

The Gift of Longing to Long

I remember several years ago when the Lord really began convicting my heart of my very little hunger for God. He did this by opening of my understanding to how much He truly wanted to give me and showing me the gap between that fullness and my actual experience. He began to very purposely disrupt my life by revealing to me the principle that He gives more according to my hunger for more, and that until my capacity was enlarged by spiritual hunger, I would be limited in my experience of God. Though having known Jesus my whole life, I had never considered that I lacked this inward groan. My heart was very small in its capacity and I did not know it. I thought I loved God intensely but He revealed to me that in all truth, my thirst for Him was relatively small. And this exposure was truly a gift. At that time I entered into what I now call “the longing to long” or “the hunger to hunger.” I was in that tension between sincerely wanting to want God and not yet being overcome by hunger for Him--and this is exactly where God wanted me. Hunger begets hunger and in time, He would cause my initial desire to give way to strong desire, that He might answer me with more of Himself just as He loves to do.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (Matt. 5:6)

Jesus releases His power and presence to us according to the measure of our hunger for Him. Spiritual hunger comes as we get a vision to have everything that God will give the human spirit on this side of eternity. God wants to take believers far beyond even what the early Christians experienced in the book of Acts. Before He returns, He will pour out the Holy Spirit in degrees that the Church historically has never witnessed. We cannot possibly imagine all that God desires to give to the human heart in this age. The utter vastness of what He wants to flood our beings with in terms of experience of divine pleasure and power encounters with the Holy Spirit has not yet even entered our minds (1 Cor. 2:9-12). Yet this fullness, this abundance of divine reward imparted to the inner man, is what God wants to give us a vision to pursue. Again, He will give according to our hunger and thus our first priority is to become hungry.

Some think they are hungry when they have a newly awakened interest in the things of God, but awakened interest is not yet hunger. Buying a book on a Kingdom topic is good, but it is not yet hunger. Hunger is when we cannot live without more, when we make radical alterations to our lifestyle in order to pursue God. A good way to measure the reality of our hunger is to measure the

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extent to which we rearrange our life (time, money, comforts) to pursue what we are hungry for.

Jeremiah prophesied of genuine spiritual hunger when the Lord spoke these words through him, "You will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord" (Jer. 29:12-14). He promises that He will be found when He is pursued by a genuinely hungry heart.

Jeremiah is teaching us that just saying prayers is not what God requires. Spiritual language and grandiose statements in prayer do not impress God. He peers right into the deep of the human heart and sees the void and barrenness on the inside. This is where much of the Western Church misses the mark. Yes, we go to a few prayer meetings; we attend a few Church gatherings. We occasionally eek out a few, "I love you, God" prayers and possibly a few "How I want You" statements. Yet all the while God is searching deep within our heart, wanting to bring us to a radically new level of intimacy with Himself if only we would respond. He is after something far deeper than regular attendance and far more severe than an occasional prayer of devotion. He wants to actually possess us. He wants our lives to be so governed and ruled by yearning for Himself that all that we do is an outflow of that intense craving. Spiritual hunger is of utmost importance to the God who created us.

Not only do we need a massive increase in our craving for personal encounters with God, we need our hunger for His power to be released in signs and wonders and miracles. According to biblical principle, this kind of manifestation of His power also requires a wholehearted cry of desperate hunger on the part of believers. The Church must operate in sustained, intense prayer, coupled with fasting in order for God's manifest power to break out in our midst. As long as we are content with paralytics not walking, the blind not seeing and the deaf not hearing, we will go without these miracles. The breakthrough we long for will not happen without spiritual intensity (Jer. 29:13), so in His grace the Lord is making us a people who cannot live without His full blessing! Our part is to become so ruined by the high vision of all that God would give us that we cannot live with things as they are. We must do our part and God will do His.