

Matthew 5:6, part 2 “The 5 Tests for Hungering & Thirsting” Craig Crawshaw

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

REVIEW

Last week we learned that the elusive satisfaction we all long for will only come from seeking and finding RIGHTEOUSNESS, which is a supernatural gift from “out of this world.”

We further learned that this RIGHTEOUSNESS, at least in part, is:

1. showing mercy to others
2. being pure in heart in our motives and actions
3. being a peacemaker in bringing people toward God

RIGHTEOUSNESS is, in a word, is being HOLY, as God is holy. To hunger and thirst for it, is to passionately desire to be without sin – seeking the LIGHT and LOVE that is God.

INTRODUCTION

This fourth Beatitude is particularly critical, for it turns the corner on the emptying of ourselves and speaks of the filling of ourselves with godliness. In that sense it moves from negative connotations to positive ones of what constitutes a Christian. Thus, we have chosen to spend an additional lesson on this foundational and provocative Beatitude.

Today, we examine various tests of our hungering and thirsting. All citizens of heaven hunger and thirst for righteousness, and yet we must ever be reminded of this critical aspect of our constitution that we might ever be filling ourselves with all the fullness God has to offer. I suggest 5 tests.

TEST #1 - Am I actively living out Beatitudes 1-3?

Filling myself makes no sense if I am not actively emptying myself. To say it a bit crudely, but I think accurately: spending time in the dining room doesn't work so well if I am not spending time on the toilet. There is no room for God if self is in the way. Hard as I might seek to be what God wants, it will not happen if I am more concerned with what I want. So, I ask in this test:

1. Am I living as if I can do nothing of spiritual value apart from Jesus? (“poor in spirit”)
2. Am I despising the sin within myself, confessing its manifestations to God? (“mourning”)
3. Am I meek and humble in my self-confidence and strong in my God-confidence? (“meek”)

If so, my quest for righteousness, blessedness and satisfaction will be far more successful.

TEST #2 – Am I indeed blessed and satisfied?

If I am truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the promise from God is that I will be blessed and satisfied. So am I? Do I constantly acknowledge the good gifts of God, or do I more readily focus on the frustrating negatives of life? Would I say my demeanor is generally one of blessed satisfaction with my state, or is it more generally one of turmoil, worry and doubt? Is it indeed “well with my soul” or is that just a hymn that I sing but don't live out?

Hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness must be accompanied by a constant awareness of God's goodness poured out to me, and a trust in Him to bring me through all difficulties.

TEST #3 – Am I avoiding “righteousness quenchers”?

Just as there are things that make it more difficult for a fire to burn, there are things that make it more difficult, if not impossible, for our righteousness to flourish. We can put them in 3 categories:

1. Activities OPPOSED to God's Word
2. Activities MARGINAL in their compliance with God's Word
3. Activities permissible, yet DRAINING on my righteous pursuits

A. Clearly there are attitudes and actions that do not achieve the righteousness of God – they just “snuff” it out and keep it from filling us.

James 1:20 *For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

Galatians 5:19 *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: [partial list:] immorality, sensuality, idolatry, strife, jealousy, disputes, envying, drunkenness, and such like these ...*

Colossians 3:8 *But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another ...*

Other “activities” clearly forbidden in God’s Word would include the following (all so prevalent in today’s society: pornography, sex outside of marriage, lesbian and homosexual behavior, adultery, murder of the unborn, cheating on our taxes, addiction to stimulants of any kind, and so on and so on ... THESE ARE ALL “RIGHTEOUSNESS QUENCHERS” and will abate any efforts to achieve God’s righteousness.

B. But there are also MARGINAL “righteousness quenchers.” They may be “grey areas” in God’s Word or just not mentioned specifically. And either society or common sense and surely the indwelling Spirit of God regards them as “suspect” in living a life of righteousness. They would include:

Gambling, games with extreme violence, media with inappropriate images [“be careful little eyes what you see”], sensual partying, discrimination of any kind - racially, sexually, socially or even politically, “dirty” jokes or crude talk – really, anything that elevates self over God.

There is a wise saying: “if you doubt, don’t.” And the Bible verse that supports this is:

Romans 14:23 *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

C. And then there are perfectly acceptable actions and activities that are not morally related, and yet by their consuming of my precious time in over-indulgence can be DRAINING on my quest for righteousness. They might be sports, media, hobbies, travel, recreation, work – even church or charitable activities – anything that in their time, talent and treasure usage might drain my time talent and treasure from hungering and thirsting after righteousness above all else. BE AWARE and BEWARE!

TEST #4 - Am I actively pursuing “righteousness builders”?

There would be many of these we might mention. But I emphasize the three most obvious ones:

1. Reading and studying the Word of God
2. Spending time alone in prayer with God
3. Immersing myself in the life of the Church and church

Since the Word of God is the collection of God’s truth on righteousness, what can quench my search after righteousness more than a restricted diet of being in God’s Word?

If God Himself is the very embodiment and source of righteousness, what can quench my quest for righteousness more than minimal time spent in communion and exchange with Him?

If the church is where God’s people gather to learn more of God and His righteousness, how might I better quench my hungering for His righteousness than by being only attending sporadically?

Dearly beloved of God – by these deficiencies you are either demonstrating that you are not truly a citizen of heaven as you might think, or you are being very lax and sloppy in your citizen duty and privilege. READ - PRAY - ATTEND!

TEST #5 - Am I both “hungering” and “thirsting” (and understanding the difference)?

Surely “hungering” and “thirsting” are two similar metaphors to describe the longing for righteousness God has put in the heart of each of His kingdom citizens. Each speaks of a need and a longing to be filled, or satisfied, with the blessing of God. Yet I believe it is not by accident that

God uses two words rather than just one. My suggestion is that there is indeed a distinction between “hungering” and “thirsting” of which we should be aware. And I believe we must realize that we must both hunger AND thirst after righteousness. To understand the distinction and be sure we are doing both is the final test I would encourage each of us to apply.

To be hungry in the physical sense is to be in need of nourishment, usually brought on by a growl of the stomach or the smell of good food. To be hungry is not to be desperate, but to understand the need to refuel and importance of taking the time to do so, even if other demands are pressing. We might put off or delay a meal, but we rarely go long without remedying our hunger.

To be spiritually hungry, I would suggest, is similar. It is the understanding that though not desperate, I must refuel my inner spirit for the sake of spiritual nourishment. Not to do so would be to compromise my spiritual stamina for the battle that awaits around every corner of life. So I go to the Word, bow in prayer and serve at church – even though other demands press, for I understand the critical importance of keeping myself spiritually nourished. This is what the Kingdom citizen IS and DOES – it is who we are. Yet we all need to be reminded.

To be thirsty in the physical sense is somewhat different, however. It is the need to hydrate – to replace physical moisture that has been lost and drained. I’m dry, parched, thirsty! I may not quite be desperate, but I know that I can’t go very long without restorative fluid, or else things like headaches, fatigue and dehydration will come. When thirsty, I’m not looking for food – it is water I crave. And finding and drinking becomes a high priority to quench that inner need.

And here also there is an easy parallel with physical thirst – and a distinction between spiritual hunger. To be spiritually thirsty is to be spiritually dry. Where is the motivation? Where is God in this seeming wilderness? Do I even feel like reading the Word or praying or going to church? I’m tired of ministry and the demands placed on me. Let someone else be the evangelist. And worship? – that’s not top on my list at the moment. As believers, we are spiritually aware enough to know that we need – even crave – spiritual refreshment, and when we finally receive it, it feels so good, hydrating our inner person with God’s love, grace, mercy and goodness once again.

For this final of 5 tests, I suggest that we must BOTH hunger and thirst for righteousness in order to be fully blessed and satisfied spiritually. We must acknowledge BOTH our need for continual refueling for nourishment with the Living Bread of Life, whether we feel hungry or not, AND our need to rehydrate our soul with the Living Water that only Christ can give to refresh and invigorate. I need both the daily, and sometimes “boring” daily routine of spiritual manna AS WELL AS the continual pouring out of God’s Spirit in surprising cloudbursts upon my thirsty and dry soul, And I must seek both. I must both HUNGER and THIRST for His righteousness.

SUMMARY

- 1. Am I actively living out Beatitudes 1-3?**
- 2. Am I indeed blessed and satisfied?**
- 3. Am I avoiding “righteousness quenchers”?**
- 4. Am I actively pursuing “righteousness builders”?**
- 5. Am I both “hungering” and “thirsting”?**

Dear God: Please help me to truly hunger and thirst after Your righteousness, believing that this and only this is the true way to life’s blessed satisfaction!