

PSALM 63

This psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion as any of David's psalms in so little a compass. As the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those that bore date out of a prison, so some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those that were penned, as this was, in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment was the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here we have,

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

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

III. His satisfaction in God (v. 5).

IV. His secret communion with God (v. 6).

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

IV. His holy triumph in God over his enemies and in the assurance of his own safety (v. 9-11). A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally does it speak its own genuine language; and an unsanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with divine things, is scarcely capable of singing it with understanding.

~~<161>~~ PSALM 63:1-2

DEVOUT AFFECTIONS

A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

The title tells us when the psalm was penned, when David was *in the wilderness of Judah*; that is, *in the forest of Hareth* (~~<162B>~~ 1 Samuel 22:5) or *in the wilderness of Ziph*, (~~<162S>~~ 1 Samuel 23:15).

1. Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful and less inhabited than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven; there it

is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground; *the wilderness there shall blossom as the rose.*

2. The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves.

3. All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God that it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David, in these verses, *stirs up himself to take hold on God,*

I. By a lively active faith: *O God! thou art my God.* Note, In all our addresses to God we must eye him as God, and our God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness-state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists and is present with us, when we say, *O God!* which is a serious word; pity it should ever be used as a by-word. And we must own his authority over us and propriety in us, and our relation to him: "*Thou art my God,* mine by creation and therefore my rightful owner and ruler, mine by covenant and my own consent." We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it: *O God! thou art my God.*

II. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace: *Thou art my God,* and therefore *I will seek thee;* for *should not a people seek unto their God?* ²¹⁸⁹Isaiah 8:19. We must seek him; we must covet his favour as our chief good and consult his glory as our highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him,

(1.) Early, with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him: *Early will I seek thee.*

(2.) Earnestly: “*My soul thirsteth for thee and my flesh longeth for thee* (that is, my whole man is affected with this pursuit) here *in a dry and thirsty land.*” Observe,

[1.] His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, not so much because it was a wilderness as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a *weary land* (so the word is); it is so to the worldly that have their portion in it — it will yield them no true satisfaction; it is so to the godly that have their passage through it — it is a valley of Baca; they can promise themselves little from it.

[2.] His importunity for that presence of God: *My soul thirsteth, longeth, for thee.* His want quickened his desires, which were very intense; he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks; he would take up with nothing short of it. His desires were almost impatient; he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain and look up to God with a holy desire.

2. He longs to enjoy God. What is it that he does so passionately wish for? What is his petition and what is his request? It is this (v. 2), *To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* That is,

(1.) “To see it here in this wilderness as I have seen it in the tabernacle, to see it in secret as I have seen it in the solemn assembly.” Note, When we are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone we may have the Father with us, and that is enough.

(2.) “To see it again in the sanctuary as I have formerly seen it there.” He longs to be brought out of the wilderness, not that he might see his friends again and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary, not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but *to see thy power and glory* (that is, thy glorious power, or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections), “that I may increase in my acquaintance with them and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart” — so to

behold the glory of the Lord as to be changed into the same image, ^{}2 Corinthians 3:18. “That I may see thy power and glory,” he does not say, as I have seen them, but “as I have seen *thee*.” We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleases himself with the remembrance of. Those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God; he loved to think them over again; these he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight and is the desire of gracious souls, in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is to see God and his power and glory in them.

^{}PSALM 63:3-6

JOYFUL PRAISES

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! After two verses that express his desire in seeking God, here are some that express his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may quickly be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. *Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord* (^{}Psalm 105:3), and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

I. What David will praise God for (v. 3): *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, than lives, life and all the comforts of life, life in its best estate, long life and prosperity.* God's lovingkindness is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, ^{}Psalm 30:5. It is better, a thousand times, to die in God's favour than to live under his wrath. David in the wilderness finds, by comfortable experience, that God's lovingkindness is better than life; and *therefore* (says he) *my lips shall praise thee*. Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God that we have better provisions and better possessions than the wealth of this world can afford us, and that in the service of God, and in communion

with him, we have better employments and better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

II. How he will praise God, and how long, v. 4. He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God and dependence on him. Observe,

1. His manner of blessing God: *“Thus will I bless thee, thus as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away, like the morning cloud, but shine more and more, like the morning sun.”* Or, “I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee.”

2. His continuance and perseverance therein: *I will bless thee while I live.* Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours and repeat our thanksgivings for them. We must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks, and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come of which we say, *We have no pleasure in them*, yet still every day must be a thanksgiving-day, even to our dying-day. In this work we must spend our time because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity.

3. His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him: *I will lift up my hands in thy name.* We must have an eye to God's name (to all that by which he has made himself known) in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with, — *Hallowed be thy name*, and to conclude with, — *Thine is the glory.* This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty and against our special enemies in God's name, that is, in the strength of his Spirit and grace, ^{<3716>}Psalm 71:16; ^{<3802>}Zechariah 10:12. We must make all our vows in God's name; to him we must engage ourselves and in a dependence upon his grace. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted. *In thee do we boast all the day long.*

III. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, v. 5.

1. With inward complacency: *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness*, not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, ^{<2216>}Isaiah 25:6. David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's loving kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a gracious soul, ^{<2218>}Psalms 36:8; 65:4. And there is that in a gracious soul which takes abundant satisfaction in God and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God; they desire no more than his favour to make them happy: and they have a transcendent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are sapless and without relish, as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of this consolation.

2. With outward expressions of this satisfaction; he will praise God *with joyful lips*. He will praise him,

(1.) Openly. His mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believes and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God; not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart (^{<2219>}Matthew 15:8), but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak (^{<2221>}Psalms 45:1), both for the exciting of our own devout affections and for the edification of others.

(2.) Cheerfully. We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

IV. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God when he was most retired (v. 6): *I will praise thee when I remember thee upon my bed*. We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now that David was shut out from public ordinances he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something towards making up his loss. Observe here,

1. How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, ^{<2222>}Psalms 10:4. The thoughts of God were ready to him: "*I remember thee*; that is, when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand, present to my mind." This

subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him: “*I meditate on thee.*” Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

2. When David employed himself thus — *upon his bed* and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but, wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. Upon my *beds* (so some); being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay two nights together in the same bed; but wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground and with a stone for his pillow, good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarcely leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore, rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking and gave him wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God. Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed (^{<B66>}Psalm 6:6), but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departs from our eyes (through pain, or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind) our souls, by remembering God, may be at ease, and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done. See ^{<B67>}Psalm 16:7; 17:3; 4:4; 119:62. There were night-watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God (^{<B01>}Psalm 134:1), in which, probably, David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites; and now that he could not keep place with them he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

^{<B51>}PSALM 63:7-11

DAVID TRIUMPHING IN HOPE

David, having expressed his desires towards God and his praises of him, here expresses his confidence in him and his joyful expectations from him (v. 7): *In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice*, alluding either to the wings of the cherubim stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell (“I will rejoice in thy oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee”), or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagle's young ones (^{<B94>}Exodus

19:4, ^{<621>}Deuteronomy 32:11), which speaks the divine power, and the young ones of the common hen (^{<457>}Matthew 23:37), which speaks more of divine tenderness. It is a phrase often used in the psalms (^{<578>}Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4), and no where else in this sense, except ^{<822>}Ruth 2:12, where Ruth, when she became a proselyte, is said to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*. It is our duty to *rejoice in the shadow of God's wings*, which denotes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil. Now let us see further,

I. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope which the word of God was the only foundation of: —

1. His former experiences of God's power in relieving him: "*Because thou hast been my help when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy. Thou hast been not only my helper, but my help;*" for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, *Hitherto the Lord has helped us*, and must therefore resolve that we will never desert him, never distrust him, nor ever droop in our walking with him.

2. The present sense he had of God's grace carrying him on in these pursuits (v. 8): *My soul follows hard after thee*, which speaks a very earnest desire and a serious vigorous endeavour to keep up communion with God; if we cannot always have God in our embraces, yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth towards him as our prize, ^{<1084>}Philippians 3:14. To press hard after God is to follow him closely, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him swiftly, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and he owns, to the glory of God, *Thy right hand upholds me*. God upheld him,

(1.) Under his afflictions, that he might not sink under them. *Underneath are the everlasting arms.*

(2.) In his devotions. God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well-doing. Those that follow hard after God would soon fail and faint if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit of him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. It is by the power of God (that is his right hand) that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope that he would, in due time, give him that which he so earnestly desired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires and kept them up.

II. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, v. 9, 10. There were those that *sought his soul to destroy it*, not only his life (which they struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness), but his soul, which they sought to destroy by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul (so doing what they could to starve it), and by sending him to serve other gods, so doing what they could to poison it, ^{<1269>}1 Samuel 26:19. But he foresees and foretels,

(1.) That they shall *go into the lower parts of the earth*, to the grave, to hell; their enmity to David would be their death and their damnation, their ruin, their eternal ruin.

(2.) That they shall fall by the sword, by the sword of God's wrath and his justice, by the sword of man, ^{<1268>}Job 19:28, 29. They shall die a violent death, ^{<6630>}Revelation 13:10. This was fulfilled in Saul, who fell by the sword, his own sword; David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of his hand, once and again; for precepts, not prophecies, are our rule.

(3.) That *they shall be a portion for foxes*; either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts (Saul lay a good while unburied) or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, ^{<2344>}Isaiah 34:14. Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; *Bring them forth and slay them before me*, ^{<1237>}Luke 19:27.

2. That he himself should gain his point at last (v. 11), that he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed: *The king shall rejoice in God.*

(1.) He calls himself *the king*, because he knew himself to be so in the divine purpose and designation; thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself *more than a conqueror*, ^{<487>}Romans 8:37. Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection.

(2.) He doubts not but that though he was now sowing in tears he should reap in joy. *The king shall rejoice.*

(3.) He resolves to make God the Alpha and Omega of all his joys. He shall *rejoice in God*. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the Prince shall rejoice in God; he has already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming. Two things would be the good effect of David's advancement: —

[1.] It would be the consolation of his friends. *Every one that swears to him* (that is, to David), that comes into his interest and takes an oath of allegiance to him, *shall glory* in his success; or *every one that swears by him* (that is, by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol, ^{<483>}Deuteronomy 6:13), and then it means all good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name; they shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement. *Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me*. Those that heartily espouse the cause of Christ shall glory in its victory at last. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*

[2.] It would be the confutation of his enemies: *The mouth of those that speak lies*, of Saul, and Doeg, and others that misrepresented David and insulted over him, as if his cause was desperate, *shall be quite stopped*; they shall not have one word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed. Apply this to Christ's enemies, to those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him while their hearts are not with him; their mouth shall be stopped with that word, *I know you not whence you are*; they shall be for ever speechless, ^{<422>}Matthew 22:12. The mouths of those also that speak lies against him, that *pervert the right ways of the Lord* and speak ill of his holy religion, will be stopped in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the

hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.