

Faith in a Dry, Parched, and Thirsty Land

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[0 : 00] Psalm 63. Give you a minute to find that. Psalm 63, a psalm of David when he was in the desert of Judah.

You, God, are my God. Earnestly I seek you. I thirst for you. My whole being longs for you. In a dry and parched land where there is no water.

I've seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 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. I will be satisfied as with the richest of foods.

With singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you. I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings.

[1 : 17] I cling to you. Your right hand upholds me. Those who want to kill me will be destroyed. They will go down into the depths of the earth.

They will be given over to the sword and will become food for jackals. But the king will rejoice in God. All who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

Thank you for the reading and especially thank you for the prayer.

I'm sure it's happened to you. In fact, I'm pretty convinced it's happened to all of us. For me, it is typically seated in a train.

And it happens as well in the silent carriage as well. It's one of those occasions where I haven't been listening to a podcast or music. And I just happen to put the headphones down.

[2 : 19] And then you hear someone a few seats away, clearly on their mobile. Meanwhile, you're only hearing one side of the conversation.

But it starts to change the tone of the conversation. It gets louder. And it's not about booking a squash court. It's not about when the person will be home and what they're looking forward to have for a meal.

It is quite serious. Again, you're listening to only one half of the conversation. But you know it's quite intense. It's so intense that you are possibly inclined to get up out of your seat, gently walk over to the individual and say, Really, please, I'm not sure you should be saying all this in a public setting. We can all listen in. I say you're tempted, but we're British and we don't do such things. So we put our headphones back in. That's on a train.

But one evening in a church in Glasgow, you hear the following. You, God, are my God. Earnestly I seek you.

[3 : 36] I thirst for you. My whole being longs for you in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Psalm 63 verse 1.

Or it may be actually in the Hebrew translation it could be the end of Psalm 62. But either way, David's words in this first verse are so intense.

We might wonder if we really should be listening. If we should be overhearing what he is praying to the Lord. It feels like we're eavesdropping on a conversation that is way too intimate for us.

Should we be listening? Psalm 63 is in our Bible, so we are to listen. Of course, David's experience is unique to him.

But when we hear David speak to God about God's faithful care for him in his time of crisis, we actually end up overhearing David telling us how faithful God is to all his people.

[4 : 47] David gives us hope because as he prays to God, we hear him tell us about God. Here's my point.

When we are in a dry, parched, and thirsty land, and we may feel at a loss for words, we can reasonably pray David's words to God in our time of need.

Because God does not change. God does not change. He is faithful to his people. He cares for his people in their times of crisis.

So we're not eavesdropping. We're not listening inappropriately. We are listening for words of assurance that is meant for you and for me.

So hear the following. First, with me, in verse 1. And here, David pleads to God. David is in the desert of Judah.

[5 : 49] It's most likely when he is fleeing Jerusalem. One of his sons, Absalom, has orchestrated a coup d'etat. David faced danger.

And that is why in part, in part, he is earnestly seeking God. This is why in part, in part, he pleads to God.

I say in part for a reason. David pleads to God, earnestly seeks God. Not only because he is in peril or in danger.

But because David has had a prior experience of God's faithfulness. Look down with me in verse 1. See how David calls God, my God.

He thirsts for God because he knows God alone can answer his need. In verse 2, David pleads with God out of his experience of God's power and glory.

[6 : 49] Additionally, God's love is better than life itself, declares David. You see, the need David faces is the threat to his life.

That's the need. But the confidence David has to plead to God is because of who God is. Whom God has proven to David in the past himself to be.

Maybe we could put it this way. If God wasn't who he is, and if he wasn't powerful and glorious, and as we'll come to in this psalm, steadfast in love.

Then there would be no reason for David to plead, to earnestly seek God. It's obvious in other spheres of life.

We don't ask for help from people we can't trust. Or we don't ask for help from people that we think, well, they can't help me. Confidence in God's care is the only, it is the only sure hope in times of great crisis.

[7 : 59] Christians in parts of the world today face threats from very hostile governments. These Christians daily face persecution, imprisonment, and death.

They feel the reality of what it's like to live in desert-like conditions. In a different way, but in no less significant way.

So do you. So do I. So do we. There are times. And there are seasons when it can feel to us that life is very dry.

And we feel parched. And we feel that this is a time of crisis and threat. When facing illness.

Or loss. Or when there's conflict within our family. When there's trouble in our church fellowship.

And just simply living in a society increasingly at odds with God's will for women and men.

[9 : 03] We want to plead to God. Because it can be frightening. It can be very frightening living in a crisis. It can be bewildering when facing threat.

And that is precisely. Precisely when we can echo David's words to God. Not just out of our need. Because if we let David teach us in Psalm 63.

We learn more about who God is. In God's kindness. Psalm 63 gives us words. How can we put it? Words from God.

That we can use to plead to God. Because God's faithful character never changes. So we can hear David plead. And we're not eavesdropping.

Secondly. In verses 2 to 5. Here David praise God's love. Oh it's not the only thing he's praising.

But look how things focus with an intense beam.

[10 : 08] On his love. Now David says that he gained this crucial assurance. In verses 2 to 5. In the sanctuary. Where he refers to.

And what this sanctuary is. Is not entirely clear to commentators. What is clear however. Is that the Hebrew word that David is using.

And that's the language in which this psalm was originally written. That word sanctuary. Relates very closely to God's holiness. God's set apartness.

And his sacredness. But here's the thing. David saw God's glory. We can call that his holiness. His power. Nothing can stop God from doing what he intends.

And his steadfast love to David. Glory. Power. Focus in on. Steadfast.

[11:03] Faithful. Love. God has not only the holy power to help him. And the holy power that is majestic and great.

To help him. But the love. The steadfast love to help him. It's when David's life is threatened. Did you notice that? It's precisely when his life is threatened.

That he says your love is better than life itself. The irony can't be more striking. His very life is at risk of being lost. And he says but actually.

Your steadfast love is greater than life itself. God's love is steadfast. Because God is holy and powerful. God is holy and powerful.

And therefore his love is steadfast. And this moves David to praise. Or bless the Lord. With a satisfaction. A satisfaction that is like eating a superb meal.

[12:01] Verse 5. Now where is the sanctuary? Where is the sanctuary where we can see.

And know for ourselves the power. Glory. And steadfast love. Of the Lord. Where do we go. To find satisfaction like eating the richest of foods.

Even when it feels like we are in a dry. Parched and thirsty land. Where is there a sanctuary for us? Is there? Is there a sanctuary for us?

There is. And as I said last week. It's again and again. We find the sanctuary is personal.

It is Christ Jesus. He is. Now the sanctuary. In Christ. You are invited to see the holiness of God.

[13:06] The power of God. And therefore. The steadfast love of God for his people. In fact. In Christ. You are invited to see.

More clearly. What David in comparison. Could only glimpse from afar. From a distance. Power. And steadfast love.

Long after David wrote this psalm. The apostle Paul. Writing to the ancient church in Ephesus. Shared a prayer. That the apostle was praying. For these.

Christians in Ephesus. You will be familiar with it. I bet. In chapter 3. Paul writes. For this reason. I kneel before the father. From whom every family in heaven and on earth.

Derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches. He may strengthen you with. Power. Through his spirit.

[14:05] In your inner being. So that Christ. May dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you. Being rooted. And established in. Love. May have power.

Together with all the Lord's holy people. To grasp. How wide. And long. And high. And deep. Is the love of Christ. And to know this love. That surpasses knowledge.

That you may be filled. To the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians chapter 3. Power. Glory.

Holiness. Played out in love. Seen in the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus' steadfast love. For. Broken people.

Troubled people. Guilty people. And lost people. We see in him. In the way he relates to people. We see.

[15:04] Assurance. For ourselves. Seen in the gospels. His absolute power. Over evil. And death. You see his ability. To help.

And when you see his love. And ability. He is your hope. He is our help. In the wilderness. Through which we may be passing. Through which you may be passing. Right now.

Because he has both the ability. To help us. And the steadfast love. To help us. But thirdly. Now in verses 6 to 8. Hear David. Remember.

God's help. Even in the middle of the night. When sleep escapes him. David remembers. Or meditates.

Upon the Lord's faithfulness to him. Verse 6. This keeps him going. In present trouble. You are my help. Verse 7. That is arising out of his.

[16:03] Remembering. What happened to him in the past. Verse 8. Your right hand upholds me. You see. David is ministering. To himself. By remembering.

God's past faithfulness. To him. Now here's something for us. When you are in life's. Parched. Dry. And thirsty land. Or when you are in a crisis. Look back. Look back. And remember. Don't lapse. Into amnesia. Or memory loss. Remember Christ's faithfulness to you. Remember that. And you will find. And you are.

You will end up recalling. Past experiences. Of his kindness. His protection. And his goodness to you. When you look to him. You will remember. Surely this will happen to you.

[16:58] You will remember. Past answered prayer. Past provisions. And past forgiveness. When you are in trouble now. And you can't see your way ahead.

Look back. And remember his mercies to you. That is one of the many ways. The spirit helps you. Here and now. But fourthly and finally.

Verses 9 to 11. Hear David rejoice. In God's. Triumph. Let's hear these words. Those who want to kill me.

Will be destroyed. They will go down. Into the depths of the earth. They will be given over. To the sword. And become food. For jackals. Now we really are. Overhearing something.

And I. Would imagine. In one sense. David's language. In these verses. If we are really honest. Want to make us. Step back. A little bit. Should God's people.

[17:53] Really use such vindictive language. I mean. Is David. Sort of a little bent out of shape. Well. Keep in mind.

At least two possible qualifications. First. David's enemies. Are not just ordinary enemies. They are enemies.

Of God's anointed king. The Messiah. This is where David's unique identity. Is important. We are not David. In that respect. To attack the Lord's king.

His Messiah. Is to attack God himself. Psalm 2. For example. Describes how serious. That attack is. But also how futile. That attack is.

But second. Even as we listen to these words of David. Do you hear. That it's not so much David's might. And skill. Which gives him confidence. As it is his assurance.

[18:50] Of God's ultimate triumph. In verse 11. But the king. Will rejoice. In God. That's. David's confidence.

Is in. The Lord's ultimate victory. And triumph. The Lord will achieve victory. Not only on behalf. Of his Messiah. But when he rescues the Messiah.

All God's people. Will be saved. And rescued. And share in the triumph. Because when the Lord wins. The Lord's people. Also win.

Yet even here. The significance. Of what David proclaims. Is actually there. In the final line. But the king. Will rejoice in God. All who.

Swear by God. Will glory in him. While the mouths. Of liars. Will be silenced. But the king. Will rejoice in God. And all who swear by God. Will glory in him.

[19:48] In union with Christ. This is the point. In union with Christ. By faith in him now. You too. You too.

Can share. In the joy. Of the king. In the king. We share. In the king's joy. Concerning the triumph. Of the Lord. This is because. We are the Lord's people. In union with Christ.

Not one day. You'll be his people. Now by faith. And grace. You are already. The Lord's people. And therefore.

The promise. Of your being. Part of the victory parade. Is true. And real. And sure. This is because. We are the Lord's people. And his enemies. Are to some degree. To some degree.

Our enemies. And our enemies. Those who would attack the church. And try to destroy the church. Are the Lord's enemies. Of course. We have to be careful.

[20:44] What we mean by this. But the triumph. Is not our achievement. It's not our might. Or our skill. It's not. It's not our courage. It's not even our faithfulness. It is the Lord's doing.

And. You need this hope. We need this hope. You need this assurance. We need this assurance. Unquestionably. Unquestionably.

The persecuted church. The persecuted church. And we really must take this seriously. I think in the West. The persecuted church. They are our brothers and sisters.

They need this assurance. They face terrible conflict. And crises. And we Christians. In the West. Must pray with them. And for them.

As they walk with Christ. And walk the way of faithful endurance. Because they are our sisters and brothers. But as we pray with them. And learn from them.

[21:43] Together with them. Psalm 63. Can strengthen us. In our challenging days. Right here and now. In light of what's in the media.

And in our news sources. All of us face. Very uncertain economic times. And socially fragile days. And it's never a case. That the church.

That Christians are exempt. Somehow or other. Set free from the problems. Of their own immediate. Context. In the context. Context socially. And historically. And these. Days. Right now. Could well be a wake-up call. To the church. And how the church responds. In this crisis. Actually will reveal.

Where our confidence. And hope rest. These days. Remind us. Of what the apostle. Peter. Wrote to. An earlier group.

[22 : 42] Of Christians. Whom he described. As strangers. In this world. And as strangers. In this world. Christians. Will experience. 1 Peter.

Chapter 1. Verse 6. Grief. By various trials. So. As I end. Psalm 63. Is strikingly relevant. For the church today. For you and me today.

But as we hear. David's words. In Psalm 63. Actually. Psalm 63. If you will. Carries us. Further forward. To hear.

With greater clarity. Greater amplification. Greater resonance. What comes in the. Final book. Of our Bibles. The revelation.

Given to. To John. For the church. Throughout the ages. John. Sees. And hears. He overhears. Heaven itself. Declare the triumph. Of the Lamb.

[23 : 38] And God. A great day. Is coming. And John. Hears. This. After this. I heard. Says John. What sounded like. The roar. Of a great multitude. In heaven. Shouting.

Hallelujah. Salvation. And glory. And power. Belong to our God. For true. And just. Are his judgments. He has condemned. The great prostitute.

Who corrupted the earth. By her adulteries. He has avenged. On her. The blood. Of his servants. What David. Was pleading for. In Psalm 63.

That's what John. Overhears. And what that. Will mean. What that. Will accomplish. For us. Is what John. Sees. Towards the end. Of this revelation. In chapter 21.

Then I saw. A new heaven. And a new earth. For the first heaven. And the first earth. Had passed away. And there was no longer. Any sea. I saw the holy city.

[24 : 39] The new Jerusalem. Coming down. Out of heaven. From God. Prepared as a bride. Beautifully dressed. For her husband. And I heard. A loud voice. From the throne.

Saying look. God's dwelling place. Is now. Among the people. And he will dwell. With them. They will be his people.

And God himself. Will be with them. And be their God. He. Will. Wipe. Every tear. From their eyes. There will be no more death.

Or mourning. Or crying. Or pain. For the old order. Of things. Has passed away. We're meant. To hear these words. We're meant. To hear David's words. We're invited. To use David's words. To express. To express.

[25 : 41] Our needs. When we can't even find. The right words. To pray. We can do this. However. In assurance. And hope. That David. Could only dimly. Perceive.

We're encouraged. To take heart. Not only. Psalm 63. But to take the heart. The revelation. Given by Jesus. To John. And now sent out. To all the churches. Because we too.

Walk in a dry. Parched. And very thirsty. Land right now. But wonderfully. Wonderfully. Even in this midst. Of all this.

We can walk. And delight in the Lord. Praise the Lord. And glory. In who he is. Because you are my help.

I sing. In the shadow of your wings. I cling to you. Your right hand. Upholds me. Father.

[26 : 40] May it be so. For me. And for all of us. This evening. Solely. Because of your kindness. And goodness. Goodness to us. Through your great.

Messiah. King. Our crucified. And risen. Savior. Jesus. Amen.