

**Matthew 5: 6 – “Blessed are Those who Hunger”, Sermon # 6 in a series entitled –
“These Sayings of Mine”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
June 30th, 2019, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Hunger and thirst are some of the most basic instincts of desire that our Creator has endowed us with. If we are hungry or thirsty we are led to seek for where those desires can be satisfied. Indeed, we will seek to satisfy the physical pangs of hunger and thirst at almost any cost if they go on long enough. The hunger and thirst which our Lord Jesus is talking about here, is for righteousness. For where there is this hunger and thirst, and righteousness is sought for, from God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, all of those desires for righteousness shall be fully satisfied. And so, at this hour, I want to bring to you 1st of all, the truth – That these desires of hungering and thirsting for righteousness are not to be confused with our own righteousness. 2nd – That these desires of hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be fully satisfied by Christ and the grace that He has purchased to give to you. And then 3rd – That these desires of hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be satisfied by your being conformed more and more to the image of Christ. Let the Holy Spirit now come to our hearts that we might grow in our understanding of this important spiritual truth, that there is a blessedness reserved for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

1st of all – These desires of hungering and thirsting for righteousness are not to be confused with our own righteousness.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Oftentimes with unbelieving but religious people, they want to go about to establish their own righteousness in the sight of God and men. This is what truly satisfies them. This is what they strive for. Indeed in a carnal sense, they are hungering to be righteous, but they want to satisfy that hunger and thirst in relation to what they are able to do on their own, apart from God’s grace. They believe that if they are able to somehow prove that they are good enough, that they are righteous enough, in terms of their own thoughts of themselves and their own works in the sight of others, they will then often attempt to prove to everyone around them, that they are a good enough person as they are, to go to heaven.

If you will turn over to the book of Philippians chapter 3, verse 1, and I will show you that this is how the apostle Paul was before he was converted to Christ. He says – “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, for me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh.” “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning Zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.” “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Now, brethren, it is very evident that the apostle Paul had repeated many times to the brethren there in this church at Philippi, and many other churches also, their need to understand the great difference between their own righteousness and the righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the difference between night and day. It is the difference

between being truly joyful and being sorrowfully burdened down. He starts out by saying – “Rejoice in the Lord”; that is, in the Lord Jesus. Do not rejoice in whether you have been circumcised or have participated in something sacramental; whether you have been baptized as an infant, or have partaken of the Lord’s Supper sometimes in your life. Perhaps somehow you have thought that your church attendance and these sacraments are saving you from your sins. Paul was warning these members in the church at Philippi, and he is warning us here today, that it is not ceremonies or church attendance which have brought you into favor with God or made you righteous in His sight. He is saying that you need to beware of those who have confidence in their flesh; people who believe that they are doing things for God, from the strength of their own worldly wisdom, and according to their own supposed righteousness. They are not really righteous. Righteousness is doing what is right in accordance with God’s word – The Scriptures. And it is doing these right things to promote God’s glory and to show love to all men. It is not a matter of boasting in yourself; your own strength of reasoning, or comparing yourself with other people.

Paul was saying, that if these false teachers had reason to boast in the flesh, he had far more reason to boast in accordance with his Jewish lineage. He had been circumcised on the eighth day. He was of the stock of Israel, and of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. And concerning his having a zeal for a works-righteousness, he was a Pharisee. And furthermore, he had in the past, been a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ. But look at what he says in verse 6b: “Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. That is, he understood himself to be doing and keeping the 10 commandments in such a way that he would be seen by people around him, to be outwardly righteous in a blameless way. No one could blame him of some sin or crime, he thought. But this view that he had of himself was utterly false in the sight of God, and all truly discerning men.

The very fact that he would persecute Christ’s church, and seek by every means that he could, to put the saints of God in prison, and even cast his vote against them; to have them put to death, shows that his heart was not right at all. No murderer has eternal life in them. Anyone who is sinfully angry with his brother has committed murder in his heart. But he did not see it this way, and he did not perceive how terribly far short he was falling, of keeping God’s word and His commandments, in a way which pleased God. However, God did show him mercy, and so it was by grace, and by grace alone, that he would come to see that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are really done those who are searching for a better righteousness than their own. Why? Because they know that they fall far short of God’s perfect standard of righteousness. O my listeners here today. I hope that you see this valuable truth.

Each of us needs to understand that by nature, if we are trying to be righteous in ourselves, that we are really persons who want to promote our own glory, and our own righteousness. When a person is doing this, it is based upon their pride in their own observations, and their pride in our own performance of supposed obedience to God. They are looking at things outwardly. They do hunger and thirst after a sort, but it is not after God’s righteousness. They hunger and thirst to be seen as great, and powerful, and wise, and even Biblically correct in the sight of men. But of God’s righteousness, and the real perfection which He expects of them, and all men, they are completely unaware. Paul says here – “concerning the righteousness which is in the law, he thought himself to be blameless. But you see, that was his own view of himself. It was not God’s view of him. He was entirely unaware of the spirituality of the law; of the extent to which it speaks. He was unaware of the sinfulness of the motions of his own heart, and he was ignorant of the fact that righteousness is not limited to outward acts.

But, even Paul’s outward acts were far from blameless before he came to know Christ. In his supposed righteous zeal, he persecuted the church, thinking that he was doing God service. He actually thought to do everything he could, to speak against the name of the Lord Jesus, the Lord

of glory. But this kind of hunger and thirst was perverse. His heart was not right in the sight of God. Why? Because he was self-righteous, and he would not believe in God's Son. This is why, after he came to Christ, that he said that whatever things were gain to him he had to consider as loss; that he might win Christ and be found in Him; not having a righteousness of his own, which was from the law. He had come to know that he couldn't put any confidence in his flesh; his fleshly self-righteous way of thinking, or his fleshly strength. There was no good thing in his flesh as he says in Romans 7: 18. In Romans 7: 5 he says – "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."

In his own mind, he had come to realize that he needed to be brought to the place where he would be willing to suffer the loss of all things, so that he might gain Christ, and be found in Him. He realized that he could not promote this righteousness of his own, which was from the law; what he was doing to promote and establish his own righteousness. But he wanted to be found in that righteousness which is received by faith in Christ; that righteousness which is from God on the basis of faith, that he might know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. He meant by that, that he was hungering and thirsting to attain to a good resurrection, and receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to him on that Day when Christ returns.

And not only will the Lord Jesus give this crown of righteousness to Paul on that Day, but He will give it to all those who have loved His appearing. (2nd Timothy 4: 8) I hope that I have convinced you; I hope that you can see that you have to jettison your own righteousness in order to be able to find the true righteousness of God. Salvation is not of works, lest any should boast. In Romans 4: 5 Paul says – "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." Has your hungering and thirsting for true righteousness begun? Or are you still trusting in your own righteousness to satisfy you? O may you leave off such a trust even now.

2nd – These desires of hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be fully satisfied by Christ and His grace.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." In hungering and thirsting for true righteousness, for real righteousness, for perfect righteousness, you may not know it, but you are hungering and thirsting for Christ Himself. Christ is our righteousness, as it says in Jeremiah chapter 23, verses 5 and 6 – "Behold the days are coming," says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth." "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord our Righteousness." Christ is our righteousness by imputation unto Justification; our legal standing before God. And Christ is our righteousness in terms of His giving us grace and filling us with His Spirit. In trusting in Christ we all receive of His fullness. And the Church becomes "the fullness of Him who fills all in all", as it says in Ephesians 1: 23.

As Christians we feed upon Christ and His faithfulness. This has a beginning in coming to saving faith in Him; in believing in Him. In John chapter 6, verse 35, Jesus says – "I am the bread of life, He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." So, when you come to Christ, by faith, you will never hunger spiritually for anything or anyone else than Him. When you believe in Him you will never thirst again for someone else, for some other teacher or teaching besides that which you find in Him and in the Bible. That teaching and those gracious influences which are given by Him and which are established in your heart, you know that they come to you through His Spirit. You come to understand experientially, that there is an ultimate satisfaction which is found in Jesus Christ, which will be

sought for progressively by you, throughout all of the rest of your life, after you are saved. You want nothing other than to be filled up and satisfied by His grace and power and wisdom and truth, so that you will be filled up to all of His fullness. That holy desire will be with you each and every day as a Christian.

What Christ has done for us is both imputed to us for righteousness, and imparted to us in the form of grace which we partake of, and we are satisfied and filled with it, each and every moment of the day. You first faith in Christ leads you immediately to the act of God's justifying you; declaring you righteous for Christ's sake. God looks upon Christ's finished work of redemption; His active obedience in His keeping all of the commandments of God perfectly and thus fulfilling God's holy law on your behalf. And He looks upon the passive obedience of Christ is enduring the pains and suffering all the griefs of sin, in your place. Christ died for your sins when you believe in Him. This finished work of righteousness is imputed to you when you first believe, and it covers you all of the rest of your days here upon the earth. This imputation of Christ's righteousness means that you are seen by God as clothed in Christ's righteousness. You are wrapped in His righteousness as a robe, and it covers you continually. Justification never changes, and God's eternal electing love is always shown to you based upon what Christ has done for you in particular.

This other part of justification is the forgiveness of sins; where God for Christ sake chooses not to remember your sins any longer. You are delivered from God's righteous wrath, and forgiven of all of your sins when you first believe. God will never bring you the Christian into judgment. But you will always have the light of life with you. The Christian is born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is sealed with the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of God's having purchased Him back from sin. God through Christ has redeemed you from the slavery to sin which you once were in. Every Christian has truly been freed from sin and death, and they are given a new law, a new principle of life and strength to do God's will, from their heart, and to do it in sincerity. They now hunger and thirst for righteousness in a holy personal sense, in order that they might show their love to God and glorify Him by the way that they live their lives. They long to be holy as God is Holy. They long to be perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect.

They hunger and thirst for righteous communion with the Father and the Son, and they pray and ask for more of the Holy Spirit so that they will be filled, and thus they will be satisfied with nothing else than having Christ richly dwell in them, and holding holy communion with Him. For they know, that all of their obedience flows out of their communion with Him. For the Lord Jesus says in John 15: 5 – "I am the vine, you are the branches." "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." So, to hunger and thirst, spiritually speaking, shows that you have an appetite for spiritual things, and this appetite is a sign of spiritual health in you. When a person does not have an appetite for physical food, it is a sure sign of something being wrong in their health. And so too, when a Christian hungers and thirsts for righteousness, they will be satisfied with nothing less than more of Christ and His imparted grace. A true Christian desires to be spiritual strong, and thus he hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

So, to recount what I have said, you are seen as perfectly righteous by God by your being justified by faith through Christ. You are complete in Him. You are accepted by God and seen by God as righteous for His sake. You have been adopted as God's child, and then you begin to pursue greater personal righteousness in relation to Christ, a better and better obedience to God's word because you love Him and want to keep His commandments. Christ's robe of righteousness is the perfect covering for both your sins and your obedience to God. Your sins are forgiven as you confess them; they are covered by His blood. Forgiveness and cleansing are a daily on-going thing which takes place in relation to humbly confessing where in your thoughts

and in your deeds you have fallen short of perfection. Christ's robe of righteousness covers all of your own personal acts of obedience and your all of your righteous deeds in this holy way. God takes all of our good works, with all of their imperfections and He dips them in the blood of Christ, and thus they are accepted by Him. Let us remember that in our sanctification we flee from the love of money (from the love of simply wanting worldly gain). And we pursue righteousness.

Listen to 1st Timothy 6: 11 – “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” Notice that you are to flee from greediness and the love of money; things that will make you spiritually weak, and you are to pursue righteousness, and all of these good things, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness; things which will make you strong as Christians. This is what the true Christian hungers and thirsts to have and to do, by the grace of Christ. Give yourself this spiritual once over. Ask yourself – Am I pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness, or am I acting like a worldling and a carnal person in the way that I speak and live, and the things that I pursue? Do I exercise love, and patience and gentleness with all the saints? And do I hunger and thirst in this good way to become more righteous and more holy? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

3rd – These desires of hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be satisfied by your being conformed more and more to the image of Christ.

This is the blessedness of hungering and thirsting for righteousness; your greater and greater conformity to Christ, the Righteous One. Is it not encouraging to think that, if you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, that every day you have opportunity to behold by faith, Christ and His glory? Christ and His glory in the Scriptures. 2nd Corinthians chapter 3, and verses 12-18. “Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech – unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.” “But their minds were blinded.” “For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.” “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” “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.”

I want you to see from these words that when a person comes to saving faith in Christ, the veil of spiritual blindness is taken away from their heart. In the case of the Jews, which is the context of these verses, a partial hardening has been upon them from the Lord, according to His purpose, because of their rejection of Christ when He came to them, and they as a nation rejected Him. Even to this very day, the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament. Someday, after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, the veil will be lifted from their eyes as a nation and as a people. But for now, if any one of them according to the grace of God, turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. These verses also show us that there is a veil which is over all people's hearts, not just the Jews, which keeps them from beholding the glory of Christ. Their minds are blinded. But when anyone comes to faith in Christ, this blindness is taken away and they come into the liberty of the sons of God.

This liberty, this being set free from blindness and the bondage of sin, sets the stage for the whole process of transformation in sanctification by the Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; there is the freedom to do and keep the commandments of God by faith in Jesus Christ. We behold His glory in the Scriptures, we behold His glory in the Spirit's working in our

hearts. And as we behold Christ's glory, it says here, that we are being transformed into the same image, that is the image of Christ. We behold His glory as is a mirror. We look to Him by faith, and we are saved. We look to Him by faith each and every day of our Christian life, and as we look at Him, we look to see whether we are becoming more like Him, in our thoughts, our speech, and our conduct. In relation to this looking at the glory of Christ, we have the holy desires of hungering and thirsting to be more like Him, and we pray that He would supply us with the imparted grace to truly be transformed more and more into His blessed image.

Are you abiding in the Lord's word? Are you studying to behold more of the glory of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures? This is hungering and thirsting for righteousness; that you want to be a doer of the word and not merely a hearer who deceives themselves. If you have these holy desires, you will be filled; you will be satisfied. Psalm 84: 11 – "For the Lord God is a Sun and a Shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." Do you claim that promise dear Christian, that when you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you will be filled? Our God will not withhold any good thing from you when you walk uprightly. But in order to walk uprightly before God, you must know the blessing of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. And God, who knows your heart, will fill you with His Spirit, as you long for more of His gracious working in your heart. When you walk in the Spirit, you will have the liberty to keep His commandments. And then as you are faithful to His word, and to Him, then God will withhold no good thing from you. Truly there is a blessedness to hungering and thirsting for righteousness. It is a blessedness which was purchased by Christ for you at the cross, at the expense of His sufferings, which leads to your greater obedience. And in your keeping God's commandments you will show forth your love for Christ, and your love for God. And the saying will come to take place in your life – "He who does the will of God shall abide forever."