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

Lloyd Jones:

The Christian’s concern is to view life in this world light of the gospel; and, according to the gospel, the trouble with mankind is not any one particular manifestation of sin, but rather sin itself. If you are anxious about the state of the world and the threat of possible wars, then I assure you that the most direct way of avoiding such calamities is to observe words such as these which we are now considering, ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled’. One of the greatest tragedies in the life of the Church today is the way in which so many are content with the vague, general, useless statements about war and peace instead of preaching the gospel in all its simplicity and purity. It is righteousness that exalts a nation, and the most important thing for all of us is to discover what righteousness means.

In this particular statement in the Sermon on the Mount we are looking at another of the characteristics of the Christian, a further description of the Christian man. In this verse we have one of the most notable statements of the Christian gospel and everything that it has to give us. It is very doctrinal; it emphasizes one of the most fundamental doctrines of the gospel, namely, that our salvation is entirely of grace or by grace, that it is entirely the free gift of God.

If we want to be truly happy and blessed, we must hunger and thirst after righteousness. What does this righteousness mean?

1. It does not mean, of course, what is talked about so much at the present time, a sort of general righteousness or morality.

2. Much more important and much more serious from the truly Christian standpoint is, I think, the fact that it is not right to define righteousness in this connection even as justification. Here, I suggest, it means more. It seems to me, that righteousness here includes not only justification but sanctification also. In other words, the desire for righteousness, the act of hungering and thirsting for it, means ultimately the desire to be free from sin in all its forms and in its every manifestation, because sin separates us from God. Therefore, positively, it means a desire to be right with God; and that, after all, is the fundamental thing. All the trouble in the world today is due to the fact that man is not right with God, for it is because he is not right with God that he has gone wrong everywhere else. That is the teaching of the Bible everywhere.

3. But it goes further still. It means a desire to be free from the very desire for sin, because we find that the man who truly examines himself in the light of the Scriptures not only discovers that he is in the bondage of sin; still more horrible is the fact that he likes it, that he wants it. The Christian is one who desires to be free from all that.

Perhaps we can sum it all up like this. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to desire to be free from self in all its horrible manifestations, in all its forms.

Until now I have been putting it rather negatively; but let me put it positively like this.

1. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is nothing but the longing to be positively holy. The man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the man who wants to exemplify
the Beatitudes in his daily life. He is a man who wants to show the fruit of the Spirit in his every action and in the whole of his life and activity.

2. It means that one’s supreme desire in life is to know God and to be in fellowship with Him, to walk with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the light. ‘Our fellowship’, says John, ‘is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.’ And in the end that is nothing but a longing and desire to be like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Very well, if that is righteousness, let us look at the other term,

What does it mean to ‘hunger and thirst’?

Obviously it does not mean that we feel we can attain unto this righteousness by our own efforts and endeavor. That is the worldly view of righteousness which concentrates on man himself and leads to the individual pride of the Pharisee, or to the pride of one nation as against other nations regarding itself as being better and superior.

1. It means a consciousness of our need, of our deep and desperate need. To hunger and thirst is to be like a man who wants a position. He is restless, he cannot keep still; he is working and plodding; he thinks about it, and dreams about it; his ambition is the controlling passion of his life. The Psalmist has summed it up perfectly in a classical phrase: ‘As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.’

Lastly, let us look briefly at what is promised to the people who are like that. It is one of the most gracious, glorious statements to be found in the entire Bible.

1. ‘Of him’, Paul says in writing to the Corinthians, ‘are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.’ At this moment I am perfect in Christ, and yet I am being made perfect. ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after . . . I press toward the mark.’ You go on changing from glory into glory till in heaven we take our place.

2. ‘Of his fullness have we received and grace upon grace’, grace added to grace. It goes on and on; perfect, yet not perfect; hungering, thirsting, yet filled and satisfied, but longing for more, never having enough because it is so glorious and so wondrous; fully satisfied by Him and yet a supreme desire to ‘know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.’

3. Then, reading the Bible. The man who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness should try to understand it and read books about it.

4. And then, prayer. It is God alone who can give us this gift. Do we ask Him for it? How much time do we spend in His presence? If you read the biographies of some of the saints, you will find that these saints spent four or five hours daily in prayer, not just saying their prayers at night when they were almost too weary to do so. They gave the best time of their day to God; and people who hunger and thirst after righteousness know what it is to spend time in prayer and meditation reminding themselves of what they are in this life and world and what is awaiting them.
Pink:

In the first three Beatitudes we are called upon to witness the heart exercises of those who have been awakened by the Spirit of God. First, there is a sense of need, a realization of their nothingness and emptiness. Second, there is a judging of self, a consciousness of their guilt and sorrowing over their lost condition. Third, there is an end of seeking to justify themselves before God, an abandonment of all pretenses to personal merit, a taking of their place in the dust before God. And here, in the fourth, the eye of the soul is turned away from self to Another: there is a longing after that which they know they have not got and which they are conscious they urgently need.

1. There has been much needless quibbling as to the precise import of the word “righteousness” in this verse, and it seems to us that most of the commentators have failed to grasp its fullness. In many Old Testament passages “righteousness” is synonymous with “salvation,” as will appear from the following. ‘Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it’ (Isa. 45:8); ‘Hearken unto Me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion’ (Isa. 46:12, 13); ‘My righteousness is near. My salvation is set forth, and Mine arms shall judge the people: the isles shall wait upon Me, and on Mine arms shall they trust’ (Isa. 51:5); ‘Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment and do justice: for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed’ (Isa. 56:1); ‘He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness’ (Isa. 61:10).

2. Yet after all, this does not bring us much nearer in that “salvation” is one of the most comprehensive terms to be found in the Scriptures. Let us, then, seek to define its meaning a little more closely. Taking it in its widest latitude, to ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness’ means to yearn after God’s favor, image, and felicity. “Righteousness” is a term denoting all spiritual blessings: ‘seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness’ (Matthew 6:33).

a. More specifically, “righteousness” in our text has reference, first, to the righteousness of faith whereby a sinner is justified freely by Divine grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. As the result of his Surety’s obedience being imputed to him, the believer stands *legally righteous* before God. As sinners who have constantly broken the Law in thought, word, and deed, we are utterly destitute of righteousness. ‘There is none righteous, no not one’ (Rom. 3:10). But God has provided a perfect righteousness in Christ for all who believe; it is the best “robe” put upon each sinner. The merits of Christ’s perfect keeping of the Law is reckoned to the account of every sinner who shelters in Him.

b. Second, this “righteousness,” for which the awakened sinner longs, is to be understood of *inward and sanctifying* righteousness, for as we so often point out, justification and sanctification are never to be severed. The one in whom the Spirit graciously works desires not only an *imputed* righteousness, but an *imparted* one too; he not only longs for a restoration to God’s favor, but to have God’s image renewed in him.
c. For this twofold “righteousness” the convicted “hunger and thirst,” expressive of vehement desire, of which the soul is acutely conscious, for as in bodily hunger and thirst there are sharp pangs and an intense longing for their appeasement, so it is with the soul. The Spirit convicts and creates a deep hunger and thirst which causes him to look unto and seek relief from Christ, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’ Like the previous ones, this fourth Beatitude describes a dual experience: an initial and a continuous, that which begins in the unconverted, but is perpetuated in the saved sinner. There is a repeated exercise of this grace, felt at varying intervals. The one who longed to be saved by Christ now yearns to be made like Him. Looked at in its widest aspect, this hungering and thirsting refers to that panting of the renewed heart after God (Ps. 42:1), that yearning for a closer walk with Him, that longing for more perfect conformity to the image of His Son. It tells of those aspirations of the new nature for Divine blessings which alone can strengthen, sustain and satisfy it.

d. Our text presents such a paradox that it is evident that no carnal mind ever invented it. Can one who has been brought into vital union with Him who is the Bread of Life and in whom all fullness dwells be found still hungering and thirsting? Yes, such is the experience of the renewed heart. Mark carefully the tense of the verb: it is not “Blessed are they which have,” but ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst.’ This has ever been the experience of God’s saints (Ps. 82:4; Phil. 3:8, 14).

‘They shall be filled.’ Like the first part of our text, this also has a double fulfillment: an initial, and a continuous.

1. When God creates a hunger and thirst in the soul, it is that He may satisfy it. When the poor sinner is made to feel his need of Christ, it is that he may be drawn to and led to embrace Him. He is made to exclaim, ‘Surely in the Lord have I righteousness.’ ‘They shall be filled’ with the peace of God which passeth all understanding. ‘Filled’ with that Divine blessing to which no sorrow is added. ‘Filled’ with praise and thanksgiving unto Him who has wrought all our works in us. ‘Filled’ with that which this poor world can neither give nor take away. ‘Filled’ by the goodness and mercy of God, till their cup runneth over.

2. And yet, all that is enjoyed now is but a little foretaste of what God has prepared for them that love Him: in the day to come we shall be ‘filled’ with Divine holiness, for we shall be made ‘like Him’ (1 John 3:2). Then shall we be done with sin for ever: then shall we ‘hunger no more, neither thirst any more’ (Rev. 7:16).

As this fourth Beatitude has been such a storehouse of comfort to many a tried and troubled believer, let us point out the use which may be made of it by Satan-harassed believers.

1. First, by those whose faith is little and weak. There are not a few in God’s family who sincerely long to please Him in all things and to live in no sin against their conscience, and yet they find in themselves so much distrust and despair of God’s mercy that they are conscious of much more doubting than faith, so that they are brought seriously to question their election and state before God. Here, then, is Divine consolation for them: if they genuinely hunger and thirst after righteousness, Christ Himself pronounces them blessed. Those who are displeased with their unbelief, who truly desire to be purged from distrust, who long and pray for increased faith and assurance—evidencing their sincerity by diligently using all proper means—are the subjects of God’s approbation.
2. Second, by those whose sanctification is so imperfect. Many there be who are most anxious to please God and make conscience of all known sins, yet find in themselves so much darkness of mind, activity of rebellious corruption, forwardness in their affections, perverseness in their wills, yea, a constant proneness to all manner of sins; and, on the contrary, they can perceive so little of the fruits of sanctification, so little evidence of spiritual life, so few signs of Divine grace at work within, that they often seriously doubt if they have received any grace at all. This is a fearfully heavy burden, and greatly casts down the soul. But here is Divine consolation. Christ pronounces ‘blessed’ not those who are full of righteousness, but those who ‘hunger and thirst’ after it. Those who mourn over their depravity, who grieve over the plague of their hearts, who yearn for conformity to Christ—using the means constantly—are accepted of God in Christ.

3. Third, by the more extreme case of one who has grievously departed from God and long been a backslider, and now, conscious of his wickedness, is in despair. Satan will tell him that his case is hopeless, that he is an apostate, that hell is prepared for him and he must surely be damned; and the poor soul is ready to believe that such must really be the case. He is destitute of peace, all his evidences are eclipsed, he cannot perceive a ray of hope. Nevertheless, here is Divine comfort. If he truly mourns over his departure from God, hates himself for his backsliding, sorrows over his sins, truly desires to repent of them and longs to be reconciled to God and restored to communion with Him, then he too is among the blessed: ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.’

Watson:

13. The nature of spiritual hunger

We are now come to the fourth step of blessedness: ‘Blessed are they that hunger’. The words fall into two parts: a duty implied; a promise annexed.

A duty implied: ‘Blessed are they that hunger’. Spiritual hunger is a blessed hunger.

What is meant by hunger? Hunger is put for desire (Isaiah 26:9). Spiritual hunger is the rational appetite whereby the soul pants after that which it apprehends most suitable and proportional to itself.

Whence is this hunger? Hunger is from the sense of want. He who spiritually hungers, has a real sense of his own indigence. He wants righteousness.

What is meant by righteousness? There is a twofold righteousness: of imputation; of implantation.

1. A righteousness of imputation, namely, Christ’s righteousness. ‘He shall be called the Lord our righteousness’ (Jeremiah 23:6). This is as truly ours to justify, as it is Christ’s to bestow. By virtue of this righteousness God looks upon us as if we had never sinned (Numbers 23: 21). This is a perfect righteousness. ‘Ye are complete in him’ (Colossians 2:10). This does not only cover but adorn. He who has this righteousness is equal to the most illustrious saints. The weakest believer is justified as much as the strongest. This is a Christian’s triumph. When he is defiled in himself, he is undefiled in his Head. In this
blessed righteousness we shine brighter than the angels. This righteousness is worth hungering after.

2. A righteousness of implantation: that is, imparted righteousness, namely, the graces of the Spirit, holiness of heart and life. This a pious soul hungers after. This is a blessed hunger. Bodily hunger cannot make a man so miserable as spiritual hunger makes him blessed. This evidences life. A dead man cannot hunger. Hunger proceeds from life. The first thing the child does when it is born, is to hunger after the breast. Spiritual hunger follows upon the new birth (1 Peter 2: 2). Saint Bernard in one of his Soliloquies comforts himself with this, that surely he had the truth of grace in him, because he had in his heart a strong desire after God. It is happy when, though we have not what we should, we desire what we have not. The appetite is as well from God as the food.

See here at what a low price God sets heavenly things. It is but hungering and thirsting. ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, buy without money’ (Isaiah 55: 1). We are not bid to bring any merits to purchase righteousness. All that is required is to bring an appetite. Christ ‘hath fulfilled all righteousness’. We are only to ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness’.

1. The invitation of the gospel is free. If a friend invites guests to his table, he does not expect they should bring money to pay for their dinner, only come with an appetite. So, says God. It is not penance, pilgrimage, self-righteousness I require. Only bring a stomach: ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness’.

2. God might have set Christ and salvation at an higher price, but he has much beaten down the price. Now as this shows the sweetness of God’s nature he is not a hard master so it shows us the inexcusableness of those who perish under the gospel. What apology can any man make at the day of judgement, when God shall ask that question, Friend, why did you not embrace Christ? I set Christ and grace at a low rate. If you had but hungered after righteousness, you might have had it, but you slighted Christ. You had such low thoughts of righteousness that you would not hunger after it. How do you think to escape who have neglected ‘so great salvation’? The easier the terms of the gospel are, the sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy of who unworthily refuse such an offer.

3. It shows us a true character of a godly man. He hungers and thirsts after spiritual things (Isaiah 26: 9; Psalm 73: 25). It is the very temper and constitution of a gracious soul to thirst after God (Psalm 42: 2). In the word preached, how he is big with desire! These are some of the pantings of his soul: Lord, thou hast led me into thy courts. O that I may have thy sweet presence, that thy glory may fill the temple! Wilt thou draw some sacred lineaments of grace upon my soul that I may be more assimilated and changed into the likeness of my dear Savior. In prayer, how is the soul filled with passionate longings after Christ! Prayer is expressed by ‘groans unutterable’ (Romans 8: 26). The heart sends up whole volleys of sighs to heaven: Lord, one beam of thy love! one drop of thy blood!

Let us put ourselves upon a trial whether we hunger and thirst after righteousness. I shall give you five signs by which you may judge of this hunger.

1. Hunger is a painful thing. He finds a want of Christ and grace. He is distressed and in pain till he has his spiritual hunger stilled and allayed.

2. Hunger is satisfied with nothing but food. Bring an hungry man flowers, music; tell him pleasant stories; nothing will content him but food. Shew me the Lord and it will suffice me. Let me have Christ to clothe me, Christ to feed me, Christ to intercede for me. While
the soul is hungry for Christ, it is restless. Nothing but the water-springs of Christ’s blood can quench its thirst.

3. Hunger wrestles with difficulties and makes an adventure for food. The soul that spiritually hungerers is resolved; Christ it must have; grace it must have. And to use Basil’s expression, the hungry soul is almost distracted till it enjoys the thing it hungers after.

4. An hungry man falls to his meat with an appetite. You need not make an oration to an hungry man and persuade him to eat. So he who hungerers after righteousness feeds eagerly on an ordinance. ‘Thy words were found, and I did eat them’ (Jeremiah 15: 16). In the sacrament he feeds with appetite upon the body and blood of the Lord (symbolically). God loves to see us feed hungrily on the bread of life.

5. An hungry man tastes sweetness in his meat. So he that hungerers after righteousness relishes a sweetness in heavenly things. Christ is to him all marrow, yea the quintessence of delights. ‘If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious’ (1 Peter 2: 3). He that spiritually hungerers tastes the promises sweet, nay tastes a reproof sweet. ‘To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet’ (Proverbs 27: 7). A bitter reproof is sweet. He can feed upon the myrrh of the gospel as well as the honey. By these notes of trial we may judge of ourselves whether we hunger and thirst after righteousness.

These words may serve to comfort the hearts of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; I doubt not but it is the grief of many a good heart that he cannot be more holy, that he cannot serve God better. ‘Blessed are they that hunger’. Though you do not have so much righteousness as you would, yet you are blessed because you hunger after it. They who can find this true hunger are blessed and may take comfort in it.

But some may object: My hunger after righteousness is so weak, that I fear it is not true.

1. I answer: Though the pulse beats but weak it shows there is life. And that weak desires should not be discouraged, there is a promise made to them. ‘A bruised reed he will not break’ (Matthew 12: 20). A reed is a weak thing, but especially when it is bruised, yet this ‘bruised reed’ shall not be broken. In case of weakness look to Christ your High Priest. He is merciful, therefore will bear with your infirmities; He is mighty, therefore will help them.

2. Further, if your desires after righteousness seem to be weak and languid, yet a Christian may sometimes take a measure of his spiritual estate as well by the judgement as by the affections. What is that you esteem most in your judgement? Is it Christ and grace? This is good evidence for heaven. It was a sign that Paul bore entire love to Christ because he esteemed this Pearl above all. He counted other things ‘but dung, that he might win Christ’ (Philippians 3: 8).

But, says a child of God, that which much eclipses my comfort is, I have not that hunger which I once had. Time was when I did hunger after a Sabbath because then the manna fell. ‘I called the Sabbath a delight’. I remember the time when I hungered after the body and blood of the Lord (symbolically). I came to a sacrament as an hungry man to a feast, but now it is otherwise with me. I do not have those hungerings as formerly.

1. I answer: It is indeed an ill sign for a man to lose his stomach, but, though it be a sign of the decay of grace to lose the spiritual appetite, yet it is a sign of the truth of grace to bewail the loss. It is sad to lose our first love, but it is happy when we mourn for the loss
of our first love. If you do not have that appetite after heavenly things as formerly, yet do not be discouraged, for in the use of means you may recover your appetite. The ordinances are for the recovering of the appetite when it is lost.

The text exhorts us all to labor after this spiritual hunger. Novarinus says, ‘It is too small a thing merely to wish for righteousness; but we must hunger for it on account of a vast longing making itself felt.’ Hunger less after the world and more after righteousness. Say concerning spiritual things, “Lord, evermore give us this bread. Feed me with this angels’ food”. That manna is most to be hungered after which will not only preserve life but prevent death (John 6: 50). That is most desirable which is most durable. Riches are not for ever (Proverbs 27:24) but righteousness is for ever (Proverbs 8:18). ‘The beauty of holiness, never fades (Psalm 110: 3). ‘The robe of righteousness’ (Isaiah 61: 10) never waxes old! Oh hunger after that righteousness which ‘delivereth from death’ (Proverbs 10: 12). This is the righteousness which God Himself is in love with. ‘He loveth him that followeth after righteousness’ (Proverbs 15:9). All men are ambitious of the king’s favor. Alas, what is a prince’s smile but a transient beatitude? This sunshine of his royal countenance soon masks itself with a cloud of displeasure, but those who are endued with righteousness are God’s favorites, and how sweet is His smile! ‘Thy loving-kindness is better than life’ (Psalm 63:3).

I shall next briefly describe some helps to spiritual hunger.

1. Avoid those things which will hinder your appetite: As ‘windy things’. When the stomach is full of wind a man has little appetite to his food. The love of earthly things will quench the desire of spiritual. ‘Love not the world’ (1 John 2: 15). The sin is not in the having, but in the loving.

2. Do all that may provoke spiritual appetite. There are two things that provoke appetite. Exercise: a man by walking and stirring gets a stomach to his meat. So by the exercise of holy duties the spiritual appetite is increased. ‘Exercise thyself unto godliness’ (1 Timothy 4: 7).

**Spiritual hunger shall be satisfied**

> They shall be filled.

**Matthew 5:6**

I proceed now to the second part of the text. A promise annexed. ‘They shall be filled’. A Christian fighting with sin is not like one that ‘beats the air’ (1 Corinthians 9:26), and his hungering after righteousness is not like one that sucks in only air, ‘Blessed are they that hunger, for they shall be filled.’

1. Those that hunger after righteousness shall be filled. God never bids us seek him ‘in vain’ (Isaiah 45: 19). Here is an honeycomb dropping into the mouths of the hungry, ‘they shall be filled’. ‘He hath filled the hungry with good things’ (Luke 1: 53). ‘He satisfieth the longing soul’ (Psalm 107: 9). God will not let us lose our longing.

2. Here is the excellency of righteousness above all things. A man may hunger after the world and not be filled. The world is fading, not filling. Cast three worlds into the heart, yet the heart is not full. But righteousness is a filling thing; nay, it so fills that it satisfies. A man may be filled and not satisfied. A sinner may take his fill of sin, but that is a sad filling. It is far from satisfaction. He shall have his belly full of sin; he shall have enough of it, but this is not a filling to satisfaction. This is such a filling that the damned in hell
have. They shall be full of the fury of the Lord. But he that hungereth after righteousness shall be satisfyingly filled. ‘My people shall be satisfied with my goodness’ (Jeremiah 31:14). ‘My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow’ (Psalm 63:5).

God first opens the mouth of the soul with desire and then fills it with good things (Psalm 81:10). For the illustration of this, consider these three things: that God can fill the hungry soul; why he fills the hungry soul; how he fills the hungry soul.

1. That God can fill the hungry soul. He is called a fountain. ‘With thee is the fountain of life’ (Psalm 36:9). The cistern may be empty and cannot fill us. Creatures are often ‘broken cisterns’ (Jeremiah 2:13). But the fountain is filling. God is a fountain. If we bring the vessels of our desires to this fountain, He is able to fill them.
   a. The fullness in God is an infinite fullness. Though He fill us and the angels which have larger capacities to receive, yet He has never the less Himself. ‘I perceive that virtue is gone out of me’ (Luke 8:46). Though God lets virtue go out of him, yet He has never the less. The fullness of the creature is limited. It arises just to such a degree and proportion; but God’s fullness is infinite; as it has its resplendence, so its redundancy. It knows neither bounds nor bottom.
   b. It is a constant fullness. The fullness of the creature is a mutable fullness; it ebbs and changes. I could, says one, have helped you, but now my estate is low. The blossoms of the fig-tree are soon blown off. Creatures cannot do that for us which once they could. But God is a constant fullness. ‘Thou art the same’ (Psalm 102:27). God can never be exhausted. His fullness is overflowing and ever-flowing. Then surely ‘it is good to draw nigh to God’ (Psalm 73:28). It is good bringing our vessels to this spring-head. It is a never-failing goodness.

2. Why God fills the hungry soul. The reasons are:
   a. God will fill the hungry soul out of His tender compassion. He knows that else ‘the spirit would fail before him and the soul which he has made’ (Isaiah 57:16). If the hungry man be not satisfied with food he dies. God has more bowels than to suffer an hungry soul to be famished. When the multitude had nothing to eat, Christ was moved with compassion and He wrought a miracle for their supply (Matthew 15:32). Much more will He compassionate such as hunger and thirst after righteousness. When a poor sinner sees himself almost starved in his sins (as the prodigal among his husks) and begins to hunger after Christ, saying, ‘there is bread enough and to spare in my Father’s house’, God will then out of his infinite compassions bring forth the fatted calf and refresh his soul with the delicacies and provisions of the gospel. Oh the melting of God’s bowels to an hungry sinner! ‘Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled’ (Hosea 11:8)
   i. We cannot see a poor creature at the door ready to perish with hunger, but our bowels begin to relent and we afford him some relief. And will the Father of mercies let a poor soul that hungerers after the blessings of the gospel go away without an alms of free grace? No, He will not; He cannot. Let the hungry sinner think thus, Though I am full of wants, yet my God is full of bowels.
   b. God will fill the hungry that he may fulfil his Word. ‘Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled’ (Psalm 107:9; Jeremiah 31:14; Luke 6:21). ‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed ..’ (Isaiah 44:3). Has the
Lord spoken and shall it not come to pass? Promises are obligatory. If God has passed a promise, He cannot go back. You who hunger after righteousness have God engaged for you. He has given His truth as security for you. As ‘his compassions fail not’ (Lamentations 3: 22), so ‘he will not suffer his faithfulness to fail’ (Psalm 89: 33). If the hungry soul should not be filled, the promise would not be fulfilled.

c. God will fill the hungry soul because He himself has excited and stirred up this hunger. He plants holy desires in us, and will not He satisfy those desires which He himself has wrought in us? As in the case of prayer, when God prepares the heart to pray, He prepares His ear to hear (Psalm 10: 17); so in the case of spiritual hunger, when God prepares the heart to hunger, He will prepare His hand to fill. It is not rational to imagine that God should deny to satisfy that hunger which He himself has caused.

d. God will fill the hungry because of those sweet relations He stands unto them; they are His children. We cannot deny our children when they are hungry. We will rather spare it from our own selves (Luke 11: 13). When he that is born of God shall come and say, Father, I hunger, give me Christ; Father, I thirst, refresh me with the living streams of thy Spirit, can God deny? Does God hear the raven when it cries, and will He not hear the righteous when they cry?

e. God will satisfy the hungry because the hungry soul is most thankful for mercy. When the restless desire has been drawn out after God, and God fills it, how thankful is a Christian! The Lord loves to bestow His mercy where He may have most praise. We delight to give to them that are thankful. The hungry soul sets the crown of praise upon the head of free grace. ‘Whoso offereth praise glorifies me’ (Psalm 50: 23).

How God fills the hungry soul. There is threefold filling: with grace; with peace; with bliss.

1. God fills the hungry soul with grace. Grace is filling because suitable to the soul. Stephen was ‘full of the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 7: 55). This fullness of grace is in respect of parts, not of degrees. There is something of every grace, though not perfection in any grace.

2. God fills the hungry soul with peace. ‘The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace’ (Romans 15: 13). This flows from Christ. Israel had honey out of the rock. This honey of peace comes out of the rock, Christ. ‘That in me ye might have peace’ (John 16: 33). So filling is this peace that it sets the soul a-longing after heaven. This cluster of grapes quickens the appetite and pursuit after the full crop.

3. God fills the hungry soul with bliss. Glory is a filling thing. ‘When I awake I shall be satisfied with thy image’ (Psalm 17:15). When a Christian awakes out of the sleep of death then he shall be satisfied, having the glorious beams of God’s image shining upon him. Then shall the soul be filled brimful. The glory of heaven is so sweet that the soul shall still thirst, yet so infinite that it shall be filled. “They who drink of thee, O Christ, being refreshed with sweet torrents, shall not continue to thirst yet they shall thirst”. What an encouragement is this to hunger after righteousness! Such shall be filled. God charges us to fill the hungry (Isaiah 58: 10). He blames those who do not fill the hungry (Isaiah 32: 6). And do we think He will be slack in that which He blames us for not doing? Oh come with hungerings after Christ and be assured of satisfaction. God keeps open house for hungry sinners. He invites His guests and bids them come without money (Isaiah 55: 1, 2). God’s nature inclines Him and His promise obliges Him to fill the hungry.

Consider, why did Christ receive ‘the Spirit without measure’? (John 3:34). It was not for
Himself. He was infinitely full before. But He was filled with the holy unction for this end, that He might distil His grace upon the hungry soul. Are you ignorant? Christ was filled with wisdom that He might teach you. Are you polluted? Christ was filled with grace that He might cleanse you. Shall not the soul then come to Christ who was filled on purpose to fill the hungry? We love to knock at a rich man’s door. In our Father’s house there is bread enough. Come with desire and you shall go away with comfort. You shall have the virtues of Christ’s blood, the influences of His Spirit, the communications of His love.

The godly man’s objection. I have had unfeigned desires after God, but am not filled.
1. You may have a filling of grace, though not of comfort. If God does not fill you with gladness, yet with goodness (Psalm 107: 9). Look into your heart and see the distillations of the Spirit. The dew may fall though the honeycomb does not drop.
2. Wait a while and you shall be filled. The gospel is a spiritual banquet. It feasts the soul with grace and comfort. None eat of this banquet but such as wait at the table. ‘In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees well refined. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation’ (Isaiah 25: 6,9). Spiritual mercies are not only worth desiring, but worth waiting for.
3. If God should not fill His people to satisfaction here, yet they shall be filled in heaven. The vessels of their desires shall be filled as those water pots (John 2: 7) ‘up to the brim’.

References