

ST. SIMEON ANGLICAN CHURCH, OFF FUTA ROAD, AKURE

BIBLE STUDY, 09/04/2008

STUDY 4

HUNGERING AND THIRSTING SPIRIT FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matthew 5:6

They that hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings (Psalm 24:5; Matthew 6:33). These we must hunger and thirst after. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink, who cannot be satisfied with any thing but meat and drink, and will be satisfied with them, though other things be wanting. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and importunate; "Give me these, or else I die; every thing else is dross and chaff, unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough, though I had nothing else." Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently, and call for fresh satisfactions; so these holy desires rest not in any thing attained, but are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily fresh supplies of grace. The quickened soul calls for constant meals of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who hunger and thirst will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond distinguishes between hunger and thirst. Hunger is a desire of food to sustain, such as sanctifying righteousness. Thirst is the desire of drink to refresh, such as justifying righteousness, and the sense of our pardon.

1. The significance of righteousness

Matthew 5:6; Isaiah 45:8; Romans 4:25; Isaiah 46:12–13; Isaiah 51:5; Isaiah 56:1; Isaiah 51:10; Romans 1:16–17; 3:22–24; 5:19; 10:4; Matthew 6:33; Romans 3:10

The best way to ascertain the significance of righteousness is to go back to the old testament scriptures where this term is used, and then to shine upon these the brighter light furnished by the new testament epistles. "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it". "Hearken unto Me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory". "My righteousness is near; My salvation is gone forth, and Mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon Me, and on Mine arm shall they trust". "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed". "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness". These passages make it clear that God's righteousness is synonymous with God's salvation.

The scriptures cited above are unfolded in Paul's epistle to the Romans, where the gospel receives its fullest exposition. In Romans 1:16, 17a, Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the

righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." In Romans 3:22–24 we read, "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." In Romans 5:19, this blessed declaration is made: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." In Romans 10:4, we learn that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

The sinner is destitute of righteousness, for "there is none righteous, no, not one". God has, therefore, provided in Christ a perfect righteousness for each and all of His people. This righteousness, this satisfying of all the demands of God's holy law against us, was worked out by our Substitute and Surety. This righteousness is now imputed to the believing sinner. Just as the sins of God's people were all transferred to Christ, so His righteousness is placed upon them.

2. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness: a twofold experience

Matthew 5:6; II Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 5:20; 6:33; Jeremiah 23:6; Psalm 42:1; Amos 2:7; Isaiah 55:2

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Hungering and thirsting expresses vehement desire, of which the soul is acutely conscious. First, the Holy Spirit brings before the heart the holy requirements of God. He reveals to us His perfect standard, which He can never lower. He reminds us that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven". Second, the trembling soul, conscious of his own abject poverty and realising his utter inability to measure up to God's requirements, sees no help in himself. This painful discovery causes him to mourn and groan. Have you done so? Third, the Holy Spirit then creates in the heart a deep "hunger and thirst" that causes the convicted sinner to look for relief and to seek a supply outside of himself. The believing eye is then directed to Christ, who is "the Lord our righteousness".

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" describes a twofold experience. It obviously refers to the initial hungering and thirsting that occurs before a sinner turns to Christ by faith and continual longing that is perpetuated in the heart of every saved sinner until his dying day. The one who longed to be saved by Christ, now yearns to be made like Him. This hungering and thirsting refers to a panting of the renewed heart after God, a yearning for a closer walk with Him, and a longing for more perfect conformity to the image of His Son. It tells of those aspirations of the new nature for divine blessing that alone can strengthen, sustain, and satisfy.

3. The blessedness of being hungering and thirsting after righteousness

Matthew 5:6; I Corinthians 1:30–31; 1:1–2; II Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 4:7; 2:12–13; Luke 1:53; Psalm 34:10; 23:5–6; I Corinthians 2:9; I John 3:2; Revelation 7:16

"They shall be filled" has a double fulfilment, both initial and continuous. When God creates a hunger and a thirst in the soul, it is so that He may satisfy them. When the

poor sinner is made to feel his need for Christ, it is to the end that he may be drawn to Christ and led to embrace Him as his only righteousness before a holy God. He is delighted to confess Christ as his new-found righteousness and to glory in Him alone. Such a one, whom God now calls a "saint", is to experience an ongoing filling: not with wine, wherein is excess, but with the Spirit. He is to be filled with the peace of God that passeth all understanding. We who are trusting in the righteousness of Christ shall one day be filled with divine blessing without any admixture of sorrow; we shall be filled with praise and thanksgiving to Him who wrought every work of love and obedience in us as the visible fruit of His saving work in and for us. In this world, "He hath filled the hungry with good things" such as this world can neither give to nor withhold from those who "seek the Lord. He bestows such goodness and mercy upon us, who are the sheep of His pasture that our cups run over. Yet all that we presently enjoy is but a mere foretaste of all that our "God hath prepared for them that love Him". In the eternal state, we will be filled with perfect holiness, for "we shall be like Him". Then we shall be done with sin forever. Then we shall "hunger no more, neither thirst any more".