

# Psalm 63

By Joel Wood

**Bible Text:** Psalm 63

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Psalm 63, let's hear the word of the Lord again today. "[\[Psalm 63\]](#) *A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh faints for You, in a dry and thirsty land with no water. I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth will praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches, because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul clings hard to You; Your right hand upholds me. But those who seek my soul to destroy it will go into the lower parts of the earth. They will fall by the sword; they will be a portion for jackals. But the king will rejoice in God; everyone who swears by Him will glory, because the mouth of liars will be stopped.*" The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

"[\[Psalm 63\]](#) *A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.*" There are two separate occasions on which David was in the wilderness of Judah. The first was when Saul was king. You remember some of those stories from scripture of Saul and his men chasing David throughout the wilderness. That famous incident at En Gedi, which is down near the Dead Sea, when Saul went into the cave to relieve himself and David was hiding so quietly Saul did not know that he was there and David cut off a portion of his robe with his knife. You remember later Saul and his men are on the other side of this cavern at En Gedi and David comes out of the cave and tells Saul 'I could have killed you, see?' At that point he realized part of his robe is missing. David exhibited great faith in the Lord and waiting for the Lord to unseat Saul to give him the throne, to give David the throne, that had been promised to him. But this time when David was in the wilderness, for all the markers and pointers that we have, this was not that time. This is a time later in David's life when David was king, when David was on the run because his son Absalom, his good looking son Absalom had set up a kingdom in the face of his father. He had had a 4 year propaganda campaign where he built into the minds of the people that Absalom was the rightful ruler, that Absalom should be on the throne, that Absalom should be king. And Absalom had the impression that his dad had done him wrong and so he set up a fake kingdom nearby. And to spare Jerusalem the attack by Absalom and his forces, David left Jerusalem. The king left his throne, left his city, left the protection of that place, and went back to that place that he knew so well, that place that he had known as a boy outside of Bethlehem where he tended sheep. But this time he fled for his life and for the sake of all of his people. We see the providence of God in this story. Absalom should have been able to have a quick turnaround and to attack his father and overtake the kingdom quickly, but through providence Absalom listened to his poor military advisors and they had him wait. "Just wait, we'll get him later" and by that time David

and his elite force of fighting men had been able to get into a position where they were easily able to keep back the attack of Absalom and his men. This is the background to this Psalm, a very real, a very tangible frustration to David. A moment when he probably thought 'You know, I thought I was done running for my life in the wilderness out here. I never thought I'd have to be living back in this neighborhood again.' David knew those caves well. He knew those valleys and crevices well. He knew how to use them for his advantage, but he never thought, perhaps, that he would have to do it again. But now, under the forceful hand of his son, David flees for the sake of Jerusalem and we find him in the wilderness of Judah.

We see firstly as this Psalm opens that David's environment reflects his spiritual yearnings. David's environment reflects his spiritual yearnings. The wilderness of Palestine, the wilderness of Judah, is a beautiful place. It has incredible sun rises, as the sun comes up over the Jordanian mountains. It has impressive topography with great rises and great falls in the land. It is a gorgeous place. But hopefully we all know ourselves and others well enough to know that while many may be able to appreciate the beauty of the desert, few desire to live there all the time. I remember making the drive across southern California, across the Anza Borrego wilderness, making that drive apparently a little too fast as the officer explained to me. But there's nothing, there's no point of reference. You drive through Maryland [and] you always have an idea of how fast you're going because there's trees everywhere. You get that that sense, that feel, but this is part of the world where it just stretches on and there's nothing there except the occasional camper. You think 'Who would want to live in a camper out here?' We can appreciate the wilderness when we know we're going to get back to the woods. We can appreciate the middle of nowhere when we know that we'll be able to get back to the middle somewhere. David's environment reflects his spiritual yearning: "[\[Psalm 63:1\]](#) O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh faints for You, in a dry and thirsty land with no water." David was not writing this Psalm sitting in the dining hall of his palace in Jerusalem. He was not writing this Psalm with endless food and wine and feasting and merriment, yet his soul was downcast. David was writing this Psalm from the wilderness, from the middle of nowhere, in a dry and thirsty land. And David is surrounded outwardly by the things that he is feeling inwardly and he begins to reflect.

Secondly, David reflects on the glory and power of God, the thunder and lightning of God. "[\[Psalm 63:2\]](#) I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory." In our Old Testament scripture readings in the mornings we have been reading through the Pentateuch and those 5 books are full of the stories of the power of God in that centralized place among his people. And David knew times when the tabernacle worship was up and running as it should and he knew times when the tabernacle worship sat like a '76 Pinto along the highway. It was not running how it should. In fact there were times when the Ark of the Covenant wasn't even in Jerusalem. David had seen God in the sanctuary, he had seen His power and His glory. So here in this dryness, in this thirst, in this desire, David begins to reflect on the way things had been at times just up the road in Jerusalem, worshiping God in His tabernacle, seeing God's power and His glory. Perhaps he was reminded of this, seeing God in that tabernacle of nature as the storms would roll across the deserts and make their way across the Jordan River and up over the crest of the mountains. Perhaps as those storms would come, forming the torrential wadis in the rocky valleys there in the wilderness, he was reminded of the power of his God, the glory of his Maker. David had seen God and here in this moment of dryness spiritually he reflected on that power and that glory.

But David didn't just reflect on the power and glory of God, thirdly we see that David is refreshed by the tenderness of God as well. These two bookends to our experience of our God and Savior, that He is powerful and He is glorious and He is holy and He is mighty and yet He is tender and careful and caring like a nursing mother with her young. "[\[Psalm 63:3\]](#) Because Your lovingkindness is better than

life, my lips will praise You." Again, David is living and worshiping from the posture of response. In responding to God's action in his life. We do not praise God to get God to do, because God has done we praise Him and we worship Him. "[[Psalm 63:4a](#)] Thus will I bless You while I live;" There might be a tinge of despair there, David's back in the neighborhood of his youth, he's back in the wilderness, he's back, perhaps, where he thought he would never have to be again, running for his life from one who is pursuing him to kill him. David, perhaps, didn't know how many days he had left. But how is he gonna spend those days? Blessing his God, praising his Maker. "[[Psalm 63:4b-5](#)] I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth will praise You with joyful lips."

We have the imagery here of feast and drink and yet here he is in the wilderness. That marrow, that fatness, that imagery that those things that pointed to provision, that pointed to richness. David would be satisfied in the Lord as if he had the greatest feast of Israel spread before him. And his mouth will praise the Lord with joyful lips. I'd pause and ask what adjective can be applied to your lips? Are they joyful lips? Are they lips that are so quick to praise God they pick up the nickname joyful?

Number four, David rests in his Lord. Here we have some imagery that is reminiscent of Psalm 4. Last week, as we worked our way through the text in the morning and looked at what it means to be angry and to sin not, we referenced Psalm 4 and lying on our bed, meditating, not rushing out to be with other people. These were things that kept the Psalmist from sinning in his frustration. Here, we see this same imagery again in this sense of dryness, this time of of wilderness wondering. "[[Psalm 63:6-7](#)] When I remember You on my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches, because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice." Brothers and sisters, what keeps you awake at night and how do you interact with that when it comes to mind? Do you meditate on the Lord and on all the ways that He will work in your problems? Or do you meditate on the problems? You remember that time when you lay awake in bed and just let worry overcome you? And you begin to spin out and you begin to-- your mind begins to reel on all of the domino-like consequences that are gonna fall out from this horrific thing that was upon you? And you worried more and more and more and eventually you came to that Godly conclusion of how God was going to work in your circumstances? Do you remember that time? Of course you don't, because it never happens that way. Worry feeds on itself. Worry is the tribbles of the Christian life. Remember that episode in Star Trek where 1 becomes 5, becomes 40, becomes 97, becomes-- suddenly it's spilling out of every cargo department on the Starship Enterprise. That is worry in our life. David did not worry, he did not meditate on the problems. He meditated on the capital S Solution: his God. And therefore he was able to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings. Is your day dark? Does it feel cold? Does it feel like maybe you can't experience the warmth of the sun? Perhaps God is protecting you in the shadow of His wing, rather than exposing you to the harsh persecution.

Fifthly, David relies on the Lord for his protection. "[[Psalm 63:8a](#)] My soul clings hard to You;" We get the imagery almost of a little child in a moment of terror and panic grabbing fast to mom's arm or dad's leg and not letting go. 'You are my only hope, mom. Dad, you are my only salvation in this moment!' David's soul clung hard to the Lord, but I love the end of this sentence: "[[Psalm 63:8b](#)] Your right hand upholds me." Your right hand upholds me. Now which ultimately did David more good? His clinging to the Lord or the Lord's upholding him by His right hand? By grace the Lord gives us faith and by the Spirit we exercise that faith in the Lord and we hold fast to our heavenly Father. This is part of the difficulty in some very destructive diseases where the mind goes and that person loses track of the world around them. They lose track of their family. They lose track of their spouse. Eventually, they lose track of themselves. And my prayer is always the same: 'Lord Jesus, hold on to them when they don't know enough to hold on to You.' George Scipione says his regular prayer is: 'Lord, take me before

I do something that's embarrassing for my family.' To which his family says: 'Too late!' But isn't that such a reminder of the glorious strength of the gospel in our lives? How much faith do we really put into our profession of Christ? In our belief in Him and in our trust in Him? And when the physical mind goes and things are done and said it would be an utter embarrassment to that person if they had any cognizant reality and understanding of what they were doing. What a beautiful reminder that Christ holds on to them when they can't because they don't even know to hold on to Him. David was relying on the Lord.

He went on: "[\[Psalm 63:9-10\]](#) *But those who seek my soul to destroy it will go into the lower parts of the earth. They will fall by the sword; they will be a portion for jackals.*" David, in a sense, did not find a great need to defend himself. He trusted in the Lord to do the jujitsu so that when those guys came after him they would be propelled into the very destruction that they were seeking to send David. David relied on the Lord. How often do we say 'Lord, I trust You but I have the perfect plan. Lord, I trust You, but now as I move from step 1 to step 2 to step 3, I pray that You'll bless step 4.' No. David was in a popularity contest with his son who was a lot younger and a lot better looking than he was. He could not win. David clung hard to God and the Lord upheld him by his right hand.

Then, lastly, David rejoices in his glorious protecting God. Here's the marker: "[\[Psalm 63:11a\]](#) *But the king will rejoice in God;*" David is speaking of himself. Kings like to rejoice in a lot of things about themselves. Absalom was rejoicing in his own popularity, his own PR campaign, his nice hair even. But David chose to rejoice in God because he knew there were two groups of people, there always has been and there always will be just two groups of people: those who rejoice in the Lord and those who will be destroyed. Here, we're given the imagery of the mouth of liars being stopped, but that is a part for the whole. All of their plans will lead to nothing. All of their destinies will be the flames of Hell. But David didn't rejoice, really, even in that. He rejoiced in God and he swore by Him, knowing that God would have the victory. David was not concerned about having the victory. He was worried about being on God's side, knowing God would have the victory. There's a big difference there. There's a big difference there and David was on the right side of it, rejoicing in God, swearing by Him, knowing He would be his glory. Because whatever his enemies were doing, it would draw to an end. He said before "while I live," perhaps the work of his enemies would end or would lead to the ending of David's life. Maybe not. But the priority for David is standing with the Lord, resting in Him, clinging to Him, relying on Him, being refreshed by Him, reflecting on Him. Knowing that He was the answer to David's thirst, that He was the strength of his life, that He was the water in a dry and thirsty land.

Stand with me as we pray.