

A Soul Satisfied In The Lord

Psalm 63

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Introduction: 1) Humans have been described as “aqua bodies.” Such a description is not without justification. Consider the following:

- The human body is 65-70% water.
- We can live without food for up to a month, but we can live only about 3 days without water.
- If we lose more than 8% of our body’s water, we will die.
- Adults should drink 8 glasses of water a day.

Children need at least 4 cups of water a day to maintain healthy bodies.

- Over a month, you need at least 7 gallons of fresh, clean water to drink.
- Water is used in almost every bodily function: digestion, blood circulation, softening of skin, and physical growth.

* Yes, we are “aqua bodies.” Without water we will die, so we thirst for it when we need it.

2) Human beings are also “spiritual bodies.” Without God, we will also die, dry up, waste away. We need Him, and the healthy soul “will thirst for Him.” Indeed the pangs of “soul-thirst” should be far greater than the pangs of physical thirst. Such a thirst can only be quenched when we thirst for God and are satisfied with Him in our souls.

3) Psalm 63 is a psalm of personal lament, penned when David “was in the wilderness of Judah” (superscription). Because of the reference to his being king in vs. 11, it is

probable that he was on the run in exile during the rebellion of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15-19).

4) Because of the KJV translation of the word “early” in v. 1, Psalm 63 has been called a “morning psalm.”

- This psalm is something of a climax of a trio of psalms (Pss. 61-63).
- The theme of “life” runs through the veins of this psalm.
- James Boice said it is “almost a love song for God” (p. 517), and J. J. Stewart Perowne said, “this is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching psalms in the whole Psalter” (Boice, 517).

5) David thirsts for God, longs for God, looks for God. David knows: his soul, any soul, can only truly be satisfied in the Lord God who as Augustine said, “made us for Himself.” John Steinbeck said, “A sad soul will kill you quicker, far quicker, than a germ” (*Men’s Health*).

Transition: 4 movements and avenues of instruction in this psalm guide us to the place of complete satisfaction in our God, to the place where not a single sad soul is found.

I. Seek the Lord with all your heart. 63:1-2

David had an appetite for God. He also had the ability to hear God and see God in any and every circumstance. He is in a dry, barren, waterless wilderness. The thirst in his mouth for water prompts him to thirst in his soul for God, and to do so with passion.

1) Seek the Lord earnestly. 61:1

- David begins with an emphatic declaration of his covenantal relationship with God. Lit. “O God, my God, you [are].”
- The name for God, “*Elohim*,” dominates Pss. 42-83, causing this section of Psalms to be called the “Elohistic Psalter.” The repetition of the word God in this verse is virtually equivalent to the covenant name for God, *Yahweh* or Jehovah.
- Of this God David says, I will seek you “early” (*NKJV*), earnestly (*NIV*, *NASV*, *ESV*). Though earnestly may be the better option, there is no need to divide the ideas. Those who seek God earnestly will seek Him early. Eagerly they will search and seek out the Lord as they start each day. They dare not walk out of their bedroom without an awareness of his presence.

2) Seek the Lord when thirsty. 63:1

David’s appetite for God is expressed by the image of a parched body needing life-giving, life-refreshing water!

- My soul (*nephesh*) thirst for “You” (there are 18 personal pronouns for God in vs. 1-8).
- My flesh (*basar*), my body (*NIV*) longs (*NASV*, “yearns”; *ESV*, “faints”) for You. And where? In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- David’s soul could only be satisfied by the One who said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me (Jesus), as the Scripture has said, “out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38).

3) Seek the Lord in the sanctuary. 61:2

- David had a vision of his God similar to that of Isaiah (cf. Is. 6:1-3). The *NIV* captures the essence of v. 2 best when it says, “I have seen you in the sanctuary (lit. “holy place”) and beheld your power (*oz*) and your glory” (*kabod*).
- David did not long or desire the things of God. He wanted God. He will not violate the first commandment while being tested in the wilderness, and neither will the greater David, the Lord Jesus, when He is tempted by the evil one to value the things God can give more than God Himself (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).
- David recalls a glorious vision of the Lord at the tabernacle, the holy place, and with resolute soul shouts for all to hear, I want to see You, Your power, Your glory, Your majesty, Your greatness. “God is not the prisoner of His sanctuary” (Kidner, 225). The same God, His God, that He fellowshiped with in the place of worship, may be found and enjoyed in the wilderness as well! What a wonderful and amazing truth.

II. Praise the Lord with all your voice. 63:3-5

David wanted God more than life, and He told Him and showed Him with passionate praise and worship.

1) Praise Him with joyful lips. 63:3, 5

- Affirmation: “Your lovingkindness (*hesed*) is better than life.”
Response: “My lips shall praise You.” (v. 3)
- Affirmation: “My soul (*nephesh*) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness” (fat & abundance), (*NIV*, “richest of foods”).

Response: “my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.”

- David voiced to God his all-consuming passion for Him and only Him. God is better than life. God alone can satisfy. I like what John Piper says at this point:

David wanted God more than he wanted life. And if you want God more than you want life, then you want God more than you want all the joys of this life – family, health, food, friendship, sexual relations, job-satisfaction, productivity, books, skateboards, computers, music, homes, sunsets, fall colors. When David says that the love of God is better than life and therefore better than all the beauty that life means, he is not denying that all these good things come from the love of God. He is warning us rather that if our hearts settle (even gratefully!) on the beauty of the gift and do not yearn for the infinitely greater beauty of the Giver, then we are idolaters and not worshippers of God.

I wonder whether this is why we cannot do without the wilderness experiences of life. If all of life were a paradise, as so many people think it should be and as so many try to make it, then would we not much more often become addicted to savoring the gifts of God rather than God. Surely that is why Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And surely that is why he takes his loved one again and again through the desert fires. He would

disenchant us with the world and give us a taste for eternity.”

(9-13-87).

2) **Praise Him with joyful hands.** **63:4**

David uses not only his mouth to praise God, he also uses his body, and in particular his hands. Many believers debate the merit of raising hands to God in worship. Some, even myself, are not completely comfortable with the practice. However, let us not fall into the error of denying that it is biblical. The Scriptural witness is far too abundant.

“So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name *I will lift up my hands*” (Psalm 63:4).

“To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. 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*” (Psalm 28:1).

“Every day I call upon you, O LORD; *I spread out my hands to you*” (Psalm 88:9).

“*I will lift up my hands* toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes” (Psalm 119:48).

“*Lift up your hands* to the holy place and bless the LORD!” (Psalm 134:2).

“O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and *the lifting up of my hands* as the evening sacrifice!” (Psalm 141:1-2).

“*I stretched out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land*” (Psalm 143:6).

“Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and *spread out his hands*. Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it on the court, and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and *spread out his hands toward heaven*” (2 Chronicles 6:12-13).

“And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and *fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my god*” (Ezra 9:5).

“And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, ‘*Amen, Amen,*’ *lifting up their hands*. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground” (Nehemiah 8:6).

“*Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven*” (Lamentations 3:41).

“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, *lifting holy hands* without anger or quarreling” (1 Timothy 2:8).

Sam Storms captures something of the power of our hands to communicate when he says,

“Our hands speak loudly. When angry, we clench our fists, threatening harm to others. When guilty, we hide our hands or hold incriminating evidence from view. When uneasy, we sit on them to obscure our inner selves. When worried, we wring them. When afraid, we use them to cover our face or hold tightly to someone for protection. When desperate or frustrated, we throw them wildly in the air, perhaps also in resignation or dismay. When confused, we extend them in bewilderment, as if asking for advice and direction. When hospitable, we use them to warmly receive

those in our presence. When suspicious, we use them to keep someone at bay, or perhaps point an accusing finger in their direction.”

He then proceeds to give us 6 reasons for why it is appropriate, from a sincere heart, to worship our Lord with uplifted hands.

1. Because like one who *surrenders* to a higher authority, I yield to God’s will and ways and submit to his guidance and power and purpose in my life. It is my way of saying, “God, I am yours to do with as you please.”
2. Because like one who expresses utter *vulnerability*, I say to the Lord: “I have nothing to hide. I come to you open handed, concealing nothing. My life is yours to search and sanctify. I’m holding nothing back. My heart, soul, spirit, body and will are an open book to you.”
3. Because like one who needs help, I confess my utter *dependency* on God for everything. I cry out: “O God, I entrust my life to you. If you don’t take hold and uplift me, I will surely sink into the abyss of sin and death. I rely on your strength alone. Preserve me. Sustain me. Deliver me.”
4. Because like one who happily and expectantly *receives* a gift from another, I declare to the Lord: “Father, I gratefully embrace all you want to give. I’m a spiritual beggar. I have nothing to offer other than my need of all that you are for me in Jesus. So glorify yourself by satisfying me wholly with you alone.”
5. Because like one who aspires to direct *attention* away from self to the Savior, I say: “O God, yours is the glory; yours is the power; yours is the majesty alone!”
6. Because as the *beloved* of God, I say tenderly and intimately to the Love of my soul: “Abba, hold me. Protect me. Reveal your heart to me. I am yours! You

are mind! Draw near and enable me to know and feel the affection in your heart for this one sinful soul.”

Yes, we may praise Him with joyful hands.

III. Meditate on the Lord with all your mind. 63:6-8

- In the *Shema*, the heart of the Hebrew faith, God’s children are admonished to “love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4).
- Jesus develops what Moses was saying when in Matt. 22:37 He says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (emp. mine).
- The life of the mind is crucial to the health of the believer’s life. We never honor God with careless or sloppy thinking. A soul satisfied in God will possess a mind saturated in God as well. 2 things in particular are highlighted by David that we must know about our God.

1) Know that He is your helper. 63:6-7

- David remembers the Lord’s lovingkindness (v. 3) as he lies down to sleep. The Lord is the first thing he wants to think about in the morning (v. 1) and the last thing he wants to think about in the evening before going to sleep.
- Recalling God’s goodness and graciousness in his life, David meditates on God “in the night watches.” Throughout the night is the idea. As the hours pass and I drift in and out of sleep, I think about You, I remember You, I meditate on You.
- Why? “Because you have been my help.” You have protected me from Goliath, Saul and Absalom. You have provided for me in the battle, the cave and the

wilderness. Therefore, “in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.” In the cool shadow and protective shelter of your mighty wing, I will rejoice (NASV, “I will sing for joy”).

2) Know that He is your protector. 63:8

- The theme of God’s protection finds further development in v. 8. Because there is protection and safety in the shadow of God’s wings, David says, “My soul follows close behind you,” literally, “Is cleaved my soul after you.” Cleave or “clings” (NASV; ESV) is a word used of the joining of a husband and wife in marriage, or even a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law as in the case of Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:14). The idea is simple: David will not let go of God no matter what!
- Why? Because “Your right hand upholds me.” I can cling and cleave to You in confidence because it is you who is holding me. I cling to you as you hold me!
- Jesus said in John 10:27-29, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”

IV. Trust the Lord with all your hopes. 63:9-11

- In this final movement of Psalm 63, David expresses his confidence both in what God would do to his enemies (vs. 9-10) and what God would do for him. Those who seek his life will lose theirs (even tragically his son Absalom; 2 Sam. 18:14-15). Those who slander him will be silenced (v. 11). In contrast, he will rejoice again in God (vs. 3, 5-7), and all who swear by God’s Name will join him in praise of the God who protects and delivers His people, especially His King.

Transition: This God can be trusted now and forever, He should be praised now and forever. In particular, David focuses on 2 important truths all of us need to embrace.

1) Release your enemies to God. 63:9-10

- Those who seek to destroy David will themselves be destroyed, they will themselves find their end in a grave.
- Those who pursued David with the sword, shall themselves feel the steel of the blade and meet their end.
- Sadly, their end is to be food for jackals, the wild scavengers of the desert. They drove David into the desert only to find their destiny in that horrible and barren place.
- Destroyed, slain and consumed, vs. 11 puts a final exclamation mark on their tombstone: “the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.”
- Proverbs 6:16-17 reminds us that one of the things God hates and calls an abomination is, “a lying tongue.”

2) Rejoice in your deliverance by God. 63:11

- In stark contrast to those who lie with their tongue, David and those like him, who are satisfied in the Lord, honor God with theirs.
- The king will rejoice in God, he will tell the world he is satisfied in His God.
- Further, all who swear by Him, who pledge their trust and allegiance to God, they shall glory (Heb. *halal*, “praise, celebrate, boast”).
- The mouth of God’s enemies will be stopped, but the mouth of God’s servants will shout and sing forever, never to be silenced throughout all eternity.

Conclusion: Release in May 1965, it shot to #1 on the pop charts and remained there for 4 weeks. Rolling Stones Magazine ranks it as #2 on its 500 Greatest Songs of All Times. VH1 rated it in the #1 Rock and Roll Song of All Time. Written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, it rocketed the Rolling Stones to international prominence. The song: (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction." Repeated throughout what is actually rather poor and unimpressive lyrics is the refrain, "Cause I try and I try and I try and I try." Mick and Keith got that right. Try and find soul satisfaction on your own and you are destined to be disappointed. But, thirst after God with all that you are, and you will find refreshment and rejoicing that will overflow your soul today and forever. John Piper is right: "The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. We were made for this" (*Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, p. 20).