

Satisfaction 8-6-06

One of the characteristics of a redeemed child of God is the daily examination of their own heart. (Psalm 139:23-24) Having been redeemed and given the gift of a heart that desires to do God's will, we often find ourselves falling into old routines or yielding to our old nature that was to have died with Christ and been buried with Him. As we look at our shortcomings, we begin to realize how deceptive our old hearts can be. (Jeremiah 17:9) Because of that treachery we find within us, we form the habit of regularly checking our heart to see if we are justifying some kind of sin. (Genesis 3:12-13)

If you have not yet found new life in Christ, you may not be able to relate to that experience, but stick with me; you will be able to relate to where I am going with this. In checking my own heart, and hearing the struggles of other believers in Jesus, I've seen a common temptation that threatens to pull us off track and away from path we have chosen for our lives.

This temptation, simply stated, is a desire to find satisfaction in something other than Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"For we are not unaware of his schemes."* 2 Corinthians 2:11b (NIV) He was writing about the importance of forgiving others, but it applies to all of the Enemy's schemes. He repeats the tactics that work. One of his most common tools, especially for us in this country and this time, is the temptation to find satisfaction in something other than Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3) He uses this on us before we come to Christ and after we find Him as our Redeemer.

It is important for me to define my terms so that you will understand what I am sharing with you this morning. By the term, "satisfaction", I am not referring to mere enjoyment. God's word tells us He wants us to enjoy things. ¹⁷ *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* 1 Timothy 6:17 (NIV) God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. What an awesome God!

Sometimes the Scriptures use the term "satisfaction" in regards to temporal things like food. But it also uses it in eternal sense. ¹⁵ *And I--in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness.* Psalms 17:15 (NIV) The Psalmist was saying that someday he would be raised from death and be fully satisfied in seeing the Lord. That is the eternal spiritual sense of the word.

I was hiking with some Christian friends and family and looking at a wall of petroglyphs not too long ago. It was a gorgeous setting. The conversation turned to the thought in that verse. We were talking about the abundance of things to enjoy in life and how God seems to have filled the world with things that are enjoyable. That is the "richly" in that verse. Creation is fascinating. People are fascinating.

Commented [notes1]: 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
Jer 17:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."
13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."
Gen 3:12-13 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.
2 Cor 11:3 (NIV)

There is so much to see and enjoy. If you lose interest in one thing, there are a million other things to enjoy. During the nine days of my vacation, I was continually marveling at the diversity in creation.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying creation. I think God is pleased when we enjoy what He created. Don't feel guilty about taking time to enjoy things, the beauty all around us. When you enjoy creation, do it as form of worship. It is part of what the Sabbath Day rest was about, taking time to enjoy all that was created. Thank God for all that He has made. Thank Him for the beauty you see. The enjoyment you experience will become a part of obeying the first command of loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. (Mark 12:30)

What is the difference then between enjoying creation and seeking satisfaction in the creation? Sometimes we so look forward to an experience that we think will fill up the emptiness in our heart. Some spouses think their mate is going to meet their every need and expectation. That is a recipe for an unhappy home. Some nature enthusiasts think the next trip into the wilderness will be the best, the most fulfilling, the most rewarding. That is a recipe for disappointment. And some who love making money think that the next big deal will really put them over the top. That is recipe for bankruptcy.

In all those situations and a million more, in any one thing that you set your heart upon to bring you satisfaction, I can guarantee you will walk away with the need unmet. (Colossians 3:1) You may enjoy the experience, whether good or evil. You may walk away with a momentary sense of satisfaction. It is a temporal mirage. As Augustine wrote, "He (God) has made us for Himself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

I think that is the satisfaction that many talk about and long for. The Rolling Stones sang a song about their inability to find satisfaction. The lyrics tell about how they try and try and try but can't get no satisfaction. There is not much to the song, but it struck a chord with the wealthy western world.

I really enjoy scuba diving. It is my place of relaxation and enjoying the diversity and wonder of creation. But sometimes the Enemy of my soul sneaks in with the idea that if I go on a diving trip, all my frustrations and longings will be met. Now, if I clarify it in words like that, it becomes obviously ridiculous, but I usually never clarify that feeling. It is a vague idea that captures our hearts and starts to dominate our thinking. That's when I become dissatisfied with daily life. When I finally get to experience what I was longing for, my expectations were so high, no matter how good the trip, I am bound to end up feeling it wasn't quite enough. It can't be. It was never meant to be anything but simple enjoyment. No mere experience can fill the heart of man. (Psalm 73:25-26)

I know that I am not alone in this, because I have seen it in so many others. What is it that the Enemy of your soul tries to seduce you into thinking will satisfy you? It

Commented [notes5]: 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'[Mark 12:30 (NIV)]

Commented [notes6]: 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Col 3:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalms 73:25-26 (NIV)

may be something evil and destructive. It may be something perfectly benign or even good. It could even be something like coming to church on Sunday morning.

The subtle twist that turns it into a scheme of the Enemy is when we see that thing or experience as the need of our heart. Your heart has one enormous need. You will always face the seduction of things or experiences unless that need is met in Christ. A few weeks ago we came across that wonderful expression from Hebrews 7:26a. Referring to Jesus, the author wrote, "*Such a high priest meets our need!*" He created in us an emptiness that can only be filled by His presence. You may not realize that you have often tried to fill it with other things, whether drugs and alcohol, or a spouse and good works. Nothing in creation will satisfy because that hole was made in the shape of the Creator.

I think this is one of the greatest reasons for divorce in our culture. We expect that person we marry fill that void. When they don't, and no one could, we go on to the next person, and the next, and the next, until we finally realize we better compromise our goal or we are going to be alone. One of my favorite lines in a wedding sermon is this. "Unless we drink deeply from the well that truly satisfies, we will never be content with our spouse." You see, if we drink from the limited well that they have, we may find enjoyment, for a time, but we will soon desire more than they can give. Jesus is the well that never runs dry. His is the water that satisfies the soul. (John 4:13-14) You can go back time and time again and drink your fill in an increasingly satisfying way. Then you can enjoy your spouse because you are not trying to have your need met in him or her. You're not trying to fill your Grand Canyon with teaspoons of dirt.

Some would say that it is not about you or me being satisfied. They would say that all this talk about being satisfied is self-centered thinking and that we should be focused on pleasing Christ. Christ is pleased when your satisfaction is found in Him. Was Jesus satisfied in His relationship with the Father? John Piper's famous quote is true, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

The Bible also calls us children of the Father. (John 1:12) We are satisfied in Him, not because we are selfishly trying to get something for ourselves, but because that is the size of the hole He put in our heart. That is a part of your design. We can ignore that, try to fill it with any number of other things, and squelch it so long that we become numb to it. It's still there. It's there because He wants us to come to Him. It's there to cause us to reach out for Him.

C.S. Lewis wrote about the soul's delight with the Lord in the Old Testament in his book *Reflections on the Psalms*.

These poets knew far less reason than we for loving God... Yet they express a longing for Him, for His mere presence, which comes only to the best Christians or to Christians in their best moments. They long to live all their days in the Temple so that they may constantly see "the fair beauty of the Lord" (27:4). Their longing to go up to Jerusalem and "appear before the presence of God" is like a physi-

Commented [notes8]: 13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
John 4:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--
John 1:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: 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 seek him in his temple.
Psalms 27:4 (NIV)

cal thirst (42:1). From Jerusalem His presence flashed out "in perfect beauty" (50:2). Lacking the encounter with Him, their souls are parched like a waterless countryside (63:2). They crave to be "satisfied with the pleasures" of His house (65:4). Only there can they be at ease, like a bird in a nest (84:3). One day of those "pleasures" is better than a lifetime spent elsewhere (84:10).

Do you hear the passion in those words? It is a passion of people who know that satisfaction only comes from a relationship with the Lord. He alone is complete and full satisfaction. It is amazing to consider their longing when they knew so little of Him. We have the more complete revelation in Jesus, and yet we have so little of their desire.

Lewis wrote that it came only "to the best Christians or to Christians in their best moments." Those are those moments when we are seeking Him with our all, loving Him with our all. They are moments when we let go of trying to fill the void in us with things and conditions. They are moments when we know He is the only One that can meet the need in us. They are moments when we fix our heart on what is eternal.

So many have tried religion and come away with a soul that is still empty. Religion will not fill the void. Ritual and rule are just another teaspoon of sand poured meaninglessly into that Grand Canyon cavern of our heart. It is only in a relationship, a wholehearted seeking, an all out chase to the end that we find Him to be all that He claims to be and more. That is why the Great Command requires all. The totality of your heart, the totality of your mind, the totality of your soul, the totality of your strength are required. (Matthew 22:37) Any thing short of "all" shows a disregard for the enormity of what you are seeking.

There is a fine line between enjoying the gifts of God and seeking to be filled and satisfied with them. That line is a line we call worship. When the thing itself is seen as the answer to your hunger, you are worshipping the thing. The Apostle Paul warned us that to worship and serve created things is to exchange the truth of God for a lie. (Romans 1:25) The truth is that God alone is worthy of worship. He alone can meet our need. He alone is the giver of all good things. (James 1:17) The lie is that something apart from Him is good, that the thing itself is all you really need. When we accept that lie, we hunger and thirst for the thing instead of God. ⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.* Matthew 5:6 (NIV) We want to be filled, but we must desire the right thing to be filled with.

As we begin to recognize this pattern in our life, a pattern of slipping from enjoyment to the worship of things, we must take hold of our thought life and break out of our old patterns and habits. (2 Corinthians 10:5) As new creations in Christ, we must recognize what is happening and take a stand to correct it by the grace of God. If we truly realize it as a scheme of the Enemy of our soul, we will earnestly seek after God for true satisfaction. We will turn from that attitude of the heart that

Commented [notes11]: 1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. Psalms 42:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 2 From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Psalms 50:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Psalms 63:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 4 Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. Psalms 65:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Psalms 84:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. Psalms 84:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' Matt 22:37 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen. Romans 1:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:5 (NIV)

would see the thing or condition as fulfilling and turn to the LORD with our whole attention. Fasting is one of the disciplines that can help you do that. Reading God's word with our whole attention and prayer are also helpful disciplines to break out of those old patterns. (Psalm 119:9) Sometimes they sneak back into your life and you must grab hold of them and return them to the cross where they belong or the grave where they were buried.

Commented [notes21]: 9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. Psalms 119:9 (NIV)

If you are not in the habit of regularly checking your heart, I'd encourage you to begin right now. What are you looking to satisfy the longings of your heart? Is it anything other than the Lord Jesus Himself? Can you see why seeking satisfaction in anything else would be an insult to the Creator who made you to be satisfied in Him? The Bible calls those other things idols or false gods. It doesn't matter what it is, it is taking the place of the one true God. (Matthew 4:10)

Commented [notes22]: 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' " Matt 4:10 (NIV)

The psalmist knew what would satisfy the longing of the human heart now and throughout eternity. He wrote,¹¹ *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.* Psalms 16:11 (NIV) He discovered the place true satisfaction is found and wrote, *"Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."* Psalm 73:25-26 Jesus stood at the feast in Jerusalem and as they were pouring out an offering of water over the altar He shouted, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."* (John 7:37)

There is only one place to satisfy the longing of the human heart. Come to Jesus. Quit trying to fill the thirst of your heart with something else, no matter how good it is. It will never quench your thirst, but only leave you thirsting for more. The Apostle Paul tells us that our lusts constantly demand more than before. (Ephesians 4:19) That is because the little enjoyment we derived is not as easily attained in repeated efforts. We realize that the hole in our heart is bigger than we thought, and we try again and again to stuff the temporal in as if any amount would ever meet our need.

Commented [notes23]: 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Eph 4:19 (NIV)

If you've had this thirst lately, this dissatisfaction with the things in your life, now you know why. Your heart has been longing for the transcendent and you've been trying to fill with the temporal. What will you do about it? Jesus told the woman at the well that if she drank from the well she would thirst again, but if she drank the water that He alone can give, she would find a well of water springing up in her satisfying her need. Have you drunk the Living Water or are you still thirsty? It matters not if you have never come to Jesus or if you came long ago but turned from that fountain back to the water of the world. Come to Jesus. He is the Bread from Heaven. He's the Living Water. He's the Fairest of 10,000. He's the Door you've been searching for. He's the Giver of all good things. He's the only One that can meet your need. Recognize that and you will have the passion of those psalmists with a desire for God.