

## "Hungering for Righteousness"

I'm sure at some point in your life you've been really hungry, but we're not talking about physical food. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." What we're talking about is hungering for righteousness. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's word gives us the wisdom to feed the hunger of the soul and quench our thirst for an eternal life. And that's why we search the Scriptures for God's truth and His promises. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be part of your life each week.

In the last few weeks, we've been seeing the blessedness that comes from being poor in spirit and wholly dependent upon God; we've also seen blessedness that comes from taking an honest look at our sins and mourning over them. Today our focus is on Matthew 5, verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (or filled)." We all know what it is to be hungry and what it is to be thirsty, and we also know what it is to be full. The hunger and thirst of this passage, however, is not the normal hunger and thirst for food and water but the intense hunger and thirst of a person who must have food and water to survive. Such desperate hunger and thirst for righteousness will cause a person to pursue it, that he has to have it. In Christ one can find the filling satisfaction that they must have.

How hungry and how thirsty are you to be right with God? If you truly know your need for God and you truly mourn over your sins, then you'll realize the importance of finding the fulfillment that comes from being forgiven of those sins and being right with God. A lost person in sin is empty and broken, while a saved and faithful person is filled. You have a hole in your soul that only God can fill. You have a nagging in your conscience that cannot be satisfied until you get right with the Lord, and you find that forgiveness that you seek. Are you hungering and thirsting for the righteousness that only comes through the blood of Jesus Christ?

Now today's study is called "Hungering for Righteousness" and it's free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Philippians 3:7 to 11, and explore what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Our reading today comes from Philippians 3, verses 7 to 11. And here the Apostle Paul is describing leaving his old way of life in Judaism, and becoming a Christian. "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." Oh what a wonderful passage.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful for all of the good that You've done for us, for the love and the joy that we've been able to have because of Your Son Jesus. And Father that we can one day go and be with You forever and ever. Father help us always to do You will. In Jesus name, Amen."

There's a big difference between being hungry and being filled physically and spiritually. Just as there comes a time when you must eat to survive, so there's a time when you must come to the Lord to survive spiritually. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me." The apostle Peter clearly said about Jesus in Acts 4 and verse 12, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." People seek spiritual fulfillment in many places, but there's only one that can fill your soul with the promises of God.

The Devil uses sin and broken lives to keep us empty. Many don't know their sins and their focus on the world is what makes them empty. Jeremiah spoke of the empty people among the idolaters of his day, but the same is true of people who pushed God out their lives today. Jeremiah 2:13 says, "For My people have committed two evils: They 've forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water." To survive physically we must have an adequate supply of clean water, and to survive spiritually we must have a right relationship with God.

In our hurried world today, people have forsaken God for their own busy lives that have little room for all the joy and blessing that comes from serving God. 1 John 2:15 to 17 warns, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that's in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

Perhaps you've seen what I've seen in people. The person who is spiritually and emotionally broken wishes to be made whole and healed. The person enslaved by sin longs to be free from the hold that sin has on him. The person who knows he's lost in sin wishes he could be righteous. The person filled with regret wishes he could make things right. The person who has a defiled conscience wishes that he could once again respect himself. The person who feels dirty with sin longs to be pure and clean. The guilty soul hungers for forgiveness.

The person who's filled with conflict longs for peace. The person who's unloved hungers for love. The confused person thirsts to know the truth. The person who has no faith wishes that he could trust in the Lord. The lost person who has no hope hungers for the hope that can fill his soul. The lost person who only sees judgment longs for the mercy that opens the doors of heaven.

Righteousness means loving God with all your heart and allowing God to rule in your heart. It means loving the things that God loves and avoiding the things that offend God. It's all about Jesus Christ being your Savior and your Lord. You long for His mercy, but you will also have to respect His being your Lord and Master. You know, it's all about walking with God. And we won't find purpose, love, rest, joy, peace, or hope, until we find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll remain hungry until you taste and see that the Lord is good.

The apostle Paul realized that his heritage wouldn't give him what the Lord Jesus could give him. He wanted more than what he had as a Jew and as a Pharisee. He wanted to "be found in Him (that is in Christ), not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Philippians 3, verse 9). Paul said in Galatians 2, verse 20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Paul knew that God's grace came as a gift that he couldn't earn. He knew the Law of Moses couldn't give him salvation. He said in Galatians 2:21, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if

righteousness comes through the Law (speaking of the Law of Moses), then Christ died needlessly.” And he explained in Acts 13, verses 38 and 39, “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him (that is Jesus) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.” We’re not saved by the blood of bulls and goats but by the blood of Jesus Christ. We’re now under the new covenant of Christ not the old covenant given at Mount Sinai.

Have you considered how deeply God hungers and thirsts for people to become righteous? If you want people you love to be saved, and I know you do, God does even more so. Remember the words of Jesus in John 3:16 and 17, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only (some say) begotten Son (others just say only Son), that whoever believes in Him shall not perish (or should not perish), but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” God loves every person, everyman, every woman, every boy, and every girl.

And in 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4 the Bible says, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” God wants everyone to be saved and everyone to know the truth of the gospel that’s found in His Word. God has never wanted people to lose their souls; He wants them instead to repent and to live righteously. Ezekiel 18:31 to 32 says, “Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.”

Have you considered how deeply the Lord Jesus wants you to be righteous and to be saved? In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounced several woes upon the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites and describing their sinful behavior. Yet He says in Matthew 23:37 to 38, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. “Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!” His heart was broken that the religious leaders of his day refused to believe and refused to leave their hypocrisy.

John wrote words of encouragement in 1 John 2, verses 1 to 2: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” Do you know what Jesus is doing in heaven right now? He’s serving as an advocate, defending you to the Father, even though you’ve sinned as a Christian. He’s at God’s right hand interceding on your behalf (Romans 8 and verse 34).

Now even when the lukewarm and offensive church at Laodicea thought they were rich and needed nothing, Jesus was concerned about winning them back. The Lord Jesus you remember said in Revelation 3 and verse 20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; and if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I’ll come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” The Lord wants to have a relationship again, even with people who have moved away from Him. He never quit loving you, even if you’ve quit loving Him.

Did you know that even the Holy Spirit is moved by whether we live righteously or live in sin? Ephesians 4 and verse 30 says, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Yes, the Holy Spirit grieves when we sin. We think of how sin affects us and we forget how it affects the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Sin offends God; it transgresses God’s law; it’s an abomination to God; it causes us to be separated from God spiritually. You remember that

Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not short, That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear."

In God's eyes, sin brings spiritual death. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is death", and that hasn't changed. Culture may lead you to think that sin doesn't matter to God, but it does. Don't take sin lightly; God doesn't. Don't act like God won't care; He does. Don't imagine God will hold others responsible for sin but will overlook yours, He won't. God is no respecter of persons and will hold everyone responsible for his sins. And if your sins are not washed away by the blood of Jesus, you will bear the guilt and the punishment for your sins. We have no other hope than Jesus Christ.

Now this fact ought to make us hunger for God's grace that saves and the transforming of our lives to prove what the will of God truly is, "that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12, verse 2). We can't be saved apart from God's grace. You can't earn grace, and God doesn't owe it to you. Grace is God's gift that frees you from sin and punishment, but that's not all that it does. God's grace instructs us to deny worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2 and verse 12). Grace opens the door to changing our lives, freeing us from an old man of sin destined to be punished and leading us to a new life that lives in love like Christ lived.

This newness of life, the new birth, means the old man of sin is dead, and you are born again. You were dead in sin, now you're dead to sin and alive in Christ. And if that's so, God expects you to live as a person born again who has repented and intends to stay free from sin. We must never take the grace of God for granted, as if it were something trivial. Jesus paid a great price, His precious blood. And only His blood can wash us clean (Revelation 7 and verse 14). He does this when we unite with Him in His death and resurrection, and that takes place in baptism (Romans 6:3 to 7).

Do you want to be free from sin? Do you want a clean conscience? Would you like to respect yourself again? The grace of God can lead you to a pure heart and a life that God intended for you. So place your trust in the Lord, turn from your sin, and be baptized into Christ. God never wanted you to hate yourself when you look in the mirror. His way will give you rest for your soul and give you promise in the life to come. I can't imagine living one day, one hour, or even one minute without the grace, love, and promises of God. Do you hunger for a close, loving relationship with God?

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, help us always to come to You, and to draw near to You, and to submit ourselves to Your will. And we pray that our love will grow deeper as the days go by. In Jesus name, we pray."

When Jesus passed through Samaria in John chapter four, he sent the disciples into town to get Him some food, but the events of that day led to something more important to Jesus than a meal. When the disciples returned with food, there also came men from the town to hear what Jesus had to say. Well Jesus refused to eat at that time and explained in John 4 and verse 34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." Now Jesus' focus was on doing the Father's will and teaching the people. Nothing else was as important. The Lord Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33 to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." What are you seeking? Paul urges us in 2 Timothy 2:22 to "pursue righteousness." What are you pursuing?

There's only one way to be right with God, and that takes being justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. To be justified means that God regards us as innocent of sin. Romans 5:8 to 9 says that "God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." We're saved by grace through faith when we put our trust in Christ, turn from sin in repentance,

confess His name, and are baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3 to 7 says that in baptism we have newness of life, we're crucified with Christ, and we're freed from sin. Now baptism is an act of faith in the working of God (Colossians 2 and verse 12), and it results in being made alive in Christ and the forgiveness of sins. Consider being baptized into Christ today? And if you hunger for righteousness, don't put off responding.

Today's program is part of a series this month titled, "Hungering for Righteousness. And we hope today's study has stirred you consider your heart and life. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office, it's toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). And you can watch SEARCH on YouTube at our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Well, be sure to like our programs when you watch. And we as always we say God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.