

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

by Hendrik Joubert

If your e-mail account is but a few months old you would have received at least one of those *testimonials* from some person you do not know from Adam, explaining what marvelous experience he or she had to *prove* that God is active in their lives. It is based upon *indisputable signs* read somewhat like a psychic reads a teacup, however if you do not accept it, or question any of it, you are considered to have questioned and resisted the Holy Spirit of God.

Even though the Scriptures may often be criticized and abused it remains the only true, consistent and objective communication from God; available to all who care to search it with the view of determining God's will for mankind. When we encounter those passages which address our weaknesses we have two options; change our behavior (repent), or change what the Bible says. Rejecting God's word outright will not allow one peace of mind; however an effective way to deal with this dilemma is to employ the concept of *interpretation* – to make it say what we want it to say and *believe* it is what God wants. Those among us who have the need to be more scholarly may employ the term *hermeneutics*.

We are not immune to this, and awareness of our vulnerability may go a long way to help us not to seek *our* righteousness, but the righteousness of God. Our interpretation may very easily amount to a distortion. (**2Peter 3:16**) In this passage the *scholars* may prefer the term **unlearned** (KJV) instead of the **untaught** (NKJV) as it may be a little easier to *interpret* as our level of education, instead of simply **not knowing the righteousness of God**, resulting in setting up one's own. (**Romans 10:1-3; 1Corinthians 1:20-31**)

Ignorance of the Scriptures must be the number one reason why we reach erroneous conclusions, as we will not consider *all* the Lord has said before reaching our conclusion on any given subject. It also makes us most susceptible to false teachings. We all need to be **noble minded**, demonstrated not by accepting anecdotal *visions*, but by **searching the Scriptures daily** to see if, not only what we hear is factual, but also what we teach. (**Acts 17:11**)

The righteousness of God, or righteousness according to God, has been revealed in the gospel: **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** ¹⁷ **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."** (**Romans 1:16-17**)

Many reduce the gospel to Christ crucified, while failing to accept man's side of the covenant revealed therein. We prefer to do things in moderation – when it suits us. The Lord instructs His followers to be somewhat fanatical in their appetite for truth and obedience – **hunger and thirst for righteousness.** (**Matthew 5:6**)

Rather than acting like many at an *all you can eat buffet* we will adhere to a strict diet.

Consider also the instruction we receive from God through Paul's letter to Timothy: ***Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. (2Timothy 4:2)*** When is the time *not* right (***out of season***) to announce God's righteousness to sinners? To the Ephesians Paul writes: ***Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. (Ephesians 5:11-12)***

Exposing unfruitful deeds of darkness does not have to be done without consideration and tact: ***The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,... (2Timothy 2:24-25)*** When Paul addressed the audience ***in the midst of the Areopagus*** he did not start out by saying "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very superstitious and idolatrous... but ***said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;... (Acts 17:22)***

Again through Paul the Lord instructs the Ephesians to ***no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—... (Ephesians 4:14-15)*** The implication is that they were to hunger and thirst after righteousness so that they may grow to maturity and not regularly flip-flop between doctrines. It also suggests that interpretation may involve ***cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (twist, distort – 2 Peter 3:16)***

People who speak about God will not be deceitful, will they? Who are we to judge? Being ***kind to all*** does not suggest that we compromise truth; we are to ***speak the truth in love*** as we work towards motivating one another to ***hunger and thirst*** after God's righteousness so that we may ***be satisfied. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matthew 5:6)***

What about the *inspired* e-mails and our ingenious interpretations?: ***Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. (Colossians 2:18-19)***

