

## A THIRST FOR GOD

### Psalm 63

**Intro:** I am sure that none of us needs to be told that we are living in very troubled times. Things are going on in our country that we have never had to face before, and we don't know where it is all going to end. Most of us, maybe all of us, believe in the sovereignty of God. But it seems that God is strangely silent in these days. And yet as we look back through our history as a nation, and even through divine history as it is recorded for us in the Bible, we know that troubles are very much a part of life. We live in a troubled world. And a major part of life is learning to cope with our troubles. When the Lord Jesus had delivered the message to His disciples which is recorded in John 13 through 16, and which we know as "the Upper Room Discourse," He concluded his message with these words found in John 16:33:

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

By those words He was indicating that He would make sure that all of the troubles of His people would turn out ultimately for their blessing, and not for their destruction. It is true that thousands upon thousands of believers have laid down their lives for their faith in Christ, but as the Apostle Paul has told us that even "to depart and to be with Christ . . . is far better" (Phil. 1:23) – not just "better," but "far better"! But we also have that wonderful statement, which is a promise, found in Romans 8:28, which in some versions of the Bible is rendered, "For we know that God worketh all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." God's ultimate purpose in saving all of us is to make us like Christ. But the circumstances are different in all of our lives. We all have our trials, but not the same kind of trials, and yet the promise of God is true in all of our lives.

The Apostle Paul has given us many wonderful words of encouragement which the Holy Spirit directed him to write for different churches in the first century, but they are words which apply to us also today. One of them is found in 2 Corinthians 4:15-18 which I want to read to you now. Listen carefully to what the Apostle Paul had to say:

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

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17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

One of the main purposes of our trials is to get us looking at the things which are not seen. This means that by the use of the Word of God we need to look into our own hearts to see what God is doing there.

Aren't we all rebuked at times by what we read in the Bible that certain people have had to say about their relationship with the Lord? Every time I read a passage like Psalm 63, and notice that what David wrote about how he felt about the Lord, I feel rebuked. Can I truthfully say, and I ask you if you can truthfully say, that my soul thirsts for God and that my flesh longs for Him?

There is a line in a hymn that I have been thinking about lately. I haven't been able to find the hymn. I believe it was written by A. B. Simpson who founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. The line goes like this, "Once it was the blessing; now it is the Lord." And he went on to express what we all do. We come to the Lord seeking blessings which we need in our lives. And there is nothing wrong with that. But Mr. Simpson we went to explain that he had learned to go to the Lord, not just for this blessing or that blessing, *but just because he wanted the Lord, and wanted to be with Him!!!* David, King David, had learned from his trials to love the Lord just because He was the Lord. How did this happen?

Do you notice the superscription at the head of this Psalm, and where David was when he wrote this Psalm? He was in the wilderness of Judah! What was he doing there? He had fled for his life from Jerusalem to get away from his own son who had successfully led a rebellion against him. Read the story in 2 Samuel 15. Zadok the priest and the Levites had even brought the ark of God to David, but David sent them to take the ark back to Jerusalem, and this is what he told them:

25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation:

26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him (2 Sam. 15:25-26).

David had to leave his house, the house of the Lord, the ark of the cove-

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nant, the city of Jerusalem, and all that was dear to him. All that he had left was God Himself. And from the wilderness of Judah (see 2 Sam. 15:28) he penned the words of this Psalm.

When I was working with Young Life shortly after Lucille and I were married, one of our staff members, George Sheffer, who was also married, was diagnosed with what was thought to be an incurable disease. Of course it was a terrible shock to all of us. George was a member of the Young Life quartet, and was really gifted in speaking to high school kids. But as he continued to meet with doctors of various kinds, it was finally determined that he did not have the disease that they originally thought that he had, and after some extensive treatment, he regained his health. I attended a meeting where George was speaking to high school kids and telling about his illness, and he said this which I have never forgotten, and never will. He said, “You never know that it is enough if you have the Lord until you have everything but the Lord taken away from you.”

That is where David was as he wrote this Psalm. He had had everything taken away from him but the Lord. But that was enough. That is the message of this Psalm. He was learning to delight himself in the Lord as he wrote for others to do in Psalm 37:4.

Dr. Graham Scroggie, in his commentary on the Psalms, point out that David set the divisions of the Psalm by his used of the words, “my soul.” See those words in verses 1,5, and 8. Others divide the verses in slightly different way, for example, putting verse 8 with the last three verses, but I like the division indicates by David’s reference to his soul. It is clear that he was looking at the things that he could not see with his physical eye, that is, what was going on in his heart inside of him, and he was looking at the Lord as his one and only sufficient God.

In the first four verses we see what King David sought. In verses 5, 6, and 7 we see how completely he was satisfied. And in the last four verses of the Psalm we see how it affected his life.

Now I don’t think that we are to believe that this is where David first sought the Lord just for the Lord Himself. Nor do I think that he had never experienced real satisfaction in the Lord before. Nor should we think that this is where David first began to follow hard after the Lord in his daily life. We are not always learning new things as the children of God, but what we know we are learning in deeper and fuller ways as we

face fresh trials in our lives. The Lord has many ways of writing the truth of His Word about Himself on our hearts.

Now let us look for a moment or two upon:

### **I. WHAT DAVID SOUGHT (Psa. 63:1-4).**

He did not seek judgment upon Absalom. He did not call down fire from heaven upon the people who had turned against him. He did not even pray for the success of those who stood with him. To put it in its simplest terms, King David took this as another opportunity to seek the Lord. He rejoiced in that which neither people, nor trials, nor even he could change. He sought his God. And his God even seemed more wonderful than ever to him when he contrasted his God with the dry and thirsty land in which he was living. Graham Scroggie said, "It matters little how *dry* and *weary* the land is, so long as we are sure that *God is ours* (p. 77).

David in verse 2 was drawing upon his past fellowship with the Lord to strengthen him in the present test. Larry Bell said as much to Pastor Will and me as he was going to surgery; he was drawing on God's faithfulness in the past for strength for the new testing. "Lovingkindness" is the familiar Hebrew word *chesed*, which means mercy or kindness. To David that was better than life. What we have in God is far better than what we have in ourselves, or in those who love us the most, or anything that this world has to offer us.

So, although David had every reason to be discouraged, he could only praise and worship the Lord as he faced those tragic and naturally alarming circumstances. Lifting the hands gave David an opportunity to show where his faith was.

So the victim was not defeated, but rising above his circumstances by focusing his attention and his faith upon his God. We all need to pray that the King's words can be our words, spoken from our hearts.

Now, secondly, let us look at:

### **II. THE SATISFACTION HE WAS ASSURED OF (Psa. 63:5-7).**

In verse 1 he was seeking water for his thirst, but here the word "satisfied" suggests that God answered with a feast for his soul, and that

which he experienced inwardly was express outwardly with praise from his joyful lips. When the well-known Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles, was dying, she said to her sons, “When I am released, sing of psalm of praise to God.” Not even death itself can get the best of a child of God who is looking to the Lord.

How many of us think about the Lord when we go to bed at night, or when we may be lying in bed suffering some affliction? The reference to the night watches speaks of continuing affliction. We are promised peace when our minds are stayed on the Lord, not on the night, or our troubles, but on the Lord.

Verse 7 gives a picture of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings. This is like Ruth Wiley’s way of signing her cards: “under the same feathers.” It is all a great picture of being surrounded by overwhelming trouble, outnumbered by the enemy, yet enjoying perfect peace.

And then as we come to the last verse of this Psalm, we have:

### **III. HOW ALL OF THE ABOVE AFFECTED KING DAVID’S LIFE (Psa. 63:8-11).**

Remember that we are not reading here the Psalm who was just learning how to walk with the Lord. David had previously enjoyed wonderful fellowship with the Lord, and had experience great blessing. He was a man deeply taught in Scripture. But regardless of how long we have know the Lord, or how intimately we have known the Lord, how much we have grown in the Lord, there is always more to learn, more growth to experience, greater understanding of the Lord and His Word that we need to experience.

David came through this experience with Absalom with a stronger faith, with a greater determination to trust the Lord, and a greater desire to be like the Lord. In Psalm 17:15 King David expressed when, and only when, he would no longer be unsatisfied, would no long feel unfulfilled in his walk with the Lord:

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

David’s heart was sobered when he remembered the fate awaiting those who do not know the Lord. Eventually all trials for the people of God

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will come to an end, and those who have not known God, nor have they sought Him, will suffer the consequences of their sin.

Derek Kidner says that the foxes can also be translated “jackals,” and should be translated that way. And then he added, “They [the jackals] are the final scavengers, consuming the remains of the kill rejected by the larger beasts. The wicked are, in other words, the very leavings of mankind” (p. 227). The King, however, humiliated by his son Absalom and all who rebelled with him, will continue to rejoice in God, and shall glory.

**Concl:** It is very significant that King David never mentioned Absalom his son in this Psalm, nor any of the people who had joined Absalom in rebelling against the King. In fact, you will remember how King David grieved over his son when his son was killed and the rebellion came to an end. It seems to David’s deepest grief was that his son died not knowing the Lord. Absalom died without turning back. David would gladly have died for Absalom if that could have resulted in Absalom’s salvation. But, unfortunately one sinner cannot die for another sinner. That is why the Lord Jesus had to come, and King David was one who knew the promise and was looking for the Messiah-Savior. As we leave this morning, make sure that you stand with King David, a redeemed sinner, and not with Absalom, a sinner who died without a Savior.

And for those of us who know the Lord, let us pray that King David’s prayer in Psalm 63:1 and 2 will be our prayer that we might follow in David’s steps in seeking to know more and more about our Lord, and may be being changed by the Lord to be more like Him day by day until that wonderful day when for the first time we will see our God and our Savior face to face. Remember that our light afflictions are working for us to make us like our blessed Lord.