

Ezekiel 33—Ezekiel The Watchman, And The Art Of Self-Delusion

Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Introduction

Last week we saw what happens to unbelievers when they die—they go down to the depths of the earth, to the Pit, Hades, or Sheol—the temporary resting place for the wicked dead. Remember that Hell is technically the Lake of Fire, a place not associated with planet earth (it's also called outer darkness). However, many Bible translations translate Sheol and Hades as “Hell”.

We learned last week that the unbelievers in Sheol, Hades, or the Pit are not only conscious, but also remember everything they did while they “caused terror in the land of the living”. The only thing that changes is that instead of being proud and boastful of their achievements during their short stay in the land of the living, they are now completely humiliated and ashamed of what they did, and must bear that shame for all of eternity, as they recognise how foolish it was to rebel against the Almighty God, and that they must now stand before a holy God and give account of their lives.

In view of this extremely sobering, in fact terrifying, reality of what happens to those who die without Christ, God now reminds Ezekiel of his primary role is to be a **watchman**, someone sent by God whose job it was to warn people that they need to repent if they are going to escape God's judgment. This applies to Ezekiel on a national level, but it applies to every believer on an individual level; we are **ambassadors of Christ**. We'll see this as we go through the passage.

Outline of Ezekiel chapter 33

1. God makes Ezekiel a Watchman for the Nation of Israel (vs 1-11)
2. God's judgement is always fair (vs 12-20)
3. The fall of Jerusalem (vs 21-22)
4. God describes Judah's sin and why He had to discipline them (vs 23-29)
5. Pretended submission and obedience—the art of self-delusion (vs 30-33)

1. God makes Ezekiel a Watchman for the Nation of Israel (vs 1-11)

Ezekiel 33:1-6 NKJV—What it means to be a watchman

Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, ³ when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, ⁴ then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. ⁵ He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. ⁶ But

if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

This section is very similar to 3:16-27. When God repeats Himself it means that it's important.

v 2 **When I bring a sword upon a land:** What is Ezekiel watching out for? *God's judgement (When I).* God tells Ezekiel when He is about to judge a wicked nation, especially Judah, and Ezekiel must be faithful to let them know how God will discipline them—if they choose to not repent.

“There is always a place for those to do what Ezekiel was called to do as a watchman—to discern that God's judgment was coming soon and to warn **the people**. Yet many who consider themselves modern “watchmen” focus on the examination of supposed error more than the proclamation of God's truth. This is a distortion of Ezekiel's calling as a **watchman.**” (David Guzik) In other words, the main function of a watchman or ambassador of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-21) is to point out sin and its consequences, and point people back to God so that they will repent.

v 3 **If he blows the trumpet and warns the people:** The watchman of the city would be on the walls of the city or another high point where they could see the enemy army approaching. It was the early warning system of the day. When he saw the enemy approaching, he would blow a predetermined sound on the trumpet which would warn the people of the approaching enemy and give them time to flee.

Of course, judgement or God's discipline only came because of their sin. So what Ezekiel was really warning them of was not that Babylon was coming, but rather that they had embraced sin and now God must discipline them. How God was going to discipline them was not the most important thing, rather, it was the fact that, because of their sin, they were now under God's judgement, and therefore needed to be called back to repentance. If they repented they would not be judged—they would be safe.

v 4 **Then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head:** This must have been a precious promise to Ezekiel and Jeremiah, as many of the people they warned didn't listen and eventually perished.

v 5 **He who takes warning will save his life:** The only way to escape God's judgement of sin is to repent and believe—turn from sin and turn to God, and also believe that Jesus' death on the cross was the full payment for all your sins. In the context of the chapter, it meant repenting of their sin, turning to God, and therefore avoiding the brutal Babylon siege of Jerusalem.

v 6 **If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet:** If the watchman failed to warn the people, then he would be held responsible for those that perished.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 NKJV—Ezekiel the watchman

“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. ⁸ When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

v 7 **I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me:** God is here reaffirming Ezekiel’s role and responsibility as a watchman. Importantly, the watchman must hear from God and speak God’s words.

v 8 **O wicked man, you shall surely die!** Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel shared this simple, but strong, message. Today we have Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* The main difference between the watchman described in this chapter, and us as ambassadors of Christ, is that Ezekiel was responsible to speak to the nations, and not just individuals.

v 9 **If you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul:** Once a person or nation hears the message, it becomes their responsibility to respond. The messenger, watchman, or ambassador is only responsible to deliver the message, not for how it is received. Like this brought comfort to Ezekiel and Jeremiah, it also brings comfort to us today as parents as we warn our kids, an unbelieving spouse, our unsaved friends and family. Also, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to warn each other and keep each other accountable so we do not suffer unnecessarily, bringing dishonour to God and His Church, and also losing our reward.

The main point here is that we must speak the truth in love. If I don’t say what needs to be said, then I am in some way responsible for what happens when they are punished for their sin. You could think of it as a spiritual duty of care. Like I would be liable as a teacher if I didn’t warn a student about a physical danger I was aware of and the student hurts themselves, so I will have to give an account to God when I stand before Him at the Bema Seat Judgement for things not said and done. Not speaking the truth in love is equivalent to neglect of duties or gross negligence.

Ezekiel 33:10-11 NKJV—The message of the watchman

“Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: ‘Thus you say, “If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?”’ ¹¹ Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

v 10 **If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?** In other words, “It’s all too hard, the judgement is too severe, there’s no hope for me, I’ll never be able to change—I’m doomed.” It was true that the people were deep in their sin—they were habitually unfaithful, but God always leaves room for repentance, right up until the final judgement. In the case of the people of Judah, it was the third and final Babylonian invasion when the city and temple were destroyed and the remaining people were taken into captivity.

v 11 **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live:** In God's response to the accusation in the previous verse, He reveals a fundamental aspect of His character—I **have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.** This applies both to God's disciplining His people now, and also condemning the unbelieving for eternity.

However, just because God finds no joy or pleasure in judging the wicked, it doesn't mean that it won't happen—God is both perfectly loving and perfectly holy.

v 11 **Turn, turn from your evil ways!** If God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked, then He finds much pleasure when they repent. Nobody has to die. Everybody has the opportunity to repent.

Luke 15:7 NLT paraphrase (also read vs 1-6 in your own time)

In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

2. God's judgement is always fair (vs 12-20)

Ezekiel 33:12-20 NKJV—*The fairness of God's judgement*

¹² “Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: ‘The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.’ ¹³ When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. ¹⁴ Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

¹⁷ “Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ But it is their way which is not fair! ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. ¹⁹ But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. ²⁰ Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways.”

In this section, God answers several questions and accusations that the people had concerning Himself.

Remember and consider that the context of these verses is the physical judgement of the Babylonian captivity, and not people's eternal destiny. Once a person is truly or genuinely born again, they are forever saved, with their sin debt having been paid in full and the Holy Spirit living within them.

Here are the two scenarios described above. At any time, someone who had been living a righteous life could decide that they wanted to begin listening to the false prophets, enjoy the temporary sensual pleasures associated with the worship of the idols, and also remain in Jerusalem—they would therefore be judged when the Babylonians came through and destroyed Jerusalem.

On the other hand, someone who had been indulging in idol worship and listening to the false prophets might come to their senses and flee Jerusalem, believing Ezekiel and Jeremiah's warning concerning the coming Babylonian invasion/judgement—they would escape the coming judgement.

v 12 **The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression:** “God told Ezekiel to speak to another accusing objection from the people of God. This was an accusation based in fatalism, which basically said: *the good are good and the bad are bad and nothing can be done about it*. To answer that objection, God reminded all that every **righteous man** could end up with a life dominated by **his transgression**. His prior righteousness would not rescue him on the day of God's judgment.” (David Guzik)

v 12 **As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness:** Just like the righteous person had the free choice to begin living a sinful life, so the wicked person has the free choice to begin living a righteous life, and therefore escape the coming judgement.

v 13 **When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness:** Self-righteousness is a dangerous trap to fall into. Self-righteousness is thinking that we are good enough to earn God's blessing and approval—nothing could be further from the truth. As we will see later, the self-righteous person is self-deceived, self-deluded, and insane. We must never forget just how sinful our sinful nature really is, because when we do, we also forget just how gracious and kind God is to unconditionally forgive and accept us.

v 15 **If the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen:** Here is another example of what repentance looks like on the outside—instead of stealing, they give instead.

Ezekiel 33:17-20 NKJV—Israel was unfair, not God

“Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ But it is their way which is not fair! ¹⁸ When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. ¹⁹ But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. ²⁰ Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways.”

v 17 **The way of the Lord is not fair:** This was yet another false accusation against God—the Lord is not fair.

v 17 **But it is their way which is not fair!** This is God's answer to their false accusation against Him. It's amazing how our sinful nature is so illogical and twisted. When we give in to sin, our minds become dark and foolish (See Romans 1:20-23).

v 20 **I will judge every one of you according to his own ways:** This is why God's ways are fair—it is based on the choices of the individual—God gives everybody free choice.

3. The fall of Jerusalem (vs 21-22)

Ezekiel 33:21-22 NKJV—The predicted messenger reports the fall of Jerusalem

And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been captured!”

Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped. And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.

v 21 **In the twelfth year of our captivity:** Ezekiel has been prophesying for about seven years now (see Ezekiel 1:2-3).

v 21 **The city has been captured:** Years before, God had predicted that when Jerusalem fell, a runner would come and let Ezekiel know. At that time, God had also made Ezekiel mute, only being able to speak when he had a message from God. God had also promised Ezekiel that once the messenger came, Ezekiel would no longer be mute. Remember that this was exactly the opposite of what the false prophets were teaching—God will protect Jerusalem and the temple, so stay here and be safe. I think that after this day, many people would have realised the folly of their ways. They would have come to understand that Ezekiel and Jeremiah were both true prophets of God because everything they said would come to pass did come to pass.

Ezekiel 24:26-27 NLT paraphrase

And on that day a survivor from Jerusalem will come to you in Babylon and tell you what has happened. ²⁷ And when he arrives, your voice will suddenly return so you can talk to him, and you will be a symbol for these people. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”

4. God describes Judah’s sin and why He had to discipline them (vs 23-29)

Ezekiel 33:23-24 NKJV—The few remaining survivors boast against God

²³ Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ²⁴ “Son of man, they who inhabit those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was only one, and he inherited the land. But we are many; the land has been given to us as a possession.’

Remember that God had promised that the land would remain desolate for 70 years, and that after that time, He would bring back the exiles and rebuild the city and the temple. However, these few people left there by Nebuchadnezzar imagined that they would begin to rebuild Jerusalem right then and there. However, when things got tough, they again put their trust in the evil world system and fled to Egypt, where they were subsequently killed. Jeremiah 40-44 records this sad story of these people who simply could not trust and obey God.

Ezekiel 33:25-26 NKJV—God’s reply to the remaining survivors

“Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “You eat meat with blood, you lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood. Should you then possess the land? ²⁶ You rely on your sword, you commit abominations, and you defile one another’s wives. Should you then possess the land?” ’

v 25 **You eat meat with blood, you lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood:** These few survivors were a part of the group that had rebelled against God all the way to the end. In His mercy God allowed a few to survive. It's amazing to see that there is still no repentance in these hard hearted and violent people, even after they had seen God's prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple come true.

v 25-26 **Should you then possess the land?** God asked this rhetorical question twice to emphasise that they would not possess the land. It would be the exiles returning after 70 years that would possess the land—those who had repented and had soft hearts.

Ezekiel 33:27-29 NKJV—God's judgement on the remaining survivors

“Say thus to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “As I live, surely those who are in the ruins shall fall by the sword, and the one who is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and caves shall die of the pestilence. ²⁸ For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. ²⁹ Then they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.” ’

v 27 **Those who are in the ruins shall fall by the sword:** These survivors thought that they had escaped God's judgement. However the same judgements—the **sword**, the **beasts**, and **pestilence**—that decimated the majority of the population, will also catch up with them in Egypt, where they fled for refuge. Jeremiah 40-44 shows this to be true.

v 29 **I will make the land most desolate:** Their arrogant strength would come to nothing. Instead of being rebuilt, the cities and land would become desolate.

v 29 **Then they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed:** Their continued sin brought continued judgement.

5. Pretended submission and obedience—the art of self-delusion
(vs 30-33)

Ezekiel 33:30-33 NKJV—The foolishness of hearing but not doing

“As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ ³¹ So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. ³² Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. ³³ And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

v 30 **The children of your people are talking about you.. saying to his brother, ‘Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord’:** This would have been encouraging to Ezekiel in the sense that at least his message was well known among the people, even if they weren't willing to submit, repent, and obey.

v 31 **They hear your words, but they do not do them:** In other words, they are giving lip service to God's message through Ezekiel. They say yes, yes, but do no, no.

v 31 **With their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain:** What good does it do a person to agree with the pastor who faithfully proclaims God's word, telling him, "That that was a great message", if that person is not going to put it into practice—knowing what is true and doing what is true are two different things. The bottom line is that they are still self-seeking, living for themselves, and have no interest in the honour and glory of God.

v 32 **You are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument:** People listened to Ezekiel like people listen to popular music—for entertainment value only. It is sad when the heart is so disconnected from spiritual reality that church attendance becomes an external facade—smile and pretend everything's okay, pretend to be spiritual, pretend to be interested in the Word, but really there is a false, ulterior, or hidden motive for attending church. Common ulterior motives for attending church include acceptance by a group or friendship, seeking a relationship with another person of the opposite sex, financial incentives, and gaining access to various church programs.

Of course the first and most important reason we should be going to church is to worship God and honour Him by seeking to love Him more and submitting to the truth of the Word of God. One of the things we need to remember is that our motive can change in an instant. One week I might be there for the right reason, with the right heart attitude, but the next week my affections have been stolen by someone or something else and I'm no longer walking in submission to God. Then I repent and the week after that I have the correct motive and a pure heart again. We all need to check our hearts before we walk in the door to church—why am I here? Am I here solely because I love the Lord and am seeking to grow in my relationship with Him? Or am I here for any other reason, including just to look spiritual and impress others. If I realise that my motive is wrong, then I simply need to repent.

v 33 **Then they will know that a prophet has been among them:** As time went by, more and more of Ezekiel's prophecies came to pass. So even if they still refused to submit to God's Word, they would still have to concede that Ezekiel was a true prophet of God.

Application: Dealing with sin on a personal/church level

v 3 **If he blows the trumpet and warns the people:** This is never easy. Nobody likes to be disturbed or roused from their comfortable complacency. After all, their sin makes them feel good (it satisfies the sinful desires and cravings of their sinful nature), but the pricking of the conscience brings pain, but it is a good pain. Think about it, what would happen if God didn't create us with nerves? I would rest my hand on the hot stove, never feel it, and probably end up having to amputate the charred remains of my hand.

Our conscience was given to us by God to be like moral nerves. When I get too close to sin it warn me that I am about to get burned. However, even as a Believer, I can choose not to repent and so harden my heart, and sear my conscience. I have, at least for a time, not been willing to submit myself to God's sovereign and holy rule over my life. Instead, I want only what satisfies my fleshly appetites, whether it be for physical pleasure, companionship, acceptance, security, pride, selfishness, or recognition.

When I choose not to submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, my conscience becomes hard or seared, no longer able to detect sin with the same degree of sensitivity, and it becomes easier to sin because it doesn't hurt as much (it doesn't mean that it's not burning me just as badly though). For all of us, our consciences, and our hearts, are always either growing harder or softer, depending on how much time we spend in the Word of God, and also our choices regarding how much of what we hear we choose to obey. Remember that the Word, if not mixed with faith, will not profit us (see Hebrews 4:2). Knowing and believing are two different things.

On a different level now, Jesus Himself tells us that there will be many who claim to be Christians, but who are not Christians—they are false converts. They have an ulterior motive, and it's not to please God, but rather themselves.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 NLT paraphrase

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. ² These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead.

Matthew 7:21-27 NLT paraphrase

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

²⁴ “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

The crash Jesus is talking about here is when their facade of fake spirituality is washed away and their unregenerate (sinful, unforgiven) state is revealed.

Application: What’s your motive—the parable of the three thieving daughters

Imagine that you have three daughters and all of them have a problem with stealing. Then, after being caught and disciplined they stop stealing. Obviously, you would be happy that they were no longer stealing. However, when you ask them why they stopped stealing, they give you three different answers.

— Your eldest says, “I only stopped because I didn’t want to get into trouble again—I didn’t want to lose any more pocket money.”

— Your middle daughter says, “I only stopped because I saw how sad it made you and mum. I stopped out of love and respect for you.”

— Your youngest daughter says, “I was convicted in my heart when I read in the Bible ‘do not steal.’ Then I prayed to God for forgiveness and repented of my sin.”

Who do you think had the right motive? Let’s see what their motivations were. The eldest daughter’s motive was purely selfish—she only stopped because of how it affected her (external circumstances). Do you think her heart had changed? (no) Do you think that she had genuinely repented of her stealing? (no) Do you think that if there were no longer consequences for stealing that she would go back to stealing? (yes) Is this an external (heart not changed) or internal (heart is changed) motivation? (external)

The middle daughter's heart was slightly softer than the elder daughter, but still there was no real change in her attitude towards stealing. Yes, her relationship with her parents was more important than her stealing, but the point is that she still loved stealing. Her motivation for stopping stealing was external—to please people and stay in relationship with them. Do you think her heart had changed? (no) Do you think that she had genuinely repented of her stealing? (no) Do you think that if her parents were no longer around that she would go back to stealing? (yes) Is this an external (heart not changed) or internal (heart changed) motivation? (external)

The youngest daughter was different. There were no external factors (external circumstances or the influence of other people), but rather the Spirit of God was convicting her, and she willingly submitted to God, recognised that her desire to steal was wrong, and repented. She had a change of heart which resulted in a change in behaviour—this is the definition of true repentance—the change in behaviour must result from a change of heart, and not some other external motivation. She made the decision that it is more important to please God than to please herself or others. She had come to that place where she said to God, “Not my will but Yours be done”. She had put to death that sinful nature desire to steal—she had died to self. Because she had genuinely humbled herself, she was able to come back into relationship with God, and therefore, as she spent time with God, God transformed or changed her heart.

Psalm 24:3-6 NLT paraphrase

Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ Only those whose **hands and hearts are pure**, who do not worship idols and never tell lies. ⁵ They will receive the Lord's blessing and have a right relationship with God their Saviour. ⁶ Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

2 Timothy 2:22 NLT paraphrase

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with **pure hearts**.

Matthew 5:8 NKJV

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

Romans 12:1-3 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your **reasonable*** service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think **soberly****, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

* **reasonable** (Greek: *logikos*) = logical, genuine, true, translated as **of the word** 1 Peter 2:2. **Reasonable service** is a life of worship according to God's Word; we are submitted to God's Word.

** **soberly** (Greek: *sophroneo*) = *reasonable, sensible, keep one's head, be of sound mind, serious, to reason correctly, to think straight, to be sane*. Therefore, to not think soberly of myself, measuring myself against God's standard of truth and holiness found in the word of God, is actually *insanity*. Again, if I'm not evaluating myself soberly, then

I'm insane (spiritually). Remember that insane people are characterised by having a false understanding of who they really are (reality) and a lack of self-control—they often hurt other people. We need to check ourselves and see that we are not spiritually insane, having a false (proud) view of who we actually are, because we are not measuring ourselves by the Word of God. We can become spiritually insane (disconnected from the truth or reality of the Word of God), by neglecting the Word of God, and also failing to obey the word of God when we do read it.

It's so easy to justify myself, and to make myself look good in my own eyes. However, this is pure foolishness—insanity. If I measure myself by myself or others, I will always come out looking good. However, if I measure myself by the Word of God, submitting myself to all of it's truth, then I will have a sober, sensible, accurate, and sane view of myself. It's never easy, but after the painful process of repentance and change, there is the greater joy of a deeper walk with God.

James 4:1-10 NLT paraphrase

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? ² You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. ³ And even when you ask, you don't get it **because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.**

⁴ **You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.** ⁵ Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that **God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him.** ⁶ And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

⁷ So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. ⁹ Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honour.