion on to a higher plane. In the Old Testament the cry of a heartbroken God breaks in an the nation, "You honor me with your lips but your hearts are afar off. This is a second hand religion only tied to the law. A first hand religion is know God. Jesus wanted something more than outward show. He made it clear than **unless** our righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees we would in no case see the Kingdom of Heaven. He also made it clear that adultery was more than a physical act, but if lust for woman was allowed to pervade and reside in the mind and heart that was adultery. Jesus was introducing a new element into religious life. Religion was not just a legalistic form, but an inward relationship with God. John Stott observed that the ethic of Jesus "requires a heart righteousness rather than a rule or law righteousness. Jesus wanted reality in religion. The Pharisees were obsessed with external and ceremonial purity. He said to them 'You Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness.' They were "like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appeared beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.' The Psalmist David not only recognized his inherent sinfulness after he had committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, but he also recognized that the solution to his problem had to go deep into his heart. He wrote those memorable words in Psalm 51 "you desire truth in the inner parts, teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Clean me with hyssop and I will clean;

wash me and will whiter than snow. Create in me a pure heart O God. Jesus said “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.” The purity of which Jesus speaks is characterized by inwardness. But it is also characterized by,

b. Completeness. Matthew 1:8. The intrinsic meaning of the word purity demands that it be complete. If the English language means anything at all, it means what it says. Purity is the absence of all that is impure. The word for cleansing in the Greek has several shades of meaning which leave us in no doubt as to the completeness of the cleansing and purity that Jesus is talking about. One has said that basically the word means cleansing from filth, dirt and contamination. This word was used of corn being cleansed of all the chaff. It is used of metals that have been refined until all and every impurity has been refined until all and every impurity has been removed leaving only the pure metal. It is applied to an army that has been purged of all disloyal and discontented cowardly soldiers resulting in a first class unified fighting unit. The Psalmist prayed “unite my heart to fear thy name.” Ps.86:11. Dr. Tasker defines the pure in heart as “the single minded, who are free from the tyranny of the divided self” or double mindedness. James exhorts us to “Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded”. Others point out that “purity of heart is a phrase in which two meanings are dominant – rightness of mind and singleness of motive.” (Rees quoting Buttrick. P.89). Purity is single mindedness. The heart having been purged of all defilement through the Blood of Jesus becomes single minded or as Lloyd Ogilvie wrote “single mindedness is not simple mindedness or narrow

mindedness. Rather it is a result of putting God first in our lives. A unreserved commitment enables us keep our attention riveted on God.” The heart of this relationship with God is a clean heart.

Charles Wesley wrote which clearly describes the nature of this heart purity’

**“O for heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels thy Blood,
So freely shed for me.**

**A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer’s throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.**

**O for a lowly contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells above**

Blessed are the pure in heart.” There is completeness about this purity. Heart purity is pervasive. Finally,

3. HEART PURITY IS A PRIVILEGE. Matthew 5:8. There are privileges that accompany heart purity. They are contained in the words, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. The conditions of the Gospel are always accompanied by it privileges. Note two truths here,

a. The Blessedness That Purity instills. Matthew 5:8. Blessed are the pure in heart.” The condition that is the foundation of happiness is a pure heart.

This blessedness is a result of the approval of God upon the life. There is no joy in inner defilement. One has pointed out that Jesus begins by saying, “What you are in yourselves determines life for you. Genuine and permanent blessedness is dependent on in the inward condition of the heart. One with insight maintained that “Jesus knew that you are your own heaven and you are

your hell. Heaven is a state or condition of the mind and soul before it becomes a place. Jesus came not only to get men out of hell, but to get hell out of man, not only to get men into heaven but to get heaven into men. When sins hell is driven out, heaven in the heart begins. **“He that has the Son has life.”** This blessedness is heaven in the heart. This blessedness is not dependent on happenings. Its source is within. Blessed are the pure in heart. Purity instills blessedness in the heart. Furthermore note,

b. The Vision that Heart Purity Imparts. Matthew 5:8. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.’ The definite implication here is that the impure will not see God. It is the pure in heart that are given that privilege. You will note that there are two faces to this vision of God. First,

i. The Present ness of this Vision. Matthew 5:8. When the eyes of the souls have been cleansed of the debris of depravity, a new perception of God takes over. We see God from a new perspective. One has correctly said “We see what we are able to see.” This is an obvious statement. What we see is conditioned and determined on what we are. Ruskin the poet used to say, a cat might look at King. But a cat cannot see a King. A cat does not have the ability to distinguish between a King and a beggar. The old English nursery rhyme clarifies the point. “Kitty cat!, Kitty cat! where have you been. I’ve been to London to see the Queen. Kitty cat! Kitty cat! What saw you there? I saw a mouse under the chair.” The cat missed this historic moment in his life. It was not concerned about the plush décor of the court. It was not conscious of the Queen herself and was totally unaware of the significance of where it was.

Amidst the significance of what surrounded it, it saw a mouse. What it was, determined what it saw. The single eye of the cat missed the glory of the palace and simply saw a mouse. It saw what is a priority to a cat. It saw what cats see. The single eye of a pure heart is able to perceive God in a way that the world cannot. The presence of God becomes the focus of the single eye. Note also,

ii. The Future Aspect of this Vision. Matthew 5:8. The assurance given by Jesus in these words is that it is the pure in heart that will see God. The Psalmist recognized the importance of this condition.” Who will ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. God in Jesus has provided a way whereby we can receive a pure heart. The Blood of Jesus was shed on a Cross as the only provision for pure heart. John wrote that the Blood of the Lord Jesus “purifies us from all sin.” And repeated it two verses later, (1 John 1:7,9.) as though to make sure that there is no misunderstanding about the truth of this great provision. Heart purity not only confirms the glorious possibility of seeing God one day, but it confirms that it is the condition upon which this assurance and hope is based. Heart purity is not an option if we want to see God. The writer to the Hebrews made this clear when he wrote, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” Heaven is a holy place. God is a holy God who expects that His holy people will inhabit his holy place and live in His holy Presence.” John in the book of the Revelation chapter 21:27 warned “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Conclusion

God's requirements may seem to be overwhelming. We may feel that we can never make it to heaven. This would be true if it were not for God's amazing grace and his unconditional love manifested on a Cross for us. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, "And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood." Hebrews 13:12. There lies the key to heart purity. Holiness very simply is the health of the soul. Health is the absence of disease and the presence of life. Holiness is the absence of sin in the heart and the presence of the life and fullness of the Holy Spirit within the heart. There is a Divine provision that prepares us for heaven. The question is have you accepted this provision into your life?