

Matthew 25:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Analysis

Then shall the righteous answer (τότε ἀποκριθήσονται οἱ δίκαιοι, tote apokrithēsontai hoi dikaioi)—The term dikaioi (righteous) doesn't indicate self-righteousness but vindication through faith. Their surprise reveals unconscious virtue; they served without calculating reward.

When saw we thee an hungred? (πότε σε εῖδομεν πεινῶντα, pote se eidomen peinōnta)—Their genuine astonishment demonstrates the authenticity of grace-wrought obedience. They didn't serve Christ-in-disguise strategically; they served need because transformation had made them servants. True righteousness is unselfconscious (Matthew 6:3-4, 'let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth').

Historical Context

The righteous's surprised response contradicts merit-theology. In Second Temple Judaism, almsgiving was often calculated for merit (though the noblest rabbis warned against this). Jesus's parable inverts expectation: the righteous don't recall their works because works flowed naturally from new hearts (Ezekiel 36:26-27). This aligns with Paul's later teaching: 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works' (Ephesians 2:10).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does the righteous's surprise teach about the relationship between faith, works, and awareness?
2. How does unconscious virtue differ from calculated good deeds done for recognition?
3. In what ways should Christians pursue righteousness without self-congratulation?

Interlinear Text

τότε ἀποκριθήσονται αὐτῷ οἱ δίκαιοι λέγοντες

Then **answer** **him** **G3588** **shall the righteous** **saying**
G5119 G611 G846 G1342 G3004

Κύριε πότε σε εἶδομεν πεινῶντα καὶ ἐθρέψαμεν ἦ

Lord **when** **thee** **saw we** **an hungry** **and** **fed** **thee or**
G2962 G4219 G4571 G1492 G3983 G2532 G5142 G2228

διψῶντα καὶ ἐποτίσαμεν

thirsty **and** **gave thee drink**
G1372 G2532 G4222

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 6:3 (Parallel theme): But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

1 Chronicles 29:14 (Parallel theme): But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Isaiah 64:6 (Righteousness): But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Proverbs 15:33 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (Parallel theme): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

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