

Seeking God in the Wilderness

2026-07-19 – Psalm 63

Do you seek God? Could those around you accurately describe you as a God-seeker? What does it mean to seek God? To be clear we know the plain and repeated teaching from God's Holy Word that no sinner on his or her own seeks God (see Romans 3:10-18). We seek the true and living God only because God first sought after us (Luke 19:10). As John put it, we love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). But for the believer how do we seek God? When and why do we seek God and what trust can strengthen us when we, like David, find ourselves in a severe trial? Though for us as Christians it may not be a literal wilderness (like it was for David) we still face various trials (1 Peter 1:6) and that we have weaknesses (Romans 8:26). And though for us the enemies around us may not be our own family (David's son Absalom seeking to murder his father) or be physically threatening us, Scripture does tell us to expect persecution (2 Timothy 3:12) even in our families (Matthew 10:34-36). Join us as we look to God's Holy and awesome Word in Psalm 63 to dwell on the rich resources God blesses His children with. The truth here will strengthen every Christian's fellowship with God and urge us to more zealously seek Him in trials! May Christ be praised! Soli Deo Gloria!

Grace and peace from God our Father, through Jesus Christ, our risen, ruling, one day soon returning Lord and the only Savior.

Brothers and sisters in Christ and friends, it is good to be with you today on this Lord's Day, and it is such a joy to open up the God-breathed Scriptures to read the Word and to hear the Word preached and also to hear the Word read and sung and prayed. So praise God for that. What a joy it is to freely gather.

This morning's sermon text is Psalm 63. If you don't have a copy of God's Word, please let us know. We would love to get you one of those. If you need one and if you lack one, please come up and see myself or someone else. We'd love to get you a Bible.

Please stand now, if you're able, for the reading of God's Word. I'm reading from the New American Standard Bible, 1995. Hear the Word of the Lord from Psalm 63.

A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water... Thus 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. So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me. But those who seek my life to destroy it, will go into the depths of the earth. They will be delivered over to the power of the sword; They will be a prey for foxes. But the king will rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him will glory, For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped. (Psalm 63:1-11)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we entrust this time now to You. We pray, Lord, that we would remember the grass withers, the flower fades, but Your Word, Lord, will never, ever fade. It forever abides. It is eternal. And so we thank You, God, for this Word in Psalm 63. We pray that we would remember that You are the God who sanctifies Your people and renews Your people through Your Word. And so, God, we ask for Your help and Your Spirit's illumination. We pray for Your blessing now as we look to Psalm 63.

And I do pray for these friends, if any are in a wilderness-like experience, or will face a wilderness-like trial, God, that You would strengthen them through this sermon. And that God, the truth that You have revealed here in Psalm 63 would be a blessing. For those discouraged and weary, strengthen them and comfort them and build them up in their most holy faith. We pray You grant faith and repentance where it is needed. And today, for some, the day of salvation would be today. So God, we entrust to You our time now in Psalm 63. Be glorified, and through us we pray in Jesus' name, and all God's people said, "Amen."

The wilderness. I wonder what comes to your mind whenever you hear that word, the wilderness. Think of a desert. You think of a dry land, a wasteland maybe. A dangerous area with many uncertainties, even possibly death, lacking water.

David found himself multiple times throughout his life in a wilderness. He found himself in a wilderness literally and physically when he had to flee from those who were pursuing him. But he also found himself spiritually in a wilderness when there's a famine in his soul, a desire for the worshiping community, the people of God, a desire for peace even within his family.

David was a man who, as we've noted in previous weeks, came from a very dysfunctional family. Much drama, even death threats within the family. Consider just briefly in David's life, his oldest brother—remember David was the youngest of eight brothers born to Jesse. And when he went to bring his brothers' food at his father's request, David went there and he heard Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, defy the living God of Israel. And what happened? David said, "What will be done for the man who defeats this pagan?"

Well, Eliab, his oldest brother, heard his brother and said the following to David. His anger burned against him, according to the text of the Bible. And Eliab said to David, "Why have you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart, for you have come down in order to see the battle." Eliab, oldest brother of Jesse, calling his brother wicked, evil of heart, conniving—family dysfunction, family drama.

Later on in his life, David would marry Michal, who was none other than the daughter of Saul, king of Israel. And so King Saul was David's father-in-law. And he had a love-hate relationship with David. David would play his harp and soothe Saul to the point where an evil spirit would leave him and calm him down. But then Saul would take a spear, which he did on more than one occasion, and say to himself, "I will take this spear and pin David against the wall. I will murder my own son-in-law, my daughter's husband." David dealt with that.

Saul, a father-in-law who hunted him down like a dog, who chased him through caves, who wanted to put him to death, who viewed him as a threat, who was jealous of him. David should have been praised by Saul as Israel's champion and defender, as the one who slew enemies. And indeed for many he was, but Saul was the king and Saul saw David as a threat. And so he sought to kill him and murder him.

And some would position Psalm 63 at a time when David was in the wilderness, fleeing from Saul. Others, though, would say, actually, it seems that it's later on in David's life when David is the king. It seems David is the king based upon the text here. If you look there, verse 11, ***"But the king will rejoice in God."*** Is he referring to Saul? Is he referring to himself? Most have suggested today, at least, that it is David speaking in the third person there. Calvin and others held that it was Saul, the time when Saul was chasing him down, so there is debate. We don't actually know with certainty, but there was some situation when David was being hunted down, likely when Saul, his father-in-law, or David's son, Absalom, was pursuing him to put him to death.

Because it was not only his oldest brother, it was not only his father-in-law, it was also his own son, Absalom, who sought David's death. In 2 Samuel 15 we read this: ***Then a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom [i.e. David's son]." That's David's son. David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise and let us flee, for otherwise none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he, [Absalom], will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."*** (2 Samuel 15)

See, Absalom had been telling people who came into the city seeking justice, "If only I were king, you would get justice." And so the text of the Bible in 2 Samuel 15 actually says to us that in this way Absalom won the hearts of the people of Israel. He won their hearts against David, and now Absalom, David's son, who should have respected him and esteemed him, wanted him dead. He wanted to reject his father as king, and he himself wanted to be king. He wanted to reign over Israel.

In the same text of 2 Samuel 15, David sends away the Ark of the Covenant. He sends away that Ark of the Covenant which was tied to the special protection and presence of God where He dwelt among His people. And so David, in this wilderness, fleeing from his son, perhaps, or maybe his father-in-law, was estranged. He was away from comfort, protection, access to resources, food, the worshiping community, and so forth, in this wilderness, spiritually and physically.

And yet in God's kindness, through that trial, the Lord gave us Psalm 63. Matthew Henry, the commentator, said this:

"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 it were, in a wilderness."

David was in a wilderness, spiritually, physically, and yet this wonderful and beautiful and deeply encouraging truth-filled psalm was penned out of those reflections, out of that trial. Derek Kidner, the Old Testament scholar, puts it this way:

"Once more the worst has brought out David's best, in words as it did in deeds."

Psalms 63 is indeed beautiful and poetic. Many rightly read it and look to it for comfort and assurance when they go through their own trials in the wilderness. And I wonder, are you going through a wilderness in your own life today? Well, what is a wilderness? Mark Futato puts it this way:

“The wilderness is a place where we experience isolation—separation from family, friends, the worshiping community, and seemingly even God Himself. The wilderness is a place where we experience desolation, joylessness, disconsolation, sorrow, confusion, loneliness, barrenness, and lifelessness.”

What are you going through right now? Are you suffering and enduring in your own life?

- Are you in a wilderness?
- Are you facing a wilderness-like experience? And if not,
- What will you do when you face such a trial?

For we are in a fallen world, friends. Are you preparing your heart for that time? For that time so that you make the most of every opportunity, for that is indeed an opportunity. We must be preparing our hearts now well for that.

John Calvin helpfully says this:

Apt as we are, when assaulted by the very slightest trials, to lose the comfort of any knowledge of God we may previously have possessed, it is necessary that we should notice this and learn by his example to struggle to maintain our confidence under the worst troubles that can befall us.

Are you prepared? And when trials come, even a less significant trial than what David experienced in the wilderness and with his family dysfunction, are you prepared to do what David did, to worship in the way that David worshiped?

Before we march through this Psalm, Lord willing, in just a moment together to see some wonderful truth here for us that we can cling to in our own times of trials, I do want to make one thing clear. I think there's an important note on the front end of this sermon, and it's simply this. When you look at verse one, **“O God, You are my God, I shall seek You earnestly,”** there was an unhelpful category introduced into our country a number of years ago: those who are seeking God, those who are seekers, a classification of people who are not unbelievers, but are not Christians, they're kind of in between, they're seekers.

“THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

(Romans 3:11-12 quoting Psalm 14 and 53)

And if you've used that term in the past, don't hear me berating you. It was probably well-intentioned in your evangelistic efforts, but the reason it's misguided and can be misleading is because the Bible very clearly tells us there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks for God. It does not matter who you are—man, a woman, a boy, a girl, young, old, doesn't matter your nationality, your ethnicity, it does not matter. The Scriptures say uniformly across the board, the human race, ***there is none who understands, there's none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, they have together become useless, there's none who does good, not even one.*** That's what the Scripture teaches us.

And so we have to admit this and understand that this is a Psalm for Christians, for Christians who admit I know I don't seek God. And if He had not first sought me in His kindness and in His mercy, I would never have believed. And you understand, you cast yourself on the mercy of God and realize, I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner who does not seek God, but praise be to the Lord Almighty, He has sought me. That's what a Christian is. A Christian is one who humbly admits, God, I have not saved myself. I have not earned this. I don't deserve this. You have given me unearned favor.

And so if you're here today and you're not a Christian, you've not repented of your sins and trusted in Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins. You've not looked to Christ and His cross work. You've not looked to His resurrection. You're not looking to Him to be the only Savior of sinners. We're so glad you're here and we pray that today is the day of salvation for you. God will gladly and fully forgive you. He will accept you into His kingdom. He will do that, friends, today. He will reconcile you today, but understand, this text of Psalm 63 is for Christians, those who have trusted in Christ. David was a Spirit-filled man. He was regenerate by the Holy Spirit.

So theologically you must know this, you must understand this. Don't read this if you're not a Christian and claim something in here or think this is what I can do and there will be a promise that I meet with. That's not the case, friends.

However, there's another error, another very important error that I want to clear up as well, and it's simply this. Sometimes even we as Christians can read this text and think, Be more like David. Try harder. Work more. And we almost make what should be a wonderful invitation to the presence of God and the fellowship of God into a law, into a system, into a code. Do these things. That's not what this text is either.

Christopher Ash, who's written incredibly helpfully on the Psalm in his Christ-centered evangelical and pastoral commentary put it this way:

"It is not, David did this, and I need to try harder like David... Jesus desired God for me, and I enter into the fruits of His desire... Jesus delighted in God for me and I enter into the fruits of His delight... Jesus rejoiced in God at all times, and I enter into the fruit of His joy... Jesus was sure of final vindication, and I may be confident that in His vindication lies my hope of final victory. A psalm that can so easily be taught as a burdensome law, ('just try harder to be like David'), becomes a wonderful gospel."

When you realize and see it and read it through Christ. And so we do that as those in the new covenant, empowered and filled with the Spirit. And so I want you to realize that. Let us not read this as law, let us read this as an invitation from the God of all grace who has given us hope in Christ Jesus.

With this in mind, then, let's walk through now and see David's focus in Psalm 63. There are three main things that David focuses on in Psalm 63 that we're going to walk through and we can cling to. And after each one of these, I'll give a truth that you can hold onto as well in your own life.

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God

In the wilderness, David longed for the true God. In the wilderness, David longed for the true God. This is not an occasional, a sporadic, once-in-a-while effort, a casual interest, not at all. Mark Futato says, The search is not a casual one, nor are we indifferent or hesitant about it. It is consuming. It consumed David.

Look in your Bible there: ***O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly.*** Look at the imagery that David pulls from: ***My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*** He is panting, he is crying out, he is saying, I am desperate. I am in a position where if I do not have this, I will die. And so it is not something that we simply think of in terms of casual interest, longing for God. David was gripped by this. It governed him.

And as much as he wanted and longed for a relationship with his son, Absalom, with his father-in-law, Saul, with others in his family who were maybe siding with those men to be with him and to be reconciled to him and to be at peace with them, as much as he wanted their fellowship, David longed for one above all others, namely, the true God.

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God

a. The personal God

And who is this true God? Well, David tells us. David longed for the true God, the personal God: ***You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly*** (or the King James Version says, early, at dawn, when I wake up in my routine). You are my personal God.

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God

a. The personal God

b. The covenantal God

And David not only longed for the true and living personal God, he also longed for the true and living covenantal God. David longed for the covenantal God. This is covenantal language that you're reading here when it says, *****O God, You are my God.***** Many Old Testament scholars note this, but Psalm 63 reminds us of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the Israelites, to those who were enslaved in Egypt, where the Lord said exactly who He is. ***"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*** (Exodus 20:2)

The Lord had set His special affection upon a people who did not deserve it or earn it. And this covenant language that often gets thrown around simply means this. It is a binding promise that God will absolutely fulfill. There is nothing that can stop the promise of God from happening. If He says it will happen, it will happen. You may not see it, you may not sense it in your heart, you may look around and see evidence to the contrary. You may be thinking in your heart, “Well, all of these scholars, all of these academics don't think this is going to happen, but if God made a promise, friends, God will bring it to pass. We believe that. We believe that God is the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God.

But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord. (Leviticus 26:45)

So understand something, that the world throws around things like “my truth” today, “my truth,” and it subjectivizes everything, it relativizes everything. What's true for you, what's true for me—that's what the world does. That is not what's going on here. This is covenantal language that every single Hebrew, every single Old Testament, Old Covenant saint would have understood to be a special covenantal relationship. It was a unique relationship, one that God, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sustainer, and that providing God that God had made with particular people for their salvation.

And so please understand that when David says, “My God. O God, You are my God,” it is not something that was casually tossed around. It is speaking to a covenantal God. Derek Kidner says this:

“This relationship, i.e. that I am your God and you are my people, is the heart of the covenant from the patriarchs to the present day. (Gen. 17:8c; Heb.8:10c).”

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God
 - a. The personal God
 - b. The covenantal God
 - c. The soul-satisfying God

And so nothing has changed in the sense that the Lord is the Lord of the covenant. He makes promises that He will absolutely with certainty that is more guaranteed than anything else, He will keep that covenant. That's who David wants, the personal God, the covenantal God, but also the soul-satisfying God. The true God of heaven and earth is a soul-satisfying God.

Look in your Bible at verse 1 again: ***O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You.*** Willem VanGemeren, Old Testament scholar, says “*yearns*” means “*faint with desire.*” That's the meaning there, “fainting with desire.” And then down in verse 5 of Psalm 63: ***My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.***

David is saying here, there is only one who can satisfy my soul. It is again, no wife. It is no human. It is not relationship with my son that is at peace and wonderful. It is not any earthly relationship. It is a relationship with God Almighty.

In the wilderness, David longed for the true God.

Truth # 1

Through any wilderness trials if you are in Christ by the Spirit's power you have even greater confidence to long for and seek God!

What's the takeaway for us? Well, here's a truth we can cling to when we are in our own wilderness. Through our wilderness trials, if you are in Christ by the Spirit's power, you have even greater confidence to long for and seek God. Understand that and believe that, friends.

David did not see the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not see the fullness of God's redemption and the revelation of the Savior, our Lord, the one in whom Peter said, Angels long to look into. David, king of Israel, as close as he was to God, as experientially powerful as he was and close with God as he was, David did not have the same depth of revelation that you and I possess. He had the same Spirit of God, he worshiped the same God to be sure. But we, when we go through our wilderness trials, because we are children, sons in the Son, Jesus Christ, filled with the Spirit of God, we have greater confidence to long for and seek God, and confidence that He will meet us there as we go through that wilderness trial.

In the wilderness, David longed for the true God.

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God
2. David looked to the worthy God
 - a. The Holy God

Second, the second focus of David's prayer here is David looked to the worthy God. David looked to the worthy God. Now understand that when we say this, we're not just throwing terms around there that are not divorced from the text. If you look here in verse 2: ***Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary.***

Why is David bringing up the sanctuary? David is focused on God's holiness. He's focused on that place where sacrifices were made for the forgiveness of sins. For the people of God, that sacrificial system was set up and established because God knew that His people were sinners and to be reconciled to Him, to be at peace with Him, there needed to be a sacrificial system set up. And David is thinking to himself and missing and longing for that sanctuary. Remember, he had just sent away the Ark of the Covenant. He's feeling estranged from the believing community. He's feeling alone. And yet he looks to the worthy God. And he knows this God is holy. And he knows this God is accessible to Him, even in the wilderness, away from the believing community.

In the wilderness, David looked to the worthy God, the holy God. He was recalling times in his life when he worshiped God. J. Alec Motyer, Old Testament scholar who went to be with the Lord in the last few years, said this:

David has past spiritual experiences and memories ready at hand to fortify him for present emergencies. The force of what David says is this: When formerly I experienced this longing, You responded to me in the sanctuary, revealing Yourself in power and glory, let it be so now in the desert.

He's saying, Lord, may the worship of Your name, may the awe that You are the God who is this holy, this good, be present. I will look to You. I will look to Your attributes. I will remember Your attributes.

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God
2. David looked to the worthy God
 - a. The Holy God
 - b. The powerful God

David looked to the worthy God who is holy. David also looked to the holy God who is powerful. Now, notice the connection here: ***Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.*** (Psalm 63:2-3)

What's going on there? All that it is is simply this: the sanctuary, that tabernacle where the presence of God was, where the people of God knew the Lord said I will specially dwell with you—this place where sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins were established and set up, this place where the people would worship God and sing praises to God and meet with God—this place was a place of power where sinners would find reconciliation with God, forgiveness for their sins, truth of God going forth as the priests opened up the Scripture and they taught from the Scripture. And David is saying to see Your power, to see Your glory. I'm looking to You, the holy God. I'm looking to You, the powerful God.

In the wilderness...

1. David longed for the true God
2. David looked to the worthy God
 - a. The Holy God
 - b. The powerful God
 - c. The loving God
 - d. the protecting God

And that's not all. David's also looking to the worthy God who is holy, who's powerful, but also the holy and worthy and powerful God who is loving, the loving God. This verse is astonishing. Look at verse 3 in your Bibles: ***Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You.***

This is an astonishing verse. David is saying here all that the best life has to offer—everything. Think about it. Health, wealth, happiness, freedom, you name it. Everything that life has to offer. It's just a generic life. And he's saying the lovingkindness of God. This attribute of God, is better than life itself. In other words, if I do not have it in my life, I would rather die. This is amazing. He's saying the lovingkindness of God Almighty is superior to whatever life I can picture. He's saying, There is something that I desire more than

life itself. If Saul comes and murders me and kills me, if Absalom, my son, comes and murders me and kills me, as long as I have the lovingkindness of God, all is well.

This is what David is saying: ***Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You.*** There is something I can praise God for, even when I'm in the wilderness. Even when I don't have the comfort of the believing community, my guards, my protection, even though I think I could die tomorrow, there is something that I can do, and that is namely, praise the Lord with my lips.

Look to the Lord, who is worthy of all worship, because He is the God who is the God of love. J. Alec Motyer again beautifully says it this way: *"Circumstances and places change, changeless love and responsive praise do not."*

You and I change. Our health changes. Our relationships change. Many things change here on earth. But through all those changes, through all those pits and valleys, through all those moments where you are in the wilderness, you can rest assured, friends, that the changeless love of God Almighty, that the worthiness of Him to be praised, that does not change. And you can do that any place, anywhere.

I love the fact that David cries out in the wilderness and he says, Even here, my lips will praise Your name because I know exactly what You're like. You are holy, You are powerful, You are loving. And for those of us who are in Christ Jesus, understand the connection here as well. This love that David knew and experienced was connected to the Old Testament. So David thinks back to the Torah and Deuteronomy. He thinks back to those wonderful words in Deuteronomy 7 when the Lord said, I love you, not because you are more mighty in number, not because you are more powerful than the other nations around you. He says this: I love you because I love you. You don't deserve it. You've earned it. I love you because I love you. And so that love is grounded in Me.

And so David is amazed at the lovingkindness of God that is eternal, that never changes. He's blown away by this lovingkindness of God. But David did not know or see or have the same revelation again that we, in the kindness of God, because of the place we are at in redemptive history, have access to. You have to realize this.

And so we see in the New Testament the following: John 15:9 – consider the love of God that we know is eternal from the Old Testament and unchanging in the Old Testament, but we see manifested most clearly in Christ in the New. John 15:9, ***"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you,"*** Jesus said. (John 15:9) The eternal Father, the eternal Father who has always existed, who has always loved the eternal Son, that same love is the love that Jesus says He has for you. It should never cease to amaze you. It should never cease to amaze our minds and blow our minds to the point where we worship and our lips just praise Him. ***Remain in My love,"*** Jesus says. (John 15:9) And we know the expression of that is obviously supremely where Jesus laid down His life and died on the cross. ***By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us.*** (1 John 3:16)

So where David looked back and remembered the covenant-making love of God, the sustaining love of God, the God who was the Creator and the Lord, and the God who gave Him victories, and the God who loved Him and delivered Him from all these trials, yes and amen. We look supremely to the cross of Jesus

Christ. We look to Christ and we say, the love of God in Christ Jesus, the love of God in Christ Jesus, that is better than life.

Paul the Apostle says this: Christ's love compels us. ***The love of Christ surpasses knowledge.*** (Ephesians 3:19) So the love of God gets better and better and better. It grows bigger in redemptive history to the point where we realize, yes, God's love is unchanging. Yes, it is rooted in His character. Yes, it is rooted in His mercy. Yes, it is rooted in who He is, the perfect God. But also now we see, revealed by God, at the perfect time, in the perfect way, on the cross of Christ, the love of God that David was only anticipating, but we have now, by the grace of God, through the Spirit's power, seen.

Truth # 2

In Christ by the Spirit's power you know the greatest and most loving God in Christ Jesus—He is worthy of your worship and will protect now and forever!

What does that mean for us? Well, it means this. Simply, when we go through our own trials, we go through our own wilderness trials, in Christ, remember, you're in Christ if you're a Christian. By the Spirit's power, you know the greatest and most loving God. You know this. And He is more worthy of your worship. And you should know this, that not only is God holy, not only is He a God who is powerful and loving, He's also a God who is protecting.

Look at all the images David picks up on in the text here of Psalm 63. Starting in verse 6: ***When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.*** So I can't sleep. I'm restless, David is saying. But I'm going to make the most of this time. I'm going to remember You, Lord. I'm going to meditate on You. This calls to mind Psalm 1: ***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, but... delights in the law of the Lord.***

David says, ***You have been my help.*** Look at the images: ***In the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You. Your right hand upholds me.*** So God is his help. He is under the shadow of the wings of God Almighty. That is a metaphor to describe the fact that you are perfectly safe. Nothing can touch you. Nothing can harm you. And ***Your right hand upholds me.*** All throughout the Old Testament and the New, the right hand is referring especially to the power of God, the rule and the power of God.

Now to be clear, God does not have a body in the way we think of this, as a human body. It's giving us what is called an anthropomorphism. A way of helping us understand something, condescending down to our level. So the right hand, the powerful right hand of God Almighty, is what David's soul is clinging to. And soul in Hebrew, by the way, refers to all that a person is oftentimes. So when you see soul, don't think like many do in the Greek or Western tradition of body-soul, this dualism. The Hebrews would think of soul as all that you are. Mind, heart, soul, everything. So you see mentions of lips, mentions of hands there, because for a Hebrew mind, soul means all that you are. Inwardly, outwardly, a soul is your entire being.

In the wilderness, David looked to the worthy Lord. David looked to Him and said, You are holy, You are powerful, You are loving, You are protecting. And for those of us who are in Christ, we recognize that as we go through temptations in the wilderness, as we go through our own trials in Christ, by the Spirit's power, we know and we can look to the cross of Christ and know, yes, even now, especially now, He is worthy of my worship. And even now, I can rest assured that He will protect me.

In the wilderness...

3. David listened to the just God

A third focus of David's prayer is this. In the wilderness, David listened to the just God. David listened to the just God. Where are we getting this from? Is this a stretch? You're just thinking, Pastor Brandon, I don't know about that. You just really wanted an L word, didn't you there? Well, it did work out well. There's an L word there. I will say that. Worked out well. But that is not the reason why we have that there. It is grounded in the text. It's faithful to meaning.

Look at verse 9: ***But those who seek my life to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth. They will be delivered over to the power of the sword; They will be a prey for foxes.*** (Psalm 63:9-10)

Now, let's just pause there for a second. Sometimes when we read in the Bible passages like we just read, we nod our heads and go along, and this happens in Bible study settings too, we have no idea what it means, we're confused and thrown off, we can't relate to that. And so what happens in Bible studies? You think, well, no one else is asking a question, but they're all going, Mmm. So we'll just go, Mmm. We can't do that. That's not wise, that's not helpful, that's not good Bible reading.

Christopher Ash helpfully says this: *"This is always a good discipline to go through a Psalm looking for the awkward parts."* What are the awkward parts? Foxes, jackals. What are we talking about here? That all of a sudden you're talking about enemies. David's been talking about his soul clinging to God, looking to God, longing for God, then all of a sudden he's talking about enemies. Those who seek my life to destroy will go down in the depths of the earth. That seems gruesome. They will be delivered over to the power of the sword. That seems brutal. They will be a prey for foxes, or your translation might say jackals. They're going to be eaten by the last animals that come to take the remains off the bodies. That seems horrific. What's going on here?

Well, noting that this is one of those awkward parts of the Psalm, let's understand what's going on and take some meaning. Hopefully that will be a blessing to us. How is David listening to God in his trial in the wilderness in this text through these verses? Well, we have to understand something. What David is recalling, what David is bringing to his mind is prior revelation. It's again the Torah. That he as the king in Deuteronomy 17 would have written out in the presence of the priests. He would have written out the law of God in the presence of the priests. And one of those verses he would have written out was Deuteronomy 32:35 that says this: ***Vengeance is Mine, and retribution. In due time their foot will slip, for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.***

David was remembering who God is and who God had said He is. Think about the inspired poetry of Psalm 9: ***But the Lord abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, and He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.***

David was listening to the just God. He was listening to this just God who had said, I will repay. And there's three aspects of this justice of God that are important to note from this.

3. David listened to the just God
a. The avenging God

First, David listened to the just God who was an avenging God. An avenging God. He said, I will repay. Vengeance is Mine. The Apostle Paul picks this up in the book of Romans. But there's this vengeance that takes place as people are digging a pit who are enemies of God, enemies of the true king. And then it's going to fall on them. Their own violence, their own desire to plot, will fall on them. We read it earlier today, in the happy providence of God, Psalm 7:15–16: *He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends.* (Psalm 7:15–16) *The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; in the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.* (Psalm 9:15)

If you're here today and you're not a Christian, I want you to understand something. Psalm 63 does speak of you. But it speaks of you as one who, if you oppose King Jesus, will be utterly and completely lost, defeated, and destroyed. It is not, decidedly, friends, a question of if, but when, you will bow the knee to King Jesus. We would have that be today for you. We would have you not be in rebellion against your Creator and your Lord. We would have you turn and trust in Jesus. He will receive you, but understand, this is the future for those who oppose the Lord, the Lord who is angry at the wicked every day.

And David is bringing this to mind. He's listening to the Word of God from Deuteronomy, but also the inspired writings that he himself wrote. And he's bringing these truths to mind, and he's saying, This, too, I will listen to. This, too, I will, in my wilderness trial, look to and cling to, that the Lord will avenge me. He will avenge me so that those who seek my life to destroy, verse 9, will go down into the depths of the earth. They will be delivered over to the power of the sword. We just read back in 2 Samuel 15 that David said, Otherwise, Absalom, his sword, will come and slay those of us in the city. David here, if it is true that David is reflecting on a time with Absalom but even with Saul they also had swords then, would have very much had this in his mind and said they are coming at me with swords, they want to put me to death and cut me down, but they will not. They will be delivered over to the power of the sword. They will be a prey for foxes. There is a reversal coming when the judgment and the wicked schemes that they're doing to me will fall on them.

And that is true for all the wicked in the world, friends. We see this throughout the Scriptures, that the wicked scheming of that one who is doing all sorts of horrific evil, that person you and I see in the news who seems awful and wicked, that person who's scheming against Christ's church, who's harming the bride of Christ, that person too will have calamity fall on his or her head. They'll be irreversible and they'll be doomed to destruction forevermore. That's what the Scriptures teach. That's what Psalm 63 is leaning into, that David, king of Israel, was holding on to this.

3. David listened to the just God
a. The avenging God
b. The vindicating God

The just God is an avenging God. But the just God is also a vindicating God. He vindicates His people. Psalm 63:11 *But the king will rejoice in God.* Remember David speaking in the third person there is what most commentators think. I, the king of Israel, will rejoice in God. This is going to happen. I will do it here in my life while I have breath, and I will do it forevermore, David believed. And then it says this: *Everyone who*

swears by Him will glory. There is future honor and dignity. There is a future and a hope for those who are in Christ Jesus.

And so David's listening to the Word of God who testifies God is just, who testifies that God will avenge those who harm His bride, His people, but also He will vindicate His people. What does it mean to be vindicated? Proven right. Proven right. So on that last day, those who are in Christ Jesus will stand with Christ Jesus. The Lord will put His arm around them and look across the nations and those who harmed the bride of Christ and say, This one is with Me, this one is righteous, this one is just, and you persecuted him, you persecuted her, but they're with Me and they were right and you were wrong. That day is coming. That day is coming and that's what David held onto, that I will be vindicated. All those who swear by Him, by the Lord, that is, trust Him and make an oath to follow Him, are committed to faithfully do this throughout their lives. ***Everyone who swears by Him will glory.*** There is a glorious day coming.

And Paul picks this up in Romans 8 in that golden chain of redemption where he talks about this. Those who suffer with Christ will also be glorified with Christ. Same idea, same concept drawn from Psalm 63. Everyone who swears by Him in this moment in the wilderness, those few who were with David, that band of brothers as it were, and a few sisters who were in the wilderness with David, who stood together with the true King, the righteous King of Israel. David was saying, Everyone who swears by Him, the Lord, will glory. There is glory coming for you, who stand with the rightful King.

3. David listened to the just God
- a. The avenging God
 - b. The vindicating God
 - c. The silencing God

But David also listened to the just God who not only was going to avenge the evildoers, not only vindicate His own people, but also David listened to the just God who is the silencing God. What does that mean? Where do we get that from? Look at the very last part of verse 11: ***For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.***

Now here's the contrast, friends. We've already seen twice that "my lips will praise You" in verse 3 and verse 5, and "my mouth offers praises with joyful lips." So David's soul is satisfied with God and he praises Him. He can't help but praise Him. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, ***Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*** So he cannot help but praise God. That is what the righteous do. They praise God. But the wicked who speak lies, eventually they will be stopped.

And friends, here's what you have to realize. There is a day coming when lying will be no more. Lies have an expiration date. You will not be able, in the new heaven and the new earth, to tell lies, to distort the truth. It is a place of truth because it is with the God of truth. And this is the future, two futures as it were, those who are with the righteous king, and those who are unrighteous, and who are liars. Those who oppose Christ, and those who are with Christ. And there's a future for both, and it's completely opposite.

Consider what Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: ***"See the difference between the mouth that praises God, and the mouth that forges lies: The first shall never be stopped, but shall sing on for ever. The second shall be made speechless at the bar, [judgment seat, that means,] of God.***

O Lord, we seek Thee and Thy truth. Deliver us from all malice and slander, and reveal to us Thine own self for Jesus' sake, amen."

Two futures: a mouth that is silenced and full of lies that rejects God, rejects Christ, and one who humbles himself before Christ, before the righteous King, before the true King, and who'll go on to unending praise of the living God.

Truth # 3

He will vindicate all His people's sufferings, and those who oppose the Lord Jesus will be silenced forever.

Here's the third truth that you go through times of trials, you cling to friends, and I pray your soul would be encouraged by. In Christ, by the Spirit's power, you know the Lord. You know He's the righteous judge. He will avenge. He will vindicate all His people's sufferings. Yours too, brother, sister. Not just the big important Christians out there, yours too. He will vindicate all His people's sufferings, and those who oppose the Lord Jesus will be silenced forever. But there's a flip side. The saints will praise God, and that praise will continue forever and ever and ever.

So my friends, the question for you is, which path are you on? Which path are you on? Are you the liar who opposes the true king? Or are you one who praises God, who seeks after God, who understands, yes, I want this God. I want fellowship with this God. I need Him to sustain me in trials and strengthen me when I go through a wilderness experience.

Because if you're over here lying and opposing Christ's church and Christ's bride, you have limited time to fulfill what you want to do, your fleshly desires, your sinful desires. But again, the invitation to you is to repent of those sins and believe in Jesus Christ and to be saved, so that then you desire to seek God, filled with the Spirit, and you go from an enemy of God at war with God, to one who is worshiping God and seeking God at peace with God in Christ.

Let us pray. Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we thank You for the precious truth in this text. God, we are so encouraged to know that You are the Lord who will repay. We are so encouraged to know that You are a just God and a righteous God, and we thank You, God, for giving us Jesus Christ. On our own, we would be utterly lost, but You have given us in Christ a perfect Savior, a perfect Redeemer, and the lovingkindness of Yours, Lord, that is far better than life. Thank You, God, for this wonderful truth. Thank You for Psalm 63. Strengthen these friends' hearts as they go through wilderness trials to cling to You and to Your Word. God, I pray that we would long for You increasingly. Your Spirit would help us long for You. Your Spirit, God, would help us look to You and Your attributes that are perfect, just like You. Your Spirit, God, would help us listen to You and open Your Word and draw deeply from it as we go through trials. God, be glorified in us, we pray. Strengthen us. In Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen.

Scripture References (in order mentioned or quoted)

- Psalm 63 (full reading and primary text)
- 1 Samuel 17 (context of Eliab and Goliath)
- 1 Samuel (context of Saul and David)
- 2 Samuel 15 (Absalom's rebellion and David's flight)
- Exodus 20:2
- Leviticus 26:45
- Deuteronomy 17, Deuteronomy 32:35, Deuteronomy 7 (covenant love)
- Psalm 1
- Psalm 7:15–16
- Psalm 9
- John 15:9
- 1 John 3:16
- Ephesians 3:19
- Matthew 12:34
- Romans 8
- 2 Samuel 15 (repeated reference)