

Blessed are the pure in heart

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Matthew 5:8

[Jesus said:]

- “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”
 - NIV
- “You’re blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and your heart – put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.”
 - The Message
- “Blessed [anticipating God’s presence, spiritually mature] are the pure in heart [those with integrity, moral courage, and godly character], for they will see God.”
 - Amplified Bible

First thought...

- “pure in heart” ... “see God”...
- They seem like
 - Good thing
 - Desirable things
 - Things that Jesus probably is

The plan for this talk

- Who has “seen God”?
- What does “pure” and “pure in heart” mean?
- How can we become pure in heart?
 - (Strong positive Christianity?!)
 - (What about when God is hidden?)

Who has seen God?

- Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they **hid** from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
 - Gen. 3:8

- Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting”. ... The LORD would speak to Moses **face to face**, as one speaks to a friend.”
 - Ex. 33:7,11
 - (Even though he was also a murderer, and ran away for 40 years)

- ...what may be known about God is plain to [even the godless and wicked] because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – **have been clearly seen**, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.
 - Romans 1:19, 20
- The **heavens** declare the glory of God; the **skies** proclaim the work of his hands.
 - Psalm 19:1

- “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we **see you** hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink?’

...

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

- Mat. 25:37,40

- Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the the Father is in me?”

...

“The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

- John 14:8-9, 21

“Pure”...?

- A common facet or “pillar” of morality:
 - Holy... sacred... clean... without blemish... untainted...
 - Vs
 - Profane... evil... sinful... unclean... defiled...
- But what in particular??
 - Keeping the commandments
 - Menstruation
 - Sickness and disability
 - Particular foods (e.g. pork)
 - Ritual washing
 - ...?

“Pure in heart”

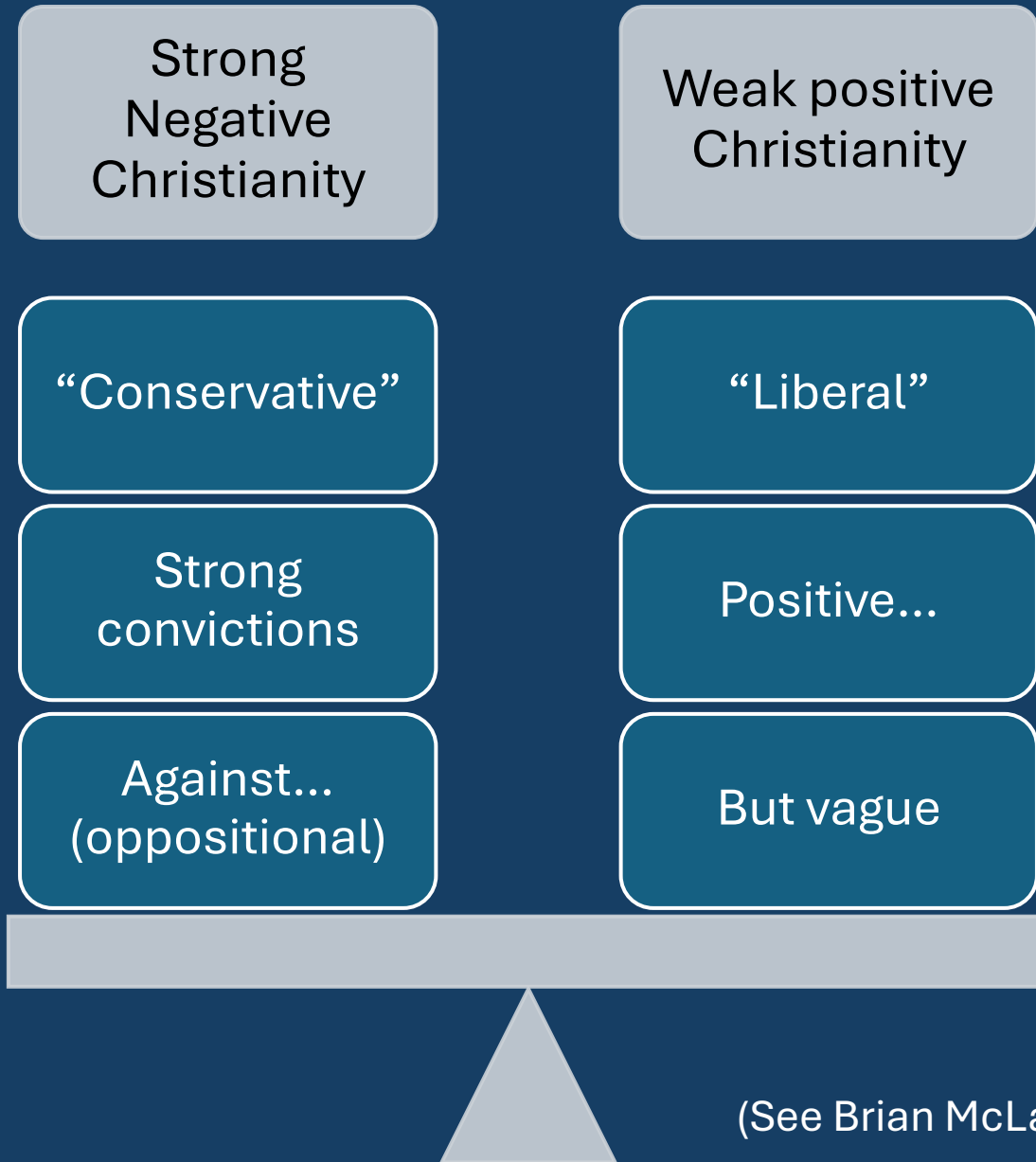
- [Jesus said] “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart, but into their stomach, and then out of the body ...
For it is from within, out of a **person’s heart**, that **evil thoughts come** – sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and **defile a person.**”
 - Mark 7:18, 19
- Note: in the bible “heart” doesn’t mean “emotions”, it means their inner self & will, or our control-centre

How can we become pure in heart?

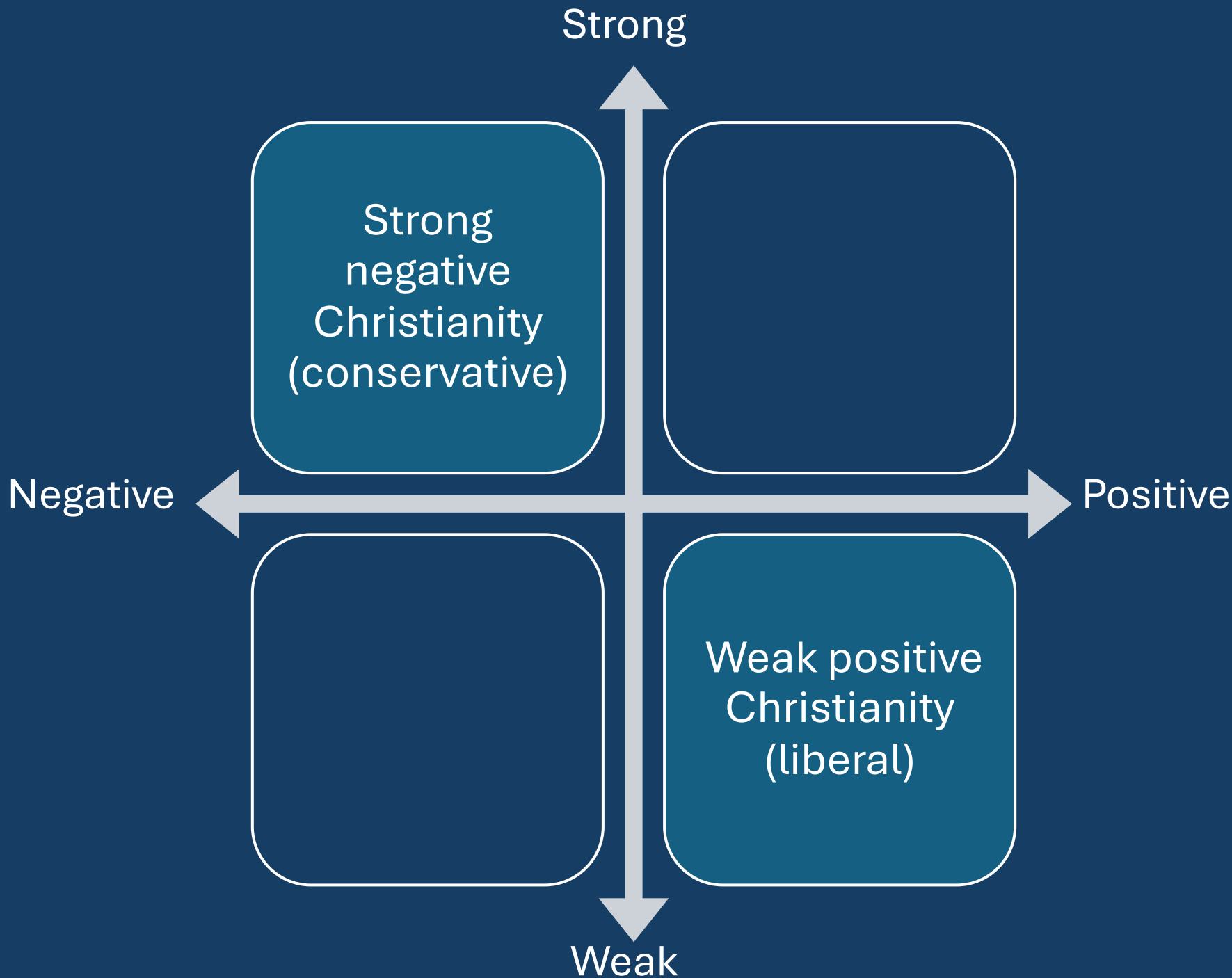
The **Negative** route?

- Is “purity” avoiding the bad things?
- The Pharisees avoid “bad” things, like “sinners” and non-Jews
- But Jesus didn’t!
 - Tax collectors and “sinners”
 - A woman with bleeding
 - Leppers

The traditional (20th Century) choice:



(See Brian McLaren)



Or could there be... Strong

Strong
negative
Christianity
(conservative)

**Strong
Positive
Christianity
!!**

Negative ←

→ Positive

“Aunt Maude”
[fictitious]

Weak positive
Christianity
(liberal)

Weak

A Positive route?

- **Come near to God** and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you **double-minded**.
 - James 4:8
- Purity of heart is to **will one thing**.
 - Soren Kierkegaard
- “God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’”
 - Acts 13:22
 - (even through he also committed murder & adultery!)

Consider an Olympic athlete...



(But...)

- Dependence on God
 - Not personal striving and victory!
- “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”
 - Gal. 2:20

Some possible anti-beatitudes...

- Woe to the **busy**, they don't have time to see God.
- Woe to the **pre-occupied**, they don't notice God when he's right there.
- Woe to the **legalist**, they are too busy ticking boxes to see God.
- Woe to the **hypocrite**, they can't see past their own mask.
- Woe to the **addict**, they can only see their next fix.
- Woe to the **hard-hearted**, they refuse to look for God.

Aside:

What about when God is hidden?

- Sometimes God seems to conceal his presence
- A “dark night” of the soul
- All we can do is wait

A final encounter

- The throne of God and of the lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will **see his face**, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will no need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
 - Rev. 22:3-5

- But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
 - Acts 7:55

So...

- the **busy**, could slow down and make space...
- the **pre-occupied**, could stop and look...
- the **legalist**, could ask if they have missed the most important part...
- the **hypocrite**, could set aside their mask...
- the **addict**, could admit their need to God...
- the **hard-hearted**, could take a risk and “cross the road” to someone in need....