

PASSION

In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”* If that does not describe passion, I don’t know what does. All of us can understand some of what it is like to be hungry and thirsty, but probably not the extreme sense to which Jesus refers. We are hungry if we skip a meal or go too long between, but not famished, truly in need of food. This is just the idea that Jesus is conveying. When one is famished, one will do ANYTHING to get food. Peter uses the example of a newborn babe desiring milk (1 Pe 2:2). Nothing will satisfy them.

Jesus is saying we need to have a passion for righteousness. Notice that he did not say *“Blessed is the one who has obtained righteousness”*. No, it is the one who has a passion for it. A common problem among the Jews, particularly the leadership, was that they felt that they were righteous. They had a passion for appearing righteous, but that is NOT the same thing. The difference is clearly seen in the parable that Jesus told in Luke 18 about the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee was focused on how great he was, and all of the good things he had done, while the publican was focused on his own sinful nature. Jesus said that the publican was justified. God wants people who are passionate about becoming righteous, not those who already think that they are.

It should be understood that passion can be turned in the wrong direction. Often the word for passion is translated as ‘lust’. It is really the same kind of insistent desire that Jesus is speaking of, just for something that is sinful. Speaking of the Israelites, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:6, *“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.”* Passion can be turned to things that are not evil: family, friends, fun, politics, hobbies, etc. We can certainly be passionate about these things (and should be!), but must be careful to keep proper balance and keep God first, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”* (Luke 14:26). Finally, we must not forget that passion for God can be harmful if not coupled with knowledge. *“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”* (Romans 10:2-3.).

Do you have a passion for righteousness? Is every decision you make touched by the fact that you need to be more righteous? Are you striving to perfect yourself? If not, you have missed everything. You have missed the whole point of the Gospel: Christ will only save those who really want to be saved! Christ will only save those who have a passion for righteousness.

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