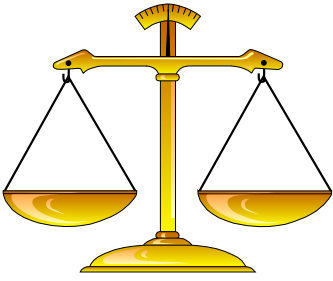


Blessed - 4 - Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Mt 5:6

The most fundamental explanation of righteousness is the one we have experienced from our youth. From our earliest memories we can remember a keen sense of justice and fairness (*righteousness*). We knew instinctively when an unfair judgment (*unrighteousness*) took something from us. We knew if we had been cheated, and would often cry out "***That's not fair!***" meaning "***That's not righteous!***" A tattletale brother or sister who gave only half the story or a matter of discipline where the teacher or parent saw only half the picture left a bitter taste when injustice (*unrighteous judgment*) had been done. We also remember the pleasant sensation of satisfaction and joy when we were treated fairly and justly (*righteously*). There is nothing more satisfying in the midst of injustice (*unrighteousness*) to find a second witness who clarifies the matter and brings vindication (*righteousness*)!



The first to plead his case seems just, Until another comes and examines him. Pr 18:17

The strength of these feelings in our heart reveal what is left of "*the image and likeness of God*" within us. When first created in His image and likeness we were incapable of anything less than full integrity, fairness and justice. We were righteous as He is righteous.

An important and revealing paradox about fairness is seen in the difference between how strongly we understand what is fair and just when we are cheated of it and how little concern we sometimes feel when we are unfair to another. Everyone becomes angry when treated unfairly or when they are the victim of injustice. Yet how much outrage is felt when they benefit when someone else is the victim of unfair and unjust treatment? While everyone hates to be cheated, many brag and consider themselves fortunate if they have benefitted from cheating another. Since it is selfishness that creates such a chasm in our understanding of righteousness, we must hunger and thirst for it if it is to ever become our possession. We have to feel the same sense of need for fairness and justice (*righteousness*) when we direct it toward another as we do when it is directed toward ourselves.

dikaiois ..., *righteous, observing divine and human laws*; one who is ***such as he ought to be***;... 1. in a wide sense, *upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God...* (Thayer, p 148-149; 1342)

dikaioisune... *the virtue or quality or state of one who is dikaiois*; 1. in the broad sense, the state of him who is ***such as he ought to be, righteousness...*** b. ***integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting...*** (Thayer, p. 149; 1343)

tsedeq- justice, *rightness, righteousness* a) ***what is right or just or normal***, *rightness, justness (of weights and measures)* b) *righteousness ...* 5) ***used of God's attribute*** c) *righteousness, justice (in case or cause)* d) *rightness (in speech)* e) *righteousness (as ethically right)*

One who is "*righteous*" observes "*divine and human law*" and is therefore "*such as he ought to be*" in the sight of God. Since any partiality between the fairness and justice we seek to receive and that which we give to others is outrageous all who hunger for true righteousness seek the absolute standards dictated by God! This is the true "*integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness of thinking, feeling and acting.*" When we understand this fundamental element of righteousness, we will know that every sin cheats someone. Every sin is an act of unfairness and injustice. It robs someone of their possessions (stealing/coveting), integrity (false witness), life (murder), and family (adultery). Every law created by God was crafted to keep us from taking something that belongs to our *neighbor* or to our *God*. There must be no unfairness or injustice in the treatment of others. All God's statutes are based on this:

138 You have commanded your testimonies in righteousness and very faithfulness. . . 144 Your testimonies are righteous for ever: give me understanding, and I shall live. . . 172 Let my tongue sing of your word; for all your commandments are righteousness. Ps 119:138, 144, 172

And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Jehovah our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as at this day. 25 And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as He hath commanded us. Deut 6:24-25

Though it may sound simplistic it is actually very profound. Righteousness is defined and explained by God's Law. His testimonies, statutes and commands are the definitive standard of righteousness. This is profound because not one law was arbitrarily crafted to rule our conduct. All God's testimonies, statutes and commands are a clear reflection of God's own character. God's laws are the mirror of God character and as we follow them we become more like God himself. Paul spoken in a similar way about the Lord and the law of Christ

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into

the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Cor 3:18

God's laws reveal to us the manner in which God has always lived and how He expects those He has created to live. We were created "*in His image and likeness.*" At that time we lived as He lived and thought as He thought. So His law reveals His own righteous character.

For Jehovah is righteous; He loves righteousness: the upright shall behold His face. Ps 11:7

Righteous are you, O Jehovah, and upright are your judgments. . . 142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is truth. Ps 119:137, 142

8 O LORD God of hosts, who is like Thee, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You ... 14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You. 16 In your name do they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness are they exalted. Ps 89:8,14, 16

Since righteousness is God's way of life, the thoughts and emotions of righteousness are the pattern for our own. God is eternally righteous. He is eternally fair and just. It is "*impossible for God to lie*" and "*there is no partiality with God!*" The righteousness we hunger and thirst for is the true reflection of God's own character.

So blessed are those who hunger and thirst "*to observe divine and human laws.*" Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to be "*such as he ought to be*" and were created to be. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for "*integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting.*"

If we are still struggling with the exact direction our hunger and thirst will take us to be righteous, there is an important parallel that will help us better understand. Our righteousness is based on God's own righteousness. When we seek to keep all God's laws of fairness and justice, it will be righteousness to us. We see an exact parallel to this in *agape*—love. The same testimonies, statutes and commands that define and reveal righteousness, all hang (depend, gain stability and strength) from *agape*—love.

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Mt 22:37-40

Think about it! The definition of *Agape*-Love is nearly identical to righteousness in its application. While "*agape*—love" always acts in the "*best interests*" of others, "*righteousness*" always treats others "*fairly and justly.*" Therefore righteousness and love are synonyms: Two different ways of looking at the same commands. When we treat others fairly we are righteous and when we act in their best interests we act in love. God is righteous and God is love. When we act in love and we act in righteousness we reflect God's character to others. So God's law, testimonies, statutes and commands reveal righteousness and love with the same words. Note the comparisons between righteousness, love, and commands. Also how they relate to our relationship to God and to the devil.

*In this the **children of God** and **the children of the devil** are manifest: **Whoever does not practice RIGHTEOUSNESS is not of God, nor is he who does not LOVE his brother.** 1 Jn 3:10*

*Therefore, **whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them,** for this is the Law and the Prophets. Mt 7:12-13*

*If you know that **He is RIGHTEOUS,** you know that **everyone who practices RIGHTEOUSNESS is born of Him.** 1 Jn 2:29*

*Little children, let no one deceive you. **He who practices RIGHTEOUSNESS is RIGHTEOUS, just as He is RIGHTEOUS.** 1 Jn 3:7*

*Beloved, **let us LOVE one another, for LOVE is of God; and everyone who LOVES is born of God and knows God.** 8 **He who does not LOVE does not know God, for God is LOVE.** . . . 2 **By this we know that we LOVE the children of God, when we love God and keep His COMMANDMENTS.** 3 **For this is the LOVE of God, that we keep His COMMANDMENTS.** And His **COMMANDMENTS** are not burdensome. 1 John 4:7-9; 5:2-4*

It is always difficult to take synonyms and see their minute differences. Righteousness is a word that specifically deals with the manner in which we treat our fellow man. If we are righteous then we seek to treat others fairly. We seek to be just and honorable. We never seek to take what is another's or in any way benefit from them at their cost. Our highest goal is for our God to see us as fair and just, manifesting integrity and a desire to always do what is best for others and never harm them.

Hunger and Thirst

As we learn how just, fair and equitable God's righteousness is, we hunger and thirst for it. True righteousness is the desire to live as God lives and be fair as God is fair. It is more than just a part of life. It is life itself!

I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more

than my necessary food. Job 23:12:

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Mt 4:4:

This is the real key! We are not hungering and thirsting for righteousness until we are hungering and thirsting to be as fair, as just and as righteous as God. The only way this can be accomplished is to look to God's commands and statutes. We cannot trust ourselves to be fair and just because it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps (Jer 10:23). To truly hunger and thirst for righteousness we must seek to follow His commands and laws to the very best of our ability. So we hunger and thirst to keep His commands and in keeping them to grow to become more and more righteous.

Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.' Deut 6:25

Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Isa 48:18

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Mt 6:33

How strongly do we desire these things? How deep is our longing to be fair and just to our neighbor and to our God? Since hunger and thirst are relative terms. We again have to define them based on God's definition and not some subjective standard we set up for ourselves. Throughout our lives we have felt varying degrees of hunger and thirst. Before each meal it is hunger that motivates us to eat and before each glass of water it is thirst that leads us to drink. Yet can we see these minor urges in the same league with the hunger and thirst Jesus seeks? How hungry was Jesus after His forty day fast? How thirsty is a man lost in the desert having to endure the hot sun for two or three days? With this in mind, what is the strength of these desires within us?

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? Ps 42:1-2

O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory. Ps 63:1-2

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." Jn 4:34

"Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. 2 And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Deut 8:1-4

How about our hunger? How would we describe the depth of need we feel to be fair and just as God is fair and just and to live every day of our lives reflecting His love and righteousness?

They Shall be Filled

Jesus promised those who hunger and thirst for righteousness to this degree will be filled. When we pant as the deer and yearn as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. When we treasure it more than necessary food, and have learned that we live by every word that comes from God's mouth, then whatever God tells us to do, we will do it, and we will be filled with righteousness.

Yet there is more to righteousness than meets the eye. All discussions of being filled with righteousness must begin with the truth "there is none righteous, no not one." All was lost through sin, Only God can help us now. We have fallen so far short of the true standard of fairness and justice that even a lifetime of work will not bring us true righteousness. Our selfishness, ignorance and prejudice will forever blind us to the quality and depth of righteousness God is seeking from us.

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." Rom 3:10-12

So how can we be filled? Jesus promised that if we hungered and thirsted for it we would be filled, but how? Paul revealed that his obedience to the gospel was motivated by the desire to be filled with the righteousness from God. Paul knew he did not have and never would have a "righteousness of his own." His only alternative was the righteousness "through faith in Christ." Though he suffered the loss of all things to gain it, his hunger and thirst were too great to allow those things to hinder him.

Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, 9 and be found in him, not having a

righteousness of mine own, (even) that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: Phil 3:7-9

This is why we must hunger and thirst for it like the panting deer in a dry and thirst land. Obedience to the gospel led to Paul to lose everything because it is the only way to be filled with righteousness. God revealed that all who believe the gospel will be filled with righteousness.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Rom 1:16-17

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rom 3:21-26

"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Heb 10:37-39

The more we trust and obey Jesus as Lord, the more filled with righteousness we become. Just like Abraham, we too are filled with righteousness when we trust God and do what God asks in order to be saved.

Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. 2 Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him. Isa 51:1-2

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,... Rom 4:3-5

He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Rom 4:20-25

When "Jehovah has laid on him the iniquity of us all" the gospel revealed that "my righteous servant shall justify many and bear their iniquities." Isa 53:6, 11 So filled with righteousness through Christ's sacrifice, each justified servant of Jesus seeks to be fair and just and keep God's commands so he can be just as God is just and righteous as God is righteous.

- 1 What was the feeling we felt when treated unfairly as children?
- 2 When someone shows partiality against us do we feel good about the outcome?
- 3 What is the word God used to describe all thoughts and actions that are fair and just?
- 4 What is the interesting paradox about partiality?
- 5 What does God demand of us to be certain we are always righteousness?
- 6 When observing God's laws will we always be fair and just?
- 7 Are there any sins that don't cheat someone?
- 8 What does God pronounce upon all of His statutes and laws?
- 9 If we keep all His commandments what will it be to us?
- 10 Can God ever be unfair or unjust?
- 11 What is the foundation of God's throne?
- 12 What did Job treasure more than his food?
- 13 Since man does not live by bread alone, what does he live by?
- 14 How can we tell the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil?
- 15 How are hunger and thirst "relative terms?"
- 16 What are some of the illustrations the Spirit used to describe the depth of our hunger and thirst?
- 17 Does anyone have his own righteousness?
- 18 Can anyone be righteous if they have not obeyed the gospel?
- 19 What was Paul willing to lose to gain the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ?
- 20 What does the gospel reveal about how God makes man righteous(Rom 1:17)?
- 21 What did the law and prophets reveal about how God would make man righteous(Rom 3:21-22)?
- 22 How was righteousness accounted to Abraham(Rom 4:3-5)?