Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Can a Christian Starve to Death?
Scripture: Matthew 6:32
Code: BQ052813

Do not be anxious then, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "With what shall we clothe ourselves?" For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (6:31–33)

Worry is inconsistent with our faith in God and is therefore unreasonable as well as sinful. Worry is characteristic of unbelief. *Ethnoi* (**Gentiles**) literally means simply "peoples," or "a multitude." In the plural form, as here, it usually referred to non-Jews, that is, to **Gentiles** and, by extension, to unbelievers or pagans. Worrying about **what** to **eat, drink**, and **clothe** themselves with are **things the Gentiles eagerly seek**. Those who have no hope in God naturally put their hope and expectations in things they can enjoy now. They have nothing to live for but the present, and their materialism is perfectly consistent with their religion. They have no God to supply their physical or their spiritual needs, their present or their eternal needs, so anything they get they must get for themselves. They are ignorant of God's supply and have no claim on it. No heavenly Father cares for them, so there is reason to worry.

The gods of the **Gentiles** were man-made gods inspired by Satan. They were gods of fear, dread, and appeasement who demanded much, promised little, and provided nothing. It was natural that those who served such gods would **eagerly seek** whatever satisfactions and pleasures they could while they could. Their philosophy is still popular in our own day among those who are determined to grab all the gusto they can get. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" is an understandable outlook for those who have no hope in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:32).

But that is a completely foolish and unreasonable philosophy for those who *do* have hope in the resurrection, for those whose **heavenly Father knows that** [they] **need all these things**. To worry about our physical welfare and our clothing is the mark of a worldly mind, whether Christian or not. When we think like the world and crave like the world, we will worry like the world, because a mind that is not centered on God is a mind that has cause to worry. The faithful, trusting, and reasonable Christian is "anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving [lets his] requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). He refuses in any way to "be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2).

Within this series of rebukes Jesus gives a positive command coupled with a beautiful promise: **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you**. The cause of worry is seeking the things of this world, and the cause of contentment is seeking the things of God's **kingdom and His righteousness**.

De is primarily a conjunction of contrast, for which **but** is a good rendering. In the present context it carries the idea of "rather," or "instead of." "Rather than seeking and worrying about food, drink, and clothing like unbelievers do," Jesus says, "focus your attention and hopes on the things of the Lord and He will take care of all your needs."

Out of all the options that we have, out of all the things we can seek for and be occupied with, we are to **seek first** the things of the One to whom we belong. That is the Christian's priority of priorities, a divine priority composed of two parts: God's **kingdom and** God's **righteousness**.

As we have seen in the discussion of the Disciples' Prayer (6:10), *basileia* (**kingdom**) does not refer to a geographical territory but to a dominion or rule. God's kingdom is God's sovereign rule, and therefore to **seek first His kingdom** is to seek first His rule, His will and His authority.

Seeking God's **kingdom** is losing ourselves in obedience to the Lord to the extent that we can say with Paul, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). To seek first God's kingdom is to pour out our lives in the eternal work of our heavenly Father.

To seek God's kingdom is seek to win people into that kingdom, that they might be saved and God might be glorified. It is to have our heavenly Father's own truth, love, and righteousness manifest in our lives, and to have "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). We also seek God's kingdom when we yearn for the return of the King in His millennial glory to establish His kingdom on earth and usher in His eternal kingdom.

We are also to **seek … His righteousness**. Instead of longing after the things of this world, we are to hunger and thirst for the things of the world to come, which are characterized above all else by God's perfect **righteousness** and holiness. It is more than longing for something ethereal and future; it is also longing for something present and practical. We not only are to have heavenly expectations but holy lives (see Col. 3:2–3). "Since all these things [the earth and its works, v. 10] are to be destroyed in this way," Peter says, "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet. 3:11).

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