
Thirst for God

Psalm 63

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Introduction In his book *The Weapon of Prayer* E. M. Bounds quoted one of Jonathan Edwards' disciples. Let's allow David Brainerd's words to be the introduction to tonight's message. Listen for a type of worship that some in the church will not understand, some in the church will understand and yet not want it, and still others in the church will both understand and embrace the paradox wholeheartedly.

Of late God has been pleased to keep my soul hungry almost continually, so that I have been filled with a kind of pleasing pain. When I really enjoy God, I feel my desires of Him the more insatiable and my thirsting after holiness more unquenchable.

(Quote taken from J. Piper's quote of E. M. Bounds. You will find Piper's interpretation of this quote in *Desiring God*; p.86)

A Pressing Search

v.1

In Psalm 63 we come to this type of worship; a worship of God that may be characterized as "a kind of pleasing pain".

The poet of the psalm is King David. Here we find the King as a person in exile of sorts. After David's adultery with Bathsheba, his attempted cover-up and his murder of Uriah, we read in 2Samuel 13 the consequences of David's sin.

When David did not deal with the sin of his son Absalom, Absalom rebelled against David causing him to flee Jerusalem. David fled to the wilderness to get away from his own son whose desire was treasonous and deadly (cf. 2 Samuel 15 – notice v.23 specifically). Ousted from royalty, we find in Psalm 63 David in the wilderness. Struggling within the consequences of his own sin, how do we see David responding? Does he look back on his life in regret or look up for His God in hope?

This psalm is a cry to God for God's presence. King David talks about an experience of isolation that is characterized in v.1 as an earnest search for water in "a dry and weary land".

The Setting

Gen.3:23f; Ex.15:22-27; 17:1-6; Num.20:2-11; Duet.8:15; 23:4; Matt.4:1ff; 1Cor.10:1-14

In the wilderness

The setting for this quest is identified as "in the wilderness". Characterized as a "dry and weary land", the circumstances surrounding David's desire for God are difficult. The wilderness is an unsteady place. Wild animals, temperature swings and scarce food and water can be found in the wilderness.

Crossing the desert by foot, David knows the life and death importance of water. Transferring this image and emotion onto God, the psalmist communicates his vigilant outlook for the life-producing/sustaining glory and grace of God.

The Search

Gen.17:8 [Heb.8:10]; Job 23:12; Pss. 42:2; 73:24f; 143:6; Isa. 55:1-3; Jer.15:16; Matt.5:6; John 6:35

O God, You are my God

What is he looking for? It isn't literal water. Having noticed the setting, let's now note the object of his search.

"O God, You are my God" identifies the search. This phrase is covenantal language expressing hope & love. He was recalling the promises given to Abraham and his offspring "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant...I will be their God" (cf. Gen.17:7-8).

Even though David is experiencing consequences of his sin; isolated in the wilderness, away from Jerusalem and the absent from the sanctuary, he has not lost hope. In fierce & relentless desire for God he cries out to God knowing God's promises.

And so we first notice the search. It is not primarily for a change in circumstances. The search is for the presence of God.

A Past Sight

v.2-8

The second of the three sections of this psalm is found in v.2-8. Here, we come to the heart of the psalm. What we find at this point is most instructive. How did he (& how do we) keep going when circumstances seem utterly unpromising? What resources are needed to persevere when God seems distant and life is difficult?

In trouble, *David remembers God's self-revelation given to him in the sanctuary. Now this God-given sight of His own power, glory and love gave David a soul satisfaction needed to persevere joyfully.* That is the essence of Ps.63 and this message. Let me repeat it slowly (repeat)

The Sight

v.2-3

Ps.27:4; 36:8-9; Daniel 3:17ff; Acts 20:24; 2Cor.3:18; 4:4-6; Heb. 11:32-38; Rev.3:20

Let's take a closer look at three aspects of perseverance in unpromising circumstances. 1) Sight 2) the results of the sight 3) how the sight came to him.

First, let's look at what David saw. V.2-3

Your power & glory

The first two divine attributes said to be seen by David are power and glory.

"Saved out of danger"

The text says that sometime in the past, David was given by God a vision in the sanctuary of Himself. He revealed his power and glory. These characteristics likely refer to God's sheer ability to rescue His people from danger (eg. Exodus 14)

Your steadfast love

Also, David noticed another divine attribute referred to as God's unfailing love.

“Sustained in danger”

Here the emphasis lands on the Lord’s love to sustain His people in danger.

For David, in other words, the former two attributes provide him with hope that God may yet act in deliverance. The latter attribute offers the courage to remain faithfully in the face of the possibility of death.

An illustration of this type of perspective perhaps can be seen in the three teenagers known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. When their lives were threatened they said, *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out off your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up”* (Dan.3:16-18).

Our need in unpromising circumstances is to see God as the One who is able to save us out of danger or sustain us in danger. And either one is simply fine with us! Right? (Heb.11:35)

The Results

v.4-8

Having briefly noticed the sight God gave David in the past in the sanctuary, we now come to the results of such a sight. This is found in v.4-8.

Soul satisfaction

In verse 5 we see the effects of God’s self-revelation upon the soul who sees. The past vision of God’s power and glory and love provide the thirsty psalmist with life-sustaining satisfaction. And this inner satisfaction gives rise to something else.

Body declaration

In vv.3, 4 & 5 we notice body parts. Lips, hands and mouth are engaged in praise and worship. Now, do you understand this connection? When the soul is satisfied with God the body is stimulated to praise. Soul satisfaction moves into body declaration. And this satisfaction and declaration move into one more thing.

Life determination

In vv.3, 8 we notice a radical lifestyle. Clinging to God because His love is BETTER than life is the ultimate result of a satisfied soul. Are you tracing this development? Satisfaction → Declaration → Determination! These aspects of the psalmist were the results of a sight of God’s attributes.

The Means

v.6

How can David who is currently away from the sanctuary and in the wilderness “see” God’s glory, power and love?

Remember You / meditate on You

Joshua 1:8; Ps.1:2; 119:15; 2Cor.3:18; 2Tim.2:7

The answer is found in v.6. *“When I remember you and meditate on You”, I will be satisfied, I will declare your praise and I will determine never to leave you.*

Even when the nights seem endlessly cold, David will be sustained because he remembers God.

Meditating on and remembering often the attributes of God found in Christ will influence the soul, body and lifestyle of His people.

And this change not in circumstances but in the psalmist will manifest something wonderful in the present. Let's close tonight by noticing V.9-11

A Present Security

v.9-11

Because David's soul is filled with a vision of God he confidently looks at the future. Though there are still dangers present, he knows his future and his enemies' fate.

The King's enemies' fate

First, the enemies' fate. Using just two words, they:

Go down (v9)

To the depths of the earth by the power of the sword for the portion of jackals!

The King's people's future

But King David's present security is not merely in his enemies' fate. Notice the King's people's future. Using just two words, they:

Go up

Exultation is for all who swear allegiance to the King.

He is confident that God will defeat the foes of the King decisively and will reward the friends of the King immensely. Damnation to the foes and jubilation to the friends. This is the gospel. This gives David a present security in his perplexing difficulty.

Let's wrap this up tonight by reflecting on some lessons.

Conclusion

9 Lessons

1. *The progressive experience of searching, seeing and settled is to be accepted and embraced (1-11).*
2. *The most worthy quest in life is for God alone (1).*
3. *When we "see" Him in His sanctuary we will be able to "see" Him in the wilderness (2-3).*

4. *To enjoy God's love is better than life (4).*
 5. *Cherishing Him gives rise to commitment to Him (5-8).*
 6. *"Remembering God" is to recall His attributes and promises and then to apply them in the present (5-6).*
 7. *His commitment to cling to us becomes our ability to cling to Him (8).*
 8. *Those who refuse to follow the King will be destroyed by the King (9-10).*
 9. *Those who swear allegiance to the King will forever exult with the King (11).*
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