

## Thirst and Hunger after Righteousness (Pt 2 Righteousness)

Today we continue our topical study of *righteousness*. In our first study we covered three points; (1) the Lord speaks righteousness, and (2) the law is righteous, and (3) Christ is our righteousness. In this study we will cover an additional three points; (1) seek righteousness, and (2) follow after righteousness, and (3) thirst and hunger after righteousness.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

### 1. Seek righteousness.

Zeph.2: 3 *Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.*

See also Matt.6: 33.

Our verse from Zephaniah links seeking the Lord with seeking righteousness and meekness, which suggest that when a person seeks the Lord they do so in meekness and righteousness. In Matt.7: 7 & 8 the Lord Jesus encourages His disciples to "seek, and ye shall find". Likewise He encouraged them to seek not to save their own life, because if they do, they will lose it (see Lk.17: 33). But when the Pharisees sought a sign from the Lord to prove who He was, He told them that an "evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (see Matt.12: 39). In Lk.12: 29 the Lord Jesus encourages his disciples *not* to seek after food or water which the world seek for, but "seek ye the Kingdom of God" (see Lk.12: 29-31). So we can seek after that which is good for us and that which is not good.

What did the Lord Jesus seek after? According to Jn.5: 30 He sought to do the will of His Father which included seeking the lost (see Lk.19: 10). In Jn.8: 50 we learn that the Lord Jesus sought not His own glory. And His Father seeks those who worship Him in truth (see Jn.4: 23).

Satan's ministers on the other hand seek to turn believers away from the faith (see Acts 13: 8), kill the prophets sent by God Almighty (see 1Kg.19: 13 & 14) and kill the Lord of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ (see Jn.8: 37).

A blind man without a cane or guide dog would walk about seeking someone to lead him by the hand (see Acts 13: 11). There is a sense of desperation in their expression, perhaps anxiety at the unknown objects they will bump into with no one to guide them.

The Lord likened the Pharisees to the blind (see Jn.9: 35-40 & Matt.23: 16-26), who sought the law for righteousness, yet did not attain to the righteousness of the law (see Rom.9: 31). And the believer today seeks for righteousness (see Rom.6: 18 & 19), but without the law (see Rom.3: 21 & 10: 4). And from our meaning of the word righteousness, we can say that we are to seek obedience, uprightness, and doing things justly. But what does it mean to *seek* righteousness? When we look at the various Hebrew and Greek words that are translated *seek* we find that the Hebrew words are also translated, ask to, desire to, make petition to, pray to, to spy out, request to and search out. And the Greek words are also translated, desire, enquire, endeavour, require, and go about. Hence to *seek* has a meaning of desire, and search out, and in Lk.11: 9 the Lord Jesus says "seek, and ye shall find" which confirms the meaning of 'search out'.

But where do we look for and seek out righteousness and uprightness? Given that the world's standards for what is right continually change, we need to look for a supernatural instruction that is the same yesterday, today and forever (see Heb.13: 8). But where do we look for God's righteous instruction?

In the Qur'an (Muslim scriptures), or in the Bhagavad-Gita, Ramayana and Veda (Hindu scriptures) or, in the RC Bible known as the Vulgate, or in the 200-plus English versions of the Holy Scriptures that include Bibles like the Queen James Bible, that removes seven references to Sodomy being sin, or do we find God's righteous instruction in the English text of the 1611 Authorised Bible?

Which one and how do you know, how can anyone be sure with such a large choice? And there are likely to be more options than those above.

As for me and my house (Josh.24: 15) we seek righteousness that is truthful and contains no error and therefore, will *not* look for, or seek any reference point, any written authority that claims to be from God, that claims to be 'Holy', which has errors within its pages. Because a little leaven leaveneth the *whole* lump (see 1Cor.5: 6). Yet so many people who claim to be Christians, who call themselves believers in Christ, are happy to use any one of the 200-plus Bibles with errors in them. Often because they are either ignorant, devious, or simply accept that what they have is the best that God has given us today. But *if* you are using something other than the Authorised Bible and you desire, you are looking for the truth, and you come to God and say, "I seek after righteousness" and you mean what you say with all your heart, then God will open your eyes to the truth. And of course part of the meaning of righteousness is also obedience, so when you find what you are seeking and you lay it out before the Lord and ask

for strength, help and wisdom to read and study it, then you will also need a heart that seeks to be obedient to the righteous instruction.

Does that sound like the majority of Christians that you know?

Does that sound like you?

Let us pray for those in the multitude of churches where they use one of the 200-plus English Bibles, and ask the Lord to show them grace, to give them a heart that seeks after righteousness, that enquires for, and desires uprightness.

## 2. Follow after righteousness.

*2Tim.2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

See also Prov.15: 9, 21: 21, Is.51: 1 & 1Tim.6: 11.

Once we have found the source of upright instruction we are then required to follow it, we are to follow righteousness. However, before our verse in 2Timothy and as part of the reference in 1Tim.6: 11 which encourages the reader to follow after righteousness, believers are first instructed to flee evil, or lusts. Hence, once the believer has hearkened unto that instruction and fled evil they are then ready to follow after righteousness. In our verse from 2Tim.2: 22 Paul requires the believer (those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart) to also follow faith, charity and peace. But for this point, we are to follow, we are to strive after that which is just, that which is upright and obedient.

We are to seek that which is righteous behaviour, and flee from that which is evil by dying daily to that which is of the flesh.

Do you depart from iniquity with as much zeal as following after that which is right? How do you know whether you follow after righteousness? You will leave a trail of seeking righteous behaviour *and* leave a trail of dying to your sin. Because when you walk this Christian journey you are in a warfare where our adversary will attack, and according to our verse, the soldier will flee the lusts of the flesh and follow after that which is right, just, and upright.

The Lord Jesus Christ is once again our example where He hastened after righteousness, where He followed after righteousness with urgency, as we see from the prophecy in Isa.16: 5 *And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.*

Should a believer follow Paul's instruction and flee that which is evil, and follow after that which right and just, and follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Or should a believer follow the evangelical churches who believe the scientific theories of the origins of man which contradict the Scriptures?

Or should a believer follow his pastor, minister of God, teacher or the Pope?

Let us encourage each other to seek for the truth and follow after that which the Scriptures of truth establish to be righteousness. And when any other person, whether they be our pastor, minister of God, or our teacher departs from the Scriptures, or makes an excuse for our sin or theirs, then it is time to depart from them. In doing so we will follow after righteousness and be less likely to be sidetracked by our adversary the devil.

## 3. Thirst and hunger after righteousness

*Mt.5: 6 Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Having established that the Scriptures require a believer to seek righteousness and follow after righteousness, we now point out that the same Scriptures encourage believers to thirst and hunger after righteousness. And in the Gospel of Matthew the Lord Jesus says that the person who does hunger and thirst after righteousness will be blessed. In this passage from Matthew which is part of the "Sermon on the Mount", it ends with verse 48 where the Lord encourages us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. It was this verse that was the catalyst for this study because it reminded me of the zeal we are being asked to have for righteousness and the blessing from God for those that obey. So we are to thirst and hunger for righteousness, for doing justly (see Mic.6: 8).

Have you been thirsty or hungry, I mean really thirsty or really hungry for food and water?

Have you been so hungry that your body resembles those 552 million who are starving in Asia or the 223 million starving in the Sub-Saharan Africa? If your body were so depleted of nutrition, water, and food your every breath would be focused on getting something to eat or drink. Hunger and thirst of that magnitude would shut the body down from thinking, or going about normal bodily functions. You would certainly have an attitude and appetite of

being hungry and thirsty to the extreme. And believers are to hunger and thirst not after food or water, like the Israelites did in the wilderness, but after righteousness.

In the 22nd Bond movie "Quantum of Solace" the bad guy Dominic Greene is left in the desert with only a can of oil and after his death his body is recovered and the authorities open him up and find oil in his stomach. His thirst was so great, in a land that was so dry and hot, that he drank oil that killed him. So in the context of our study it would be like thirsting or being hungry spiritually and feeding on the rubbish from the Qur'an where their god Allah gets his disciples to do all his killing, and then when they die they stand before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and realise they supped on evil and wickedness. Or going back to our example of the movie, they realised they have drunk oil instead of the 'living water' which is the Lord (Jn.4: 10-13).

So we are to thirst, we are to hunger for righteousness, the uprightness that cannot be attained under the law, but is the righteousness attained when we believe the gospel of Christ crucified.

If Christians were to hunger and thirst for righteousness they would be less likely to desire and accept the false doctrines fed to them by the devil. That's right, many Christians have been deceived by Satan who introduced an alternative spiritual food-supply that, on close inspection resembles a hazardous waste dump, rather than 'living water'.

If Christians were to hunger and thirst after righteousness there would be fewer ministers of God advertising same-sex marriages, fewer church denominations holding meetings to discuss ordination of sodomites, and less churches advertising vampire movies to increase attendance, because there would be a heart desire, and a *thirst* for doing that which is good, upright, and just and that excludes doing that which is an abomination, or evil, or wicked in the Scriptures.

So, let us pray for ourselves and our brethren that we would desire *righteousness*, that we *thirst* for doing that which is right and just according to the Holy Scriptures of truth.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our second study on the topic of *righteousness* we have covered three points; (1) seek righteousness, and (2) follow after righteousness, and (3) thirst and hunger after righteousness, and the Lord of Glory will bless you for your obedience.