

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 39)

SPIRITUAL ASPIRATION. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6). Righteousness here refers to the imparted righteousness of sanctification, not the imputed righteousness of justification. God declares believers righteous at the time of salvation. That is justification. He then proceeds to make us righteous through the work of the Holy Spirit. That is sanctification. Oswald Sanders says, "The Lord uses the elemental instincts of hunger and thirst to convey the idea of passionate desire for holiness. Not mere wistfulness, but insatiable craving. These are two of the most agonizing and intense of human appetites." A radical disciple craves holiness. It is a spiritual response to the work of the Spirit which begins the transformation of the inner life. Sanders continues, "The objective Jesus had in mind was ethical righteousness, likeness to Himself in outlook and conduct..." The righteous here is contrasted to the self-righteousness of the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteous of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The righteousness of this beatitude is an attitude of spirit that produces actions of conscience. The disciple who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the only person capable of living by his conscience. One of the qualities of a radical disciple is a commitment to live by a conscience that is instructed by the Holy Spirit. Inward righteousness of conscience produces outward righteousness of conduct. The blessing: "They shall be filled." God's righteousness comes through God's Spirit. The blessing is the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Luke 11:13).