

THE BEATITUDES

BLESSED ARE THE HUNGRY AND THIRSTY (St. Matt. 5:5)

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Again, we are faced with a situation that many of the readers are not really acquainted with; for very few of us have really been hungry and thirsty to the point of starving. In many countries today, food and water are so scarce that people are dying by the thousands daily. Food and water are not luxuries, they are necessities. This was especially true in Palestine in Jesus' day. Both food and water was used carefully and never wasted. The owning of a well and the cultivating of a field were matters of life and death. So when Jesus linked hunger and thirst and righteousness together, He was telling people that righteousness was not a luxury; it is a necessity. Our physical life depends upon food and water; our spiritual life depends upon righteousness.

One of our modern-day food analysts wrote a book with the title, "You Are What You Eat" Victor Lindlahr. Doctors tell us we are what we eat. This principle is true not only of the body but also of the soul. The outer man depends upon food and water; the inner man depends upon righteousness. The inner man of the spirit must be fed if he is to survive just like the outer man. Lack of food for either means they become sickly and weak. Both MUST be fed IF they are to function properly. And as food and water causes the outer man to function properly, so righteousness must give nourishment to the inner man.

Doctors have found that much of the "junk food and snacks" which have good taste supply very little or no nutritional value. And in so many cases, the appetites of the children of God are for those things which satisfy not and leave them spiritually weak and unhealthy. The appetites we possess and the things we crave determine what kind of children of God we are and eventually will become. There are those that lament the fact that they are unhappy and spiritually lacking and weak; but they have NEVER checked their spiritual food.

The "inner man" MUST be fed if he is to function. The inner man, too, is what he eats. Food (proper food) is important because it is the source of

strength. And we all need the "inner organs" to function properly.

The "inner man" has a sense of "sight." Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened (Eph. 1:18). Our Lord counseled the church at Laodicea to "anoint their eyes with eye salve that they might see" (Rev. 3:18).

The "inner man" has a spiritual sense of "hearing." Jesus said, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!" Christ's sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:3,4); but they will not follow the voice of a stranger.

The "inner man" has a spiritual "taste." O taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Psa. 34:8). The soul has its hunger and thirst, built into man by God at his creation. And just as it is normal for the deer to thirst after the waterbrooks, so is it natural for a man to thirst after God (Psa. 42:1). He may not know that his thirst is for God, and he may try to satisfy his thirst with a substitute that will leave him with more thirst

The person who has trusted Christ has found the answer to that hidden hunger and thirst in his life; for Christ alone can satisfy that inner hunger and thirst. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:35). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:13, 14).

The presence of hunger and thirst in one's life is a good thing. They are evidences of life. Dead people have no appetites; the believer who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is giving evidence not only of life but of health also. One of the symptoms of sickness is loss of appetite, and one of the first signs of health regained after sickness is the return of appetite. When the infection of unconfessed sin is at work in the life of the disobedient Christian, he loses his appetite for spiritual things. He spends his money for that which is not bread and he tries to nourish his soul on substitutes. But when through confession of his sins he is restored to fellowship, his appetite for the things of God returns.

Were it not for hunger and thirst, we would be unable to live and work. Hunger is a sign that the body needs fuel. If we could go on working and living without knowing that we needed water and food, we would kill ourselves. Hunger and thirst alert us of our body's needs of food and water, like pain tells us that something is wrong in the body. A hunger and thirst for

things of God is preparation necessary for life and service.

The Bible tells us some tragic stories of people hungering and thirsting after the wrong things...Samson and his hunger for ungodly women along with Solomon who sought after every unique, earthly thing including women...the prodigal son who sought pleasure, excitement and popularity and found them all but failed to be satisfied. It is easy for the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" to be satisfied. It takes a lot to feed the ego. All of these things are passing away, but "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17). The things of the world cannot satisfy the soul of a man. Jesus found "meat" for the soul in "doing the will of God" (John 4:34). This is what satisfied Him.

The Christian's hunger and thirst is for "righteousness." It is a hunger for righteousness and holiness that satisfies the appetite of the inner man. Too often, the Lord's children hunger and thirst for much less. It is written of the Israelites that they "lusted exceedingly in the wilderness...And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106:14, 15). What they "lusted" after did NOT satisfy them. Had Israel loved and listened to God's Word and cultivated an appetite for His will, God would "have fed them also with the finest of the wheat and with honey out of the rock would He have satisfied them" (Psa. 81:16).

The theologians tell us that there are three kinds of holiness: **imputed**, which is justification; **imparted**, which is sanctification; and **eternal**, which is glorification. When a sinner trusts in Jesus, he is declared righteous; this is "imputed holiness." As a result of this decision, his life is changed and he shares "imparted holiness." The righteousness of God becomes part of his daily life. The person who practices sin but professes salvation is not born of God; for the Christian is not only "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1), he is "justified unto life" (Rom. 5:18). Justification not only involves being cleared before God in the heavens; it involved a living relationship with God and results in a living revelation of God in our everyday lives.

The righteousness or holiness taught by the Beatitudes is a holiness that begins in the heart. The words "HOLY" and "WHOLE" belong to the same family. To be holy involves wholeness. Sin divides and

and destroys, but holiness unites and builds. Holiness is the basic attitude of God. "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). When a soul hungers for holiness, it hungers for God—as David said, "My soul thirsteth for Thee." And to have God in our lives means wholeness; He puts everything together. In Colossians, Paul said, "By Him all things consist (are held together) (Col. 1:17). When the prodigal son left home, all of his life fell apart. In fact, what he was looking for he found right at home.

To be righteous means to be right—right with God, right with self and right with others. When our inner man hungers and thirsts for God, then our soul will function as God made it to function; our spiritual senses are exercised and developed (Heb. 5:14). St. Paul admonished Timothy to "exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (I Tim. 4:7). There is a unity in a person's life whose deepest desire is to know and please God and to enjoy Him. This person finds "all of his springs in Thee" (Psa. 87:7).

It might have come as a surprise to our Lord's followers when He equated holiness and happiness. He promised that they would be blessed if they hungered and thirsted after righteousness. This was a different brand of holiness to what they had seen. The Pharisees had equated holy living with misery. They had the wrong idea of holiness. They thought of holiness in terms of negatives; for this is all they saw in the Pharisees. The Pharisees were better known for what they were "against" than what they were "for." Many Christians today have this concept of holiness and are most unhappy. Jesus was both happy and holy, even though His life was difficult. His holiness was inner holiness, genuine and real, and providing happiness that was lasting. The formula given by our Lord for happiness is one that involves the soul and provides "a fulness of joy and pleasure forevermore" (Psa. 16:11).