

Restoring Our Appetite for Righteousness

Text: Matthew 5:6 (KJV)

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

Hunger and thirst are two of the strongest drives a person has. When one is really hungry and thirsty, these dominate his thinking. Jesus says blessed is the person who has an intense desire to do right. When the most important thing in a person's life is to do right in the sight of GOD. He will be most richly blessed. He will enjoy the Joy that comes with being righteous in the sight of GOD.

What is righteousness? Righteousness is an attribute that belongs to GOD, the lawgiver, and is manifest in his written laws. No man can be justified by his own works apart from obeying Gods written word. Therefore righteousness is a wonderful gift from God to humanity through his love. It is the God given quality imputed to man upon obeying the son of God.

Our effort to restore our appetite for righteousness must be intense, all consuming, steadfast unmoveable.

Matthew 6:33 (KJV)

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

I Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

I Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

And They Shall Be Filled

- Philippians 2:13 (AMP)
- II Corinthians 3:18 (AMPC)
- Revelation 3:15-16 (AMPC)

Philippians 2:13 (AMP)

For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure.

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II Corinthians 3:18 (AMPC)

And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit.

Revelation 3:15-16 (AMPC)

¹⁵ "I know your [record of] works and what you are doing; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth!"

Righteousness is a God centered attribute; no man can attain it through his own efforts apart from rightly dividing the word. We humans are inclined to follow our own paths and use our own ways. Notice that this selfish desire for independence from God is in our nature. We are always looking to please our feelings first, but Gods commands us to discipline ourselves in order to restore Gods absolute standard of righteousness.

God's Standard for Public Worship (Proscuno)

- Singing is Worship
- Preaching is Worship
- Giving Money to the Lord's Church is Worship

Singing Is Worship

Singing has a very definite place in worshipping God in spirit and in truth. We glorify God in our singing praises to His name. There are only nine scriptures in the New Testament which specify the kind of music in the worship of the church that God wishes in order for us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. They are as follows: (1) Matthew 26:30, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives"; (2) Acts 16:25, "But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God"; (3) Romans 15:9, "For this reason I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name"; (4) 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding"; (5) Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"; (6) Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"; (7) Hebrews 2:12, "In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You"; (8) Hebrews 13:15, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name"; (9) James 5:13, "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing psalms." All without exception specify only singing. Mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church are not mentioned in the above scriptures or anywhere else in the New Testament because God has not authorized them. Those who do not respect God's word do not respect God.

God has commanded us to sing. That means each one of us. When people just sit through the song service and never attempt to sing, they are not obeying God. Or when people just sit and listen to a choir sing, they are not obeying God's command to sing. They are not "offering the

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fruit of our lips". Can someone else worship for us? I think not. There is no Biblical authority for a choir. Congregational A Capella singing is the only kind of music divinely authorized by the Lord for Christian worship. If we follow only what God has authorized in our singing in worship, then the whole congregation will sing without mechanical instruments of music.

Preaching Is Worship

pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe...but we preach Christ crucified." The preaching of Christ crucified is pleasing to God, but is foolishness to many people. It is only by this kind of preaching and teaching that man will be saved.

The kind of preaching God wants is not always pleasant to hear, but it is for our own good. As we read in 2 Timothy 4:2-4, "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap to them teachers; and they will turn their ears from hearing the truth." The kind of preaching God wants must convince, rebuke, and exhort. We must be careful that we do not turn our ears from hearing the truth by having someone preach what sounds good to us, but contradicts what God says in the Bible.

Proverbs 28:9 (NKJV)

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

How do you listen to preaching? It will affect your life. If you neglect or reject preaching, God will hate and reject your prayers. This is a sober warning for your future success. If God is against everything you do, including your prayers, no amount of effort will work.

Here is one of the most important proverbs. It is a lesson that affects every person, the consequences are severe, and the remedy is easy and simple. You can distinguish yourself in God's sight for His blessings more quickly here than most anywhere else.

Do you attend every church service you can? Do you pray and prepare before arriving? Do you stay focused and absorb as much as possible? Do you review what you heard? Do you meditate on the subject? Do you examine yourself for changes the lesson called for?

The Bereans were noble for receiving Paul's preaching with very ready minds and studying out what they heard (Acts 17:11), but the Jews of Jerusalem plugged their ears and rejected Stephen (Acts 7:51-60). Where do you fall between these two extremes?

Do you attend church as a Sunday habit? Do you miss whenever you feel like it? Do you watch television Saturday night instead of preparing? Do you doze during the preaching? Do you let your mind wander? Do you read your Bible or a hymnal instead of listening?

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God reveals Himself and His will by preaching (Mal 2:7; I Cor 1:21). He picks the men, gives them ability to teach, convicts and leads their minds, and gives them their content – either by visions in the past or by His Spirit and the Bible today (II Tim 3:16-17; 4:2).

Preachers are God's ambassadors (II Cor 5:20). He sends them with His message for your profit, if you will hear and obey. If you neglect God's ambassador and the message he brings, you mistreat God Himself, and you will pay (Ex 16:8; Ps 105:14-15; I Sam 8:7).

What more can He say to get your attention? If you neglect His words in preaching, He will reject your words in praying (Pr 1:24-30). The matter is important, for you need His wisdom through preaching for your success, and you need Him to hear your prayers.

God had preachers under the Old Testament that taught the people by verbal instruction (II Chron 17:8-9; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-12; Jonah 3:1-2; Mal 2:7). King Solomon, the writer of these proverbs is called the Preacher (Eccl 1:1-2,12; 7:27; 12:8-10). And there are preachers today under the New Testament (Rom 10:14; I Tim 2:7; II Tim 4:2).

The Lord warned that He will reject the prayers of those who do not listen submissively. In fact, He will consider their prayers to be abominations! Here is a very serious warning about your attitude toward the preaching of God's word. He explained to the regathered Jews this was the reason for their horrific punishment by the Babylonians (Zech 7:7-14).

Imagine your prayer being an abomination to God! While you beg Him for blessing and favor in your life, He intensely despises, hates, and loathes your efforts and words. Your prayers nauseate Him. It is one thing to have your prayers hindered by neglecting your wife (Mal 2:13-14; I Pet 3:7), but this is a far worse thing of God hating your prayers.

How were the Bereans noble? Consider Acts 17:11 closely. First, they heard Paul with very receptive minds. They did not listen scornfully, raising their own opinions, objections, or foolish questions against his preaching. They wanted to hear; they wanted to believe; they assumed he was right; they were thankful they had a man of God to declare truth to them. Their minds did not wander or wonder if perhaps Paul was wrong.

Second, they searched the Bible daily to confirm his words. They did not mock Paul's superior knowledge by five minutes in a concordance trying to reject him. Some think they can ignore a preacher's many hours of study on a particular subject and a lifetime in God's word with a few minutes of weekend reading. Such is the mentality and nature of foolish and unlearned questions, which godly ministers ignore (II Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9).

Human pride is terrible, and a sermon against a sin of yours will bring it out. But pastors are to wage war against your opinions (II Cor 10:3-6). He has studied the subject 100 times more than you; he is preaching to the varied needs of many people; he has a divine mandate to be true to Scripture alone without fear of men (Jer 1:17); he is not preaching his agenda; he is merely repeating orders from the King of kings. Remember these things.

Paul, knowing your temptation to resent such preaching, warned in I Thessalonians 5:20, "Despise not prophesyings." God has warned in both testaments to listen attentively and submissively. The Lord Jesus Christ soberly brought his parable of the sower to a conclusion by

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saying, “Take heed therefore how ye hear” (Luke 8:18). His judgment is severe – He will take from the stubborn listener the little knowledge he thinks he has.

Cornelius gives one of the best examples of receptive hearers, when he assembled his family and friends to hear “all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33). And Israel held a great celebration for understanding preaching that pointed out duties they had overlooked (Neh 8:1-18). The Thessalonians heard Paul’s Bible preaching as all preaching should be heard – as if the words were the very words of God (I Thess 2:13).

No sermon is perfect, as any honest preacher will tell you. There are always small faults you can criticize, and conscientious pastors agonize over them; the hearers who focus on them are wicked scorers (Is 29:20-21). Peter preached like an unlearned fisherman to the scornful Jews, but he had the wise words of salvation from Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12-13).

God will defend His preachers, as forty-two disrespectful children discovered (II Kings 2:23-25). Korah and his friends wish they had respected Moses and his preaching better (Num 16:1-33). God does not appreciate men ignoring or rejecting the message of His ambassadors (Deut 1:41-44). Paul despised such men (I Cor 14:36-38), and he did not allow foolish contentions, even about matters as minor as the length of hair (I Cor 11:16).

Not all preachers are God’s messengers. Most preachers do not preach God’s word, just as the Bible warns (Amos 8:11-12). Most Christians want fables instead of truth (II Tim 4:3-4), so they find effeminate preachers that prey on vulnerable women (II Tim 3:6-7) with their false Christianity (II Tim 3:1-5). The cure is simple – preach the word (II Tim 4:2).

This proverb’s warning is severe, as it should be, because rebellion against God’s word is like witchcraft, and stubbornness is like idolatry (I Sam 15:22-23). If the Lord of heaven discerns you are protecting an idol in your heart and rejecting His message, He will send you lying delusions, just as He did Ahab (Ezek 14:1-11; I Kings 22:8; II Thess 2:9-12).

Consider the advice Eli gave Samuel when the Lord called him at night. Eli told Samuel to answer, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth” (I Sam 3:39). This is the godly and humble attitude that will be blessed. He that hath ears to hear; let him hear. And let his prayers come up as a sweet savor in the nostrils of the glorious God in heaven. Amen.

Giving Money to the Lord’s Church Is Worship

➤ Proverbs 3:9 (NKJV)

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Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

How important is God to you? Can you improve your finances? This proverb answers both questions! You can honor Him with your mouth, but talk is cheap. You should put your money where your mouth is to show true honor. Solomon promised, “So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Pr 3:10).

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Success requires giving some of your assets, and the first part of any increase, to God. Giving Him leftovers, whether large or small, is not honor, and it does not fulfill the proverb. Solomon gave a financial secret – firstfruits giving to honor God. Giving money away is how to get ahead (Pr 11:24). Are you poor? You cannot afford not to give!

Firstfruits giving pays God off the top. Fruit is return on investment or labor. First is paying God before anyone else, including you. Many violate this rule by giving a few bits of all they make. This is not honor. Others violate it by giving from what is left after expenses. This is not honor. This is not firstfruits. Many give a percentage of take-home pay, though they always quote their salary in terms of gross pay. This is not firstfruits.

The tithe is not taught directly in the New Testament. It was taught in the Law of Moses. The Israelites gave 23 1/3 % with two annual tithes and a triennial tithe (Num 18:20-32; Deut 14:22-29). Plus, they gave special vows and freewill offerings (Deut 12:6). How did Abraham and Jacob know about tithing before the Law of Moses (Gen 14:20; 28:22)? Because it is a general rule of godly giving, which New Testament saints should use as a guide or minimum for the far greater blessings they enjoy (Luke 12:48; Heb 8:6).

God dares His people to test how much He can bless them (Mal 3:8-12). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were financially blessed because they knew how to give (Gen 14:20; 28:22). God made David rich (I Chron 29:18), but David loved to give (I Chron 21:24; 22:1-16). If you give liberally, the Lord promises to reward you liberally (Pr 11:25; Luke 6:38).

How you give counts more with the blessed God than how much you give. The Lord loves a cheerful giver (II Cor 8:12; 9:7). Giving should be your favorite financial activity. The Lord Jesus Christ took note of a widow woman giving just two mites (Luke 21:1-4). If you combine cheerful giving with liberal giving, God will bless you greatly.

Lay By in Store:

- I Corinthians 16:1-2 (NIV)

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¹ Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

- ✓ 10% of \$100 = \$10
- ✓ 10% of \$200 = \$20
- ✓ 10% of \$1000 = \$100
- ✓ 10% of \$5000 = \$500

New Testament giving in worship must be between 10% and all to be excepted by GOD

God is pleased only when we are fully obedient to His will. When His will and only His will is practiced in worship, we then "worship Him in spirit and in truth."

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Our Giving Must:

- Bring God Honor (Prov. 3:9)
- Be Our First Fruits (Prov. 3:9)
- Be Sacrificial (Rom. 12:1-2)
- Be Liberal (II Cor. 9:6-8)
- Be Bountiful (II Cor. 9:6-8)
- Be Given Cheerfully (II Cor 9:6-8)
- Not Be Grudgeful (II Cor 9:6-8)

INVITATION

1. **HEAR the GOSPEL ~ Romans 10:17**
So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
2. **BELIEVE ~ Hebrews 11:6**
But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
3. **REPENT ~ Luke 13:3**
I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.
4. **CONFESS ~ Matthew 10:32-33**
Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.
5. **BE BAPTIZED ~ Acts 22:16**
And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.