

Study 2: *Psalm 63*

This psalm was written when David was **“in the Desert of Judah.”** No specific occasion is given beyond that. “David did not stop singing because he was in the wilderness, neither did he just mindlessly go on repeating Psalms intended for other occasions; but he carefully adjusted his worship to his circumstances, and wrote a song to his God; a wilderness Psalm when he was in the wilderness” [Spurgeon].

HIS EXPERIENCE: The psalm begins: **“O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You”** (vs. 1). Being far from the place of worship in Jerusalem did not stop David from seeking God. Nor did being in the wilderness prevent David from approaching God as his God. “We should always approach God, not only as God, glorious and almighty, but as our God. The phrase **‘O God, You are my God’** includes the two ideas of omnipotence and the covenant relationship. We belong to the Almighty God. David, having cultivated a close relationship with God before he was thrust into the wilderness, was well-prepared for facing the trials of the wilderness.

What do you say/do when you find yourself in a difficult or desolate place?

Have you taken the time to cultivate intimacy with God for such times as these? How?

HIS RESPONSE: The special relationship David had with God is reflected in the language used to express his yearning for God: **“My soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water”** (vs. 1). Thirst, next to the need to breathe, is the second strongest bodily need.

“Thirst is an insatiable longing after that which is one of the most essential supports of life; there is no reasoning with it, no forgetting it, no despising it, no overcoming it by stoical indifference” [Spurgeon]. It is important to note how daily experiences can be tools God uses to make us think of him. David was thirsty, being in **“a dry and weary land where there is no water”**, and so it was no small thing for him to say to God, **“My soul thirsts for You.”** And not just thirst, David yearned for God with his entire being, with both **“soul”** and **“body”**.

What is a mirage and where do they appear? How might we see and go after “mirages” rather than God in dry, desert like times?

HIS REFLECTION: This event causes David to recall his encounters with God under more favorable circumstances: **“I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and Your glory”** (vs. 2).

What might this teach us about our pursuit of God?

While in the desert, though David was far from the holy place, this did not stop him from praising His God: **“Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands”** (vss. 3–4).

In what ways is love (God’s love) better than life?

And if David could praise God while on the run in the desert, he could certainly praise God anytime, anyplace. As he says: **“I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands”** (vs. 4).

“My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise You” (vs. 5). Praising God, in all circumstances, has benefits to our emotional well-being, bringing us satisfaction and contentment, as we get our minds off our worldly problems, and focus on God’s eternal plan:

How does God satisfy our souls as with the richest of foods?

Did this wilderness experience prompt David to think of other times of distress in his walk through life? It appears so. As he thinks of sleepless nights he says his communion with and meditation upon God was never-ending: **“On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night”** (vs. 6). “Such is the nature of true religion and the power of divine grace, that it gets good out of all evil, and turns even a sleepless night to some valuable account.” [ScriptureStudies]

David’s praise for God was based on his first-hand experiences of God’s goodness: **“Because You are my help, I sing in the shadow of Your wings”** (vs. 7). David had had intimacy with God so that thinking of God refreshed his memory and helped him recall past deliverances.

When has God blessed you by bringing back to you a remembrance of his goodness and provision?

How would journaling help in these remembrances?

David sings in **“the shadow”** of God’s wings. What does that mean?

“The very shade of God is sweet to a believer” [Spurgeon]. We do well to rejoice in the shadow of God’s wings, which is our response to Him by faith in prayer, just as chickens naturally, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It is our reliance upon Him as the one able and ready to help us.

“My soul clings to You, Your right hand upholds me” (vs. 8). Some say God’s children use God as a crutch. True believers are or can be proud to use God as a crutch, and depend on Him for everything. When we are weak He is strong.

As David considers other problems, it is with a faith that believes God that, he is confident God will right everything: **“They who seek my life will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals”** (vss. 9–10).

Note how he quickly returns to thoughts of praising God: **“But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God’s name will praise Him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced”** (vs. 11). See the contrast between the mouth that praises God, and the mouth that tells lies: the first will not be stopped, but shall sing on forever; the mouths of liars will be silenced (presumably by God himself).

Our Conclusion

David’s worldly standing did not get in the way of his praise for God. Though a king, David praised the One much greater than he. What do you know to be the chief end of all humanity?

We as children of God are not guaranteed easy lives, and so we too, just as the godly men of the past, will find ourselves (figuratively speaking) in the desert. David sets an awesome example on how to “praise God in the desert”.

What a blessing to have a caring, omnipresent God, who is ready and willing to hear our prayers, wherever we may be.

Suggestion for small group time: Briefly re-discuss and then pray this Psalm (especially our memory verses 1-5) over each other out loud.

[Resources consulted and adapted: Spurgeon, “The Treasury of David”; ScriptureStudies online; Bible Knowledge Commentary on the Psalms.]