

# Psalm 63

**Introduction** – This is a psalm of great confidence when you are walking in a weary land, when your life is in the wilderness, when your soul and/or your body is failing, when your circumstances are out of control. David is in the wilderness, probably running and hiding from Absalom (v11 notes that David is king), thirsty, tired, unsure of what is going to happen next. Chrysostom (4<sup>th</sup> Century Church Father) said that *“it was appointed to sing Psalm 63 every morning to kindle in us a desire of God, and to inflame our souls with a mighty fire of devotion.”* David exemplified this while in the wilderness, but even he did only in part. But David is a type of Christ, and by Christ’s Spirit we may also approximate this delight and assurance in our Lord with the unwavering delight and confidence of Jesus Himself – while in the wilderness.

**Overview of the Text** – If this is a time of running and hiding in the wilderness, this is a prayer of dedication and faith, with the object of that faith not yet realized. The psalm-singer seeks his God and does so early because of an intense thirst in his soul and flesh (v. 1). He yearns to see God’s power and glory as he has previously seen it in the sanctuary (v. 2). Remembering that, he sings that God’s lovingkindness is better than life and opens his lips in praise (v. 3), and his hands are lifted in worship as long as he lives (v. 4). He looks forward to a full satisfaction in his soul and how that will overflow in praise with more joy (v. 5). Not only early, but even through the night, He remembers and meditates on his bed (v. 6), remembering all the ways God has helped him and such remembrance grants assurances as being under the shadow of His protective wings (v. 7). The psalm-singer, *“cleaves,” “follows hard”* after the Lord, and he senses the assurance of God’s right hand (v. 8). Feel the assurance: those who seek the psalm-singer’s life will descend to Sheol (v. 9), falling by the sword, bodies left as carrion for the jackals (v. 10). But the king will rejoice and his followers will glory (with open mouths). Those who oppose him will have their mouths stopped (v. 11).

**Delight in the Wilderness** (vv1-5) – Remember the *“my”*s in Psalm 62? Well here it is *“my God.”* His physical thirst becomes a powerful image of the desperate need for the presence of the God who alone gives living water (v1, John 4:13-14, 7:37-38). *“Everyone burns with desire, but there are precious few who can say to God – my soul is athirst for you – people thirst for the world where their souls are meant to be thirsting for God”* – Augustine. But there is something more here. The word, *“flesh”* here is not being used of an evil thing as in the NT *“works of the flesh.”* Rather, *“soul”* and *“flesh”* are together denoting his entire being. To kindle our desire like this, we need to remember as we groan in our bodies, we are to groan – not to be released from our bodies – but for the resurrection of our bodies (Rom 8:23). We are to desire with our body and soul to be raised and glorified before the face of God.

He has had a taste of this satisfaction in the worship of God with His people in the tabernacle (v2, Psalm 27:4). As we gather at His summons each Lord’s way, we too are invited to taste the power and glory of the Lord in the Word preached and the sacraments presented and given. Consider what they proclaim: His gospel, His intentions and plans for the world – and for you. And His lovingkindness, which is better than life (v3, Mark 8:35-37). As the Spirit gets ahold of you this way, it can’t and shouldn’t stay just in your head; this affects your body as well. Your lips and mouth praise, your hands praise. Our bodies are not simply tools to carry our brains around. This is why we kneel, and stand, and sing, and shout, and pray aloud, and lift our hands as we worship. Every piece of us will be resurrected in the final consummation. And what will that be like? That feeling of physical, emotional, relational satisfaction after your best meal with your best people (v5, Isaiah 25:6).

*“We choose what we want, seek what we love, and praise what we enjoy”* – Ash. Consider this psalm-singer’s desire and the Greater Psalm-singer’s desire. Ask for such a desire. Long for the desire. Desire the desire.

**Assurance in the Wilderness** (vv6-10) – When your life is in the wilderness and you are awakened in the night and find the pressure of afflictions heavy on your mind, here is your (our) verses (vv6-7). The night is the time of aloneness, sorrow, and we fret over the current aggravating circumstances. This is the time to turn and meditate upon God, calling to mind His past mercies and taking courage from them for the future. That is the time to fix your thoughts upon the Lord (v6, Psalm 119:55, 147, 148, Psalm 139:17-18) and remember his previous mercies and deliverances (v7, 2 Cor 1:10). Such remembrances place us under the shadow of His wings where we rejoice in past deliverances while we are in the dark wilderness of the present.

*“My soul clings to You”* (v8, ESV). The verb is used to speak of Ruth clinging to Nomi (Ruth 1:14-17) and is famous for its covenantal use in marriage (Gen 2:24). The psalm-singer is clinging to the Lord, cleaving to Him, joined with Him in life, death, and resurrection. And while we think of our union with Christ as the church like the marriage union, nevertheless there is a deep union we each individually have with Christ. And if we are upheld at God’s right hand, then we are where Christ is seated (Psalm 110:1) which leads to the next verses

**Assurance of Defeating Foes** (vv9-10) – Such destructions really happened (v9, Num16:30-33) and so the psalm-singer expects his enemies to be defeated. And we should not have a natural aversion to such language. God has not withdrawn His government of the world and is, if slowly, establishing His kingdom among all nations. Enemies will all be defeated so that God’s Messiah will reign and restore a broken world (which is why we also say that God often makes his enemies his friends). Nevertheless, there have been times and will be times where God intervenes with hard justice (v10, 2 Sam 18:7-8). And no one escapes the final judgment where even death and hades will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).

**A Covenant Head Declaration** (v11) – What happened to David extended beyond him for he was a covenant head. Yet so much more, Jesus, our covenant head, has won the victory and so our happiness and glory depend entirely upon Christ. Because He is our covenant head we share in His victory, His glory. *“We pray in these psalms for the victory of Jesus Christ in the world, we give thanks for the victory already won, and we pray for the establishment of the kingdom of justice and of peace under the King, Jesus Christ” - Bonhoeffer.* We want the mouths of Christ’s enemies stopped, and we are promised they will be. And as Christ did, while they crucified Him, we cry out until that final judgment *“Lord, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,”* in other words, forgive them by bringing them to the Christ they lie about, grant them faith, forgiveness, and eternal life.

**Ponder** – What did it mean for David to sing these words in the wilderness? What would it mean for you? Pray for that anticipatory satisfaction, even today, while waiting for that final banquet on that great Wedding Day. And do not despise but receive that grace of His indwelling love in you (vv6-8, Rom 5:5).

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