

“Thirsting for Christ”
Psalm 63
(Preached at Trinity, March 20, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to **Psalm 63** we once again find David fleeing from his enemies. The superscription tells us that he is in the wilderness of Judah. There are two periods in his life that this could refer to.
 - (1) When he was in the wilderness fleeing from King Saul
 - (2) When he was in the wilderness fleeing from his son Absalom.
2. **Verse 11** excludes the possibility that David is fleeing from King Saul. David is the king in this passage.

This means **Psalm 63** is referring to the period when David was fleeing from Absalom. David was in the wilderness where he was overwhelmed by the absence of God.

 - A. Remember, David would have placed great emphasis on the importance of Jerusalem and the Tabernacle as the dwelling place of God. This was the place of corporate worship.
 - B. Nothing brought David greater pleasure than gathering at the House of God
Psalm 84:10 – “For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”
Psalm 27:4 – “One *thing* have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”
 - C. David continually stressed the importance of the experience of corporate worship.
Psalm 34:3 – “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.”
3. Fleeing from his enemies demanded that he flee from Jerusalem into the Judean wilderness. Canaan was a rich fertile land. It was described as a land flowing with milk and honey. But it also had desert regions. This wilderness was a barren place, a place where water was often scarce.
Psalm 63:1 – “my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is”
4. But David’s thirst was not merely a physical thirst. His was a spiritual thirst.
Psalm 63:1 – “my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee”
5. Tonight I want to begin looking at this thirst for God in a dry and thirsty land. There are two ways to look at this subject.
 - A. First, it speaks of the personal thirst of the Christian for more of Christ—a deep longing for Christ.
 - B. Second, it speaks of the discomfort of dwelling in a dry and thirsty land and the longing for the refreshing waters of God’s grace—it speaks of our thirst for the powerful working of God in the revival of our land.

6. This week we'll look to the first – the thirst for God in the heart of the believer. Next week we'll look at the thirst in the heart of a believer for God's work of revival in our dry and thirsty land.
7. How do we describe this thirst for God in the heart of Christian?
I've observed church members for over 35 years. It would seem they fall into three different categories.
1. Those who are Christians in name only. They claim to be Christians. They are members of the church. But they don't really have an interest in the things of God. They aren't dedicated to advancing the Kingdom of God. They don't truly have a relationship with Christ but it doesn't really bother them. They are like the five foolish virgins who were waiting for the Bridegroom with the rest but found themselves totally unprepared at His arrival. Obviously, these are not Christians. But they exist in numbers we tremble to even consider.
 2. Those who are true believers in Christ but they seem satisfied with the current condition of their relationship with Christ. They love Christ and are concerned about holiness but they are not passionate in their pursuit of knowing Christ more. This is a dangerous position to be in. One has to examine why he doesn't have a greater passion for Christ. Edwards: "Who will deny that true religion consists, in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercise of the heart? God, in His Word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, fervent in spirit, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion. If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing."
 3. Those who are passionately pursuing Christ. They are intensely thirsting for Him. **Psalm 63** describes this passion.
8. There are two main causes of this passionate thirsting after God:
- A. One is our absence from God. This is David's situation. He is removed from Jerusalem and the sanctuary and thus removed from the worship of God. He is thirsting for God. We saw this also in **Psalm 42**
Psalm 42:1 – "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."
 1. There are numerous reasons why we may feel an absence from God but the chief cause for a feeling of separation from God is sin
 - a. Sin will hinder our prayer life. It will hinder our worship.
NAS **1 Peter 3:7** – "You husbands likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."
 - b. Sin crushes the believers confidence and robs him of his assurance
 - c. Sin always affects our fellowship with God
God will seem distant. We long for the times when He was near.
As time stretches on we fall into great sorrow
 - d. Perhaps God will mingle it with physical affliction which will make Him seem even further away

2. This is often a form of God’s chastisement
 - a. We will never be abandoned or forsaken but there are times when God withdraws the fullness of His countenance from us for a season.
 - b. We read in the 1689 Confession , Chapter 5: Divine Providence: “The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends.
 - c. Sometimes through sin or neglect we fall into the valley of darkness where prayer is hard and our fellowship with our Father is difficult.
David was a man after God’s own heart, yet he sometimes felt abandoned by God.
Psalm 22:2 – “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.”
- B. The second reason for our thirsting after God is our current state—we are in the season of faith.
 1. Peter writes:
^{NAS} **1 Peter 1:8** – “and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,”
 2. We do not yet have the full expression of our inheritance. We have not yet seen Christ in His fulness.
^{KJV} **1 John 3:2** – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”
^{NAS} **Romans 8:18** – “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
 3. We have not yet been glorified. So we are pressing on towards our hope of glory. We are thirsting for more and more of Christ now.
^{NAS} **Philippians 3:13-14** – “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
9. Does this describe you? David was intoxicated with God. He was addicted with a desire for God. Is this your heart?
10. In the brief time we have together tonight I want to address this high subject – the subject of thirsting after Christ. My method will simply be to examine the heart of David from this psalm. May God grant us the grace to examine our own hearts. And may He enlarge our vessels to be filled with more and more of Christ.
11. I want to direct your thoughts to consider several aspects of David’s desire for God. It was Personal, Primary, Powerful, Progressive, Perpetual

- I. David's desire for God was personal. His life was intoxicated with God. He had an intense relationship with God.
- A. He calls God, "My God." – "O God, thou *art* my God"
 The expression "My God" is found 55 times in the psalms.
 David had a relationship with God. This was how he prayed.
Psalm 7:1 – "O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust"
Psalm 30:2 – "O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me."
Psalm 38:15 – "For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God."
Psalm 86:12 – "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore."
1. David knew God. But more, David possessed God as his only God.
 Not earthly riches, not earthly power, not earthly pleasure -
 "O God, thou *art* my God"
 2. And David was confident that he was God's own possession
Psalm 17:8 – "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,"
- B. Do you have a relationship with Christ?
Song of Solomon 6:3 – "I *am* my beloved's, and my beloved *is* mine"
1. A relationship with Christ causes a hunger to know Him more
 2. A relationship with Christ creates a heart of worship – a desire for praise
 3. A relationship with Christ desires exclusivity
 Other earthly things can hinder our pursuit of Christ
- II. David's desire for God was primary. His first priority was God – "early will I seek thee"
- A. David considered God his chief business
1. שָׁחַר *shachar* – points to the time before sunrise, before dawn. In other words, David pursued God before all else.
 2. This was the custom of our Lord. He often prayed all night
Luke 6:12 – "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."
 3. Again, listen to our Lord's response to His earthly parents when they found Him after three days of searching:
Luke 2:49 – "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"
 Literally: "It is necessary for me to be about the things of My Father"
 Jesus made the things of His Father His chief business.
John 4:34 – "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."
 4. Contrast this with the condition of lost humanity.
Psalm 53:2-3 – "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. ³ Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one."
- B. Do you make the pursuit of Christ your chief work?
 Is it evidenced by your life? How you spend your time, your money

- III. David's desire for God was powerful – His passion for God was intense
Psalm 63:1 – “my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;”
Psalm 63:8 – “soul followeth hard after thee”
- A. David felt an agonizing soul thirst
1. You can survive for days without food, but without water death is an agonizing trauma. Every thought is captivated by a desire for water.
 2. There is no thirst like soul thirst
Psalm 42:2 – “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God”
 3. He mourned in the absence of God. With all of his heart he longed to come into the presence of God
- B. Do you continually thirst for Christ?
1. Is the presence of Christ in your life your chief desire?
Psalm 27:4 – “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”
 2. In His absence we press towards him like a man dying of thirst after water.
 3. There are times when God seems far away – praying is difficult and takes great effort. But we thirst after Him!
 Spurgeon – “it is the weightiest of all earth's sorrows for a Christian man to lose the conscious presence of his covenant God.”
- IV. David's desire for God was progressive. He desired to experience more and more of God's grace
- A. Listen to David's plea
1. He desired to see the glorious manifestation of God
 “To see thy power and thy glory” – Verse 2
 - a. David wanted more of God
 - b. This was Moses' great desire
Exodus 33:18 – “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.”
 2. As David thought about God's covenant love his heart exploded in praise
 “Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”
 - a. David considered his relationship with God his greatest treasure
 “thy lovingkindness *is* better than life”
 - b. It was better than life itself
 3. To David nothing else would satisfy him
Psalm 63:5 – “My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips.”
- B. Does this describe your heart?
1. Is your greatest pursuit to see more and more of the glory of Christ?
 2. Is your possession of His love sweeter than life itself or anything this world has to offer?

- V. David's desire for God was perpetual. Because God was his chief pursuit David thought about it continually
- A. God was always upon his mind
 1. God was David's continued meditation
Psalm 63:6 – "When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night* watches."
 2. When David was laying in his bed long into the night God was his meditation
 - B. When Christ is your chief pursuit your mind will be continually upon Him.
 1. Do you dwell upon His excellence? Do you dwell upon how worthy He is of your love? Do you dwell upon how sweet your duties are before Him.
 2. Is there anything lovelier in your life? Do you long for ever sweeter communion with Him?

Conclusion:

If a person is thirsting after Christ how is this thirst quenched?

1. It is not quenched as we seek an experience. It is quenched as we partake of Christ.
 - a. There is a difference between seeking an experience and seeking Christ. The man seeking Christ wants his life consecrated unto Christ.
Consecrated means set apart for holy use.
 - b. The man seeking Christ wants his life conformed to Christ.
We flee from everything that might hinder our pursuit of Christ
 - c. We pursue Christ by His Spirit, but we can quench the Holy Spirit's influence upon our lives through an unholy seeking of this world
Through disobedience we can grieve the Holy Spirit and quench His influence
Ephesians 4:29-30 – "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
Ephesians 5:18 – "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"
2. We find greater communion with Christ as we place ourselves under God's means of grace. In his book, "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life," Donald Whitney puts it like this:
"The Spiritual Disciplines then are also like channels of God's transforming grace. As we place ourselves in them to seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us and we are changed."
3. We find Christ in His Word
1 Timothy 4:13-15 – "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴ Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. ¹⁵ Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."
4. We find Christ in prayer
Psalm 63:1 – "early will I seek thee"
5. We find Christ as we associate with others who are making Christ their chief pursuit
Proverbs 27:17 – "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

6. We find Christ in worship – we come to meet with Him.
- a. Jeremiah Burroughs – (Gospel Worship p.38) “If to worship God is to draw near to Him, then to neglect God’s worship is to depart from Him.”
 - b. Don’t think that merely showing up is worshipping God.
 - c. Jeremiah Burroughs – “When we worship we draw nigh to Him, but let us take heed how we draw nigh. Hebrews 10:22: “Let us draw near with a true heart.” The God whom we come to worship is a great and glorious God, and, having to deal with such an infinite, glorious, dreadful Majesty, it is fitting that we should make preparation when we come nigh unto Him.”
 - We must get our hearts possessed beforehand with right apprehensions of the majesty of God.
 - There must be a taking of the heart off from every sinful way. If there is iniquity in your heart labor to put it out.
 - There must be a disentangling of the heart from the world and from the businesses in the world