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When the Heart Sees Clearly:

The Vision Born of Love

Eunike Jonathan - p. 2

"Radical & Reckless:
When God's Love Disrupts Your Life"
Eunike Jonathan - p. 5

"Locked Out of Love"
Greig Whittaker - p. 6

When the Heart Sees Clearly:

The Vision Born of Love

Eunike Jonathan

The Beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12) can be gathered into the two great commandments: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). The first draws us *inward toward undivided love for God; the second moves us outward into embodied love for others.* That is the Way of Jesus.

Many who have faithfully matured in love through poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness, and mercy (Matthew 5:3-7)—may find themselves in a season of exile, when inner transformation outgrows external constructs still shaped by fear. This article flows from the same concern expressed in an open letter I wrote, "To the Exiles Who Still Love Jesus,"[1] which reflects on healing from spiritual exile and rediscovering communion through love.

It is from within this experience of exile and rediscovery that the next Beatitude takes on new meaning:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

This Beatitude reveals how seeing God becomes the turning point—when inner vision is healed and love begins to flow outward as peace. Without this renewal of sight, pain can harden into isolation or reconstruct the systems we left behind. The Jesus Way calls us instead toward communion—to live in relationship even with our enemies, not by mirroring fear but by keeping the door of love open.

The purity of heart Jesus describes in Matthew 5:8 is not about moral perfection but about seeing through love—an undivided vision that makes us peacemakers and children of God.

This article, employing an exegetical and contemplative approach that weaves Scripture, patristic insight and lived experience, explores purity of heart not as moral perfection but as an undivided vision—the capacity to see God clearly within ourselves, others, and even our own wounds.

Seeing God's Eyes

Those who have already tasted mercy and begin to recognize within themselves the reflection of God's likeness. From that recognition comes the invitation to move from receiving mercy to perceiving divinity—from knowing God's compassion to seeing with God's eyes.

Before considering the phrase purity of heart, we recall what Jesus meant by blessed. The Greek word *makarios* speaks of sharing in God's own life—a joy unshaken by circumstance, "the ultimate happiness without the faultlines of happenstance."[2]

To be blessed, then, is to share in God's own life. ***Each Beatitude is not a command to achieve but an invitation to divine life.*** The blessed are those whose hearts become transparent to divine joy, reflecting the radiance of God, who is Love (see 1 John 4:8).

"Blessed are the Pure in Heart"– Being Whole

The Greek word for pure (*katharos*) refers to what is free from taint, stain, or impurity—"unpolluted by lies, half-truths, or slogans."[3]

Importantly, *katharos* does not imply separation from

imperfection but integration within the self—wholeness, the absence of duplicity, hypocrisy, or self-deception. Augustine calls it "a singleness of heart."[4]

Over time, the word pure has often been narrowed or misused—not only to suggest moral or sexual perfection but to define religious worthiness. Some have taken it to mean total, uncompromising devotion to God—an ideal of perfect worship and flawless virtue attainable only by a few. Though sincere in their pursuit of holiness, such views risk reducing purity to outward performance rather than the inner transformation Jesus describes.

When he spoke these words, Jesus was not addressing the few but the many—the ordinary, weary and seeking multitudes (see Matthew 5:1). His invitation to purity was never about religious elitism but about restored wholeness of heart. The truly blessed life—the one rooted in God's own being—is the life whose inner world has been cleansed of illusion, whose motives and actions flow from the same clear spring of Love Himself (see Hebrews 10:22). Purity is not moral perfection but transparency of being—the state through which divine light passes unhindered and illumines all.

This understanding of pure naturally extends to the heart, for the purity Jesus describes is not flawless devotion but the integration of one's entire self. In Scripture, the heart (*kardia*) is the center of physical, intellectual, and spiritual life—the seat of vitality and the source of thought, desire, emotion and intention. It encompasses understanding, will and character: the whole person in motion.

When the meaning of heart is reduced to emotion or sentimentality, Jesus' command to love or believe "with all your heart" becomes a matter of passion and intensity rather than participation and integration into divine life. Yet Jesus points to something far deeper: the heart as the meeting place between the human and the divine, the space where we learn to perceive as God perceives (see Psalm 51:10).

To be pure in heart is to live from that center—where intellect, will, and desire are united in love. This purity naturally follows mercy, for a heart that is rigid or unkind—even toward itself—can never be truly pure. Therefore, purity does not arise from strict religious performance but from a heart softened by love from God, for oneself, and for others.

"For They Shall See God" The Restoration of Sight

To see God is both a promise and a present possibility. Within the Beatitudes, it signifies not an external vision of divinity but an interior awakening of communion.

In the language of the early Church, the mind (*nous*) is the spiritual eye of the soul. It directs the will and illumines the inner person. When the mind is clear, it governs the heart rightly, allowing divine light to permeate the whole being. Jesus expresses this truth through metaphor:

The purity of heart Jesus describes in Matthew 5:8 is not about moral perfection but about seeing through love—an undivided vision that makes us peacemakers and children of God.

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness (see Matthew 6:22-23).

This image reveals a two-way movement of light and darkness. A sound eye not only allows light to enter but also perceives through that light, seeing reality as it truly is. An unhealthy eye, by contrast, both blocks the light and distorts what it perceives, casting shadows on reality. Jesus speaks of more than moral vision—he describes a spiritual way of seeing. The inner eye is both the window through which divine light enters and the lamp through which that light is expressed.

When the *nous* and heart are healed, they become transparent to God's light—we see and are seen rightly. ***To be pure in heart is to live in this reciprocity of illumination: receiving divine love without obstruction and reflecting that love outward without distortion*** (see 1 John 3:2, 4:16).

To see God, then, is to perceive this living flame within—the warmth of perfect love that dispels the coldness of accusation. As divine love softens our inner harshness and casts out fear, it frees us to see others through the same lens of compassion (see 1 Peter 1:22, Acts 15:19). The one who truly sees God no longer stands above others in condemnation but beside them in love—beholding through God's own eyes, with the gaze of communion, where every face becomes a reflection of the One who is Love (Genesis 1:27, Colossians 3:11).

"With All My Heart"

Such vision is not abstract; it takes shape in how we live—and how we respond to those who have wounded us most deeply. One powerful example of this kind of sight comes from Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who, along with her family, hid Jews from the Nazis during World War II.

Years later, while speaking at a church in Munich about God's forgiveness, one of the former SS guards from Ravensbrück—the very camp where her sister had perished—extended his hand, saying, "How good it is to know that all our sins are at the bottom of the sea."

Corrie froze. Memories of cold barracks, cruelty and loss flooded back. In that moment, she realized she could preach forgiveness all she wanted—but now she was being asked to live it. She prayed silently,

"Jesus, help me."

As she reached out her hand, she felt "a current" pass from her shoulder down her arm into his. Tears came as she said,

"I forgive you, brother. With all my heart."

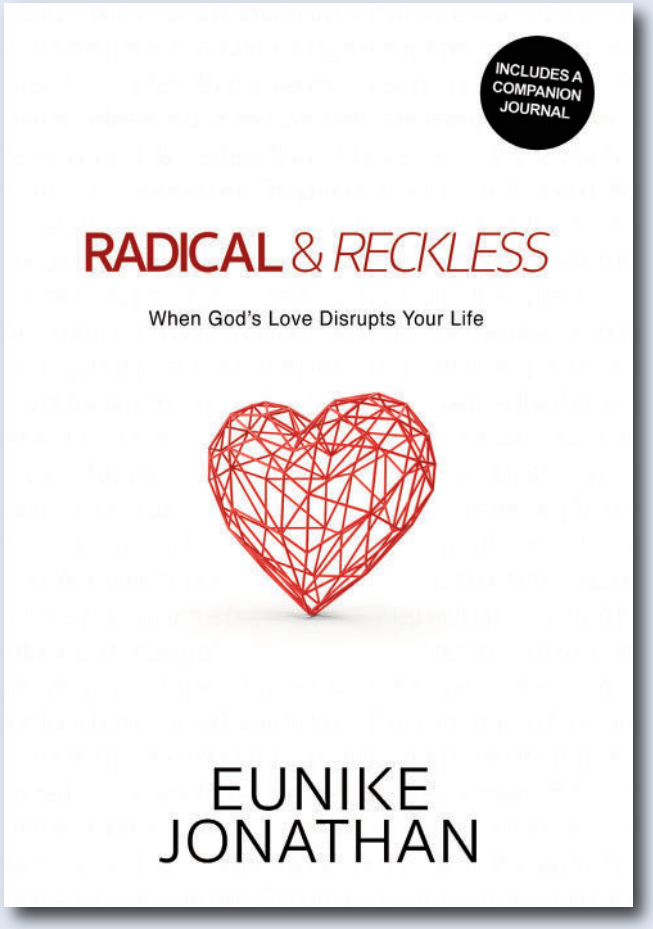
In that instant, she felt the love of God more intensely than ever before.[5]

Her forgiveness was not denial but divine sight—the kind of vision that perceives God even within the one who caused the pain. This is the purity of heart Jesus speaks of: a healing of vision until love becomes not merely what we feel, but the truth by which we see and live.

Summary

The essence of this Beatitude's promise is to see as God sees—not through injury or ideology, but through communion, in love. Such vision restores what exile scattered and transforms pain into peace.

I invite us, then, to yield to this promise—***to let our vision be born of love until it becomes the very light by which we see.*** From this place, we live as peacemakers—children who bear the likeness of their Father, able to stand in



When the Heart Sees Clearly (cont'd from page 4)

love even when misunderstood or persecuted (Matthew 5:9-10). This is the Jesus Way: to keep the table open, the door of love unclosed, and to let God's vision become the one through which we live.
Amen. ❑

Eunike Jonathan is an Indonesian-born Chinese American theologian, writer, and speaker exploring identity, healing, and divine love at the intersection of faith, culture, and justice.

Notes:

1. "To the Exiles Who Still Love Jesus," *CWR blog* (June 2, 2025).
2. Jim Forest, *Ladders of the Beatitudes* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 20.
3. Forest, *Ladder,* 90.
4. Commentary on Matthew 5:8
5. "Guideposts Classics: Corrie ten Boom on Forgiveness." *guideposts.org.*

No Such Thing as Darkness with God

exerpt from *Radical & Reckless* by Eunike Jonathan

It's impossible to disappear from you or to ask the darkness to hide me, for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night. There is no such thing as darkness with you. The night, to you, is as bright as the day; there's no difference between the two. Psalm 139:11–12 (TPT)

We live in a world where darkness and night have negative connotations, and they bring fear and anxiety to us. That is the reality of a life that is void of the presence of God. His Light has not pierced the darkness and infiltrated it. So, where there is darkness, darkness remains. But as Kingdom citizens, children of God, we have a different reality. Christ lives in us, and darkness is not dark to him; the night will shine like the day for him, for darkness is as light to him. The periods in our lives that would naturally cause fear, anxiety, or depression and cause us to be bitter, apathetic, or hide are just as much a blessing of love filled with opportunity in the supernatural. God's reality of darkness and night is not the same as ours.

For God, darkness was an opportunity to create! He was there, even in darkness, and he said, "'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day' and the darkness he called 'night'" (Genesis 1:3–5a, NIV).

When we read that passage of Scripture, we have to be careful not to misinterpret what God said. He saw that the light was good, but he never said the darkness was bad! He named them both: "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day" (Genesis 1:5b, NIV).

The day began with sunset! Darkness. Night. Winter. Loss. Whatever may seem "bad" in our lives can be the beginning of a beautiful life and season when we trust in the One who saw darkness and emptiness as an opportunity to create with love… for love. Darkness was where my journey began. ❑

Locked Out of Love

Greig Whittaker

Here is the revelation that is shaping my life today: religion locks you out. Religion focuses on the peripheral issues and makes them the priority for entry. Jesus came to expose the fraud that is religion in all its perversity, fraudulence, and arrogance, so that no one would ever follow religion again. Already loved replaces stories of separation, so that no one misses out.

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and you Pharisees-such frauds and pretenders! You do all you can to keep people from experiencing the reality of heaven's kingdom realm. Not only do you refuse to enter in; you also forbid anyone else from entering in!" . . .

"Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees-frauds and pretenders! For you are obsessed with peripheral issues, like insisting on paying meticulous tithes on the smallest herbs that grow in your gardens. These matters are fine, yet you ignore the most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God, to display mercy to others, and to live with integrity. Readjust your values and place first things first."

—Matthew 23:13, 23 (*The Passion Translation*)

OBSERVATION

Religion moves the first-place issue of love to a distant last place and disguises the way God is experienced through establishing performance as the entry door, so no one ever gets to experience Heaven's love. It places behaving right for acceptance above experiencing the already lavished beauty of God's gift of acceptance.

As soon as you are locked out of Heaven's love embrace then you are imprisoned in the performance cycle of always reaching for performance-based worthiness for your acceptance. And you just never make the grade—no one makes the grade. So, religion locks you out of love and gets you "obsessed with peripheral issues," and then the management of your, and those of others, performances on the thousand peripheral issues. Critical critique not beautiful embrace becomes the story of your journey.

When you miss how already unconditionally loved you are then your story starts and is shaped by separation from God, and religion shows you the way you must behave to overcome the separation. And performance is so demanding, ***"paying meticulous tithes on the smallest herbs,"*** that you lose sight of love, and God becomes a demanding, distant tyrant that is obsessed with the details and judges harshly your every misstep.

The story of God starts, is founded on, and finished with the truth that you are loved, always have been and always will be. All who choose to hear will know this to be their story. It's only when you know you are loved that you realize the "most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God."

You see there are no nit-picking laws to follow, there is only be loved, walk in the embrace of love. Religion has us work and we miss love. Whereas God wants us to be loved, stay loved and then overflow, to reflect love. This is not working—this is now being me. The loved me, loves, and love shows mercy and lives in integrity. Place the first thing first and everything else falls into place. *Place religion first and you don't enter in; place love first and you will experience Heaven and bring Heaven to earth.* How do we miss this?

APPLICATION

I will never allow rules or religion in any of its warped forms, no matter how good and right and godly they may appear, to be the meter of judgement for my acceptance into the open embrace of Heaven. Nothing, nothing at all, not the worst behavior I could think upon, or engage in, will

ever have me walk away from Heaven's embrace.

Heaven's love is where healing happens, where I become my truest self, shaped in Heaven's image. I will never judge others to be unworthy, and I will never sit under any judgement that condemns me to be unworthy of being embraced and experiencing His love.

This is the priority of life, I will readjust all my values to "the most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God."

Thank you that you hate religion and tear down its condemning rules and silence its shame-filled voice. I would be locked out of love if religion had its say.

Thank you that you call me into a beautiful life of experiencing your unconditional, uncaused, unworldly love. Being postured always to encounter love like this, is the priority of life, with the second being reflect it. This is a life I can live, this is a life I can embrace, this is life!

Thank you that you place no barriers, no grades to pass, no measures to meet, no behavioral monitors for acceptance, between me and your love.

Meditate: the most important duty of all is to walk in the love of God.

Consider: How loud is religion's voice in your life?

Do you ever feel unacceptable to be embraced by Gods love?

How beautiful is love's embrace? ❑

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Carvoeiro, Portugal

Photo: Brad Jersak

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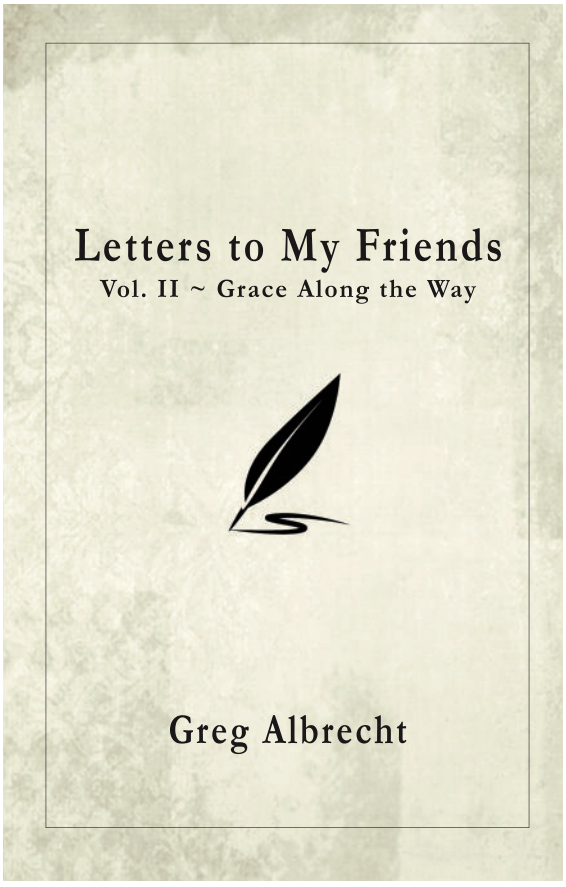
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