

“God’s Presence Comforts and Assures”

Lesson Text: Psalm 63:1-11

Background Scripture: Psalm 63:1-11

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 14:26; Hebrews 13:6

Psalm 63

¹ You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched 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 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. ⁶ 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 I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. ⁹ Those who want to kill me 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 will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

INTRODUCTION

Some of the psalms have historical superscriptions that indicate a time element. According to the superscription of this psalm, David was in the wilderness of Judah when he wrote it. There are two possible occasions for this writing. It might have been when he was running from Saul, or it might have been when he fled from Jerusalem and his son Absalom. The second incident is the more likely of the two, because in verse 11 David referred to himself as "the king," which he was not when Saul was pursuing him. The incident regarding Absalom is recorded in 2 Samuel 15 through 18. Absalom had rebelled against the king (15:7-12). In this psalm we read the reflections of a man on the run. Understanding these circumstances causes us to marvel at the great faith expressed in the psalm.

TODAY’S AIM

- **Facts:** to show how David found sustaining comfort in the wilderness by drawing close to God.
- **Principle:** to state that God's presence will always be a source of comfort to sustain us.
- **Application:** to show that when we feel alone and miserable, God's presence can bring the joy back into our lives.

Seeking God’s Comfort (Psalm 63:1-4)

In his opening cry of desperation, David called out to God. David was thirsty and longing for just one thing: God's help. "The psalmist yearns for fellowship with the Lord like one who thirsts for water in the desert" (Barker and Kohlenberger, eds., Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary, Zondervan). He was seeking Him "early." This is the Hebrew word *shachar*, which means "to seek, seek early or earnestly, look early or diligently for" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Oxford).

This helps us understand the desperation of David's heart. He was eager to talk with his God about his situation. Rather than let bitterness and disappointment control him, he knew enough to lean heavily upon God when the trial was hard. His reference to thirst and fleshly need in a dry, barren land where he could not find water is a symbolic way of expressing spiritual need rather than physical. He could not live spiritually without God any more than he could live physically without water.

1. What was David longing for when he said he was thirsty in a dry land where there was no water (Psalm 63:1)?

What is the best time of day for you to seek God? Why?

What made it even more difficult was David's memory of having been in the presence of God in the past and enjoying the worship and security he had there. He had been able to witness God's power and glory during those days; now he suffered in the wilderness, feeling absent from God. To him it was nothing short of pure torture. If only he could repeat the past experiences of being in God's presence! If only he would not feel so alone and deserted! With his own son turning against him, he needed God all the more.

2. What made his present experience even more difficult (v. 2)?

David now offers another phrase of great depth: God's "*loving is better than life.*" David would rather enjoy the sweet fellowship of God in the dawn hours than any other aspect of living. His spiritual needs take priority over his physical needs.

What an attitude David displayed in the middle of a severe trial! He focused on the loving-kindness of God instead of on the negative circumstances that were engulfing him at the time. What an example for every believer! A great deal of discouragement and depression in believers results from not doing exactly what David did. Humanly speaking, it is easier to focus on our immediate circumstances than it is to focus on the unseen God. The solution is found in genuinely knowing God so well that we can trust Him.

On a human level, we trust most the family and friends we know the best. We cannot trust those we meet until we come to know them well and see that they are people of integrity and therefore trustworthy. Nor can we trust God until we know Him well, and the only way that happens is through devouring His Word and learning everything about Him we possibly can. Those who do not spend time with God in His Word, in prayer, and in church will not be able to have the level of trust needed in trials.

David determined, in fact, that he would maintain an attitude of praise to God as long as he lived (v. 4). To bless the Lord is a form of praise coupled with thankfulness. David praises actively and physically, lifting his hands toward Heaven in a posture of prayer. This was a gesture of respect for God and His Word. Psalm 119:48 says, "*I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees.*" David's trust would not waver.

3. What enabled David to continue to praise God in this trial (vs. 3,4)?

Resting in God's Presence (Psalm 63:5-8)

David said the presence of God was as satisfying to his soul as good food was to his body. Regarding the phrase "marrow and fatness," John MacArthur noted in *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson) that this is "a metaphor comparing the spiritual and emotional satisfaction of the divine presence with the satisfaction of rich banquet food."

The Holman Old Testament Commentary makes this observation: "He used the metaphor of a royal banquet prepared with the choicest of foods. David probably remembered the stately feasts he enjoyed as Israel's king. With this regal background, he reminded his own heart that only God could satisfy the true yearnings of his soul" (Anders, gen. ed., Broadman and Holman). No wonder he could go on to speak of praising God with joyful lips. David was not merely indulging in spiritual jargon. These were sincere feelings from within.

4. How did David describe the satisfaction he found in God (v. 5)?

David now shifts to the other end of his day, the time before sleep. This is not so much a time of praise, but of meditation and remembering. He can look back on the day and count its blessings, ways in which God has been his help. To do this on a regular, daily basis causes one to appreciate more fully the constant care that God provides. This period of David's life is stressful beyond expression. Will there be enough food today? Will Absalom find David's place of refuge and take his life? What about his family members? In stressful times, we might begin our day saying, "How will I ever get through this?" At the end of the day we should remember that we have survived and God has not abandoned us. As the mother hen gathers her young brood of chicks under her wings for protection as they sleep, we may end our day and take our rest knowing that we are always under God's loving protection (v. 7).

5. What did David do during the night to encourage himself (vs. 6,7)?

To "*cling to*" or "*follow hard*" is an old expression that means to follow very closely, right behind. It does not imply that it is difficult for David to follow God's leading. David is more than willing to follow and not strike out on his own. This sense of proximity is reinforced by the image of the active, supportive presence of the leader's right hand. David understands that he will fall without the support of the Lord. The right hand is presumably the stronger hand, the hand of power.

David does not see his relationship with God to be static and unchanging. He is being led to places that he may not anticipate. In this case, he does not know how things will play out. David knew his safety was in God even more than in the army that was accompanying him. He would have to hold onto God's hand for his future. This is the grasp of faith.

6. What did David mean by "I cling to you" (v. 8)?

God's Justice Assured (Psalm 63:9-11)

Here we see for the first time reference to David's enemies. In speaking of them, he expressed confidence that those who sought to destroy his life would be destroyed in turn by God. Their going to "*depths of the earth*" is a description of the realm of the dead. The implication is that they would be slain and never seen again. David would live on, but they were going to perish. Such was his confidence in the justice of God.

David went on to say that his enemies were going to die by the sword and be left for wild animals to devour (v. 10). There was no honor in this. Absalom and his loyal followers were attempting to put David out of commission so that they could occupy the throne and govern the country in their own way.

The result of the battle that eventually ensued was the defeat of Absalom's army and his death. When it happened, it was a source of deep grief to David (2 Sam. 18:33); it surely was not as satisfying to him as he anticipated in this psalm. His trust in God remained, however, and his enemies were destroyed while he continued his life and reign.

7. Of what was David confident regarding his enemies (vs. 9,10)?

David now spoke in the third person, stating that he would rejoice in God, knowing he would survive the present crisis. At the moment he wrote this, there was no evidence of the outcome; so this is a statement of faith based on his knowledge of God. He was determined to stay true to God throughout and expressed it with the phrase "*all who swear by God.*" Deuteronomy 6:13 says, "*Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.*" This describes staying true to Him. The person who stays true to God will be able to boast about God and His presence and help. What believer has not found this to be true? God works on our behalf in so many ways, giving us repeated opportunities to testify of Him and His wonderful works. "*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for*

mankind," (Ps. 107:8). There is a universal truth in the statement at the end of Psalm 63:11, as seen in "every one." Those who stay true to God will have reason to praise Him! In contrast, those enemies (described as liars) who try to defeat the truth will be stopped and have nothing to say. David's enemies were fighting against God and therefore would not have any hope of victory. They would be stopped, and he would carry on.

8. What is the universal truth we find in the last verse?

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Daily fellowship with the Lord should be our constant desire and priority (Psalm 63:1,2).
2. Contemplating God's steadfast love, or "lovingkindness," will give us a proper perspective on life (vs. 3,4).
3. True satisfaction comes only from fellowship with God and dwelling on Him (vs. 5,6).
4. We are to cling to the Lord at all times, knowing He will sustain us always (vs. 7,8).
5. Though we are treated unjustly, with God ultimate justice is assured (vs. 9,10).
6. We can rejoice that we share in God's victory (v. 11).

CONCLUSION

Not Just on Sunday

When do you recognize your relationship with God? How often? Do you praise Him on Sunday, but not during the week? If your time of communion with your Creator is limited to once a week, what happens if you miss a couple of weeks? Can you maintain a strong relationship if you neglect it for 7 or 14 or 21 days? What if you miss a couple of months, maybe during a sports season or due to a change in shifts at your job? The answer to this is obvious: any relationship withers if it is not cultivated. David understood this, even in his times of deepest distress. He languished as a fugitive in a remote wilderness hideout. Whatever his worship patterns had been, they would have been difficult to maintain. There must have been days when he was confused, wondering why his own son would seek his death. But today's psalm shows us that David did not despair of his strong, sustaining relationship with the Lord. A mature, growing relationship with God will not be confined to Sunday. It will spill over into the other days. It can begin as we seek time alone with the Lord every morning and/or evening. We do not need a carefully planned program with people designated to pray and read Scripture. There is nothing wrong with these things, but worshipping "only on Sunday" is not enough. As our relationship grows deeper, we will begin to understand what David learned: that God's "lovingkindness is better than life." We will begin to acknowledge that our souls have a deep, unquenchable thirst for God and that we need to experience His presence to sustain us.

PRAYER

Holy God, lover of our souls, we praise You with lips of joy. We want to seek You in the morning, in the evening, and all the day through. Our souls are destitute without Your presence. They are like the parched ground in a desert during a long term drought. They need and seek the living water that comes from You. May You continue to bless us with Your presence and comfort. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God is always available.