

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 εἶδομεν 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

Psalms 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	ἢ
Lord	when	thee	saw we	an hungred	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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