

Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: A 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God

by C. D. Hildebrand, 24-7-365 Version 2026

Day 17

HUNGRY, THIRSTY, AND DESPERATE

Many Christians today are seeking to be closer to God and would describe themselves as hungry, thirsty, and even desperate for Him. They have read multiple books on prayer, know all the major prayer formulas, and practice at least one of them regularly, hoping with everything to finally reach that moment when they can sense God’s presence deeply and hear Him speak to their hearts. They are determined but never completely satisfied.

Others, when they sense that God is far away, shrug their shoulders and conclude that “this is all there is”. Sure, when they first came to Jesus, they felt so very close to Him, but now, let’s face it, they don’t often sense His presence. “So what?” they reason, “I didn’t become a Christian for goose-bumps and supernatural experiences. My life is dedicated to Jesus. No matter how I *feel*, I will keep worshipping and serving Him.” They are dedicated but mostly miserable.

We’ve taught formulas for intimacy with God. We and those we’ve taught have employed them consistently, but instead of God feeling closer, He feels far away. Some are asking God to help them understand why they feel this way. They know they aren’t perfect, but they are doing almost everything they think they are supposed to do. They know that God is near, because of what they’ve learned in the Bible, but if you ask them, they will honestly say that He doesn’t feel close at all, at least not as He did in the beginning. Or they “sense His presence” now and then, but not moment by moment. They are asking why. They can’t think of any unconfessed sin. They are in the ministry or living lives that reflect that they are believers. They want to please God with all of their heart, so why this distance? Why this unsatisfied longing? Where is the love they once knew? Where’s the joy? They are confused but still hold out hope that there is an answer to their dilemma.

An increasing number of believers have become desperate and are now taking a more questionable route in their search. In the extreme, we see people in some countries offering their bodies to be crucified, whipping themselves until they bleed, or walking on their bare hands and knees for miles to gain God’s favor. Most of us would never consider doing such a thing, though some might empathize with the motive behind their efforts. Perhaps most would not go to such extremes, but there are multiple

thousands today who are so desperate to once again experience the presence of God that they will scream at the top of their lungs, make animal noises, crawl around like animals, feign miracles to “inspire others to believe”, or receive “impartations” which cause them to behave like demoniacs. They are desperately deceived.

While I believe that every working of the Holy Spirit available to the Early Church is still ours today, much of what people think is the Holy Spirit is fakery at the very least, and I’m sad to say in some cases, this supposed “manifest presence of God” is “other” in nature. Are we to rationalize that if something gives us chills, makes us laugh uncontrollably, overpowers us, electrifies us, or appears to be a supernatural manifestation, it must be from God? We shouldn’t.

Matthew 24:23-26

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.

Certainly, the opinion about when these things will take place varies from one eschatological camp to another, but what we can conclude is that deceptive signs and wonders exist. Even more horrifying is that the *elect* of God *can* be deceived by them. Could there come a time when Christians will be “looking for Jesus” here and there? My observation is that this is already happening. Believers are traveling far distances to “be in the presence of God” or to “experience a refreshing from God” because they’ve heard His presence is in this church or that place or under a certain person’s ministry. Please consider how pitiful this is. Christians—looking for God!

It is not the purpose of this book to debate this topic of what manifestations are or are not of God. What concerns me most is *why*. Why are so many *believers*, even pastors, trying to *find* God? Why are they hungering and thirsting for Him as if they were never born again?

I remember so clearly what happened while sitting in a church we were visiting one Sunday morning several years ago. We were singing a popular song about how we were thirsting and couldn’t Jesus please come and fill us. I didn’t really think anything of it since this type of song is so common, but the thought came to me, “Never thirst.” Knowing this was a scripture, but not remembering all of the words, I asked my husband to hand me his Bible and searched his concordance. I sat stunned as I read these words.

John 6:35

*And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall **never hunger**, and he who believes in Me shall **never thirst**.*

I leaned over and pointed the verse out to my husband, and he raised his eyebrows immediately, getting the connection.

There we were, singing about being hungry and thirsty, pleading with God to fill us, but Jesus said we, those who believe in Him, would *never* hunger and *never* thirst. Something obviously was not right with the picture of a room full of believers pleading with God to take away their hunger and thirst. I started wondering what the perspective of a visitor or a child might be. Why would someone want to become a Christian if he is going to feel so desperate? Aren't believers supposed to have the life of Jesus overflowing from them? Where's the joyous contentment we advertise?

I later emailed this revelation to the worship leader of that church, thinking he would also be amazed by my discovery. Instead, I got this answer: "As a worship team, we have determined that it is important to *cultivate* a hunger and thirst for God among the people."

Before continuing, I need to ask this question. Do we do things in ministry because **we** decide it is what is best, or do we base what we do on what Scripture teaches us? If we discover we are doing something in error, we need to change, not justify ourselves based on our *opinions*.

In fact, a huge stumbling block in the church today is what I call Consensus Christianity. Instead of making the *Scriptures* our guide, we rely on the agreement between ourselves to speak as truth. Surely we can come to a consensus about truth, but when truth is *defined* by what we have agreed upon together, and it is *not* truth, we deceive ourselves by putting our opinions above the written word of God.

The norm should be that we don't hunger and thirst at all. We are supposed to be *satisfied*, walking in a daily sense of fullness. Not only are we supposed to be satisfied, but overflowing.

John 4:14

*Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will **never** thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a **fountain of water springing up** into everlasting life."*

Do you remember when we used to proclaim the good news, "Christianity isn't a religion. It's a relationship with Jesus Christ"? We remember the closeness we felt with God when we first believed in Him. We knew we were forgiven. We knew God was our Father. We knew He loved us so deeply and personally. "Those were the days, my friend. We

thought they'd never end,"¹ but gradually, almost without us realizing it, and much to our dismay, they did.

With each other's consent, we have become entirely too effective at turning our blessed relationship with God into mere religious practices. We wonder why our new converts gradually lose that joy. In fact, we've come to expect it will happen eventually, and we observe their current joy with a certain disappointed nostalgia, knowing we used to feel that way—longing to feel that way again, and we are sadly aware that this glorious joy we observe in new believers will one day fade from them as well. After all, it happened to us—most of us unaware of how or why. Not knowing what to do about it and having come to some sort of “peace” with it as to be expected, we just go on preaching the same old same old never considering that there is a *reason* this happens, and the reason is we were taught a “gospel” that leads us away from His amazing grace to “another”, and we keep passing it on.

¹ “Those Were the Days, My Friend”, Mary Hopkin