


Sunday, November 1, 2020 | Kingdom Manifesto

Matthew 5:8 | Structural Integrity for the Soul

Integrity, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change.” Meaning, if you say you’ll do something, you’ll do it. This is where we get the saying, “My word is my bond.” And this is the sort of characteristic we look for in those who lead us. We want them to say what they mean and mean what they say.

But integrity can also be used to describe a structure’s strength and completeness. When a construction project lacks structural integrity, it collapses.

EXAMPLE:  For instance, after fourteen years of planning, three years of construction, and spending over \$6 million, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge was completed in Washington State on July 1, 1940.¹ An estimated seven thousand people were in attendance on opening day.² Spanning just a hair past a mile, it was one of the longest suspension bridges at that time, coming in at the third spot right after the George Washing Bridge in NYC and the Golden Gate in San Francisco, which was at the top.

However, not too long after it opened, the bridge showed signs of a yet unknown fault. They first noticed something was wrong when it would sway and twist during the slightest breeze. Because of this anomaly, people nicknamed her "Gallopig Gertie" as the bridge appeared to bounce and ripple like a galloping horse. This rippling would sometimes go on for a few moments to as long as eight hours.

Surprisingly, they didn’t close the bridge down. Not unlike today, people had great faith in modern technology. If you were brave enough to cross it, they’d let you and then charge you a toll on the other end: one-way was 10 cents for pedestrians and \$.75 for cars. But then, a mere four months later, while they were working on a solution, the bridge shook itself to pieces and fell to the waters below. Thankfully, no lives were lost.



¹ General Editors, “Tacoma Narrows Bridge collapses”, November 13, 2009, *History*, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/tacoma-narrows-bridge-collapses>, [accessed, October 30, 2020].

² General Editors, “Success: Creating the Narrows Bridge 1937-1940”, 2005, *The Washington State Department of Transportation: Tacoma Narrows Bridge*, <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tnbhistory/connections/connections2.htm>, [accessed, October 30, 2020].

<TACOMA BRIDGE COLLAPSE STILLS>

Afterward, an investigation revealed that the principal cause of the structural failure was due to torsional forces.³ Meaning, because the bridge was constructed with solid plate girders and decking, there was a lack of airflow. This lack of airflow basically turned the bridge into something like a sail or a plane's wing, creating lift whenever the wind picked up. Had the bridge been designed with grates or holes which would've allowed air to pass through uninhibited, the bridge would've remained intact.

<INSERT PICTURE> Ten years later, in 1950, they reopened with a much safer—more aerodynamically porous—bridge. And today, there are now two parallel bridges that accommodate the growing populace of Tacoma. Thankfully, they seem to lack the gallop of their predecessor.

Had the bridge gone through rigorous testing beforehand, it wouldn't have failed. But the planning committee wanted to save money and time and so rushed the planning process. Coincidentally, the architect who designed the Tacoma Narrows Bridge never made another bridge again. Since two of the other bridges he designed had similar structural faults as this one.⁴

Sadly, those connected to this failure carried the shame for the rest of their lives.

The lead architect, Leon Moisseiff, died three years of a heart attack after this event. And though none of his other designs failed, Tacoma overshadowed them all. So much so that his “minor” design flaw has been used as a cautionary tale in every architectural class since.

One of the primary engineers on the project, Clark Eldridge, would later serve in the military during WWII. However, sadly, he spent most of his service as a POW under the Japanese for over three years. At one point, a Japanese officer who had once been a student in the States before came up to Eldridge, pointed his finger, and said, "Tacoma Bridge!"⁵

³ Hillhouse, Grady, “Why the Tacoma Narrows Bridge Collapsed,” August 28, 2018, *Practical Engineering*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXTSnZgrfxM&t=455s>, [accessed, October 30, 2020].

⁴ Wikipedia contributors, “Leon Moisseiff,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Leon_Moisseiff&oldid=935951081, [accessed, October 30, 2020].

⁵ General Editors, “Weird Fact #6: Tacoma Bridge Spans Ocean”, 2005, *The Washington State Department of Transportation: Tacoma Narrows Bridge*, <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tnbhistory/weirdfacts.htm>, [accessed, November 1, 2020].

The point is, when we prize anything other than wanting a job done right, we inevitably cut corners. The finished product has inherent faults in its design. So, when sufficient enough force is applied, they break in a spectacular fashion. And those connected with this kind of failure are forever defined by that failure in the eyes of history.

There are no shortcuts in life. A life that is devoid of integrity will eventually buckle under the pressure. And, as we'll learn today, only those who are pure of heart will be rewarded with seeing God. But those who've lived a life of cut corners will see nothing but darkness and separation. They will have their life's work overshadowed by one crucial oversight. A good man who does not know Christ is not good at all.

But before we dive too deep into this principle, we must first read through the beatitudes. It is time to memorize.

READ: Matthew 5:1-12 (NKJV)

¹ And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

³ "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed *are* those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed *are* the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed *are* the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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

Jesus’ words here are directly lifted from Psalm 24.⁶ In that particular psalm, we're told about an individual who lives on top of the "hill of the Lord" and stands in the "holy place." What a remarkable individual that must be. But what makes him so unique? Let's find out.

READ: Psalm 24:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ The earth *is* the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. ² For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. ³ Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

The one who is pure of heart lives atop the Lord's hill. The one who has clean hands stands firm in the Holy Place of God. This individual is blessed by God. As such, he receives eternal salvation because he does not worship idols and does not speak falsities. He is singularly devoted with his heart and his tongue. There is no variableness, no hypocrisy, and no deceit in him. His integrity is as sure as wrought iron and clear as a diamond.

Whenever the Bible talks about the heart, it does not refer to the muscle that pumps your blood or the place where our emotions live. The purity of heart refers to the truth in unadulterated substance, not feeling. It is a wholesomeness at the very center of our being.⁷

Every time purity is addressed in the Scriptures, it's speaking of an individual with a “single-minded devotion to God.”⁸ And while actions are undoubtedly a part of what is pure in someone's life, scriptural purity speaks more about *inner* piety than *outward* compliance to God's laws.

The problem is we often overemphasize the outer part but deemphasize the inward part of the Christian life. In fact, a perfect example of this faulty emphasis comes in Matthew 15.

READ: Matthew 15:1-20 (NKJV)

⁶ Carson, D.A., *Matthew*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew and Mark, Volume 9, Revised Edition, General Editors Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2010), p. 164.

⁷ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1992), p. 100.

⁸ Turner, David L., *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 152.

¹ Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

³ He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is a gift to God*” — ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸ ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.’”

¹⁰ When He had called the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “Hear and understand: ¹¹ Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”

¹² Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” ¹³ But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

¹⁵ Then Peter answered and said to Him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶ So Jesus said, “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is [expelled]? ¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”

Whenever we allow traditions to blunt the edge of commandments, we have traded our integrity for convenience. It is far easier to look religious than actually *being* religious. There are no loopholes and no shortcuts in the Christian life. The requirement is unapologetically wholesale devotion to God; it is purity in all things; it is good through and through. In other words, there are no skeletons in this man’s house.

Now, it is at this point, you may be thinking: "This is impossible. No one has a heart like this. No one is that good to their core. What person doesn't have skeletons in their closet?" And you'd be right. We are cracked to our core. As such, we need someone who is unbroken to fix our brokenness. We need someone pure to purge our impurities.

Personally speaking, my own faults are ever before me. Beneath the superficial fault lines so easily seen on my exterior runs a deep network of unending canyons. The cracks of my character are the mere ripples stemming from an utterly broken core.

But like me, all of us are not known for our pure hearts. Theologian John Calvin famously said, "The human heart is a factory of idols. Every one of us, from his mother's womb, is an expert in inventing idols." Even Jeremiah the prophet said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)

We live in constant dissonance and disharmony. We are, all of us, hypocrites (cf. Mat. 7:1-5). And no one has more trouble possessing a pure heart like a hypocrite. But praise be to God who cures the hypocrite! He tunes our flat hearts. He makes us sing in unison with him.

Jesus is a master craftsman when it comes to mending broken hearts. Ephesians 3:17 says that Christ has made His home in our hearts through faith. David prayed in Ps 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Jehovah is the heart-mender. He is the greatest heart surgeon who ever lived.

So much so that Ezekiel, the prophet, foresaw a time when men's hearts would be replaced entirely and given a new one.

READ: Ezekiel 11:17-21 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel." ' ¹⁸ And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. ¹⁹ Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But *as for those* whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their heads," says the Lord God.

Through Christ, hearts of stone are softened and made anew. And when they are created anew, they are given the ability to see God. Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

Now, as we've talked about before, seeing God is a symbolic way of talking about recognizing God's hand in our world (cf. Gen. 32:30; Deut. 4:12; Job 19:26-27; 1 Tim. 6:15-17; 1 Jn. 4:12). So, when Jesus speaks of "seeing" God, it is not a literal seeing as no one can literally see God and live (cf. Ex. 33:20). But even this is beside the point. Suppose they could, what would they see? God is a spirit (cf. Jn 4:24). What does a spirit even look like?

Now, do not misunderstand me. Though we cannot see God in any literal sense as one man sees another. That is not to say we cannot see His handiwork in creation.

READ: Psalm 19:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language *where* their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

The brilliant workings of the observable universe are no less miracles straight from a divine mind than when a Carpenter turned water to wine, fed thousands with a boy's lunch, and ultimately rose from the dead. One is evidence of the other. The things we see in the night sky or smell in the spring air are our very own familiar miracles. And while the sweet melody of God's voice is most clearly heard within the pages of Scripture, I cannot help but also hear a faint echo of Him within the rhythmic laughter of my children.

This is why the faithful see God's hand in everything. But the faithless see only the hands of chance. One is led closer to Him, whereas the other is driven farther from Him. This is why the pure in heart are the only ones who can see God, and those who are impure of the heart will never see Him. They aren't even looking for Him.

But this seeing is not only a knowledge of who is behind the seemingly mundane affairs of our everyday life. No. It is so much more. There is also a true eschatological seeing we shall experience in the age to come.⁹ Someday, we will see Christ seated on His eternal throne, and something spectacular will happen to us.

READ: 1 John 3:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know Him.

² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

So, when Jesus says the pure in heart see God, he is speaking of seeing him in our every day *and* but then also seeing him on the “eternal” day. When that day comes, we will undoubtedly see Him in all His literal glory. And seeing him will have a transformative effect on us. So much so, will be made, transformed, and altered to be just...like...Him.

But even then, when all of humanity and even the earth itself is made anew, the only literal being we will ever actually see is Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 12:14; Rev. 21:22-27). The Lamb is the true light by which all things are illuminated. And seeing Him is as good as seeing the Father (cf. John 14:1-11). So, when Jesus speaks about the pure of heart seeing God, He is talking about a knowledge that “sees” the Holy One at work in all things today, tomorrow, and forevermore.

So, what’s the takeaway?

A core of integrity creates eyes that see God.

To skimp on inner piety is to doom one's self to a catastrophic structural failure. Robust integrity matters far more than an impressive exterior. And where man looks on the outward appearance, God looks upon the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7). When He looks at our hearts, what does He see? Does He see cracks of hypocrisy? Does He see the blemishes of unchaste heart? Does He see our hearts bent in a direction we should not be going? What does He see when He looks at our hearts?