

SBC – March 23, 2025
Psalm 63 (NKJV)
“Thirsting for God”

A Psalm of David When He Was in the Wilderness of Judah.

David is that author and the occasion was when he was on the run for his life in the Wilderness of Judah.

Place of Refuge (BiblePlaces.com)

Because of its lack of water and good routes, the Judean wilderness has been (mostly) uninhabited throughout history. Consequently it was an ideal place for those seeking refuge from enemies or retreat from the world. When on the run from King Saul, David hid in various places in the Judean wilderness (the Wilderness[es] of Ziph, Maon, and [En Gedi](#) are part of the Judean Wilderness). John the Baptist preached here, and it seems likely that this was the wilderness where Jesus was tempted. Herod the Great built two fortresses ([Herodium](#) and [Masada](#)) in this area for protection should his people ever revolt against him.

Definition of Wilderness: A wilderness is an uncultivated region, such as that of a forest or a desert, which is uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals. In the Bible, the idea of wilderness is that of a desolate place.

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Scholars debate whether David, on this occasion, was on the run from Saul prior to him actually being king (although he had been anointed king) or whether it refers to the time that he fled from his son Absalom (cf. 1 Sam. 23:14-15; 1 Sam. 24:1; 2 Sam. 15:23, 28). It is not totally clear.

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Psalm 63

“Thirsting for God”

- vv. 1-2 David Thirsting for God
- vv. 3-5 Praise for God’s Loyal Love
- vv. 6-8 Remembering God’s Power
- vv. 9-11 Anticipating God’s Judgment

1 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.

God here is “Elohim” meaning Higher Power or Supreme Being. David verbalizes in worship, **“O God, You are my God”**. This is the language of a covenant relationship in the OT. (cf. Gen. 17:7; Ex. 6:7; 29:45-46; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 29:13; Ruth 1:16; Jer. 7:23; 30:22; Ezek. 34:24; 36:28; Zech. 8:8; 13:9; Rev. 21:3, 7). Consistently, we see the refrain in one form or another: “You shall be my people and I will be your God.”

David is here recognizing that God is his God. He is in covenant relationship with Him. That is comforting all by itself. Ephesians 2:12 speaks of those without “hope and without God in the world.” That wasn’t David! He knew God as his God and affirmed it. Everything builds on this reality.

And for this reason, he says he will seek God early. Early is literally “at dawn”. God is his priority! God was no afterthought for David, but the first priority!

“The word ‘early’ has not only the sense of early in the morning, but that of eagerness, immediateness.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

David intensely longed for God.

His whole being longed to experience God's presence. Similarly, in Psalm 42:1-2 David said...

Psalm 42:1–2 (NKJV)

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

This was a desert experience for David, both literally and spiritually. He was in a wilderness land where there was no water. You can't live long without water. That is a DESPERATE situation!

But note the emphasis here is not on the physical but rather the spiritual. His soul thirst for God – his whole being longed for God. He longed for the satisfaction that only God can give.

All the great saints have known the reality of "desert" experiences. It is when our spiritual life is dry. We long to experience God, but "there is no water". It sounds so un-spiritual, but in truth, this is often the experience of God's people. All is not a "mountain top" experience for the Christian, there are often "desert" experiences as well. It's no fun! It was in that context that David desperately sought for God!

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Just as we have physical senses that are satisfied by God's creation, so we have spiritual senses (Heb. 5:14) that can be satisfied only by Christ. – **Warren Wiersbe**

2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

In his "desert" experience, David remembered his worshipful experience in the sanctuary. It was there that the ark was found, which was indicative of the intimate presence and strength of God (1 Sam. 4:21). It was there that the truth of God in His power and glory was expounded. It was in this formal place of worship that true worshipers like David most clearly saw the truth of God's power and glory portrayed.

In worship, to see God in His power and glory is AWESOME! David longed for such in the context of his present desert experience!

In the book of Exodus, Moses asked to see God's glory. God gave him a partial view, which amounted to Moses seeing the CHARACTER of God as the LORD descended in a cloud "and proclaimed the name of the LORD." (Ex. 34:5). As the LORD passed before Moses, He proclaimed His name as YHWH, merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abounding in goodness and truth, etc. (cf. Ex. 34:6-7). The immediate response of Moses was to bow in worship before the truth of Who God is (cf. Ex. 34:8). He saw God's glory in terms of God's character.

God revealed to Job the awesome truth of His total sovereignty over the whole of nature. Job was humbled.

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Job 42:5 (NKJV)

5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now **my eye sees You.**

Job did not literally see God, but rather he now saw the reality of God in a whole new light! He saw the power and glory of God in way he had never seen before.

When Isaiah saw the Lord "high and lifted up" he cried out, "Woe is me...for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (cf. Isa. 6:1-5). To see the reality of God for WHO He is - is AWESOME beyond description.

When David remembers seeing God's power and glory in the context of the sanctuary, the sense is probably that of "**looking to God**" in worship and experiencing His power and His glory. God's power is His strength, and His glory is associated with His presence. To experience the glory of God is to experience His presence in a very real and moving way. David longed for this as he had known it to be when he worshiped in the sanctuary (cf. Ex. 16:7; Num. 14:10; Deut. 5:24).

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;

great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

(An 8th Century Irish Hymn)

Sometimes, we need a fresh vision of the power and the glory of God in our desert experience. We need a fresh experience of the presence of God. This is what David longed for in this dry and thirsty land.

For David, it always came back to God. And so it was here as well. In his desert experience, David remembered his worshipful encounter with God in the sanctuary, and he longed for this again! And then David immediately connected God's power and glory with His lovingkindness.

3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.

"**Lovingkindness**" is a translation of the Hebrew word "**hesed**". I think "lovingkindness" is an incomplete translation. Hesed is a candidate for being one of the greatest words in the Bible. In some measure, it seeks to define God's character. Hesed is the idea of FAITHFULNESS in combination with LOVE.

It is the idea of loving faithfulness. Lovingkindness is sometimes translated as "steadfast love," "loyal love," or "covenant love." Faithful covenant love is a very good sense of the word.

As David focused on the CHARACTER of God His faithful covenant love overwhelmed him. He says, "**Your lovingkindness is better than life**".

David meant that God's chesed, which will bring him into the glory and complete joy in the next life, is better than anything that the present life has to offer. – **The Mood Bible Commentary**

The most important thing is God's loyal love. It's more important than life itself because it will outlast this life and will endure for all eternity! God's faithful love is ultimately BIGGER than this life as it takes us into the glory beyond this life.

God's lovingkindness is better than life because it goes beyond this life and into eternity.

Focusing on this reality brought David out of the desert (so to speak), and because of this reality, he exclaims: "***My lips shall praise You.***"

He then went on to emphasize his enduring commitment to praise God and that in Him, his soul finds satisfaction and security.

4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

To bless God is to praise and thank Him! This David commits to doing as long as he lives. It was common for the Jews to lift up their hands in prayer and praise to God.

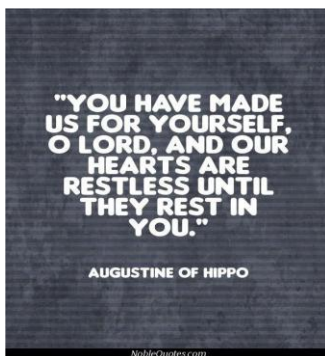
Posture and gesture can intensify prayer and praise if the action is natural and the intent sincere. – ***The Apologetics Study Bible***

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.

"**Marrow**" is literally "fat" and **fatness** is the idea of abundance. Fatness in the OT often represents prosperity (cf. Deut. 32:15; Ps. 73:7; Jer. 5:28). The combination of these words portrays being satisfied beyond what one needs. That is what David says his soul will be and consequently He is going to express joyful praise to God.

How wonderful to find your satisfaction in God. In truth, lasting satisfaction can be found in no other place.

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6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.

The Jews traditionally divided the night into three watches: the first watch was from sunset to 10 PM, the second watch was from 10 PM to 2 AM, and the third watch was from 2 AM to sunrise.

When David goes to bed and he can't sleep, what does he do? He remembers God and meditates on Him in the night. A lot happens in the night watches between God and His children. It is a time for quiet reflection! And what was David meditating on? In context, it would seem he is thinking about how God had delivered Him in the past, and this gives him assurance going forward.

7 Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.

David remembers how God has helped him in the past. That is a great thing to meditate on in the middle of the night when the mind is restless and won't let you sleep. Focus on God and His faithfulness and how He has brought you through in the past.

And this reality encourages David going forward. David is confident that God will continue to be the place of his security.

“In the shadow of Your wings” is a favorite metaphor for David (cf. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4). It pictures being close to the heart of God under His protective care. It signifies intimacy of relationship and security. This reality causes David to rejoice!

Sometimes it has the idea of *protection*, as a mother bird shelters her young chicks. Other times it has the idea of *presence*, as in the wings of the cherubim that surround the throne of God. Here the idea of *presence* seems to best fit the context. – **David Guzik**

8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

David and God are close. David says his soul follows close behind God in the sense of clinging very close to Him. This speaks to David's unwavering commitment to God. He stays close! The phrase "follows close" is translated as "clings" in some translations (NASB, ESV). It is the very same word that expresses the intimate bond between a husband and wife in Genesis 2:24.

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Genesis 2:24 (NKJV)

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be **joined** to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

The primary sense of the Hebrew word is that of being glued together. Therefore, figuratively, it speaks of being in very close association or being united intimately together.

This is the intensity with which David pursues God. There is an old song titled "Nothing between my soul and the Savior". The refrain says...

Nothing between my soul and the Savior,
So that His blessed face may be seen;
Nothing preventing the least of His favor,
Keep the way clear! Let nothing between.

That expresses the heart of David here. And because of David's deep communion with God, he affirms that God's right-hand holds him up. That is, God preserves and sustains him.

God's right hand speaks of His power, which David depends upon. But while God upholds David, he also affirms that his enemies are going down.

9 But those who seek my life, to destroy it, Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

This is a way of saying they are going to die! With David's enemies, it was often a matter of life and death. They wanted him dead, and David looked to God to take care of them – often calling on or prophesying of their impending death.

The lower parts of the earth refers to the realm of the dead, often referred to as Sheol in the OT (cf. Ps. 16:10). Clearly death is in view as he goes on to state in the next verse.

10 They shall fall by the sword; They shall be a portion for jackals.

They wanted to kill him, put David pictures them being taken out in battle by the sword.

In David's day when people killed on the battle field often their carcasses were just left out in the open for scavengers to feed on them. That is the picture here when he says they "shall be a portion for jackals.

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Jackals were a type of wild dog-like animal known for feeding on the kills of other animals. They are cowardly, nocturnal, and travel in packs. Jackals are known for their mournful howling (Micah 1:8).

– ***Gotquestions.org***

Some people criticize David for wanting his enemies destroyed and their bodies left for scavengers to devour. But they should remember that these rebels were the enemies of God and God's purposes for Israel, and that those purposes included the coming of Messiah into the world (see Ps. 55). David didn't execute the enemy himself but asked God to deal with them, and He did (2 Sam. 18:6-8). David didn't rejoice in the destruction of his enemies; he rejoiced in the God of Israel. – ***Warren Wiersbe***

11 But the king shall rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him shall glory; But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.

Either David here speaks as the God-ordained anointed king even though he wasn't on the throne yet – when he was on the run from Saul, or as the legitimate king of Israel on the run from his son Absalom. Either way, he was God's anointed.

He expects that, indeed, God is going to bring him through, and he shall rejoice. God is going to accomplish His purposes with His anointed – His God-ordained king. To take on this reality was really to take on God Himself.

To swear by God here has the sense of swearing allegiance to Him. It was a statement of loyalty. In the OT the Jews were to swear by God ALONE (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20). Those on God's side were really on David's side because he was God's chosen man – God's anointed.

Those whose allegiance was truly with God would see victory and would glory in this position. In other words, they would share in this celebratory victory. The king would rejoice in God and they would glory.

But in contrast those who speak lies will be stopped. The sense is their mouths shall be stopped! While those with David would boast in victory, those opposed to him would have their mouths silenced in disgrace.

They say, "desperate times call for desperate measures". But for David desperate times called for God! For David desperate times made him desperate for God! And David's testimony is that God is faithful in that desperation!

As David focused on God and reflected on His power and glory, he came to the conclusion that God's lovingkindness is better than life. That reality drives his whole thought from there to the end of the Psalm.

God's faithful covenant love can always be depended upon. Nothing will ever change His covenant commitment to His people. Many times I have been going through something very disheartening only to in the morning focus on Lam. 3:22-23.

Slide # 10

Lamentations 3:22–23 (NKJV)

22 Through the LORD's mercies [Hesed] we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

Indeed, God's lovingkindness is better than life – therefore, let us, like David, resolve to praise Him continually!

He is forever faithful!