

FBC POWELL, 4-30-17 AM NOTES
"Experiencing God"
Psalm 63:1-11
12 in Series, "Psalms: Medicine for the Soul"

2 Samuel 15:23 "While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people passed over. The king also passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness."

Job 5:7 (HCSB) "But mankind is born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward."

I. The Preparation for Experiencing God (v. 1a)

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth."

Psalms 77:13b (ESV) "What god [EI] is great like our God [Elohim]?"

Genesis 14:20a "And blessed be **God Most High**, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

Genesis 16:13a "Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are **a God who sees.**'"

Psalms 100:3 "Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

Deuteronomy 6:15a "For the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God."

II. The Passion for Experiencing God (v. 1b)

Psalms 42:1-2 "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

*Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, now the giver is known,
Once I sought for things, now Himself alone.*

—A. B. Simpson

"O God, I have tasted [Your] goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need for further grace, and I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the triune God, I want to want [You]; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be more thirsty still..." —A. W. Tozer

Psalms 105:4 (NIV) "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always."

III. The Pursuit of Experiencing God (v. 2)

Psalms 63:2 (ESV) “So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.”

IV. The Praise That Accompanies Experiencing God (vv. 3-4)

“He who has God plus everything has no more than he who has God alone.”

—Unknown

A. The Prompter of Praise (v. 3)

B. The Product of Praise (v. 4)

V. The Pleasure of Experiencing God (v. 5)

Psalms 63:5 (NIV) “I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.”

VI. The Peace Found in Experiencing God (vv. 6-8)

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV) “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”

VII. The Protection Provided While Experiencing God (vv. 9-11)

Sermon 12: Experiencing God

Psalms 63:1-11

The introductions to the Psalms are not inspired by God. They were added much later, but most Bible scholars believe that they are generally accurate. The heading or introduction to Psalm 63 says, “A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.” This is almost certainly referring to the time described in 2 Samuel 15 when David’s son, Absalom, rebelled and tried to steal the kingdom of Israel from his Father. Absalom’s coup (from a human perspective) came close to succeeding. David had to quickly leave Jerusalem, the place of his home, his throne, place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, and the place of corporate worship. The scene is summarized in 2 Samuel 15:23: “While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the

people passed over. The king also passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness.” Eventually Absalom’s rebellion was stopped and he was killed, but I believe that it was in the time of exile from Jerusalem, from the place of corporate worship that David was inspired to write this Psalm.

Here is why this background is so important in understanding this Psalm. Can you think of a sadder time for a father than this one? His own son rebelled against him and sought to take his place as King. Not only that, but David loved to worship the Lord in the designated place with God’s people in Jerusalem. But now corporate worship wasn’t an option in this wilderness of Judah. Yet, in these painful, sorrowful circumstances, we will see some amazing things that David said. For instance, he says in:

Psalm 63:3a: “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You.”

Psalm 63:4a: “So I [David] will bless You as long as I live...”

Psalm 63:5a: “My soul is satisfied...”

David knew how to experience God, to delight in the Lord, and in his time of heartbreak and disappointment he only sought to go deeper in this “experiencing God” walk he had with the Lord.

Have you discovered that it is in times of trouble, disappointment, and heartache that we either become bitter toward God or go deeper with God? When going through trials, we seldom, if ever, remain the same! David chose to experience God at a deeper level instead of becoming bitter. Some of you are in the middle of hard times right now. Some are headed into difficult days, but you just don’t yet know it. I say that because that is just a fact of living on a fallen planet. We’re told in Job 5:7 (HCSB): “But mankind is born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” Some of our troubles are of our own making. That would, to some extent, apply to David. He was far from the perfect father to all of his children. But some of our troubles are simply troubles allowed by God and they are tied into nothing specific that we have done.

As we look at this Psalm of David, I pray that you will see clearly how to grow deeper in experiencing God in your trials, even if the trials are reaping what you have sown. Oh, what a grace filled, glorious truth! Oh that our suffering would not be wasted, but be allowed do its work of sanctification in us, deepening us in our walk with God, motivating us to experience Him with a deeper love and delight in Him than we have ever known. What I am about to say will likely seem harsh and uncaring, but it is not. If you only experience delight in the Lord, only experience the joy of the Lord, long to worship the Lord in times that are pleasant and comfortable, then you have never gotten out of kindergarten in the subject of experiencing and delighting and rejoicing in the Lord.

Do you want to go deeper in experiencing God – to love Him more passionately, delight in *Him* more than you delight in His blessings? If so, then Psalm 63 just may become your favorite Psalm after we study it today.

I. The Preparation for Experiencing God (v. 1a)

This is the language of surrender. This is where experiencing God starts. There are two Hebrew words used here that are translated “God.” This first phrase in Hebrew is, “O Elohim, You are my El.” Elohim is a plural word. It is the first name used for God in the Bible. Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth.” The fact that Elohim is plural doesn’t prove the trinity (one God in three persons) but it certainly leaves room for it. Elohim is the name for God that emphasizes His creative power. El is used as a more general word for

God. It is not really a personal name. It is used in Scripture to refer to the one true God, but it is also used to refer to idols. What the psalmist is saying in Psalms 63:1 is that the true God [Elohim] is the true God [El]. We read in Psalms 77:13b (ESV): “What god [El] is great like our God [Elohim]?”

There are many personal names for God that begin with *El*. For example, *El Elyon* means “The God Most High.” It is used in Genesis 14:20a: “And blessed be *God Most High*, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” Another personal name for God is *El Roi*. It means, “the God who sees.” Genesis 16:13a: “Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, ‘You are a God who sees.’” A person’s god [*El*] is what or who they worship, what or who rules them, and what or who they turn to when they are in need. Anyone or anything that we worship, allow to rule us, or that we turn to in need other than the one true God, (*Elohim, Yahwah, Jehovah*), is an idol. As God, He (*Elohim*) is to be surrendered to. This God who created all that is, is the only true God and our response is to surrender completely to Him. Psalms 100:3: “Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

If you would truly experience God, even in the midst of trials and tribulations, it starts with a confession that this God revealed in Scripture is indeed your God. It is the renouncing of all idols and a renewed surrender to this one who made you for Himself. He is the one that you worship; He is the one that you treasure supremely; He is the one that you look to first in time of need. He is not your last resort; He is your first response. Set aside some time to examine your heart to see if you are honest before God when you say “O God you are my God.”

II. The Passion for Experiencing God (v. 1b)

Four times the Psalmist uses the pronoun “You” when referring to God in verse one. He is not primarily seeking God’s hand, God’s action, God’s deliverance; he is passionately seeking God Himself! Notice the passion with which He seeks God. Look at the words, “seek,” “thirsts,” and “yearns.” The Hebrew word translated “seek” means to start early to painstakingly search for something or someone. In the Psalms, the word “thirst” is often tied to a craving for something. Psalms 42:1-2: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” The word “yearns” is translated “faints” in the ESV. In other words, these words are words of desperation. What we have is a picture of a person who is in the desert without water. Are you *that kind of* thirsty to more deeply experience God? I desperately want to be!

I’m not talking about a thirst, a deep desire for God to change your painful circumstances – to heal a loved one, to enable you to get the job you applied for, to have Him bring your prodigal home. It is certainly appropriate to pray for all of those, but if you would grow deeper with God, there must be a hunger like that *for God Himself!* Is there an earnest seeking of God and His pleasure, His plan, His way?

A. B. Simpson said it well in a hymn entitled, *Once It Was the Blessing*:

*Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, now the giver is known,
Once I sought for things, now Himself alone.*

— A.

B. Simpson

We don’t grow deeper with God when we come to Him with a self-centered attitude that says, “Lord, this is what I want you to do for me that will make my life more comfortable.” “Here is how I want You to change my circumstances.” We genuinely experience God when we come to

Him saying, “Lord I want to really know You; I want to delight in You even where I currently find myself. I am desperate to more deeply experience You in all your glory.”

Why don't we have that kind of seeking, thirsting, and yearning for God? Could it be because we are full with the scraps that the world has thrown us and the polluted water from the world's polluted wells. A. W. Tozer in the book, *The Pursuit of God*, expressed my heart in this prayer:

O God, I have tasted [Your] goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need for further grace, and I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the triune God, I want to want [You]; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be more thirsty still...

Once you have experienced God Himself, you will never be satisfied with what the world can offer and the flesh can accomplish. Psalms 105:4 (NIV): “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.”

III. The Pursuit of Experiencing God (v. 2)

I believe that the ESV has a clearer translation of verse two. Psalm 63:2 (ESV): “So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.” In verse 2, David is longing for corporate worship. David not only longed to grow deeper with God; he also longed to worship God corporately – with other believers. Neither the Old nor the New Testaments confines worship to a building. But in both the Old and the New Testaments God blessed the corporate worship of the church, the gathering together of believers. We take that corporate worship so for granted. I hear from so many missionaries who have almost no opportunity for corporate worship like we have every Sunday morning and every Sunday night. In our World Mission Celebration, the most common comment we get from missionaries who have assignments from God to go to the unreached people groups on this planet, is the impact of the corporate worship in the services. They don't complain about the building being too hot or too cold or the style of worship; they are able to be with hundreds of other believers singing biblically based songs to the Lord whom they love.

I love coming to church here in this place. When I wake up at “four something” on Sunday mornings, generally my first thought is “what day is this?” Then I figure out that it is Sunday, and I get a serious case of the “Happies.” I can't wait to get here. I could go to another church and hear a much better message, but I couldn't be with the people I love – my big spiritual family. When the first song starts, my heart is full and I am experiencing something that cannot be experienced by myself. I cannot comprehend, I cannot fathom why a person who has been made a new creation in Christ would choose to sleep late, watch TV, or _____ (fill in the blank). And here is the bonus. We get to come back on Sunday evening and do it again.

David longed to pursue God in corporate worship and while he was cut off from doing so, he grieved. David is telling us that he has lost almost everything that was valuable to him, but the thing that he longs for is God Himself. His heart is to fully experience God, delight in God and worship Him with other believers.

IV. The Praise That Accompanies Experiencing God (vv. 3-4)

In verse three, the emphasis moves from corporate to personal praise. Our worship should be non-stop. It is really worship of our precious God that our hearts are longing for. We try to fulfill that longing with a million other things and we find that we are still empty. One of my favorite

quotes is this (I forgot who said it – C. S. Lewis I think), “He who has God plus everything has no more than he who has God alone.”

A. The Prompter of Praise (v. 3)

The prompter of David’s praise is the lovingkindness of God. The Hebrew word that is used here is almost impossible to translate with one English word. It is translated “steadfast love” in the ESV and “faithful” love in the HCSB. The best way I can describe this word is to say that is a combination of love, mercy, and grace. As the Psalmist meditates on this word, he concludes that being a recipient of God’s lovingkindness is better than life itself! In the midst of his multitude of trials and his loss, David says to the Lord, “Your mercy, love and grace are better than life.” David was not treating lightly his trial. His heart was broken! This whole circumstance didn’t turn out well by human standards. David’s son Absalom actually ended up in battle with David’s men and was killed. David grieved deeply over the loss of his rebellious son, but even in the heart-breaking circumstances, he found comfort and satisfaction in God and His grace, mercy, and love. In times of trial, you see that God is sufficient and you go deeper with Him.

B. The Product of Praise (v. 4)

The product of praise is humility. God becomes big and we become extremely small. As David praises the Lord with his lips, his hands get involved. In Old Testament worship, raised hands were a common posture of prayer and worship. The uplifted hands primarily signified emptiness, being without merit, reaching out to God for His supply because we are empty. In a word the uplifted hands signified humility. There is a line in the great old hymn *Rock of Ages* by Augustus Toplady that says, “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.”

V. The Pleasure of Experiencing God (v. 5)

God’s lovingkindness is to the soul what the best and richest of food is to the taste buds. It satisfies the deepest longings and needs of our hearts. When you are overwhelmed with life, meditate on the lovingkindness of God, worship Him, and everything starts coming into perspective.

VI. The Peace Found in Experiencing God (v. 6-8)

At night, David would meditate on the lovingkindness of God. Setting our minds on God and His perfections is the way that we can have internal peace in difficult times. The word used here for meditate means to mutter or whisper. It is the thought of going over a passage as you murmur the passage to yourself while you think on it. Isaiah 26:3 (ESV): “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” As we meditate on, rehearse, muse (think deeply) on the word of God in those quiet times when sleep eludes us, we will discover a peace that the world doesn’t understand.

David is at peace because he has a past with God and a pattern that he has seen is that God is faithful (v. 7). God has already brought him through so much! This rebellion coming from his own family is not the first heartbreaking and perplexing thing that he has faced. The more we go through trials while walking with God, the more confident we become in His pattern of faithfulness. The result is that there is peace in trials because we know and have experienced God and have seen Him sanctify through suffering, and we believe He will continue to do so.

That phrase in verse 8, “My soul clings to You,” means to be glued to. David is determined in trials to have his soul glued to God. God’s right hand is used several places in Scripture to represent God’s power. David has experienced God’s power and he rests in that when all seems to be falling apart. The hopeless looking situation with Absalom was not beyond God’s power. His provision was and is sufficient.

VII. The Protection Provided While Experiencing God (vv. 9-11)

Even in the midst of horrible trials, we are assured that nothing outside the will of God can harm us or destroy our life. Notice that I didn’t say that nothing can harm us. I said that nothing outside the will of God can harm us. If God has more suffering for us, His grace will take us victoriously through all that His will chooses as best. There is no fear called for. Neither Satan nor all the demons of Hell can stop God’s sovereign plans.

Conclusion

This Psalm shows us how to experience God when all the props have been knocked out from under us. When everything is allowed to be taken away, do you draw near to God? It may be that your trial will reveal that you have been worshipping the gift instead of the giver. That is idolatry and God will not tolerate rivals. Can you say with David, “Give me the giver, even if all the gifts are taken away? He is my treasure; He is my delight, He is the object of my affections, not the “goodies” He gives me. This is what it means to experience God.