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Psalm 63 – The Satisfied Soul in the Wilderness of Life

Newton Bible Church a.m. Service (3-30-14)

Intro: I know of a man whose family is now serving the Lord overseas, and Erica and I were able to get to know him and his wife during college. They had two or three kids at the time, and we would be in their apartment occasionally, and more than once we enjoyed great food while there—his wife was an excellent cook. However, once for some reason we were discussing the food that his daughters would eat, and he said, half in exasperation, and half in a mocking tone, “My daughters are perfectly happy eating peanut butter sandwiches—why does somebody have to come along and tell them about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!”

For months now Pastor Matt has been walking us through a series on the Kings of Israel—“Who’s the Boss?” Time and again we have seen kings fail or at best succeed occasionally in leading God’s people well. However, some Israelites did practice a genuine life of faith in God. David was one such individual.

This morning, let’s open up to Psalm 63 and examine “The Satisfied Soul in the Wilderness of Life.” We face a danger today of being believers who are satisfied, at best, with peanut butter sandwiches from God’s Word—and we likewise face the danger of trying to convince the next generation to be satisfied with the same such meal. But in Psalm 63, we meet an individual who thirsted for far more than a simple nourishment from God. He craved God—desperately thirsted for Him. This psalm shows us not only how the psalmist came to desire God desperately, but it shows us how he turned that desperate need for God to deep satisfaction in God. That will be the challenge for us today...

Theme: Turn desperate need for God to deep satisfaction in God. However, I know that this very challenge means that we will need to develop at least in part how to cultivate a desperate need for God. I believe this passage gives us direction for cultivating such a thirst for knowing God. As we understand this, we will be able to see the challenge then of turning desperate need for God to deep satisfaction in God. So, our goal: to be individuals who turn desperate need for God to deep satisfaction in God.

Trans: By examining three of the psalmist’s uses of the word “soul,” we can see how he made this transition in his own life. Let’s begin with prayer before we read this psalm together. My approach to Psalm 63 this morning will be thematic in nature. We will be looking at the [give outline]...

Outline:

1. The Soul that Thirsts for God (vs. 1)
 - a. The Setting: see Hebrew heading
 - i. Highly reliable, but people differ on whether these heading are part of the original text.
 - ii. David is the given author, the text seems to support this
 - iii. Probably when he was in the wilderness fleeing Saul.
 1. Could be when he fled his son Absalom, but the place he fled to is not what is commonly understood as the Wilderness
 - b. “O God, you are my God” – strong statement of faith in God

The Soul that Thirsts for God...

The Soul that Clings to God...

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That Soul will be Satisfied in God

- c. “earnestly I seek you” – some older translations may have something like, “early will I seek you.” The understanding of Hebrew words has developed over time, and while the noun for “dawn” and the verb for “earnestly seek” are close, “earnestly seek” is the more accurate translation when it is used here as well as in other contexts
- d. “my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you”
- i. The Emphasis: “soul” is used 4x in this Psalm – vs 1, 5, 8, 9
 - ii. Reference to the whole being—meaning both the material & immaterial parts of man
 - iii. **Genesis 2:7** “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” [“being”]
 - iv. The comparison of thirsting for God to thirsting in a dry land is easy to make for the psalmist, who is likely in the wilderness at the time
- e. Brief explanation of mankind and what God created us to long for and do
- i. Such longing for God and His ways should be part of the believer’s life!
 1. **Mat 5:6** “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
 2. **Heb 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
 - ii. As living beings, God designed us to be thirsty for Him
 1. **John 7:37** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.
 2. **Rev 21:6** And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.
 3. **Rev 22:17** The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. [Jesus is the resurrection and the life]
 - iii. As living beings, God also made us in His image and likeness so that we can glorify Him. This is only possible when we know Him, personally: **2 Cor 3:18** “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Psa 27:4 “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”
- f. “as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” – desperate thirst!
- i. Why is he so thirsty for God? [we saw verses from the rest of Scripture, but what answers to this question do we see from the text?]
 1. The verbs in verse 1 should be taken as characteristic of his life (perfect verbs in 1-2)
 2. Verse 2 shows why such a God-seeker would feel like he is in a dry land...
 3. Since he has such a thirst for God, he would normally go to the sanctuary...
 4. But now he cannot go there! Thus, his thirst is heightened

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- ii. **Application:** This psalm is incredibly convicting at times. What would our greatest thirst be?
- iii. Quote: “To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too easily satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart.”
- iv. This leads us to the next question...
- g. What has created such a thirst in this soul?
(God presence, God’s character, God’s steadfast love)
 - i. God’s Presence and Character
 1. **Psalm 26:8** O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. [Psalm of David]
 2. So we return to **2 Cor 3:18** “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”
 3. Jesus Christ has given us, the church, His Spirit so that we can behold the Glory of God!
 - ii. God’s Steadfast Love
 1. “because your steadfast love is better than life...” – What better statement on the sufficiency and superiority of a life lived in pursuit of God!
 2. **Application:** God’s steadfast love is better than riches—than a fat retirement account, than my dream home, than the new car, than a mad money stash or a credit card that I always manage to pay off. God’s steadfast love is better than power—than the promotion at work, than the supervisory position I have wanted, than the seat on the board of the company, than authority over my siblings or spouse or children or fellow citizens. God’s steadfast love is better than the greatest pleasure I can experience on earth—than the richest of foods, the sweetest of drinks, the tastiest of treats, the intense joys of marriage, the deepest of love that we have for our children, the most comfortable of clothes and couches and beds, the most relaxing of vacations and the longest naps that we can take. God’s steadfast love is better than recognition—than the praise of friends, the adoration of fans, the approval of our boss, or the needs of our followers. God’s steadfast love is better than the pleasures of sin that last but a season. God’s steadfast love far exceeds even life itself—it is better than health, youth, strength, athletic ability or mental acuity. Such is God’s steadfast love! Are you a recipient of it? We could turn to Romans 8 and see that God’s faithfulness to His people endures even death. We could turn to Ecclesiastes and see that no matter how hard we look, nothing in this life will be better than God’s steadfast love. It is better than life.
Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Turn desperate need for God to deep satisfaction in God.

The Soul that Thirsts for God...
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Trans: So we have seen that David thirsts for God, and he thirsts because God has made us to thirst for Him, because he has beheld God's power and glory in the sanctuary, and because he is a recipient of God's steadfast love. But his soul does more for God than thirst, his soul also clings to God.

2. The Soul that Clings to God (vs. 8)

- a. God alone can satisfy the thirst—the psalmist sees no other option!
- b. As the psalmist clings, God holds him up
- c. Biblical Examples of “cling”
 - i. Adam and Eve: **Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and **hold fast** to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
 - ii. Ruth: **Ruth 1:14** Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth **clung** to her.
 - iii. Solomon: **1 Kings 11:1** Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon **clung** to these in love.
 - iv. **Analogy**: beware of clinging to sin. Sometimes when we bite the bait of sin, the hook only gets stuck in our lip. Beware, though. Someday, you might swallow the hook. Beware of the time when gratification results in massive internal injury. Don't cling to the wrong thing.
 - v. Jehoshaphat: **2 Kings 18:5-6** He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. ⁶ For he **held fast** to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.
- d. What does clinging look like in Psalm 63?
 - i. Praise God for what He has done (3)
 - ii. Remember Him while in bed (6)
 - iii. Meditate on Him throughout the night (6)
 - iv. Trust in Him in the midst of life's fears (9-11)
 1. The 4th use of “soul” in this text is in verse 9, but “life” is a better translation—certainly the enemies can only kill the physical life...they cannot destroy someone completely
 2. Clinging to his God meant that the psalmist trusted Him with his life
 3. **Jude 24-25** provide an amazingly similar passage to Psalm 63:8, ²⁴ “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Trans: So the psalmist has expressed his intense thirst for God, and he has chosen to cling to God. His mindset, even as he works through his thirst and desperation, produces in him a joyful, thankful soul that shows his deep satisfaction in God.

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3. That Soul will be Satisfied in God (vs. 5)

- a. Praise is the very essence of showing satisfaction, because it shows that what you have is sufficient—it makes you full, thus, “my soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food” is really a statement of fact...it is satisfied, he is praising God, he is meditating on God... [the imperfect verb can show a continuing state]
- b. Praise is the dominant theme of this psalm!
 - i. “My lips will praise you” (3)
 - ii. “I will bless you as long as I live” (4)
 - iii. “In your name I will lift up my hands” (4)
 - iv. “My mouth will praise you with joyful lips” (5)
 - v. “In the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy” (7)
 - vi. “The king shall rejoice in God” (11)
 - vii. “All who swear by Him shall exult” (11)
[the following two are on a separate slide for clarification]
 - viii. “In your name I will lift up my hands” (4)
 - 1. Another way of stating that he was praying
 - 2. **Psa 28:2**, “Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.”
 - 3. Lifting up hands might be compared to our teaching children to hold hands
 - ix. “All who swear by Him shall exult” (11)
 - 1. As in, swear an oath of allegiance or promise
- c. Therefore, we can conclude that the psalmist had a “full soul” as he concluded this psalm
- d. **Application:** The Christian life should be one of continual praise to God—we always have reason to praise God, and contentment is not possible without a heart of praise to Him. So...
 - i. Does your singing reflect your satisfaction in God?
 - ii. Does your demeanor show your contentment in Him?
 - iii. We behold Him
 - iv. We develop a thirst for Him
 - v. We cling to Him even when life is altered
 - vi. We praise Him
 - vii. Or, we stay with our peanut butter sandwiches. We eat just enough to get by. We try to take delight in dry bread and sticky peanut butter. We try to make a feast of it at times...even claiming to others that nothing is better, even while we ourselves don’t believe what we are saying. Who wants a peanut butter sandwich in a dry wilderness?
 - viii. Many within our churches, and possibly some here today, have little idea about what thirsting for God and clinging to God look like. Therefore, they have little idea about what feasting upon God looks like.

Restate Outline then theme

Turn desperate need for God to deep satisfaction in God.

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