

BLESSED ARE THE HUNGRY!

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Spiritual hunger begets intense yearning for fellowship with God. It may be true to say few people attain to that exalted position. David exclaimed: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). During droughts in South Africa, I often watched the springboks (deer) defying lions in order to drink at the river. Their unquenchable thirst could not be denied. Water had to be obtained or survival was impossible. When men and women seek after God with the same intensity, their spiritual stains becomes immeasurable.

Six kinds of hunger may be found in human beings. Hunger (1) For food and raiment, which produces harvests, tools and industrial activities. (2) For knowledge, which produces schools, books, papers and literature. (3) For fame, which produces office, rank, political parties and spheres of influence. (4) For beauty, which creates the fine arts, and encourages inherent capabilities. (5) For affection, which creates homes, fireside songs and acts of service which could never develop without love. (6) There can and should be hunger for God; the intimate relationship which joins heaven and earth, and unites the Creator and the created in a family where love is predominant. This is the greatest of all, for when people are in tune with the Almighty, all yearning is satisfied by the Lord of Heaven. The man who hungers after righteousness rarely desires lesser things.

A Gracious Promise (Matt. 5:6)

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." This was the fourth of the nine beatitudes which formed the basis of the new morality embraced by the Christian church. Probably, the greatest example of hungering after God was provided by the Savior. Conscious of His continuing need, Jesus often rose early in the morning to commune with His Father. Throughout most of His days the Lord was fully occupied attending to the needs of sick people, but the outflow of Divine energy had to be matched by an inflow of spiritual power, and the only way this could be maintained was through continuing fellowship with God.

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Christ hungered for something earth could not supply. He said to His disciples: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." That yearning, in itself, was the guarantee God would supply what was necessary. The rich young ruler hungered for financial security; Pharisees sought the praises of men; athletes long for greater success in their chosen careers; financiers seek greater profit in their investments; politicians work for important positions in government, but true Christians desire to be Christlike. They are the only people confident of reaching their objectives in life.

A Great Preventative (John 6:35)

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." When the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, they were sustained by manna provided by God. Nevertheless, the people were commanded to collect daily supplies. They gathered twice as much on the eve of the Sabbath, and the food never perished.

Deprived of daily sustenance, the nation would have died. It was significant when Jesus claimed to be the equivalent of the food sent from heaven. He said: ". . . Moses gave you that

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bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32-33). Jesus promised that if and when people came to Him, He would satisfy their longings and solve their problems. He reiterated the same truth when He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

He claimed He had the ability to supply His followers' needs, and history proved He was correct. Christians who abide in His presence remain satisfied. It is only when men forsake the Savior that they experience impoverishment, and lust after what the scripture calls "the fleshpots of Egypt." No other person was able to do what Jesus did.

Many years ago, The Christian Evangelist published a story about a little street-girl who became ill at Christmastime. She

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was taken to the hospital where she heard, for the first time, the story of the birth of Jesus. One day, when the nurse came on her round of duty, "Little Broomstick"Äthat was the child's street nameÄheld her hand and whispered: "Nurse, I am having real good times here, ever such good times. S'pose I'll have to go `way from here as soon as I get well; but I'll take the good times alongÄsome of it, anyhow! Did you know about Jesus being born?"

"Yes" replied the nurse, "I know, but you must not talk anymore."

The child replied: "You did! I thought you looked as if you didn't, and I was going to tell you."

"Why, how did I look?" inquired the nurse. The little girl said: "Oh, just like most folkÄkind o' glum. I shouldn't think you'd ever look glum if you'd knowed about Jesus being born."

A Glorious Provision (Rev. 7:16)

"After this, I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb... and he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. . . they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more., for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:9-17).

The scene mentioned by John described believers already in heaven. The apostle emphasized they would neither hunger nor thirst because the Lamb of God had assumed responsibility for supplying their eternal need. The river of the water of life could never run dry, for it came from the heart of God, and was eternal. It is very difficult at this stage of the Christian journey to assess what might, or might not, be needed. The King of Kings will provide every requirement in the hereafter as efficiently as He did when the church was upon earth. The revised form of the old Welsh hymn expresses this important fact:

Bread of Heaven; Bread of Heaven  
Feed me now and evermore.

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There is no sadder sight than that of a professing Christian without a desire for the deeper things of God, whose only interests are unspiritual.

Robert Robinson, the author of the beloved hymn, Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing, unfortunately, lost his hunger

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and thirst after God, and for most of his declining years, strayed from the Lord. He became deeply disturbed, and, hoping to find relief in travel, decided to visit foreign lands.

During one of his journeys he met a young woman who was interested in poetry. She asked what he thought of a hymn she had just been reading. He was astonished to discover she had become interested in his own composition. Robinson tried to evade her question, but she persisted in requesting his answer.

Suddenly, he began to weep. As the tears streamed down his face, the author confessed that he had written those lines many years earlier. He said: "I would give anything to experience now the joy I knew then." Although greatly surprised, the young woman assured him, the streams of mercy mentioned in his song still flowed. He was deeply moved, and turning his wandering heart to the Lord, was restored to fellowship with Christ. It was only then he realized the blessedness of his own words.

O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seat it for Thy courts above.

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