

## "Hungering for Righteousness"

Each day we get hungry for food. Have you ever hungered for righteousness? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore hungering and thirsting for righteousness, so stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way; we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. Matthew chapter four, verses one to four, says the Spirit led Jesus "into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But He answered, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" We can fill our empty souls by feeding them on every word that comes from the mouth of God. We find these words in the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd like to study with you each week.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Now everyone gets hungry and thirsty. When you're hungry or thirsty, your body cries out for the food or water that you want and need. When you're really hungry or thirsty, you can't think anything but food to eat and water to drink. That's the kind of hunger that we need in our spiritual lives. Psalm 42:1 says, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God." Man possesses a spiritual hunger that only God can satisfy.

People seek what they hunger for. Some seek power, some fame, some money, and some the things of the flesh. All these things are temporal and will perish. What are you seeking? What you seek and hunger for determines the direction of your life. If you seek only the temporal and you miss the spiritual, you have missed the only thing that will satisfy you for eternity. Without God, everything is in vain.

Now, if you want to study more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 51:10 to 13, and explore what it means to hunger for righteousness.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 51 verses 10 through 13. And in this passage we're looking at that time when Nathan came to David after he had committed his sin with Bathsheba and killed Uriah. He said,

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation  
And sustain me with a willing spirit.  
*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners will be converted to You.

Here the heart of David comes out crying to God for a clean heart. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that we can come to You at times whenever our hearts are broken because of our sin. And cry

to You and find the strength that we need. But Father help us also to be obedient to Your word. In Jesus name, Amen.

When we hear the word "righteous," we often think of a person's character; but the word actually describes a relationship. When people have a right relationship with the Lord, God considers them righteous. When people fail to have a right relationship with the Lord, God considers them as unrighteous. The righteous person loves and obeys God, while the unrighteous person ignores God and feeds on his passions. God described Rehoboam, the son of Solomon and king of Judah, this way in 2 Chronicles 12 verse 14, "He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD." When people ignore the Lord and live according to their own desires, they fail to enter into a right relationship with the Lord. When people seek the Lord, they choose to live righteously.

How we regard God determines how we choose to live. Seeking and loving the Lord shapes our character. The more we know and love the Lord, the more we want to be like Him. God is righteous, and we learn righteousness from Him. God is holy and righteous, and He expects those who follow Him to live that way too. The Lord God said in Leviticus 11:44, "be holy, for I am holy." Habakkuk 1:13 says of God that, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor." God is utterly holy, and God wants us to live holy lives. Hebrews 12 verse 14 says, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord."

Sadly some have come to believe that we have no responsibility to clean up our lives, to leave the old man of sin behind and to conform to the ways of the Lord. Romans 12 verse 2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Christianity always goes against the ways of the world. And those who think they are more religious or more Christian because they try to fit their faith into the culture have missed the mark. You can't compromise what the Lord teaches about morals and salvation and at the same time become a stronger Christian.

The Bible never contemplates the idea of going back into an old life of sin in order to be a better Christian. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:13 to 19, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

The Lord Jesus paid the ultimate price so that we might be cleansed from all unrighteousness. He didn't buy your freedom from sin with silver or gold, no. He paid for your freedom with His blood, because He didn't want you to continue that way of life. He expected something better from you and for you. Ephesians 2:8 to 10 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." God's grace is abundant; but He saves us in order to transform our lives. We must never cheapen God's grace by taking it for granted.

Some intentionally choose to sin against God, believing they can ask for forgiveness later. They presume the grace of God allows them to live as they please as long as they pray for forgiveness afterward.

Paul asked in Romans 6 verses 1 and 2, "Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Christians must forsake that old way of life in order to fulfill God's will for their lives. 2 Peter 2 verses 20 to 21 says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (that is they become Christians) they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them." Christians who return to a sinful way of life and are overcome by it are worse off than if they had never become Christians.

Many today do not want a Jesus who judges. They want a Jesus who will approve of them no matter what they do, a Jesus who will not ask them to repent, and a Jesus who requires nothing of them. They want to rest in the comfortable grace of Jesus, a grace that approves of them as they are and never expects a change. They presume the grace of God will cover them no matter how they live, what they think, or with whom they have sex. The Jesus they seek, however, is imaginary; you can't find a Jesus like that in Scripture. You can find Him full of grace, but not a grace that will leave you alone. The grace of Christ forgives but tells you to "go and sin no more." The Lord will not leave you where He found you. He will transform your life to conform with the holiness and righteousness that He teaches.

The Bible calls Jesus the "righteous One" in 1 John 2 verse 2 and the "righteous judge" in 2 Timothy 4 verse 8. Paul told the pagan philosophers in Acts 17:30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Now our postmodern culture is very much like Jerusalem in the seventh century before the time of the exile. The people were idolatrous and had pushed God out of their hearts and lives. In the past they had honored God, but their hearts had turned away from Him. Zephaniah 3 and verse 2 charged Jerusalem with four great errors: "She heeded no voice, She accepted no instruction. She did not trust in the LORD, She did not draw near to her God." Today our country will not listen to God's instructions; they no longer want to hear the gospel of Scripture. People today want to rewrite the gospel and take out the call to "repent." They prefer to live by their own rules and want God to accept their sinful lifestyles rather than conform to His will.

Righteousness includes obeying the commandments of God. Righteousness is the opposite of lawlessness. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Paul instructed Timothy to handle God's Word accurately. Now a reckless handling of God's Word is a cause for shame. We must study God's Word to know what it says and to teach it correctly. In 1 Timothy 4:16 Paul said "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." To depart from the truth can cause a person to lose his soul.

It matters, my friend, what we believe! Learn to think Biblically and to distinguish what the Scripture actually teaches from what is false and human. If the word of truth doesn't contain the doctrine, don't believe it. If the word of truth doesn't instruct the practice, then reject it. You can't follow God and follow man-made religion at the same time.

Now, some today have stopped trusting what God says in Scripture. They believe many of the narratives found in Scripture are myths or legends. They doubt Adam and Eve, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea. They think they're the products of chance and evolution rather than created in God's image. Now if you doubt God, you see no reason to obey His moral teaching. Our coins say "in God we trust," but we've thrown His Word out of our public schools. References to God these days come in the form of taking His name in vain. We've ignored what He says about the sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage. One in seven Americans no longer believes in the concept of sin. However, even if billions of people doubt God, God is still God. Even if billions of people doubt His teaching, the words of Jesus will judge us on the last day.

When people push God out of their hearts, they reap a bitter harvest. Proverbs 10 and verse 16 simply says, "The wages of the righteous is life, The income of the wicked, punishment." It matters whether we follow God. Psalm 1 reveals the destinies of the righteous and the wicked. Verses 3 to 6 say the righteous "will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." Righteousness isn't some strange fad or hobby; it's the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

Why does God require us to live righteously? He does so because He loves us and He wants what is best for us. Our faith makes a difference in every aspect of our lives. Christianity is not a once-a-week pastime; it's a daily walk with God. God's way is the way of love, of truth, of kindness, of peace, and of integrity. God's way gives us faith, hope, and love. It teaches us where we came from, why we're here, and what will happen to us after we die. It gives us reason to live, to serve, and to love. Christian righteousness lifts people out of harmful sins and behaviors and provides a new way of life that blesses everyone.

Being right with God, the fiber of our society depends on it and families as well. Proverbs 14 verse 34 says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people." When people forget God, they are far more willing to do things God will not allow. Love for God motivates us to live virtuous and noble lives. It helps us rise above selfishness and pride. It helps us overcome destructive behaviors. When people follow Christ, they're better citizens, better fathers and mothers, better husbands and wives, better parents, and neighbors. Nothing today will improve our lives more than taking hold of the Christian life and pursuing it with all our hearts. Let's set our hearts to desire God and to seek righteousness. Let's take our faith seriously and take up our crosses daily and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. Oh, Father help us to love You with all our hearts and soul. Help us to serve You and help us to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The Lord has made righteousness and His kingdom a priority. He doesn't merely say seek them; He says seek them "first." We're often so busy making a living, raising our children, and pursuing our passions that we forget our souls. The Lord said in Matthew 16:25 to 27, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels,

and will then repay every man according to his deeds.” Please take the Lord seriously. And get right with God today.

Now, you can't earn a right standing with God by your own doing; it comes by the gift of God's grace through the blood of Jesus. But to enjoy God's grace, you must meet God's conditions. You must believe in Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God, you must repent of your sins and determine to follow Jesus, you must confess Christ before others, and you must be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you're baptized into Christ, you're also baptized into His death according to Romans 6 and verse 3. Jesus shed His blood in His death. And the Lord washes you in His blood when you're united with Him in His death burial and resurrection in baptism according to Romans 6:4 to 7. If you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, you'll not wait to come to the Lord and serve Him.

We hope that today's study about righteousness has encouraged you to get right with God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now, you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

Please get your life back where it ought to be by worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.