

# Filled with Righteousness

#0128

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—August 29, 1975

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" Matthew 5:6.

What a wonderful assurance. Are you hungry? You will be fed. Are you thirsty? You will be filled. Whether we know it or not, we need what Jesus is offering here. It is one thing to be hungry, and another thing to know it and have the sense of need. Cocaine causes the sensation of hunger to disappear. There are other drugs that have this effect. But if we sense our condition, we all need what Jesus is offering. He says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

What is righteousness? Righteousness is right doing. You will find that stated in so many words in *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 312. That is what the word means.

Do you long to do right? Let us face this reality. We do not become righteous by doing right things. We have to be righteous in order to do right things. Apple trees do not grow apples in order to become apple trees. They grow apples because they are apple trees. So Jesus does not say, Strive to become righteous. He says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Righteousness is a gift, and that gift is the gift of our Lord Himself.

"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" Jeremiah 23:6.

Notice that this is an Old Testament text. The Gospel of righteousness by faith is found in both Testaments. It is the only Gospel by which sinners could be saved, the only message that has ever saved anyone.

Who is our righteousness? The Lord. We have no righteousness of our own.

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" Isaiah 64:6.

If in any sense we look to our righteousness we will be disappointed. It's those who hunger and thirst after righteousness which they do not possess that will be filled. Obviously, if we were full, we wouldn't be hungry. If we were filled, we wouldn't long. If we had everything of ourselves we wouldn't feel our need of Jesus. Yes, Jesus is our righteousness.

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”  
1 John 4:8.

God’s character is defined in one short, wonderful word. It is *love*. God is love. So righteousness is love. You will find that stated in *Mount of Blessing*, page 18. Righteousness is love. I’m so thankful that God has promised to give us this gift of righteousness, this gift of love. Aren’t you? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace and so forth.

“My tongue shall speak of Thy word: for all Thy  
commandments are righteousness” Psalms 119:172.

Let us put all this together. Our righteousness is in Jesus. He is our righteousness, and He is love. Love is righteousness, and righteousness is love. It says all God’s commandments are righteousness. God’s commandments are the law of love. It was love that caused Him to give us His law, and it is love that causes us to respond in obedience. So He says:

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” John 14:15.

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the  
fulfilling of the law” Romans 13:10.

Isn’t it strange that anybody ever got the idea that if you have enough love, you won’t need to keep the law? The more we love God, the more we will seek to obey Him. So we do not have antagonism between love and law. Nothing of the kind. The more love we have, the more we will be in harmony with that law which defines righteousness.

Jesus, our righteousness, came down from Heaven to earth to keep this law. He says:

“...I have kept my Father's commandments” John 15:10.

Every one of God’s commandments was beautifully exemplified in Jesus’ life. He kept those commandments through love. And since His life fully revealed obedience to the law of God, we may look upon the Ten Commandments as the written expression of righteousness. In the life of Christ we have that righteousness fully demonstrated. We have in Christ’s life a sample of what He wants us to become.

Our text says, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” If I have a quart jar, and it is filled, how much does it have in it? A quart. Wouldn’t a pint do it? Wouldn’t a pint and a half do it? To be filled, it must have what? A quart. That is all it can hold, but it must have all it can hold in order to be filled.

If you and I are to be filled with righteousness, and the law of God is the standard of righteousness, how many of those commandments will be exemplified in our lives? All of them. Notice how plain the New Testament makes this:

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For the law [margin] that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” James 2:10–12.

So in New Testament times the apostle, James, sets forth the Ten Commandment law as the standard of judgment by which the lives of Christians are to be measured.

Someone says, “But Brother Frazee, I thought you read that all our righteousness is as filthy rags, and that our only hope of righteousness is in Jesus?”

Precisely. What is it that shows us that our righteousness is as filthy rags? It is comparing our lives with God’s law.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” Romans 7:7.

Paul said he would not have known sin in his life if it hadn’t been for the law of God. Measuring sin without the law, he thought he was good. But measuring it by the law he found himself to be a sinner. So the law exposes our weakness, reveals our filthiness, shows us our lack that we may flee to Jesus and seek for His righteousness. And blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

If the measure is filled, there is nothing more that can be added. A quart filled has one quart in it. Isn’t it a wonderful thing that God offers us complete, full righteousness as His gift? Why try to whittle it down then?

If I was in debt, and someone should offer to pay my bills, I think I’d scratch up every bill I could remember. I don’t think I’d try to hide some of them. I don’t think I’d try to change the figures and make them look less. If I am going to get out of debt, why not let him present full and perfect payment?

But now dear friends, let’s be very practical about all this. Can I accept the righteousness of Jesus to cover my sins of the past if I deliberately plan to repeat those sins tomorrow and next week? If that’s the program, then Christ is the minister of sin. But He is not. Notice:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein” Romans 6:1–2.

For two generations or more, missionaries have been going down to the South Sea Islands where for centuries some of those savages have been guilty of the most atrocious vices. What happens. As those people hear the good news of Jesus’ love for them and His death for them, and His desire to clean them up and make them obedient to His law, they accept the Gospel and changes take place in their lives.

Suppose one those cannibals were to stand up and say, “Folks, you understand that I have been a cannibal all my life, and my father was a cannibal, and my grandfather was a cannibal, and back as long as we have traditions. So don’t expect me to change overnight. I am not eating quite as many people as I used to. I hope to do better. But accept me just as I am, and not hold it against me. And remember, it’s legalism if you make that in any way an issue. Jesus died for me, cannibal or no cannibal. He’s died for me, so I have liberty in Christ Jesus, and I want you to accept me on that basis.”

What would you say? Whatever his theology, he needs some religion. Isn’t it strange how easily we can see inconsistency when it comes to eating human flesh? I suppose we could, with many other things in this country. But my sin, the sin that I have cultivated all my life, whether it be evil temper, a gossiping tongue, a critical disposition, some filthy lust, some foolishness, whatever the sin, if I’m not careful the Devil will try to get me to think that it is impossible for that thing to be changed in my life. And those excuses lead to sinning.

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled with righteousness. The cannibal will quit eating human flesh. The drunkard will quit taking whiskey and beer and wine. The angry man will become patient and self-controlled. The sinner will become like Jesus. Why? Because he has received the gift of righteousness through Christ. That’s a miracle, my friend. It is as much a miracle as it was to raise Lazarus from the dead.

This is the miracle God is conducting in heathen lands for those cannibals. That’s why they quit eating human flesh. They’ve received Jesus into their hearts, and He is righteousness. Thank God, it works just the same here in America for those who let Jesus in, for those who turn from their own ways, which are unrighteous, and accept Jesus.

Someone says, “Then what is legalism against which we are warned?”

Legalism is when I look at the law and see that I am not like it, and instead of going to Jesus to be cleansed and saved, I try by my own efforts to be more like that law. That is legalism. That is righteousness by works. And it never works any more than a man could fly by working his arms hard and fast enough. He might work his arms and jump up a few inches, but he would be back right away.

So the man who tries by his own human effort to achieve righteousness according to the law never succeeds in reaching the goal. He's never filled. Oh, no. His righteousness is indeed as filthy rags.

So our hope is in turning from our ways, which are unrighteous, and fleeing to Jesus. He is the righteous One, and He offers us two things: forgiveness for the past and help and victory for the future. Both of these are included in the gift of His righteousness. Either one without the other would not be sufficient. No matter how much Jesus forgives us for the past, if we keep on doing the wrong thing, how could it ever be said that we are righteous? Even if Jesus would exercise His power to keep us doing the right thing from now on, what about the past? The wages of sin is death.

So thank God, Jesus does both. He takes care of the past by presenting His precious life as the atonement for our sins. He takes care of the future by giving us His gift of righteousness, Himself, and in our human flesh that righteousness of His life, His law is to be revealed.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”  
Romans 8:3–4.

He's not talking simply about a righteousness that is accounted to us for the past. He's talking about a righteousness which is fulfilled in us. It is the righteousness of the law. Every one of the Ten Commandments is included in this righteousness of the law, for we read, “All His commandments are righteousness.”

Fulfilled is an interesting word. Part of that we've already read tonight. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Filled with what? Righteousness. That is what they hunger and thirst for. Here it says that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. How much? Fulfilled is filled full. And the full measure of righteousness is to be revealed in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Someone says, “Brother Frazee, that looks impossible to me.”

Sure. It does to me too. God does a lot of impossible things. He's been doing it all through the history of this world. He started off by doing impossible things. He said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” He made the whole world from start to finish by doing impossible things. The plan of salvation takes the impossible and makes it possible all the way through. The plan of salvation changes sinners to saints, unrighteous to righteous, sinful to holy. Oh, I am thankful that we're dealing with the God of the impossible. What do you say?

Faith is necessary in order that God may exercise this power. So we are justified by faith.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” Romans 5:1.

That means accounted righteous by faith. Notice how beautifully it is put:

“It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen, and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned” *Steps to Christ*, page 62.

He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. What an exchange.

The thief on the cross threw himself on the mercy of a dying Savior, and he was saved. He confessed his need. He hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and he was filled. He died with the perfect peace of full acceptance with God. Every one of us can come, must come to Jesus just as that thief did.

As that grand, old hymn “*Rock of Ages*” puts it:

In my hand no price I bring,  
Simply to His cross I cling.

Nothing we do can recommend us to God. Only our need pleads most eloquently for us. So blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Why not take the fulfillment of God’s promise to fill us full? Why not sit down to the whole banquet. We need it. And thank God, it’s offered to us through Jesus.

“More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith... Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works,—works of righteousness, obedience” *Ibid.*, pages 62–63.

The same Jesus that puts His life to my credit for the past puts it into me for the present and the future. We call the past justification. We call what is in us day by day sanctification. It’s the same Jesus, the same righteousness. One is

accounted to us when we never did it. The second is done in us. But don't forget that the second is just as much a gift of His love as the first.

Suppose I've been in debt. Suppose my debts have rolled up, and I owe ten thousand dollars. Some kind, rich friend offers to pay my debts, so I am free and out of debt. But if I am just as penniless as I was before, I will either be in debt or starve to death. It would be wonderful if that rich friend that paid my debts would give me some money and say, "now you can pay cash as you go along." Wouldn't that be wonderful?

One is payment after I am in debt. The other is the same benefactor keeping me out of debt by furnishing money to pay the bills.

That's just a poor illustration, but Jesus is actively in the business of helping people before they sin instead of waiting until after they sin and forgiving them. That is what He did for the cannibals down in the South Seas. That's why they quit that business of eating people. And you and I can quit everything that God condemns, and do everything He that He says in exactly the same way that those cannibals have been saved from eating human flesh. We can do it by believing in the righteousness of Jesus.

It isn't just to take away the guilt of sin. It's to break the power of sin. It isn't just to help us after we've fallen. It's to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Remember the repeated assurance that Jesus will finish what He's started.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" Philippians 1:6.

To believe that the One who has begun this work in our lives will finish us and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me"  
John 6:57.

It is not enough to be hungry. We must feed on the food when it is brought to where we can get our hands on it. What a shame it would be to approach the table and just sit there and watch other people eat.

What are you doing? Are you watching other people eat, or are you eating? You are doing one or the other. Some people here tonight have been fed. Are you being fed? Jesus said, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

We are not fed by what we see other people eating. We are not fed by hearing lectures on nutrition or reading cookbooks. Oh, no. How can we feed on Jesus?

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” John 6:63.

So through God’s Word, Christ presents Himself to us as the living bread that came down from Heaven. The Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation testify of Him. More than that, they are the embodiment of His life, the revelation of His will, the agency through which He communicates His power. Then if I hunger and thirst after righteousness, I will feed on this Book.

It is not enough to take food in our mouths and swallow it. It must be digested. There are things that we can do to help digestion. Take the practical thing of mastication. Does it make a difference whether we chew our food or not? Oh, yes. Some people are not getting full nutrition out of what they eat because they bolt their food, as we say. And every one of these thirty-two teeth is saying, Chew, chew, chew.

But there is something that is happening as we chew our food. The salivary glands under the jaw and under the tongue are pouring out digestive fluids that mix with the food that we’re chewing, and while it is being mechanically reduced to a smaller size, those digestive juices are pouring into that mass and being mixed with it.

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” Hebrews 4:2.

They did not masticate and let the saliva mix with their hearing the Word. Merely reading the Bible will not in itself give you righteousness. You may read chapters and books and the entire volume, but without faith the Word will not profit you. Faith must be mixed with the Word. Before we read we pray, Lord, speak to me through this page. Let me receive the life of God through these words. And as we read we mix faith. We say, Lord, I believe what I’m reading. I accept it, I receive it, and I thank You for it.

As we do this, we who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness will be filled. This Word is to be the living agency through which Christ communicates His power, His life, His righteousness to us day by day.

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