

FILLING OUR EMPTINESS Sunday School- October 31, 2010

Unifying Topic: PRESENCE COMFORTS AND ASSURES

Lesson Text

I. Thirsty For God (Psalm 63:1-5)

II. Clinging To God (Psalm 63:6-11)

The Main Thought: O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. (Psalm 63:1 KJV)

Unifying Principle: People yearn for comfort to fill the emptiness in their lives. Who or what can fulfill this yearning? King David rejoices in the comfort and confidence he found in God's presence.

Lesson Aim: To help Christians to seek God for help in meeting their deepest needs, realizing that He protects us as we cling to Him by faith.

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- 63:1 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
- 63:2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
- 63:3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.
- 63:4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.
- 63:5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:
- 63:6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.
- 63:7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
- 63:8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.
- 63:9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
- 63:10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.
- 63:11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

HISTORY:

¹The 63rd Psalm begins with a heading that says, "A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah." In verse 9 he speaks of "those who seek to destroy my life." So he is probably a fugitive of some kind. Someone is chasing him in the wilderness.

We are inclined to think of the days when King Saul chased David in the wilderness and tried to kill him. But verse 11 points to a later time. It pictures David as the king already: "But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall glory; for the mouths of liars will be stopped." But when Saul was chasing David, he wasn't king yet.

But there was a time when David was king and a fugitive from his own land; forced to flee to the desert, namely, the time when his son Absalom rebelled and tried to overthrow his father's throne. According to 2 Samuel 15:23, David fled the city, crossed the Kidron brook, and went into the wilderness. This is probably the experience behind this Psalm.

The "Wilderness of Judah" was that wild and uncultivated tract of country lying on the east side of the territory of the tribe of Judah, commonly called "the Wilderness of Judea" lying along the Jordan. [There are Psalms appropriate for a wilderness; and we have reason to thank God it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, and not the wilderness of Sin. (Matthew Henry)]. David was repeatedly driven into that wilderness in the time of King Saul, and also when David was king, fleeing from his son Absalom's treason and rebellion. The general structure of the psalm would accord well with any one of those occasions. David writes from the perspective of these tenses:

- I. Present—Seeking God's Presence (63:1-5)
- II. Past—Remembering God's Power (63:6-8)
- III. Future—Anticipating God's Judgment (63:9-11)

LESSON:

Psalm 63:1-5 Thirsty For God

His desire towards God (v. 1, 2).

63:1 "O God, thou art my God" – This is not the seeking of a man who was unacquainted with God. It is not the seeking of a man who had no relationship with God. This is the deepest affirmation saying that between David and God there is a covenant, a relationship based on God's oath. ²The words here rendered God: The first one –

¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/your-love-is-better-than-life>

² <http://biblehub.co./commentaries/psalms/63-1>

"*Elohiym*" - is in the plural number, and is the word which is usually employed to designate God in (Genesis 1:1); the second (*God*) is a word which is very often applied to God with the idea of strength - a strong, a mighty One; and there is probably this underlying idea here, that God was the source of his strength; or that in speaking of God as his God, he was conscious of referring to Him as Almighty. It was the divine attribute of power on which his mind mainly rested when he spoke of Him as his God.

63:1b "...early will I seek thee:" – The word "*early*" used here has reference to the early dawn, or the morning; and the noun which is derived from the verb, means the aurora, the dawn, the morning. The proper idea, therefore, would be that of seeking God in the morning, or the early dawn; that is, as the first thing in the day. The word "*early*" also has not only the sense of early in the morning, but that of eagerness, immediateness. He who truly longs for God longs for Him now; first in one's plans and purposes; first in all things. He would seek God before other things came in to distract and divert his attention; he would seek God when he formed his plans for the day, and before other influences came in, to control and direct him. It yields the respect to prayer and to seeking God early, in the first place or "*diligently*." Observe the eagerness implied in the time mentioned; he will not wait for noon or the cool eventide; he is up at cockcrowing to meet his God. Communion with God is so sweet that the chill of the morning is forgotten, and the luxury of the couch is despised. The morning is the time for dew and freshness, and the Psalmist consecrates it to prayer and devout fellowship. The point is: that he would seek God as the first thing in the day.

63:1c "...my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee" – As our bodies need food and drink, so our souls need something. That something is God! The Psalmist refers to both "*soul*" and "*flesh*" in order to denote his whole being; expressive of the same thing but in different words. David has a heart for God. He has a taste for fellowship with God. David longs for God's presence like a wanderer in a desert longs for water. Hiding from his enemies in the barren wilderness of Judea, David was intensely lonely. He longed for a friend he could trust to ease his loneliness; his thirst. No wonder he cried out, "*O God, my God! How I search for you! How I thirst for you!*"(TLB) as he sought lasting satisfaction! Our bodily nature usually tugs in the other direction, but the spirit when fervent can compel it to throw in what power it has upon the other side. [*So, God satisfies with this consolation both our higher and lower nature.* (Thomas Le Blanc)].

- Thirst is a dry, uncomfortable feeling in the mouth or throat caused by having nothing to drink.
- Thirst is an insatiable longing after that which is one of the most essential supports of life.
- Thirst will be heard; the whole man must yield to its power.
- Thirst is where long is to wish, very much; desire greatly; yearn, crave.

When the wilderness caused David's weariness, discomfort, and thirst, his flesh still cried out (longed) in unison with the desire of his soul. Only God Himself can satisfy the craving of a soul really aroused by the Holy Spirit.

63:1d "...in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" – such was the wilderness of Judea, where David now was, and where he was destitute of the means of grace, of the ordinances of God's house, and wanted comfort and refreshment for his soul, which he thirsted and longed after, as a thirsty man after water in a desert place. The picture here, there is no running streams; no gushing fountains; nothing to alleviate the thirst. A weary place and a weary heart make the presence of God the more desirable. David acknowledged a personal intimate relationship with God in which his longing for God is as intense as the longing of dry, parched lips for water.

³There are three kinds of spiritual thirst:

1. Thirst of the empty soul – Devoid of God, he is constantly in pursuit of that which will fill his emptiness.
2. Thirst of the dry soul – The difference between the empty soul and the dry soul is that one has never experienced "rivers of living water" (John 7:38) while the other has and knows what he is missing.
 - a. Drinking too much from the desiccating fountains of the world and too little from "*the river of God*"
 - b. While there are times God floods our souls with a sense of His presence, there are other times we dehydrate by a sense of His absence.
 - c. A Christian is prolonged with mental or physical fatigue.
3. Thirst of the satisfied soul – Unlike the dry soul, and as self-contradictory as it may sound at the moment, the satisfied soul thirsts for God precisely because he is satisfied with God. He has "*taste[d] and see[n] that the Lord is good*" (Psalm 34:8), and the taste is so uniquely satisfying that he craves more.

The illumination which seemed to come from the Lord upon His Word was perceived by Piper this way:

When you drink my water, your thirst is not destroyed forever. If it did that, would you feel any need of my water afterward? That is not my goal. I do not want self-sufficient saints. When you drink my water, it makes a spring in

³ <http://biblicalspirituality.org/thirst.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

you. A spring satisfies thirst, not by removing the need you have for water, but by being there to give you water whenever you get thirsty – Again and again and again.

63:2 "To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary" – Now we get to David's petition.

- "To see God's power and glory here in this wilderness as I have seen it in the tabernacle"
- "To see it again in the sanctuary as I have formerly seen it there."

⁴How is God's divine power and glory in the sanctuary manifested to believers?

- By seeing the divine power and glory in the sanctuary, we shall have our strength renewed to go on our Christian course afresh.
- A view of the divine glory crucifies our lusts, and puts the corruptions of our heart to death.
- Fresh views of the divine power and glory nourish our humility.
- These views of the divine glory in the sanctuary arm us for our conflict with the last enemy.

[This made David long to be in the sanctuary when he was in the wilderness; and why so? - To see thy power and thy glory. Could not David see them in the heavens, in the mountains, in the goodly cedars, and other works of God? Yes, but not as in the sanctuary; and therefore he saith, To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary; there I have seen thee otherwise than ever elsewhere; there he saw the king upon His throne and in His glory. (William Greenhill)].

As he is now on the run and cannot attend the sanctuary, David cries for his God. However, note: he cries less to see the sanctuary of his God than he does to see the God of his sanctuary. Our delight should be in the Lord. David didn't treat his times with the Lord lightly and neither should we.

His esteem of God (v. 3, 4).

63:3 "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life," Lovingkindness is favor, mercy, tender compassion, steadfast eternal love because it comes from God. If one or the other was to be sacrificed, he preferred that it should be his life; David would be willing to exchange that for the favor of God. Physical life itself can be lost. But His eternal love (lovingkindness) can never be lost! ⁵This means that David wanted God more than he wanted life. And if you want God more than you want life, then you want God more than you want all the joys of this life—family, health, food, friendship, sexual relations, job-satisfaction, productivity, books, skateboards, computers, music, homes, sunsets, fall colors. **He is warning us, rather, that if our hearts settle (even gratefully!) on the beauty of the gift and do not yearn for the infinitely greater beauty of the Giver, then we are idolaters and not worshipers of God.**

Why We Need the Wilderness? Why we cannot do without the wilderness experiences of life? If all of life were a paradise, as so many people think it should be and as so many try to make it, then would we not much more often become addicted to savoring the gifts of God rather than God? *"Surely that is why Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."* **The wilderness is the way of God to wean us from the most precious things in the world.** And those who savor the vision of God know that his love is better than all that this life can give.

63:3b "...my lips will praise thee" – Is it possible that any man should love another and not commend him, nor speak of him? When we experience God's goodness, we are led to open our lips in thanksgiving. That is:

(a) because of this loving-kindness; or

(b) because thou wilt restore me to the place of public worship.

⁶David shows "7 ways" he used to bless God, by using each part of his physical & emotional makeup!

[1] His lips – "My lips shall praise You." (3b)

[2] His tongue – "Thus I will bless You while I live;" (4a)

[3] His hands – "I will lift up my hands in Your name." (4b)

[4] His will – "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," (5a)

[5] His mouth – "And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips." (5b)

[6] His memory – "When I remember You on my bed," (6a)

[7] His intellect – "I meditate on You in the night watches." (6b)

Praising lips must be joyful lips. David was in continual danger. Care and fear held his eyes at every waking moment, and gave him wearisome nights but he comforted himself with thoughts of God.

63:4 "Thus will I bless thee while I live" – The word "thus" refers to the sentiment in the previous verse, meaning that

⁴ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=063&verse=002>

⁵ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/your-love-is-better-than-life>

⁶ Thomas Le Blanc, from Boice Ps.63, pg.519.

as the result of David's deep sense of the value of the loving kindness of God, he would praise him through all the remainder of his life, or would never cease to praise him. Scripture says, "*For the grave cannot praise thee, death can [not] celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I [do] this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.*" David has been running for his life, and then, suddenly, he realizes, "Hey, I am still alive!" "Thus", he says, "*I will bless thee while I live!*" David celebrates God while he is alive, giving an external sign of this by raising up his hands.

63:4b "I will lift up my hands in thy name" – He is alive not because he has been so clever, but he is alive because of God's grace and power. Lifting up his hands is giving glory to God and recognizing God's grace and blessings. This is a demonstrative gesture of prayer and reverence in who God is. David recognizes and pays homage to God and His grace in this Psalm. Our hands are to be lifted up for worship, public prayer, praise in joy, in thanksgiving, in labour, and in confidence because of His name.

His satisfaction in God (v. 5).

63:5 "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:" – The idea is, that his soul now longed for the service of God as one who is hungry longs for food, or as one who is thirsty longs for drink; and that the time would come when this longing desire would be satisfied. He would engage in the service of God as he desired to do; he would be permitted to enjoy that service without interruption.

- ⁷The Lord satisfies the souls of His people as with marrow and fatness, by feasting them with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.
- The Lord satisfies the souls of His people as with marrow and fatness, by showing them His glory in the face of Christ.
- The Lord satisfies the souls of His people as with marrow and fatness, by shedding abroad His love in their hearts.
- The Lord satisfies the souls of His people as with marrow and fatness, when He feasts them with new covenant promises.
- The Lord also satisfies the souls of His people, by filling them with the Spirit.
- The Lord satisfies his people as with marrow and fatness, when He revives former experiences of His kindness.

The point is this: David began to seek after God early, yearning for His presence, thirsting with an emptiness, praising joyfully with hands lifted up with an expectation and confidence that God would satisfy and comfort him.

- The empty vessel filled. How? By meditation.
- With what? God's goodness as marrow and fatness.
- To what extent? Satisfaction.
- The full vessel running over.
- My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.
- The soul overflows with praise -- joyful praise. G. J. K.

Psalm 63:6-11 Clinging To God

His secret communion with God (v. 6).

63:6 "When I remember thee upon my bed" – David recalls memory upon his bed. This is interesting, because David writes this psalm from the desert wilderness of Judah. There will be a time when you will look back on the many days that you spent in Bible class or in the study of God's Word as a time of relaxation, a time when tension was at a minimum, a time that you will view as blessed. This is what David is doing. That is, when I lie down at night; when I compose myself to sleep. Nothing can be more proper than that our last thoughts, as we sink into quiet slumber, should be of God; of His being, His character, His mercy, His loving-kindness; of the dealings of His providence, and the manifestations of His grace toward us, during the day; and nothing is better suited to compose the mind to rest, and to induce quiet and gentle slumber, than the calmness of a soul which arises from the idea of an Infinite God, and from confidence in Him.

63:6b "...and meditate on thee in the night watches" – Meditation always brings more sweetness than does, mere remembrance. The word "*watches*" here refers to the ancient divisions of the night for municipal or military purposes - periods of the night assigned to different persons to keep watch around a camp or city. The most common division of the night was into three parts, though the arrangement varied at different times. David is not specific here, but is referring to any time in the past when he would recall God; when he would wake up thinking about God, he would meditate about God.

Recognize that these two halves of v. 6 are adverse in a way. The first half hearkens back to David taking in God's

⁷ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/tod/view.cgi?book=ps&chapter=063&verse=005>

Word when his life was easy; the second half views him now, staying awake during the various watches with his men, under the pressure of running and not being caught. David spends this time meditating and recalling to himself God's Word. The idea is, David's circumstances have changed; but God has not. David has gone from great power and wealth to poverty and hiding, yet God's Word remains the same.

His joyful dependence upon God (v. 7, 8).

63:7 "*Because thou hast been my help*" – Meditation had refreshed his memory and recalled to him his past deliverances. The idea is, that he had experienced the divine interposition in times of danger, and that this was a reason why he should still confide in God. God's mercy and favor in the past is still a reason why we should confide in Him in time to come. So David knows what God has been to him.

- God helps by way of prevention.
- God helps by way of support.
- God helps by way of rescue, and redemption, and deliverance. Thomas Horton.

63:7b "**Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice**" – This means that he continues to shout for joy or to celebrate being under God's protection (which is the imagery of being under the shadow of God's wings). The very shade of God is sweet to a believer. Under the eagle wings of Jehovah we hide from all fear, and we do this naturally, because we have aforesaid tried and proved both His love and His power. We are not only safe, but happy in God: we rejoice as well as relax.

63:8 "**My soul followeth hard after thee:** " – The word used here means properly to cleave to; to adhere; to be glued to; to stick fast. Then it means to attach oneself to anything; and then, to pursue or follow after. This is the same word which is used of Adam clinging to his wife (Gen. 2:24); no fundamentalist wants to see this word interpreted as Adam following after his wife. The idea here is that of adhering to, or cleaving to; and the meaning is, that the psalmist adhered firmly to God, as pieces of wood glued together adhere to each other; that he, as it were, stuck fast to Him; that he would not leave Him or be separated from Him.

- Following hard after God is expressive of ardent and intense desires. It does not consist in cold and lethargic wishes, but unquenchable longings after communion with God and conformity to His will.
- It implies laborious exertion, not earth nor is heaven merely the object of pursuit, but God Himself. And the desires of a truly renewed soul are not sluggish and ineffectual;
 - The soul's pursuit after God. It follows,
 - a. In desire. b. In action. c. Earnestly. d. Quickly. e. Closely. f. The soul's support. g. Thy right hand upholdeth me, the arm of strength. In doing and bearing. G. J. K.
 - "A mighty hunter before the Lord."
 - a. The object of pursuit: **Thee**.
 - b. The manner of pursuit: **Hard after**.
 - c. The dangers encountered. J. S. B. *:(suffering)*.

David is speaking of a completed action (perfect tense). His soul has clung to God in the past, and David continues to cling to God at the time of writing this Psalm. ⁸Here are a few thoughts regarding clinging to the Lord:

1. You will have to open your arms and/or hands first. You can't cling to Him with your arms crossed or slack, or if your hands are clenched. He is there to carry you, but you have to trust Him and hang on.
2. When you are clinging to Him, you will go where He is going and fit into His way.
3. It is an act of the will. He invites us to cling to Him. He is the strong One. We choose whether to cling to Him or go through life alone.

63:8b "**...thy right hand upholdeth me**" – God's right hand refers to His grace and mercy in delivering His own. The meaning is that God sustained him in life; defended him in danger; kept him from the power of his enemies. God also responds to us. As we pull closer to Him, He pulls closer to us. God's right hand upholds His people in three ways.

1. As to sin; lest they should fall by it.
2. As to suffering; lest they should sink under it.
3. As to duty; lest they should decline from it. W. Jay.

His holy triumph in God over his enemies and in the assurance of his own safety (v. 9-11).

63:9 "**But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth**" – As David earnestly sought for God, there were men of another order who as eagerly sought after his blood. They aimed, at his honour, his best welfare; and this they would not merely injure but utterly ruin. The devil is a destroyer, and all his seed are greedy to

⁸ http://www.thoughts-about-god.com/active/kk_cling.htm

do the same mischief. Those who hunt souls to destroy them shall be themselves the victims.

The slayers shall be slain, and the grave shall cover them. The hell which they in their curse invoked others shall shut its mouth upon them. Every blow aimed against the godly will recoil on the persecutor; he who smites a believer drives a nail in his own coffin. Their pain and suffering will be unfathomable. If you are a growing believer, and you have been cheated, lied to, unjustly persecuted, you don't need to worry about taking revenge. You don't need to worry about getting even. God will take care of that for you. God is better at it!

63:10 "They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes" – David continues to speak of what will happen to his enemies; they will die by the sword and become jackal food. He prophesies of their destruction, whose bodies will not be buried but will be devoured with wild beasts.

1. The enemies of the Christian: Evil spirits, evil men, evil habits, etc., etc.
2. Their intent: To destroy the soul.
3. Their fall: Is certain, shameful, destructive.
4. Their future: Hell is reserved for them G. J. K.

63:11 "But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped" – The king—that is, David himself, and all who reverence God, "*shall share a glorious part,*" while treacherous foes shall be for ever silenced. The king rejoices in God, and those who swear by God will boast in Him. Simultaneously, those who speak lies will be shut up. Those who swear by the name of God show themselves to be loyal to God and will be upheld by Him in the time of danger. The Lord's anointed shall not fail to offer his joyful thanksgiving; his well established throne shall own the superior lordship of the King of kings; his rejoicing shall be alone in God. "*Every one that sweareth by Him shall glory*" – signifying adherence to God, and worship paid to Him. It was customary to swear by the life of the king. They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. "*If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*" *Matthew Henry.* We thereby have...

- o Royal rejoicing.
- o Lawful swearing.
- o and Evil speaking

⁹The psalm finishes by drawing a contrast between the truly faithful of God and the ones who just profess to be faithful to Him. These last two phrases give a conclusion to the whole psalm. Those that are truly faithful to God will worship Him even in threatening circumstances—giving the connotation of "*swears by Him,*" will also praise Him. Those that are not truly faithful, those who just say they are but are lying, will not—those who lie and make false commitments to God will have their mouths shut so they will not defile God's holy name. Cling to God by faith.

SUMMARY:

This Psalm begins with a desperate plea of a parched and weary soul physically threatened with death from the elements and spiritually longing for God. David is thirsty for God and begins to seek Him early as a priority. The conclusion of this Psalm contains a threat of death from enemies. But the apex in the Psalm speaks of satisfaction, help and protection. These come to the psalmist through worship from the past, present and future.

In addition, he meditates on God's work and remembers times of God's protection. His soul's satisfaction only comes through the close relationship he had with and all-powerful yet ever-present God. And even though his enemies were still after him, God would be faithful to take care of them and David would be faithful to praise Him. As he followed hard after God, God's right hand was there to uphold him.

Essentially the Psalm is summed up in the last two phrases. Those who claim loyalty to God with their lips but lie in their actions will be silent in desperate time. But those who are counted among God's faithful will praise Him and worship Him and they will receive satisfaction for their souls.

APPLICATION:

We don't have to stay empty or dry or wanting more. We can be continuously filled with God's immeasurable Spirit. Follow hard after God's Word, after His presence, after His power and glory. In those times of meditation, remember the things God has done in the past and know He is still able to do the same in the present. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad that our enemies cannot destroy us because God has not left us alone. He comforts and assures.

⁹ <http://2t22.110mb.com/archive/ot/Psalm63--1-11.pdf>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>