

## THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST

Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

This is not a hunger for experiences, this is not a hunger for blessings, this is not a hunger to have a ministry; this is not a hunger to make a name for oneself, or create some kind of image in people's minds.

This is a hunger and a thirst after righteousness. Deep in our hearts there must be a hunger and thirst for righteousness. It is not only a hunger for God, it is a hungering and thirsting for the Lord to perfect the work He started in our life, so that he can be glorified in us. As David said, *...he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* Psalms 23:3.

There is a need within us, and when our spirit realizes that need there comes a hunger and a thirst after righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount seems to hit right at the very heart of it. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...* Matthew 6:33. It is not talking about experiences, blessings, or any other thing but His righteousness. We are not to be seeking what we are to eat, or what we are to wear, but to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and the other things will be added.

The mark of a mature spirit is that yearning, striving, and crying after God that is always there. In Philippians 3:14, Paul told how he was pressing toward the mark, striving and reaching. Oh, how he wanted to be following the Lord! Then he said, "Let as many as are perfect, or mature, be like-minded..." (verse 15).

It is the hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God that causes us to be filled with all the fullness of God.

The characteristic mark of the mature spirit is the yearning, striving, living on tiptoe, and crying out to God with hunger and thirst. We cannot love the Lord without desiring to be one with Him, and we do not want that oneness to be marred by the fact that something in our heart is not right.

The wrong things in the human heart ruin marriages destroy relationships and spoil the oneness in the body of Christ. Love, unity and fellowship thrive as people are all reaching up with hunger and thirst after the Lord, and to be righteous in Him.

*2corn 7:1 Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

It is so easy for people to bring that down to a level of do's and don'ts, and it is not on that level at all. It means those things which are defiling our spirit. that which hinders the life of God flowing in our spirit. It is speaking about being cleansed from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

It is a hunger in the heart of the people for righteousness. Everything is judged according to defilement of spirit, so there has to be within us this yearning and crying out, "O God, I hunger for Thy righteousness." For we know our fellowship with Him is related to the righteousness of our own spirit.

We desire an end to that in our soul which troubles and disturbs us.

How can we perfect holiness? It can be done, as the Scripture says, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

We want those impurities and imperfections, those propensities and desires, and those things which have come down from Adam, out of our life. There has to be more than a desire; there must be a hunger and a thirst. The hunger after the Lord, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness comes through this one attitude, when we are going through the pressures: we say, "Thank You, Lord, for what I am going through, because I know the pressure is pointing me to lay hold of you. It will make me a partaker of your holiness." Somehow, in all the pressures we come under, it opens our spirit up with a hungering and a crying out after the Lord.

There is a longing, a crying of our heart for God, a hunger and thirst for His righteousness to fill us when we are tired of the frailties and faults that we see in our heart, and we want to be cleansed and purified. We are longing to respond in God to His demands and not respond with the inadequacy of our soul. When God says He wants something of us, we respond in God to it instead of responding in our self.

The world doesn't seem to change much, one way or the other, whether or not we become upset about things. Something in our spirit can go right on walking with God, not reacting to the circumstances, events, and conditions around us. The cry of our heart is, "O God, get me out of the way, and everything in my soul out of the way, and move through me."

This Beatitude holds the promise to us of becoming a pure worshiper, because it is out of the spirit made righteous that worship

comes forth unto the Lord. Pure worship comes from a heart that is cleansed of its human reactions and responses to the world about it. It says like Paul of old, “None of these things move me” (Acts 20:24). When we know how to respond to the world about us, then we can really worship.

We have come to church and found we were not able to worship very well because we were worried about something. Someone had insulted or injured us. We were fearful of something happening. We tried to worship and we couldn't. Our reactions to the things that were going on around us and the circumstances of our own life overwhelmed us, and the worship was gone.

A pure worshiper ought to be able to worship God in the middle of mayhem. No matter what a worshiper is being subjected to—anyplace, anytime, in any situation—they ought to be able to worship God.

There were a few people in Bible times like that. Paul and Silas had that in their response to the beating at Philippi, their bodies lacerated by the whip. In those days salt was rubbed in wounds to prevent infection. You can imagine how that felt! Their feet were put in stocks in the inner dungeon, and there, not feeling sorry for themselves, they were singing praises unto the Lord (Acts 16:23–25).

Their spirits had been delivered of human responses, human reactions to the environment and the world about them, and even to the reactions of the flesh and its sufferings. Can we comprehend that the early Church were worshiping when the lions were tearing them apart? There is only one way we can understand it—their spirits were beautiful. They hungered and thirsted for righteousness. They had

become pure worshipers because their hearts had been cleansed of human reactions.

The hunger and yearning in our spirit is very necessary. The Scripture says if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we will be filled. It has both a promise and a principle involved. God promises that the person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will be filled.

The principle is, of course, that God always responds to hunger. Hunger opens the door of our spirit, and God starts pouring out of Himself into our life. The longing of spirit is like a mouth drinking out of an endless fountain. The hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled automatically.

It is like drinking water from a glass, though there is a limit to that, and that thirst may not be quenched. But Jesus said, “He who drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst again” (John 4:14). It becomes to him who drinks the source of a fountain.

Hunger and thirst is a demand of our spirit to feast on the Lord, the person who does not hunger and thirst after righteousness is not demanding of the Lord. When they read the Scripture they are impressed, and they study it. They learn it factually as they would learn any book.

There is a strange quality about the person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. They never open the Bible to read it without hungering and thirsting for it. That silent cry goes on in their spirit, the prayer without ceasing, “Fill me, fill me, fill me, fill me, fill me...” It is the hunger that transcends all other appetites and all other desires. When they read the Word, their spirit says, “Feed me, feed me—I hunger, I

thirst.” When they pray they are concerned about all the things everyone else is concerned with, but their spirit is carrying on a prayer of its own with groaning which cannot be uttered, “Help me, fill me, fill me, feed me, feed me, feed me.”

*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* It is a hunger that nothing else can really satisfy. It is that importunate knock that comes at midnight, “A friend of mine has come on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him” (Luke 11:5–10). It knocks and it knocks and it knocks. It is a cry, yet it is a demand on divine promise: “Complete it! Complete what you’ve begun! Finish it, Finish, O God, that which you began within my life. Shape me into the vessel you want me to be! Fill me! Fill me!”

It is the hunger that seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, even if it means ignoring every other human need.

When a young person is hungry and thirsty, looking to the Word, receiving all the help they can, all the time reaching to the Lord, then the perverse things in their heart will go. That person will be filled with the righteousness of God.

It is not enough to be a Christian. We must deal with the perversities in your heart that makes us an ineffectual Christian. We want to be a channel of the Lord. We want to be a believer through whom His love can flow. Therefore, we hunger and thirst after His righteousness. That’s what we reach for.

It is not enough to work around problems and situations; we need to be concerned about our own spirit in every one of them. We need to

be concerned about our own spirit in every relationship, in every decision, and in everything that we do.

We need to let the Lord search our heart and say, “Lord, I hunger and I thirst for your righteousness.” Otherwise, we will go on with those same traits, those same little things that are like land mines and booby traps; we walk along not knowing when they are going to explode. We never know when the thing that is in our heart is going to get us, or what can happen to us with just the right combination of circumstances.

Have you ever wondered how strong you are, how much you are really set in a walk with God? It is said that everyone has a price; everyone has a situation in which they can break, except when the grace of God comes. The only person the devil can break is the person who is looking for something else. Then the devil can frustrate them on that until their hopes are shattered, but those who hunger and thirst after righteousness seem to never fail, though they may go through all kinds of situations. Hunger and thirst is a demand—“O God, finish what you have started in my life. You are the Author. Be the Finisher. Don’t leave me half perfected.” Hunger and thirst cries out to God for a completion of that which He has begun.

Hunger and thirst seems to be the lubricant which keeps us as new wineskins before the Lord. We need that which keeps us from being a stiff old wineskin (Matthew 9:17). What is an old wineskin? One who is satisfied with the experience of yesterday.

There are certain wines that may improve with age, but most wines do not. After processing they are bottled, and at that particular point they are not going to work anymore. They may keep their

potency for several years, and some wines may improve with age, but old wineskins do not get any better, and chances are the wine could grow sour.

If we want new wine, then we want to be a vessel able to handle it—a new wineskin, flexible for all that God will bring forth in the earth. Then we can apply the lubricant of hunger and thirst after righteousness. An old wineskin is one who is satisfied. They hunger no more.

Here is one more description of hunger and thirst. The hunger and thirst after righteousness is so great that it does not despair over our failures or our lack, but it believes for our emptiness to be filled with His righteousness. It is no longer concerned about our shortcomings, because it wants an end to it. It wants His righteousness to fill us. We are not asking to improve ourselves; we are asking for His righteousness to come and fill our spirit. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Sometimes, despairing over our own failures is but an indication that we feel we could do better, and we are just about ready to make a gigantic effort to correct the thing in our own self. That would be trying to perfect in the flesh what was begun in the spirit. We cannot do it. The hunger and thirst for righteousness is for His righteousness. It is not an ambition to change things in our own self by our own efforts, by our own wisdom and our own disciplines. It goes beyond that. It is a yearning and crying to God for His righteousness. Nothing else but His righteousness will satisfy us, because that brings the answer to our emptiness and shallowness. Nothing else can do it.

