

LIFE, RIGHTEOUSNESS & HONOR

MATTHEW 5:6, PROVERBS 21:21

Text: Matthew 5:6, Proverbs 21:21

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⁶ Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Proverbs 21:21

²¹ He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

Introduction:

No right thinking person would argue the fact that we are living in a rapidly degenerating society. It is a society that is plagued with moral perversion, an alarming divorce rate, the escalation of teen violence, a lack of moral absolutes, little or no concern for spiritual things, and many other evils too numerous to mention.

However, as evil as these things are, we must not lose sight of the fact that they are but symptoms of a much greater disease. This disease not only plagues this nation, but the world as a whole, and is the same disease that brought about God's judgment in the garden of Eden and in the days of Noah. It also brought about the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This dreaded disease is SIN. Every evil that exists in the world today is the result of sin.

The solutions to the problems that plague our society today cannot be found in more government intervention or more social programs. The solution is in men and women developing a "hunger and thirst" for righteousness.

1. A DESIRED POSSESSION

The Bible speaks of two kinds of righteousness.

A. Self Righteousness

Isaiah 64:6

⁶But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Romans 10:1-3

¹Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ²For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Philippians 3:8-9

⁸Yea 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, ⁹And 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:

Titus 3:5

⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Every effort made by fallen man to be righteous is rejected by God.

B. Saviour's Righteousness

Romans 4:1-11

¹ What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ² For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. ³ For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ⁴ Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ⁶ Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷ *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. ⁹ *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰ How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Romans 4:19-25

¹⁹ And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet

the deadness of Sara's womb: ²⁰ He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; ²¹ And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. ²² And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Romans 5:1

¹ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2. A DILIGENT PURSUIT

Many today are prepared to seek spiritual things: spiritual maturity, real happiness, the Spirit's power, and effective witnessing skills.

Other people run from preacher to preacher, meeting, to meeting, and conference to conference seeking some vague "blessing" from on high.

They hunger for spiritual experience; they thirst for the consciousness of God.

But how many hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Someone once said of the one who hungers and thirst after righteousness, "It is not that he wants to be a little bit better, still less that he thinks of righteousness as an optional luxury to add to his other graces; rather,

he hungers and thirsts for it. He cannot get along without righteousness; it is as important to him as food and drink.”

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15:34

³⁴ Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

Those who hunger for righteousness desire to be free from the:

A. The Power of Sin

Romans 6:6-23

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³ Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. ¹⁶ Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. ²⁰ For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. ²¹ What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death. ²² But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 8:34-36

³⁴ Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. ³⁵ And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. ³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

B. Preference of Sin

Romans 7:15-25

¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. ¹⁹ For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. ²⁰ Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. ²¹ I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. ²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul was a man who desired to be set free from the preference of sin. He makes it clear in this passage that although there was a part of him that desired to do right, there was still present within him that part that desired to sin. He is teaching us here about the battle that rages between the carnal and spiritual natures.

C. Presence of Sin

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness involves avoiding everything that is in any way opposed to righteousness.

There are certain things in this life that we know are clearly opposed to God and His righteousness. We know they're bad, we know they're harmful, we know they're sinful, to "hunger and thirst" after righteousness is to avoid these things at all costs.

But a sincere and legitimate pursuit of righteousness goes beyond avoiding what is clearly and unmistakably sinful, it also involves avoiding those things that tend to dull or take the edge off our spiritual appetite.

Paul spoke concerning things like this.

1 Corinthians 6:12

¹² All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1 Corinthians 10:23

²³ All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Hebrews 12:1-2

¹ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3. A DIVINE PROMISE

The promise given to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness is that they will be filled.

Notice the promises given to those who follow after and who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

A. Filled

They shall be satisfied as a hungry man is when supplied with food, or a thirsty man when supplied with drink.

B. Righteousness (Prov. 21:21)

Proverbs 21:21

²¹ He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

Those that do follow after righteousness shall find righteousness; God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of doing it.

The individual that follows after righteousness and mercy finds not only righteousness, but also life and honor; which is more than he is said to follow after.

Close:

What are we following after? How are we following after righteousness?

Are we hungering and thirsting after it?

Is it something that we cannot live without?