

Hungering & Thirsting After _____?

by Wayne Goff

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

Hungering & Thirsting

Sometimes when reading the Lord's Beatitudes, as they have been called, we come across this one and conclude that Jesus is saying that one is blessed when he hungers and thirsts after God's Word. What Jesus actually said was "...hunger and thirst after righteousness." Is there a difference?

The psalmist did affirm of the Bible that "*all thy commandments are righteousness*" (Ps. 119:172). And Moses wrote in the book of Deuteronomy that "*it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all the commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us*" (Deut. 6:25). But it seems to me that we are short-changing ourselves a bit by reading in the text of Matthew "*hunger and thirst after God's Word*" rather than "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*." God's Word is the **means** by which we obtain righteousness, the **end** desired. So let us not confuse the two.

Righteousness

So what is this "*righteousness*" for which we should hunger and thirst? Briefly stated, **righteousness** is the state of being right, with God's Word as the standard of what is right. So Jesus is commending the ones who desire to be right in the sight of God, and He says that their desire shall be filled. But let's look a little farther into the word "*righteousness*."

Defined by *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, we see "**1** in a broad sense: state of him who is as he ought to be, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God. **1a** the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain a state approved of God. **1b** *integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling and acting*: Matt. 3:5; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1; Acts 13:10; 24:25; Rom. 6:13, 16, 18-20... **2** in a narrower sense, justice or the virtue which gives each his due."

It would be good for everyone to read the following references which speak of "*righteousness*" as "*integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting*" — Matt. 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1; Acts 13:10; 24:25; Rom. 6:13, 16, 18-20; Rom. 8:10; 14:17; 2 Cor. 6:7, 14; 2 Cor. 11:15; Eph. 5:9; 6:14; Phil. 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:16; 4:8; Titus 3:5; Heb. 1:9; 12:11; James 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:14; 2 Pet. 2:5, 21; 3:13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7, 10. These Scriptures will help you see both the importance and the manner of obtaining righteousness before God.

Some of the key points which you will learn about "*righteousness*" from these verses include:

- Jesus was baptized to fully obey all the commandments of God required at the time, Matt. 3:15
- Our righteousness must exceed the Pharisees' righteousness in kind, not in quantity, Matt. 5:20.
- Paul convicted Felix on the grounds of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Acts 24:25.
- Our bodies should be used as "tools" for doing right, just as they formerly were used as "tools" for doing wrong, Rom. 6:13, 16, 18-20.
- The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit — not a physical buffet for the body! Rom. 14:17
- Righteousness does not have fellowship (association) with lawlessness, 2 Cor. 6:14.
- Righteousness is a "*fruit of the Spirit*," Eph. 5:9.
- The Christian survives the battle against Satan by putting on "*the breastplate of righteousness*," Eph. 6:14.
- Young and old alike should "*pursue*" (chase after) righteousness, 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22.
- The Bible is profitable for "*...instruction in righteousness,...*" 2 Tim. 3:16.

So, dear reader, are you interested? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? I hope so!

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