

# Hungering And Thirsting After Righteousness

By Everett Hardin

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled”*  
(Matt. 5:6).

These words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount present an idea for human life, founded upon religious truth and moral principles, which have been and still are recognized as the highest standard to which mankind can and must attain. **“Hungering and Thirsting”** picture for us a man longing for that which God has to offer, just as one ravenous with hunger and parched and panting with thirst longs for that which will satisfy his natural desires. Hunger and thirst are signs of life and health. They are natural reactions that are instinctive. When a person loses his desire for food and drink it is a sign that something is abnormal. Righteousness involves integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting. *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”* (Rom. 6:13). We are free from sin, and can, therefore, present our members to God as instruments of righteousness. If we lose our appetite for righteousness, or if it is ever lacking we are in serious trouble.

There is a price to pay for any worthwhile achievement. Those willing to pay the price can accomplish great goals; those who merely hear and are not willing to strive will accomplish nothing. It is the person who really wants an education that gets one. One must really want to be a great athlete, or a good musician, if he gains recognition in either field. One lesson I get from Matthew 5:6 is that God’s spiritual blessings are for those who **really want them**.

## Those Who Must Hunger and Thirst:

### 1. Unless you really want to be forgiven of your sins you will never be forgiven.

Unless your sins deeply trouble your conscience and cause you profound grief or godly sorrow, you will not want to be forgiven. You must come to hate sin and experience great sorrow and unhappiness while living in sin. As long as the prodigal wanted to live in the far country he stayed there. *“He came to himself”* and made a resolution to return to his father. When he really wanted his father’s mercy and forgiveness, he went home. Many who enslave themselves in sin never resolve to turn from it (Heb. 6:4-6). Many who make resolutions never put them into action, but continue in their same sinful state.

Forgiveness requires a resolve to close the door on sinful living. By faith, repentance, confession, and baptism you can be saved (John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Rom.6:3-4). *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”* (Rom. 1:16-17). The gospel can rescue the perishing. If a sinner refuses to be rescued it intensifies his guilt. One can reach a point when he thinks life is not worth living, if he should be deprived of the pleasures of sin.

Saul of Tarsus was forgiven of his sinful past because he desperately wanted to be. He mourned his transgressions so intensely that he could not eat or drink until forgiven. The

Philippian jailor wanted forgiveness so much that he submitted to baptism at midnight. The Pentecostians were in great earnest when they asked, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do*" (Acts 2:37). The realization of their sins pricked them in their hearts.

**2. You will really have to want to if you go to heaven.** "*Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it*" (Matt. 7:14). The reason few find it is that it is "*strait*" (difficult) and narrow—it will not admit sinful gratification, selfishness, or the doctrines and commandments of men. Titus 2:12-14 tells us that we must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts which war against the soul. 2 Peter 1:5-11 tells us we must add virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. One must keep himself "*unspotted from the world*" (Jas. 1:27). All of this requires the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof (Gal. 5:24). It all adds up to a tremendous price of self-denial and total consecration. Many are more concerned about business, material interests and amusements than they are about going to heaven. God must have first place in the lives of those who really want to go to heaven (Matt. 22:37). He will not be content with the crumbs from life's table. The apostle Paul was ever reaching forth in his pursuits as a Christian, never content with the past accomplishments. "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13-15). There is never a time for those in Christ to sit down and be idle.

**3. You will really have to want to if you learn the Word of God.** A person who does not have an intense hunger and thirst for the word of God will not devote the long hours of hard study to gain the knowledge needed. We must be diligent in study. "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15). If one stands approved of God he will have no cause for shame, no matter who disapproves. He will be like Ezra. "*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and teach in Israel statutes and judgments*" (Ezra 7:10). David says, "*Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments*" (Ps. 119:5,6). There is a challenge to preachers to study; they must study to preach effectively.

The Hebrew brethren had been in the church long enough to have become teachers, but were still in need of being taught by others. "*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat*" (Heb. 5:12). The author does not mean that the Hebrew brethren should all be teachers in a public and official sense; but simply that they should be able to explain the gospel to parents, neighbors, and friends. If we are going to be effective in "*contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*" we must be a serious student of the Bible. That is one great incentive to want to know it; and when you really want to learn it, you will. It is the duty of all to "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18).

**4. You will really have to want to if you rear faithful children.** If you are not genuinely and deeply concerned, you will likely fail. Family obligations should never be secondary in our life to anything except the Lord and spiritual things. "A better education for the children," a "higher standard of living" — Whatever takes the parent away from their child-rearing responsibilities is really not in the best interest of the child. If you are not genuinely and deeply concerned, you will likely fail. If your only concern is that they be decent and keep out of trouble, you may not succeed even in that; and you certainly cannot have hope of them becoming faithful Christians. It takes constant love and work with your children to accomplish our job.

If you care so little that you neglect to teach them God's word, neglect to take them to Bible study, neglect to oversee their preparation for the Bible study, neglect to oversee their conduct at the services, neglect to pray with them and warn them of the evils of the world, they will likely not be faithful Christians. When we see all that must be taught and accomplished during the brief time we have our children in our home, we see clearly that there is no time to waste. Too much is at stake. Let us pray to God for wisdom, study the Word of God, and be faithful in our own life. We must discipline our children by teaching them and correcting them when they are wrong.

Too often we forget the great blessing we have in our children. The Psalmist said, "*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of thy youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*" (Psa. 127:3-5). Children should not be viewed as a burden. It is true, however, that children place grave responsibilities upon their parents. Loving parents are happy to shoulder these obligations because of their great interest in the lives of their own children. The children are a vital part of the parents' lives. Members of the family should genuinely reverence God and His Word and show respect and consideration for one another.

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