

The traits of a true Disciple/Believer in the eyes & mind of Jesus Christ

(Understanding the Beatitudes as code of ethics and standard of conduct)

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Matthew 5:6 **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**

This is one of the most important verses in the Sermon on the Mount. Without this intense desire for righteousness, a person (believer/disciple) will not be able to pursue deeper relationship with triune God or develop the character traits that Jesus is teaching /describing.

It is noteworthy that the fundamental requirement for all godly living is to “hunger and thirst” for righteousness. Comparing this Beatitude with Matthew 6:33 proves my point. We can see such a hunger in Moses (Exodus 33:13 &18), the Psalm writer (Psalm 42:2 & 6) and the great missionary Apostle Paul (Phil 3:10). The spiritual condition of Christians all throughout their lives will depend on their hunger and thirst for:

- (1) The presence of God (Deuteronomy 4:29)
- (2) The Word of God (Psalm 119)
- (3) The interaction and friendship of Christ (Philippians 3:8-10)
- (4) The Companionship, Guidance and the Influence of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39; 2-Corinthians 13:14)
- (5) Righteousness (Matthew 5:6)
- (6) God’s power (Matthew 6:33)
- (7) Return of Jesus Christ/crown of righteousness (2-Timothy 4:8)

A believer’s hunger for God and His purposes is hindered and even destroyed by:

- (1) The worries of life & deceitful of wealth (Matthew 13:22)
- (2) The desire for temporal things (Mark 4:19)
- (3) The lust for life’s pleasures (Luke 8:14)
- (4) Failure to trust Christ and remain in a right relationship with Him (John 15:4)

When a Christian loses his or her hunger for true God and His standards, he/she will begin to die spiritually. For this reason, it is essential that we be sensitive & responsive to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives and in our consciences—keeping us away from evil and drawing us close to God (John 16:8-16 and Romans 8:5-16).

This Beatitude speaks of a person who has a starving spirit and a parched soul that craves righteousness. But the text reveals even more: righteousness means all righteousness. The blessed person is starved and parched for all righteousness. This is shown in the original language, for the Greek verbs translated “hunger” and “thirst” are usually in the genitive case. This simply means that a person sometimes feels a little hunger and a little thirst; therefore, he hungers and thirsts for a bit of something, for example, an apple or a glass of juice. But in this beatitude, hunger and thirst are in the accusative case. This is most unusual. It means a hunger and a thirst for the whole thing—for all righteousness, not just for bits and pieces. This is significant: it means that the promise of a satisfied or filled life is conditional. A person must starve and thirst for all righteousness if they wish to be filled with the fullness of life. The blessed person hungers and thirsts both to be righteous and to do righteousness. To do righteousness is not enough. To be righteous is not enough. Both are essential in order to be blessed. Some stress being righteous and neglect doing righteousness. This leads to **two serious errors**:

➤ The error of false security. Such people stress that they are saved and acceptable to God because they have believed in Jesus Christ. But they neglect doing good. They do not live as they should, obeying God and serving others.

➤ The error of loose living. Such people go out and do whatever they desire. They feel secure and comfortable in their faith in Christ. They know that wrong behaviour may affect their fellowship with God and other believers, but they think their unrighteous behaviour does not affect their salvation and acceptance with God. A righteousness that stresses being righteous but neglects doing righteousness is a false righteousness. Righteousness in the Bible means being righteous and doing righteousness. The Bible teaches nothing about being righteous without living righteously. **On the other hand**, some people stress doing righteousness while neglecting to be righteous. This also leads to two serious errors.

➤ The error of self-righteousness and legalism. Such people believe they are saved and acceptable to God because they do good. They work hard, behave morally, keep certain rules and regulations, do the things a Christian should do, and obey the main laws of God. But they neglect the most basic law: the law of love and acceptance—that God loves them and accepts them not because they do good, but because they love and trust the righteousness of Christ.

➤ The error of being judgmental and critical. People who stress that they are righteous (acceptable to God) because they do good deeds often judge and censor others. They feel that rules and regulations can be kept by others because they keep them. Therefore, they judge, criticize, and censor anyone who fails to keep them. The problem with this stress is that it too is a false righteousness. Again, righteousness in the Bible is both being righteous and doing righteousness. The Bible teaches nothing of being acceptable to God without being made righteous in Christ Jesus (see 2 Co.5:21; see also Rom4:22 -25 for more discussion).

When most people think of righteousness, they think of doing good—doing good deeds, good works, and helping their fellow man. As they walk through life, they face appeal after appeal for help, and they help. And they feel comfortable with themselves because they have helped. They feel their good deeds make them acceptable and righteous before God. But the Bible does not say that people never do good; it says that people are not righteous—not perfectly righteous within their hearts. Christ does not say, “Blessed are the righteous,” for no one is righteous (Ro.3:10). He says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” People are not righteous, not perfectly righteous. Our chance to be righteous is gone. We have already come short and missed the mark. We are already imperfect. We have but one hope: that God will love us so much that He will somehow count us righteous. That is exactly what God does. When we genuinely “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” we will repent and place our faith in Christ. God then takes Christ’s righteousness and imputes or credits it to us. He fills us with Christ’s righteousness. God does this because He loves us.

Every person has some inner pull and influence that urges them to do good. That pull and influence needs to be nourished. In fact, it must be nurtured or else it weakens, and it can be subdued and weakened so much that it is killed completely. It becomes hardened against doing anything except what self wants to do (He.3:13; see Pr.21:29; 28:14; 29:1). Righteousness is the only thing that will fill and satisfy our innermost need. Food and drink will not. Any honest and

thinking person knows there is nothing anywhere on this earth that can meet their deep need for life (permanent life, life that never ends). Only God can fill a life and satisfy the deep need for permanent life. This is the reason Christ calls us to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

A Thought . The question each person needs to ask is this: How much am I seeking after righteousness? Am I seeking at all—seeking a little—seeking some—seeking much—seeking more and more? Christ says that we are to crave, starve, and thirst after righteousness. We must seek righteousness more and more if we wish to be filled and satisfied.

What is righteousness? In the Bible righteousness means two simple but profound things. **It means to be right and to do right.** It may be said another way: to be good and to do good. This is critically important in the Bible.

And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” (Mt.19:17)

As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one.” (Ro.3:10)

For all . . . fall short of the glory of God. (Ro.3:23)

What is being said is that God alone is righteous; He alone is perfectly good. People are not perfectly righteous; we come short. How then can a person become perfectly righteous? The answer is what Christ says: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” or “filled.”

What happens is as follows: A person who truly “hungers and thirsts for righteousness” will repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. When they do, God counts their faith as righteousness. The person is not righteous, but God counts him or her righteous. This is the great love of God. As a person hungers and thirsts after righteousness; God keeps fillings him/her.

Several things need to be said about righteousness.

1. Righteousness is explained throughout Scripture in the word **faith**. Faith is believing God and trusting the goodness of God to take our faith and count it as righteousness. **Scripture says it clearly:** we cannot please God without faith (He.11:6). It is the person who diligently seeks God who really believes God. The person who so hungers and thirsts for God and His righteousness will be counted righteous and will be filled (see Phil.3:7–16).

2. The righteousness of God has been shown to man. Just what God wants us to be and to do has been demonstrated perfectly in Jesus Christ. This is the love of God. God has not given humanity the written Word only, which describes His righteousness; He has given us a life—the life of His own Son—to show what He means by righteousness. Jesus Christ is perfect righteousness; He does nothing but good. This is what the Bible means when it talks about Christ’s being “the righteousness of God.” Christ is the Picture, the Expression, the Pattern, the very Image of righteousness—*of being right and of doing right*.

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Co.1:30)

For our sake he made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Co.5:21)

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. (Ph.3:9)

3. Righteousness involves the mind. Scripture says it involves being “renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ep.4:23) and being “renewed in knowledge” (Col.3:10).

What does this mean? Very simply, those who seek after God are created in righteousness and true holiness. They “put on the new self” or “man” (Col.3:10) and are “renewed in the spirit of [their] minds” (Ep.4:23).

Filled/Satisfied—Life:

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are wonderfully satisfied. They are filled with both abundant life and eternal life as follows:

1. They are “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge” (Ro.15:14).
2. They are “filled with all the fullness of God” (Ep.3:19).
3. They are “filled with the Spirit” (Ep.5:18).
4. They are “filled with the fruit of righteousness” (Ph.1:11).
5. They are “filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will” (Col.1:9).
6. They are “filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts.13:52)

Remember! that a deep respect and holy fear of God, along with a determination to avoid evil, were the basis for Job’s righteous reputation.

“Blameless” refers to Job’s moral integrity (i.e honesty, reliability, faithfulness, virtue, undivided loyalty) and wholehearted devotion to God. “Upright” relates to his words, thoughts and actions that measured up to God’s standards of what is right, honourable and true. God Himself gives this description of Jobs character, twice in Job 1:8 and 2:3.

Today, the church/believers/disciples/Christians have the power available to overcome their human nature & the pull of sin, so they can walk blamelessly and be upright-in the fellowship of the Triune God.