

Teaching Sound Doctrine

Lord Teach Us

Blessed are They Which do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

Back in the days of the depression families were faced with true hard times. As a result many went hungry and thirsty literally. They lived on what little they could grow and they worked hard for little pay. Today almost no one knows the hardship they lived through. They understood what real hunger and thirst were.

The Lord spoke of those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." What does this mean? How shall they be filled?

What is meant by 'hungering and thirsting for righteousness'?

It describes people who earnestly desire to live a righteous life as God wants them to live [EBC, ICC, NIBC, NICN, TH]. They desire to conform to God's will in actions, thought, speech, and worship [BNTC]. They want to live righteously, free from guilt. They strongly desire to have a right standing with God and do what is right, something which must be desired in order to be possessed, but which ultimately can only come as a gift of God [PNTC]. They desire to see God's justice and standards applied in all aspects of life [NAC]. Their desire for right behavior before God includes social justice as well as personal piety [BECNT]. It is an intense desire to see a just social order, as lived out in the presence of God [NIGTC]. They long for the day when God's justice will prevail.

'Righteousness' is primarily social justice, although personal righteousness would also necessarily be involved [WBC]. They have a deep desire for personal righteousness as well as for justice in society, a desire that will ultimately be fulfilled at the consummation of the kingdom [EBC]. A different view is that their desire is to be declared righteous in God's sight [Lns]. Conformity to God's will in one's life, which can ultimately only come by imputation of the merits of Christ, satisfies the deepest spiritual need [NTC].

" Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for the whole of righteousness, for complete righteousness."¹

Just as people during the depression, only more so, the poor people in the time of Jesus were pitifully familiar with hunger and thirst. A hired hand in Palestine earned one Roman denarius ("penny," KJV) for a day's labor ***Mat 20:1-2 tells us*** *For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.* It was worth about seventeen cents. Even if we allow for present inflation, that did not buy very much. These men had to work every day, or their families would go hungry. At best, they were always just a step ahead of real hunger. Meat was a luxury enjoyed only once a week.

In the dry Bible lands, people were familiar with real thirst. The hot desert wind blowing stinging sand into one's face would create a terrible, throat-wrenching thirst.

The Lord did not speak of a little hunger pang to be met by a light snack. Nor did He refer to the half-hearted desire for a sip of tea. He rather spoke of a craving hunger and a driving thirst which a man would do anything to satisfy.

One of the basic reasons most people in our day refuse to obey the Gospel is that they do not "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Many know what they should do, but they are simply not interested enough in salvation to do anything about it. They are careless of their lost condition. Others who are ignorant of the truth do not care enough to honestly, diligently study. They have the same attitude and response, *"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee" (Acts 24:26).*

We must be as the ancient psalmist:

"As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1-2) (Ps.63:1) Oh God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

As Paul, we must count the righteousness that comes through Christ more important than anything else in the world (*Phil 3:7-9*). *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may*

win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

How are those who "hunger and thirst after righteous ... filled"?

To be righteous is to be right in point of law, to be declared not guilty. Those who are "poor in spirit" recognize they are sinners, destitute of this righteousness. They "mourn" over their guilt. Those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" have a craving desire to be right with God, to be declared "not guilty" and enjoy fellowship with their Maker.

One who desires something is filled when that which he craves is supplied. How is righteousness supplied? Righteousness is certainly not supplied by our own perfect obedience to God's law. In the Roman letter Paul discussed this very problem. Of perfect obedience, he declared, *"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:9-10)*. This is because *"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)*.

If we are to be right, our guilt must be removed by executive pardon (forgiveness) through the grace of the Lawgiver. God, by his grace, sent his Son as a propitiation for our sins, that we through him might receive the forgiveness of our sins by the sacrifice of his blood on the cross *(Rom. 3:21-26)* *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. See also (Rom: 4:6-8) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

This plan of forgiveness, whereby we might be as spotlessly righteous as though we had never sinned, is the gospel. Those who believe and obey the Gospel appropriate to themselves the forgiveness God has promised and become righteous by God's mercy through their own obedient faith *(Rom. 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.) (Rom:6:17-18 But God be thanked, that ye were the*

servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.). This gospel first began to be preached on the first Pentecost after the Lord's resurrection, and on that very day the righteousness of the kingdom of Heaven was first granted to hungering and thirsting souls (Acts 2:37-41).

The question is to the careless, sinner, are you not parched and weary in a baked "desert of sin"? Do you not hunger to be filled with the bread of righteousness from Heaven? The Master offers water, whereof, if a man drinks, he "shall never thirst" (Jn. 4:13-14). Jesus is "the bread of life," and whoever comes to Him "shall never hunger" (Jn. 6:35). All who truly "hunger and thirst after righteousness" shall be filled abundantly by forgiveness through the Gospel (Matt. 7:7-11).

Why, then, will you perish miserably in hunger and thirst?

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is no bread? and you labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isa. 55:1-2).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).