

## "How to Lust Like a Christian" Psalm 63

### Introduction

- Over Labor Day weekend, when my parents and sister were visiting, we went to see Romeo and Juliet at *The American Players Theater*. It had been a while since I'd seen or read Shakespeare's tragedy and as the play progressed I was repeatedly struck by Romeo's intense desire for Juliet. Call it lust, call it young impetuous love, call it passion, call it what you will. On the spectrum of emotions Romeo's desire for Juliet is about as intense as it gets.
- One of my favorite scenes comes from Act 3, Scene 3 which follows Romeo's murder of Juliet's cousin Tybalt. Seeking asylum, Romeo has holed up in the Friar's quarters. The prince has sentenced Romeo and Friar Laurence has just returned bearing the news of the sentence. Romeo hears for the first time that instead of the death sentence he has been forever banished from Verona and consequently from Juliet's presence. His reaction to the sentence is so strong, his desire for Juliet so effusive, and his emotional convulsions so powerful, the scene is almost comical. In his monologue, Romeo enviously compares himself to the privileged houseflies of Verona that land on Juliet while he suffers banishment at a distance.

'T is torture, [Romeo says] and not mercy; heaven is here,  
Where Juliet lives, and every cat and dog  
And little mouse, every unworthy thing,  
Live here in heaven and may look on her,  
But Romeo may not. More validity,  
More honourable state, more courtship lives  
In carrion-flies than Romeo. They may seize  
On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand  
And steal immortal blessing from her lips,  
Who, even in pure and vestal modesty,  
Still blush, as thinking their own kisses sin;  
But Romeo may not, he is banished.  
This may flies do, when I from this must fly;  
They are free men, but I am banished.  
And say'st thou yet that exile is not death?  
Hadst thou no poison mix'd, no sharp-ground knife,  
No sudden mean of death, though ne'er so mean,  
But 'banished' to kill?—Banished!  
O friar, the damned use that word in hell,  
Howling attends it; how hast thou the heart,  
Being a divine, a ghostly confessor,  
A sin-absolver, and my friend profess'd,  
To mangle me with that word 'banished'?

- Like Romeo, we too are creatures of appetite. We are wired to desire. Our desire may not be for another person but we covet, we crave, we lust after, we constantly and continually, daily

find ourselves needing, wanting, desiring food, drink, sex, happiness, material possessions, the perfect family, comfort, sleep, power, security—you name it. Add to this internal wiring the fact that we are constantly bombarded by ingenious commercials that stimulate all and every kind of desire. And without realizing it, I think most of us go through our days dominated by our by our appetites. And the irony of it all is that, as Ecclesiastes 6:7 says, *All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied*. None of these things ever satiate. Those ravenous feelings of hunger—for whatever—always return.

- This morning I want to focus on the most neglected desire we have. Our desire for God. And I want to say to you as clearly and as forcefully as I possibly can...

### Proposition

- **The strongest desire in life should be our appetite for God**
- As we have done for several weeks already, this morning we continue our series through the Psalms called *The Songs of Life*. The Psalms teach us how to emote, how to feel emotion in a god-glorifying way. The psalm we are going to look at this morning, Psalm 63, is a psalm about **desire**. And the message of Psalm 63 is that our appetite for God must be the strongest of all our appetites. How do you lust like a Christian—lust not in the sexual sense but lust in terms of intense desire? How do you lust like a Christian? You lust after God.
- Every day this week I made it a point to note my appetites throughout the day. What did I truly desire? First of all I was shocked at how I was unconsciously ruled by my appetites. But even more shocking was that, more often than not, my desire for God, my longing for God, was weaker than my longing for the thing I desired. I kept asking myself over and over and over which do I really desire more, this thing, this physical sensation, this experience, this emotion, this person—or God? And it was painfully obvious that I have not cultivated my desire for God in such a way that my desire for him trumped those other desires. Instead, I found I too quickly feed my growling appetites.
- And I know I'm not alone. "From the beginning, people have failed to seek satisfaction in the right place; they have sought to satisfy spiritual hunger and thirst with literal food, sex, knowledge, wealth or political power of one kind or another. Spiritual appetite has one ultimate and proper object, God himself."<sup>1</sup> We all try to wring satisfaction out of things that weren't meant to satisfy. We're guilty of the sins that God railed against through his prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 2:13 *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.* That's me. That's you. We suck on broken cisterns that yield only disease when God offers living water.<sup>2</sup> Just a few verses later, God says that Israel is like an animal in heat. What a graphic picture. She has this uncontrollable desire for everything but God. *Face the awful sins you have done. You are like a restless female camel, desperate for a male! You are like a wild donkey, sniffing the wind at mating time. Who can restrain your lust?*<sup>3</sup> And I ask you, is this not us? Is this not the primrose path our culture frolics down? And like the rest of the world, we travel the yellow brick road toward our desires like animals in heat *sniffing the wind at mating time*. Uncontrollable. Senseless. If we want it, we eat it, we buy it, we think it, we watch it, we listen to it, we say it, we indulge in it, we do it. And as we

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<sup>1</sup> DBI, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *Let Your Passion Be Single*, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 2:23-24

surrender ourselves to our appetites, our desire for God shrinks. Uncontrolled appetites for things other than God hinder spiritual growth. Like sickly kids who've feasted on saltines and soda, we've lost our appetite for the real meat of God himself. **The strongest desire in life should be our appetite for God.**

### Transition

Let's look at the way it should be. This is how to lust like a Christian. Look at the first five verses of Psalm 63.

### Main Points

- Listen to David's gushing. Verse 1. *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. 5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.* Who does David earnestly seek? Who does his parched soul thirst for? Who does his body long for? Who is better than life itself? Who is David's desire? Who does he lust after? God. **The strongest desire in life should be our appetite for God.** Speaking from experience, David has tasted and seen that the Lord is good. *I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and glory.* In the words of one commentator, "A thirst crazed traveler may be cheated by a mirage, but the psalmist's God is no mirage. This is the God he has encountered in the sanctuary. In worship he has come face to face with the power and glory of God."<sup>4</sup> And God has satisfied his desire. Verse 5. *My soul will be satisfied.*
- Do you remember the Tom Hanks movie *Cast Away*? *Cast Away* tells the story of Chuck Noland a top engineer for FedEx. While flying over the South Pacific, a violent storm damages the company jet causing it to slam into the ocean. Noland survives the crash, but everyone else onboard is killed. Clinging to a yellow life raft, he rides out the raging storm and washes up on a small deserted island. For the next four years he struggles to survive before escaping the island and returning to civilization. The day after Noland first sets foot on the island, the only concern greater than his fear is his desperate need for water. He is dangerously thirsty.<sup>5</sup> Watch what happens.
- Are you dangerously thirsty for God? How intense is your thirst for God? Is He your greatest desire? Do you long for Him like Hanks did the milk from that coconut? Do you even have a thirst for Him? [John Piper](#) has said and I agree that, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." He says, and I'm paraphrasing, "God gets no glory from people who don't enjoy God." If God is not great enough in your life [if your desire for him is not such] that he is more enjoyable than the meal you eat or the sex you have or the phone you buy or the football game you watch or the family you raise or the spouse you love or the trip you take or the deer you hunt then you blaspheme in what you do. "If he is not more precious to you [so] that you have taste buds that enable you to delight more in God than this fellowship, [your house], your health, your family, you don't know God. God is not just to

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<sup>4</sup> Davidson, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> *Cast Away* (Twentieth Century Fox, 2000); written by William Broyles Jr., directed by Robert Zemeckis. Content: Rated PG-13 for intense action sequences. Elapsed Time: 00:40:02 to 00:42:20 (DVD chapter 11).

be known with the mind. He is to be delighted in. Savored. He is to be seen and savored."<sup>6</sup> Psalm 34:8 *Taste and see that the LORD is good. Are you thirsty for him? "The cost of food in the kingdom [of God] is hunger for the bread of heaven, instead of the white bread of the world. Do you want it? Are you hungry? [Are you thirsty?] Or are you satisfied with yourself and your television and your computer and your job and your family?"<sup>7</sup> Our absolute strongest desire in life should be our appetite for God.*

- All he asks is that we come. Come taste Christ, the bread of life. Come drink Christ, the spring of living water. Don't settle for digging your own cistern and drinking from a cesspool that will not satisfy. God's unfailing love for us through Christ is so great; there is no other experience this life has to offer that satisfies like God. Again, that's why David can say, *My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods*. Experiencing God is such a satisfying endeavor it's like feeding on the richest, fattest, choicest morsel of food. What's interesting is that those words *richest of foods* are literally the *fat of the ashes*. David's referring to an animal sacrifice in verse 5. In the Old Testament, when animal sacrifices were offered to God, God reserved the fat, the choicest, most flavorful part of the animal for himself. Leviticus 3:16 *The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD's*. Basically what David is saying in this verse is that feasting on God is like feasting on "sacrificial god-like food."—he's the *crème de la crème*. There is nothing better.<sup>8</sup>

### Transition

I want to transition now to verses 6-11. The big idea of these verses is still the same. But in these verses David expresses the consequences of his desire.

- Listen again to [verses 6-11](#). *On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. 7 Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. 8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. 9 They who seek my life will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. 10 They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. 11 But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God's name will praise him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.* At the end of the day, after the busyness has died down, after all responsibilities have been taken care of, after the people and conversations of the day drift dreamily away, when the pillow calls and sleep is heavy, one thought remains—the thought of God. David can't stop thinking about God. *On my bed I remember you* or as another translation puts it *I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night*.<sup>9</sup>
- And as he ruminates he is overwhelmed with feelings of protection and safety. In other words, when God is your greatest desire, when your appetite for him is above all other appetites, the result is security, peace, protection, safety. Like a baby bird under the shadow of its mother's wing David is completely at ease. *Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings*. He clings to God and God clings to him. Nothing can touch him. *My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me*. He cannot be shaken.

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<sup>6</sup> John Piper, *Let Your Passion Be Single*, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> John Piper, author and pastor, from sermon "The Present Power of a Future Possession," preached at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN.

<sup>8</sup> Tate, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> New Living Translation

- Unfortunately, the same can't be said of those who are ruled by their appetites for things other than God. *They who seek my life will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. 10 They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals.* There is no peace, there is no security, there is no hope, there is no future, there is no life.

## Conclusion

- One of the most beloved characters of C.S. Lewis' *the Chronicles of Narnia* is the warrior mouse Reepicheep. Reepicheep is always the first into battle, the most courageous in any given situation, and although he's diminutive in size he's always talking, always cheeping in his shrill mouse voice about what is honorable and glorious and noble. His hearts desire is to sail to the Eastern Islands, beyond the Silver Sea, toward Aslan's country beyond the End of the World. And in the end, he makes it—his deepest longings are fulfilled. He finally reaps what he's always chattering and cheeping about. He sought glory. He received glory. He pursued honor and nobility and he became honored and noble. He desired immortality. He received immortality. His story is in some sense a parable of Psalm 63.
- Ultimately, we achieve what we desire. If our strongest desire in this life is an appetite for God, he's what we will receive. If it's something less permanent, less glorious, less honorable then that is what we will reap. Romans 2:7-8 *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.* In the words of [Jonathan Edwards](#), that great pastor theologian and leader of the First Great Awakening, "Reason plainly shows that those things which...men...actually cleave to and prefer in their practice, when left to follow their own choice and inclinations, are...what they do really prefer in their hearts."<sup>10</sup> What do you prefer in your heart of hearts? Are you thirsting for God? Is your desire for him above all else? Are you lusting after him? It is a matter of eternal life or eternal damnation that you and I do everything we can to cultivate a hunger and thirst, an insatiable appetite, for God through Jesus Christ. If this is your desire, if he is your desire, then silently pray along with me.
- "O God, I have tasted your goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need for further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want you; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me your glory, I pray, that I may know you indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then give me grace to rise and follow you up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus' name."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, Stout and Minkema, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, p. 169.

<sup>11</sup> Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 20.