

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

By Ginny Larsen

“O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart....”

(Psalm 15:1-2)

“Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.”

(Psalm 25:5)

“Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!”

(Psalm 43:3)

“Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.”

(Psalm 51:6)

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

(Matthew 5:8)

As I've gone through the Sermon on the Mount lately in Matthew 5, digging deeper into each "Blessed are they" phrase that Jesus spoke, I'm aware that Jesus is getting to the heart of the people listening. He is addressing the Jewish nation who thought themselves saved and favored by God just because they were Jewish. They thought of themselves as keeping the law, just because they had the law and knew it. They looked to the Pharisees who kept the law perfectly (outwardly, that is). But Jesus was showing them the righteousness that was above that of the Pharisees. He was revealing to them their own hearts, how sinful they were, and how full of deception and darkness they really were.

Jesus always gets to the heart. It is our heart He desires. *"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"* (Matthew 5:8). God desires truth in our inward parts - in our heart of hearts. It is the one who comes into His Light, allowing all in his own heart to be exposed to God's Light, Who is truth. It's only when we allow this exposure and vulnerability to ourselves that we can be made pure of heart.

We all have hidden motives. All of the motives of one who has not been regenerated are selfish in some way. We do what makes ourselves feel good. Even when we're reaching out to someone else, there is something we look to get out of it. When our hearts come before God, the very truth is brought forth to us, and we're made to see ourselves as we really are in His Light - despite our attempts to hide what is there from our own conscience, try to make it look better than it is, or try to excuse it. No wonder we run from God's Word! No wonder it is so hard to read our Bible. It convicts us. It kills us, so to speak, slaying our sinful nature. But it's only when we let it in that it brings forth Light and truth, which gives life as well.

Our hearts are seared by the Word and purified. They are cleansed. We're no longer afraid of His Light but are able to come into it with joy and confidence and be filled with the love we find there. We're able to see God. We're able to know Him. As long as we hide anything in our heart, we are kept from the intimacy of knowing Him and what He desires for us. We're kept in

a superficial relationship with Him. When we confess our sin (admit to it and agree with God against it), we are freed from it as well by His power as we put faith in the gift of His forgiveness and promise of eternal life.

As believers, born of His Spirit, we are to continually walk in His Light, where truth is. We are to cling to truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6a). Jesus Himself is the truth. How, then, could He ever abide in a lie? Is it any wonder that He says He hates lies? Whenever I am confused and don't understand the truth in a situation or someone is being deceptive, my prayer is, "Lord, bring forth Your Light and Your truth - let them lead me."

Sometimes that means exposing the lies of others, the lies of false teachers or prophets, or the lies of Satan in a situation where someone is bound and can't see their way out of the bondage he has caused them. Sometimes it means the confusion in my own mind is over a matter I need clarity on or over a teaching or admonishment someone has given. I have learned that if I allow God to examine my heart for truth first and if I allow His Word to cleanse me, then I can count on Him to bring forth the truth in a situation and lead me. He has done this for me again and again. But if my heart is not true before Him, if there is a hidden agenda in my heart, if there is some way I am trying to make my will acceptable to Him and convince myself that His Will is my will, even though the Word tells me otherwise, then I will be led astray by others, by circumstances, and even by what seems spiritual because it all seems to fit with what my heart really desires. So I make sin to look like God's will. Once in this spot, spiritual discernment becomes impossible. In this way, I will walk in compromise and darkness, even thinking I am okay until I look to the Lord again, honestly, with truth in my inward being, asking Him to examine my heart in His Light and enabling me to see myself. We're unable to see God as He wants us to as His children as long as we find a way around the truth in His Word, rather than truly in our heart of hearts receive it and believe it and obey it. We're given eternal life in order to know Him (John 17:3).

How deceptive Satan is! He convinces us that if we believe a lie we won't be held accountable to truth! But no matter what we do with truth - receive it or reject it - truth is still truth. Jesus is still truth. God's Word is still truth, and that truth will never pass away, and one day all will be judged, not by man's standards, but by that Word of truth. Wouldn't it be better if we learn to know that Word now and abide in it, letting that sharp, two-edged sword pierce us now and bring us to the life He has for us, rather than wait until it's too late to benefit from His truth? Satan convinces us that His truth is going to reveal a very harsh, cruel God that likes to spoil all our fun and that we will be miserable for the rest of our lives and have nothing in this world that makes us happy. He tries to prevent us from reading the Word and living by it. We see Hollywood's version of a "Christian" in the movies and TV shows where they put out harsh, sour-faced killjoys who condemn everyone else. So people think this is what they will have to become if they want to be a Christian. They think it is a life of guilt and trying to live by standards they never can keep and that all those who call themselves Christians are hypocrites because they can't keep it either! Nothing is further from the truth. You see, the father of lies has kept people in that lie, where the truth is hidden and turned into a lie, and they never find His life then.

The Christian life is one of truth. It is a life where truth reveals what is already in us (and already holds us condemned) in order to free us. It is the truth that reveals the life of God that He holds out freely for "whosoever will" come to Him in truth and receive Him. It is a life of walking in His Light that reveals freedom...true freedom that enables us to know Him. *"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"*

(John 17:3). Is it any wonder, that the world tries to excuse sin, rather than facing that truth? They try to make sin look good, or even twist around what is good to make it evil and what is evil to make it look good? They have to do something with their guilty conscience. We should look on them with compassion because they have to do something in order to live with their guilt. They have to find some way to fill the void in themselves. Unfortunately, if it is not filled with Christ and if their guilt is not cleansed by Him, they have to resort to other means to do so. This is the whole reason for psychology and religion. They are both human-centered and are lies that cover and change the truth of God. They are man's way of trying to better themselves and, in the process, destroying the conscience God gave them. Because they cannot succeed at bettering themselves without God, they have to continually build up more ways to try. Once you live a lie, you have to continue making more lies in order to keep up the facade. So the depravity grows and progresses to more depravity, such as we see happening in the world today (such as Romans 1 describes), until man is given over to his own depravity and its consequences. They think they are free from the truth and that they won't have to endure the consequences of that truth, but that truth is still there, proving itself true even as they grow deeper and deeper into their lie. Finally, they are destroyed by their lie and then they rant against God for it. *"When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD"* (Proverbs 19:3).

The one we lie to the most is ourselves. We can't be honest with God if we are not honest with ourselves. It takes the grace of God to enable us to truly be honest with ourselves. We cannot examine our own hearts by constant introspection. In fact, introspection in my life almost destroyed me and my relationship with God. It's by looking at God, through His Word, that we are able to truly see ourselves. The more we look inward, the worse we become. It is flesh trying to improve flesh, which is impossible. The more we look at Him, the more we are freed from sin and made like Him. Let God look into your heart. Don't think you can know it or change it. Bring it to God and allow Him to bring His truth to you. Allow His truth to cleanse you and lift you up to Him, where you can abide in His life and in His joy. Even Satan uses God's Word, which he twists to kill and steal and destroy. He twists it and then uses it to condemn us. But if we open our hearts to God in truth, His truth brings life out of death. It brings freedom from condemnation. It brings peace and joy. We want to stay in His Light then and walk in it and never again be away from it.

The words to "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," a hymn by Martin Luther, stand out to me: "The body they may kill, His truth abideth still...His kingdom is forever." Let us then hold on to what is truth that lasts forever. Let us hold on to Christ. Abba, Father, keep us in Your Light, and let Your truth guide us continually. Amen.